

---

Theses and Dissertations

---

2016

## Best practices of affinity groups in independent schools

Cindy P. Chun

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd>

---

### Recommended Citation

Chun, Cindy P., "Best practices of affinity groups in independent schools" (2016). *Theses and Dissertations*. 746.  
<https://digitalcommons.pepperdine.edu/etd/746>

This Dissertation is brought to you for free and open access by Pepperdine Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Theses and Dissertations by an authorized administrator of Pepperdine Digital Commons. For more information, please contact [bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu](mailto:bailey.berry@pepperdine.edu).

Pepperdine University  
The Graduate School of Education and Psychology

BEST PRACTICES OF AFFINITY GROUPS IN INDEPENDENT SCHOOLS

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Doctor of Education in Organizational Leadership

by

Cindy P. Chun

December, 2016

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D. – Dissertation Chairperson

This dissertation, written by

Cindy P. Chun

under the guidance of a Faculty Committee and approved by its members, has been submitted to and accepted by the Graduate Faculty in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

Doctoral Committee:

Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D., Chairperson

June Schmieder-Ramirez, Ph.D.

Andrew Harvey, Ed.D.

© Copyright by Cindy P. Chun (2016)

All Rights Reserved

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
LIST OF TABLES .....	vi
LIST OF FIGURES .....	viii
DEDICATION .....	ix
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS .....	x
VITA .....	xi
ABSTRACT .....	xiii
Chapter One: Introduction .....	1
Statement of the Problem .....	4
Statement of Purpose .....	6
Research Questions .....	7
Significance of the Study .....	7
Assumptions of the Study .....	8
Limitations of the Study .....	8
Definitions of Terms .....	9
Summary .....	12
Organization of the Remainder of the Study .....	12
Chapter Two: Review of Literature .....	13
Overview of the Chapter .....	13
History of Private Schools .....	14
Independent Schools .....	16
Racial Identity Development Models .....	26
Diversity in Independent Schools .....	37
School Climate and School Culture .....	39
Sense of Belonging .....	41
Conclusion .....	49
Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology .....	51
Chapter Overview .....	51
Research Design .....	51
Restatement of the Research Questions .....	55
Sources of Data .....	56
Protection of Human Subjects .....	57

Data Collection .....	61
Participants.....	62
Instrument .....	63
Validity and Reliability.....	70
Role of the Researcher .....	72
Data Analysis .....	74
Summary .....	76
Chapter Four: Analysis of Findings .....	77
Organization of the Chapter.....	77
Overview .....	77
Data Collection .....	82
Data Analysis .....	84
Data Display.....	85
Summary .....	124
Chapter Five: Results and Conclusions .....	127
Discussions of the Findings .....	128
Implications of the Study .....	131
Recommendations for Future Research .....	132
Final Thoughts .....	133
REFERENCES .....	136
APPENDIX A: Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activity.....	148
APPENDIX B: Protecting Human Research Participants Certificate of Completion .....	150
APPENDIX C: Interview Protocol .....	151
APPENDIX D: Expert Panel Review Information.....	152
APPENDIX E: Institutional Review Board Approval Letter .....	157

## LIST OF TABLES

	Page
Table 1. Participant Professional Demographic Information .....	80

## LIST OF FIGURES

	Page
Figure 1. Interview protocol before validation .....	64
Figure 2. Interview protocol after validation and revision .....	69
Figure 3. Affinity groups defined .....	88
Figure 4. Need for affinity groups .....	90
Figure 5. Defining success of an affinity group.....	93
Figure 6. Measures of success of affinity groups .....	95
Figure 7. Ways affinity groups are used .....	99
Figure 8. Affinity groups in practice.....	104
Figure 9. Meeting protocol .....	106
Figure 10. Years to form affinity groups .....	109
Figure 11. Pushback from faculty and administration .....	111
Figure 12. Obstacles to overcome.....	114
Figure 13. How overcome were obstacles .....	114
Figure 14. Benefits of affinity groups.....	118
Figure 15. Downsides to affinity groups.....	121
Figure 16. Do anything differently .....	123



## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my family who loves and supports me unconditionally.

To my mom, who always taught me to be proud of who I am and to always stand tall. She has watched me and guided me through this journey from above, and although I was not able to share it with her in person, she has been in my heart the entire time.

