OVERVIEW
In this activity, participants will be asked to explore their own experiences in mainstream and marginal roles as an entry point to discussing the experiences of dominant and marginalized groups. They will also be introduced to the concepts of power, privilege, and oppression.

This activity explores more advanced concepts and should only be done after your branch has spent time completing earlier activities or having in-depth conversations about diversity and inclusion.

MATERIALS NEEDED
- Mainstream and Margin handout (1 per participant)
- Flip chart paper
- Markers

TIME NEEDED
90 minutes

ACTIVITY INSTRUCTIONS

I. INTRODUCTION [2 MIN]
- Welcome participants and introduce each facilitator.
- During this activity we will share our identities and discuss how identity affects individuals’ experience in our branch. We will end with a brainstorm of specific things we can do to become more diverse and inclusive.

II. COMMUNITY AGREEMENTS [5 MIN]
- When exploring sensitive or personal topics, it's important to take steps to ensure that you create a safe space. Start this activity by setting community agreements. See the last page for more on community agreements.

III. EXPERIENCES OF FEELING MARGINALIZED [20 MIN]
- Pass out the participant packet.
- As I mentioned, we are going to start this session with a focus on your own experiences. First, we are going to reflect on a time when we felt marginalized or outside of the mainstream. This is something we can all relate to — the feeling like we didn’t belong.
• Provide a few examples from your own experience of feeling outside the mainstream. It may be helpful for you to provide a system-level example, like an experience related to a marginalized identity you hold, as well as a localized example that may or may not be related to dominant and marginalized identities, like an experience when you got a new job and felt excluded from the social relationships that had formed before you began. The micro-level example will be especially helpful for participants who haven’t previously reflected deeply on their own identities, so that they can easily come up with an experience to share.

• On the first page of your packet there are questions that will help you think through an experience of feeling outside of the mainstream.
  a. Remember a time when you felt marginalized, or outside of the mainstream.
     i. What was the situation?
     ii. How did you know you were outside of the mainstream?
     iii. How did it make you feel?
  b. We are going to get into groups of four and explore only part one right now.

IV. EXPERIENCES OF FEELING MAINSTREAM [20 MIN]
• In the same groups we are going to shift gears and discuss a time when we were part of the mainstream, but we saw someone else marginalized or outside of the mainstream. By part of the mainstream, I mean that you felt that you mattered, and you felt accepted and validated.

• Again provide one macro-level and one micro-level example from your own experience.

• The questions we are now going to discuss are under part two on the front page.
  a. Remember a time when you were part of the mainstream, but you saw someone else marginalized or outside of the mainstream.
     i. What was the situation?
     ii. How did you know that you were part of the mainstream? What did people do to make you feel like you mattered?
     iii. How did you know that this person was not part of the mainstream? How did people treat this person?
     iv. How do you think it made her or him feel?
     v. How did it make you feel?

V. EXPERIENCES DEBRIEF [10 MIN]
• Bring the full group together to debrief the small group conversations by facilitating a quick discussion with the following questions:
  a. Was this exercise easy or hard? What was hard about it?
  b. What did you discover in the discussion that was new or surprising?
  c. How did the discussion make you feel?
VI. DEFINITIONS [13 MIN]

- What we’ve been discussing so far is related to the concepts of power, privilege, and oppression. Turn to the next page in your packet to find definitions of these terms; I will go over each one.
- Go over the definition of each one. After each one, ask for questions. This may seem like more time than necessary to go over these definitions, but it is important to make sure that participants understand these definitions before moving on to the next section, so spend time helping them grapple with and process the definitions.
- You may also ask for comments at this point, but know that there may be some people who want to use this as an opportunity to challenge or push back against the definitions you have provided. Make sure that such pushback does not derail the group. Respond to their comments, but if it seems like they are not likely to change their mind in that moment, let them know that we need to keep moving forward but that you would love to discuss the definitions further with them and hear their concerns after the activity is over.
  - Power is access to resources that enhance the chances of getting what one needs or influencing others in order to lead a safe, productive, and fulfilling life (Adams et al., 1997).
  - Privilege denotes the power and advantages benefiting a particular group, derived from the historical oppression and exploitation of other groups (Ohio University).
  - Oppression is the systemic and pervasive social inequality woven throughout social institutions as well as embedded within individual consciousness. Oppression signifies a hierarchical relationship in which dominant or privileged groups benefit, often in unconscious ways, from the disempowerment of subordinated or targeted groups (Adams et al., 1997).