To my dad, who always encouraged my every whim and who taught me to always live with integrity and honor. He continues to be my biggest fan, always interested in hearing about my educational pursuits and opportunities.

To my brother, who always pushed me to be better.

To my sister, who is my biggest cheerleader and who gave me five of the most precious people in my life.

To my niece Brianne who continues to inspire me each day, even though she left us far too soon.

To my nephews Quinn, Devin, Dylan, and Grant...always strive to be your best selves. Dream BIG, play hard, and love unconditionally.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I could not have completed this journey without the help, support, and encouragement of so many people. Thank you to all of my past teachers who filled me with wonder and helped to create the lifelong learner that I am today.

My deepest appreciation and gratitude go to my dissertation chair, Dr. Farzin Madjidi. His gentle guidance and unassuming leadership encouraged me not only to never give up on completing my dissertation, but also to take risks in my career. In one of our first classes in the Doctoral program, Dr. Madjidi told us to *trust the process*. I did not understand what he meant then, but I fully embrace the concept now. Thank you, Dr. Madjidi, for your unconditional support, for your humor and good nature, and for your friendship and guidance. I am forever grateful.

My heartfelt appreciation goes to my committee members, Dr. June Schmieder-Ramirez and Dr. Andrew Harvey. Your leadership, guidance, and suggestions throughout this process have provided me much support on my dissertation journey. Thank you, Dr. Schmieder-Ramirez, for sharing your expertise and compassion. Thank you, Dr. Harvey, for your insight and knowledge, and for pushing me to see a different perspective. I am humbled by both of your dedication to helping me complete this project.

I would like to thank and acknowledge my West Los Angeles cohort for the laughter and learning that we shared. The trips, late night study sessions, and group projects were unforgettable. We will always be connected by this journey. A special thank you to Brandi, Faith, and Carole who continued to encourage me to finish. I am so fortunate to have friends who never stopped believing in me.

Thank you to Pauline for your steadfast encouragement and support. You have been by my side every step of the way, and I cannot thank you enough.

Thank you to Steve for always being my very good friend and for never judging me or giving up on me. I am forever grateful that you will always have my back.

Thank you to my Higgins family. You are my second family, and I am so fortunate to have you all in my life. Your unwavering support, guidance, and love have helped to shape the person that I am today, and there are no words to express my gratitude. I would like to send a special note of appreciation to Julianne for her constant love, laughter, and encouragement.

Thank you to my dad for making education a priority. He taught me the value of hard work and always encouraged me to shoot for the stars. Thank you to my brother for being there when I needed him. Thank you to my sister for her unconditional love and support. Thank you to Nate for always taking such good care of me. Thank you to my four nephews for inspiring me to be and to do more - I hope you all continue to aspire to greatness, and I cannot wait to see how you make your marks on the world!

Finally, mahalo nui loa to the numerous friends and colleagues who have supported and contributed to who I am today – I am blessed to have each and every one of you in my corner. You have made a difference in my life, and for that I am eternally grateful.

## VITA

Cindy P. Chun

### ACADEMIC BACKGROUND

Pepperdine University – Malibu, California  
Major: Organizational Leadership

Degree: Doctorate of Education  
Graduation: May 2016

Pepperdine University – Malibu, California  
Major: Education

Degree: Master of Arts  
Graduation: July 2002

California State University, Northridge  
Major: Child Development

Degree: Bachelor of Arts  
Graduation: December 1992

California State University, Northridge  
Major: Psychology

Degree: Bachelor of Arts  
Graduation: December 1992

### LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Los Encinos School – Encino, California  
Assistant Head of School: July '10 - Present

- Aligns and facilitates curriculum across grades K – 6 for continuity
- Contributes to the interviewing, hiring, evaluation, supervision, and termination of faculty, staff, specialists, and contract employees
- Coordinates and conducts admissions events, parent education coffees, curriculum evenings, and attends Parent Association meetings for curricular updates
- Plans and leads faculty observations, professional development, and goal setting meetings

### TEACHING EXPERIENCE

The Buckley School – Sherman Oaks, California  
Teacher of Grades Preschool, Kindergarten, First, Three – Five  
July 1996 – June 2010

Arlington Heights Elementary, LAUSD  
Kindergarten Intervention Program Specialist

San Fernando Elementary, LAUSD  
Third Grade Intervention Teacher

Columbus Junior High, LAUSD  
Sixth Grade Bilingual Teaching Assistant  
1992 – 1996

## RELATED EXPERIENCE

Loyola Marymount University <i>Guest Lecturer, Literacy in the Curriculum (EDUC 409)</i>	2004 – 2008
California State University, Northridge, University Library <i>Administrative Assistant to the Director of Human Resources</i>	1994 – 1996
Rancho del Valle Crippled Children's Society <i>Recreational Specialist for Young Adults</i>	1992
Para Los Niños <i>Research and Fieldwork with Homeless Children and Adults</i>	1991
Canoga Park Elementary <i>Child Mental Health Specialist Intern</i>	1990
Medwin Insurance Agency, Incorporated <i>Office Manager (began as File Clerk)</i>	1984 – 1994

## PROFESSIONAL CONFERENCES & ORGANIZATIONS

Phi Delta Kappa, Education Honor Society	Current
WASC Joint Accreditation Representative (CAIS/WASC)	2015, 2106
Units of Study in Reading Conference	2015
WASC Accreditation Committee Member	2011 – 2013
Units of Study in Writing Conference	2013
Co-presenter, CAIS Regional Meeting	2014
National Conference, NCTE	2012
Educational Records Bureau National Conference	2010, 2012
Writing Institute, Teacher's College, Columbia University	1997, 2007, 2008, 2011
National Conference, NAIS	2008, 2009, 2011 – 2015
Presenter, Hawaii International Conference on Education	2010
Annual Meeting & Exposition, NCTM	2010
People of Color Conference, NAIS	2007, 2008, 2010
Presenter, Society of Educators and Scholars Conference	2009
South Conference, California Math Council	1997 – 2004, 2009
Reading Institute, Teacher's College, Columbia University	2007, 2008
First Grade Language Arts Collaboration, Center for Early Education	2001

## ABSTRACT

Independent schools across the nation recognize the need to create inclusive communities for their students of color. Independent schools must embrace diversity and create communities in which students from all different cultures feel that they belong. The presence of diversity in the independent school environment is critical to the success of students of color. Many non-cognitive obstacles inhibit the success of students of color who attend predominantly White schools including institutional racism, oppositional identity, and internalized oppression (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Tatum, 2003). One of the many approaches that independent schools use to address inclusivity is the creation of affinity groups. The purpose of this study is to discover best practices of affinity groups in independent schools and how they are used to create a sense of belonging and inclusion for students of color. This qualitative study employs the Dynamic Narrative Approach to conduct interviews with diversity practitioners at independent schools that are members of the National Association of Independent Schools. Diversity practitioners were asked semi-structured interview questions through a password-protected wiki. A review of the literature and the findings from this study produced a list of best practices of affinity groups in independent schools, including possible downsides and how to overcome them. The findings of this study may be beneficial to independent school leaders and diversity practitioners who have not yet begun affinity group work at their schools. This study adds to the dearth of literature surrounding using affinity groups in independent schools to support students of color.

## **Chapter One: Introduction**

“Diversity is a fact of our world and our schools, but we do not always know how to embrace it in healthy and enlightened ways” (Hotchkiss, 2005, p. 22). Until recently, diversity in education was measured quantitatively. Diversity success in schools used to be based solely on numbers; in other words, what was the numerical breakdown of the school’s student body in terms of race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic classification. Successful diversity can also be viewed in terms of cultural inclusivity. Educators today, in both public and private schools, are faced with the challenge of trying to communicate with and to educate students, particularly students of color, who may not fit in culturally with the school’s majority population (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008).

While challenges of diversity persist across the educational arenas, one particular area of note is that of private K – 12 schools. According to Keigher and Gruber (2009), there are approximately 28, 200 private schools in the United States. There is a distinction between private schools and independent schools. Private schools are institutions that are established and controlled privately, usually supported by endowment and tuition and not by public funds. Private schools are also operated by non-governmental agencies. More specifically, independent schools are defined as private schools that are not affiliated with a church or other agency and include the most prestigious and privileged of private schools (Hall & Stevenson, 2007).