VII. FULL-GROUP DISCUSSION [15 MIN]

- Earlier we discussed examples of experiencing being part of a dominant or subordinated/marginalized group on a micro scale. Our society as a whole places certain groups inside the mainstream and in the margins, which is an experience that can’t be changed. While in some of our own marginalization experiences we can simply leave a space and return to the privileges of our dominant identities, for people who are part of marginalized groups, they cannot simply leave a situation to escape.
- So now let’s think about what can be done about all of this. What can members of dominant groups do to share their power and create space for those who are experiencing marginalization?
  - Have the group discuss and contribute ideas to answer this question. As ideas are shared, record them on a flip chart.
  - When it comes up naturally in the discussion (likely near the beginning), ask participants to turn to the next page of their packets and read the definition of “allies.” Also read for them the excerpt from Beverly Tatum on the moving walkway of oppression.
  - Allies are people who make the commitment and effort to recognize their privilege (based on gender, class, race, sexual identity, etc.) and work in solidarity with oppressed groups in the struggle for justice. Allies understand that it is in their own interest to end all forms of oppression, even those from which they may benefit in concrete ways (Center for Assessment and Policy Development).
• Moving walkway of oppression: “I sometimes visualize the ongoing cycle of racism as a moving walkway at the airport. Active racist behavior is equivalent to walking fast on the conveyor belt. The person engaged in active racist behavior has identified with the ideology of our white supremacist system and is moving with it. Passive racist behavior is equivalent to standing still on the walkway. No overt effort is being made, but the conveyor belt moves the bystanders along to the same destination as those who are actively walking. But unless they are walking actively in the opposite direction at a speed faster than the conveyor belt — unless they are actively anti-racist — they will find themselves carried along with the others” (Tatum, 2003).

VIII. CLOSING [5 MIN]
• Ask participants to silently reflect on one specific next step they are planning to take as a result of this activity and then turn to the person next to them to share.
• Close by thanking everyone for their participation and for their honest and open reflection.
Whenever you are having conversations with your branch or board on topics of diversity and inclusion, it’s important to ensure that the space feels safe for conversation and exploration. Start each activity or discussion by setting community agreements by following the steps below.

- **Before the meeting, prepare a flip chart sheet with “Community Agreements” written at the top and the bullets below written underneath.**
- In this activity we explore potentially sensitive topics. So I’d like to start by having us set a few community agreements, or “norms,” to help make the space feel safe for conversation and exploration.
- The community agreements that we agree to are all things we are willing to honor for the duration of this session.
- To start, I have a list of a few community agreements that I think will be helpful. I will read through and explain each one and then ask for comments and questions on them. Then, I’ll ask if you have any you would like to add.
  - **Speak from the “I” perspective:** Avoid speaking for others by using “we,” “us,” or “them.”
  - **Listen actively:** Listen to understand, not to respond. Sometimes we are tempted to begin formulating what we want to say in response, instead of giving 100 percent of our focus to the speaker. So let’s make sure we are listening 100 percent.
  - **Step up, step back:** If you usually speak up often or you find yourself talking more than others, challenge yourself to lean in to listening and opening up space for others. If you don’t usually talk as much in groups and do a lot of your thinking and processing in your own head, know that we would love to hear your contributions, and challenge yourself to bring your voice forward in the conversation.
  - **Respect silence:** Don’t force yourself to fill silence. Silence can be an indication of thought and process.
  - **Share, even if you don’t have the right words:** Suspend judgment and allow others to be unpolished in their speaking. If you are unsure of their meaning, then ask for clarification.
  - **Uphold confidentiality:** Treat the candor of others as a gift. Assume that personal identities, experiences, and perspectives shared in this space are confidential unless you are given permission to use them.
  - **Lean in to discomfort:** Learning happens on the edge of our comfort zones. Push yourself to be open to new ideas and experiences even if they initially seem uncomfortable to you.
- **After you read through the list, ask if anyone has comments or questions about the community agreements overall. Then ask the group if anyone has anything to add to the list. Take responses and add them to the list. Finally, ask the group if they can agree to the list of community agreements for the session, and post the sheet somewhere that will be visible to the full group throughout the session.**