Racial diversity in independent schools is a relatively new concept. When private schools began, homogeneity was valued. Private schools were started for rich, White children of wealthy colonists (Kennedy, 2009). Private schools, and more specifically independent schools, were considered to be elitist, because they pursued excellence and rejected mediocrity. Being able to pick and choose whom they admitted made it difficult for students of color to gain

entrance into these private schools that offered more opportunity. Critics in the 1950s argued, “exclusive prep schools were agents in a conspiracy of the already privileged to perpetuate their privilege forever” (Powell, 1998, p. 85). These exclusive schools responded to the criticism of their homogeneity with what they coined at the time as diversity (Powell, 1998). Initially, independent school talks of diversity only dealt with socio-economic differences. Student homogeneity perpetuated because schools only gave financial aid to students who were academically strong.

With the rise of the civil rights movement and the fear that elite prep school students would be culturally deprived, racial diversity talks began in the 1960s (Powell, 1998). By the 1980s, diversity was essential to the independent school experience, and by the 1990s, independent school communities were described as those that celebrated diversity (Powell, 1998). Independent schools began to struggle with balancing their new diverse populations, while maintaining their history and upholding their missions.

According to the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS; 2011a), there are approximately 1,400 independent schools in the United States, of which about 1,300 are members. NAIS (2011a) reports total student enrollment at member schools to be about 611,226. Students of color represent approximately 130,873 of that number, making up 22.4% of the total enrollment in independent schools. The students of color can be further delineated to 5.8% African American, 3.7% Hispanic American, 6.8% Asian American, 0.2% Native American, 4.5% Multiracial American, 1.4% Middle Eastern American, and 3.0% International students (NAIS, 2011a).

The presence of diversity in the independent school environment is critical to the success of students of color. Many non-cognitive obstacles inhibit the success of students of color who



attend predominantly White schools including institutional racism, oppositional identity, and internalized oppression (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Tatum, 2003). Institutional racism is defined by habit and not by intent. It refers to the policies and practices of a school community that restrict the personal opportunities of students of color. Regardless of the fact that these policies and procedures were not meant to practice discrimination, they do have harmful affects. Oppositional identity and internalized oppression are ways in which individuals respond to situations where he/she feels excluded (Ogbu & Davis, 2003; Tatum, 2003). In both cases, individuals form their own identities either in opposition to the predominant culture or by internalizing the criticisms of the dominant culture. Schools must make the necessary adjustments to ensure that students of color understand and feel included in their school communities (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008).

According to Bassett (2003), there are significant differences in the overall quality of experience of students of color in independent schools by race. As diversity in independent schools has increased, so has the need to create inclusive environments where diversity is honored and supported. Schools that can garner the support of their board of trustees, faculty, students, and parents and craft a curriculum rich in diversity, are able to create an inclusive environment (Gow, 2001). Independent school communities, which embrace the notion that everyone is responsible for the success of every student, fully understand the needs of diversity. Arrington, Hall, and Stevenson (2003) report that it is the responsibility of independent schools to pay attention to the academic achievement of students of color and also to the emotional and structural challenges they face.

## **Statement of the Problem**

Independent schools across the nation recognize the need to create inclusive communities for their students of color. NAIS names inclusivity as one of the four core values of independent schools. When discussing the movement of independent schools toward inclusivity, Patrick Bassett (2004), president of NAIS, states:

In the journey to become more inclusive, independent schools seek to move along the continuum from “awareness” towards “commitment” and, finally to “action.” As one might expect, different schools find themselves at different points along the journey. Even within individual schools, the internal community finds itself at different continuum points, being at one stage with admissions, another stage with recruitment of faculty of color, and perhaps another at creating a supportive culture for diverse families and an inclusive curriculum for a multicultural student body. (p. 1)

Independent schools struggle to hold on to their organizational identity while also creating an inclusive environment for students of color. In 2007, NAIS conducted a survey of leadership challenges of heads of schools. Diversity was not listed among the 22 aspects of the job that heads of schools were asked to rate according to its general job challenge. It was, however, listed as another issue that heads of school find challenging or very challenging (Booth, 2008). Students struggle to balance the values of their culture, family, and race with the expectations of their school. Tatum (2003) argues that if schools hope to create a sense of belonging among their students of color, they will have to examine both the structure and culture of their community.

In an effort to help independent schools best support students of color, in 2011, the NAIS Board of Directors revised their Principles of Good Practice for Equity and Justice, which were

originally created in 1996 (NAIS, 2016a). These principles were developed for “creating and sustaining an inclusive, equitable, and just independent school community” (NAIS, 2016b, p. 1). The principles “define high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of school operations to guide schools in becoming the best education communities they can be” (NAIS, 2016a, p. 1). As such, mission statements for many, if not all, independent schools now include a statement on diversity.

Independent schools must embrace diversity and create communities in which students from all different cultures feel that they belong. If students of color are to feel included on campus, their culture needs to be included in the curriculum (Tatum, 2003). One of the many approaches that independent schools use to address inclusivity is the creation of affinity groups.

Affinity groups, or resource groups that are formed around age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability, can help students feel a sense of belonging and garner success (Arnold, 2006). Being able to support a student of color in a predominantly White community is integral to the success of the student, and affinity groups can provide this support. According to Gene Batiste (2004), NAIS Vice President of Equity and Justice Initiatives, the term affinity group describes a gathering of people who share a common identifier such as race, gender, profession, or special interests. Students and faculty use to build community, identify issues, share successes, and have honest cross-cultural dialogue (Batiste, 2004). Aguilar and Gross (1999) state,

Cultural or racial affinity groups bring students of the same racial background together to discuss issues and topics that relate to their everyday school experiences. They can focus on reducing the isolation felt by minority students in predominantly White schools, and

help them develop their own cultural and racial identities. The group serves as a safe place for open discussion and empathy among its members. (p. 24)

Although this struggle is not unique to independent schools, there are many reasons for studying independent schools specifically. Most importantly, this area has not been extensively examined, as have other arenas such as public schools and business. Also, according to Kane (1992), independent schools are very distinct; they are governed by boards of trustees, set their own curricula, self-select students and faculty, and are privately funded through tuition, donation, and endowment. In addition to these reasons, I am an educator of color at an independent school and have a vested interest in helping my students succeed, not only academically, but also socially and emotionally.

While diversity in independent schools has improved numerically over the last three decades, creating inclusive communities and using affinity groups are relatively new concepts. Many independent schools have struggled with creating a community that feels welcoming to students of color. Allowing students to form affinity groups is one way to mitigate a student's sense of not belonging. This study will look at some of the schools that are using affinity groups to compile a set of best practices.

There is very little literature that addresses the use of affinity groups in independent schools to create an inclusive environment for students of color. Due to the gap in research, further investigation is warranted in this area.

### **Statement of Purpose**

Diversity in independent schools is important to give students a broader perspective of the world around them. In business, affinity groups are used to recruit and support a diverse workforce. The groups work to achieve these goals by offering mutual support, self-

development, education programs, and career coaching. This study examines independent schools that have affinity groups from the perspective of the diversity practitioners who facilitate them. The purpose of this study is to discover best practices of affinity groups in independent schools and how they are used to create a sense of belonging and inclusion for students of color.

### **Research Questions**

1. How are affinity groups in independent schools defined?
2. How do affinity groups define and measure success?
3. What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups?
4. What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them?
5. What are the lessons learned from having affinity groups?

### **Significance of the Study**

As globalization of the world becomes a reality, independent schools are looking to build communities that reflect the outside world. “Educators of all racial and cultural groups need to develop new competencies and pedagogies to successfully engage our changing populations” (Howard, 2007, p. 18). With increasing diversity comes the need to create an inclusive culture and community that promotes a sense of belonging for all students, especially students of color. By discovering the best practices of affinity groups in independent schools, administrators and other stakeholders will be able to use affinity groups to support students of color.

This study will provide independent school administrators with the necessary information to be able to use affinity groups to address the growing needs for diversity, to assist students of color in their racial identity development, and to foster a sense of belonging for students of color in independent schools.

The information gleaned from this study will be critical as the racial landscape in the United States continues to change. Williams (2003) notes that “If current demographic trends persist, within the next 50 years, as everyone is currently categorized, Whites will no longer make up the majority of the U.S. population” (p. 90). The reality of the shift in demographics makes this study all the more necessary to implicate change in the culture of independent schools and their support of students of color.

### **Assumptions of the Study**

Independent schools are unique in the composure of their student bodies. Although most independent schools today have statements of diversity as part of their mission statements, student populations are still primarily composed of wealthy, White individuals, making it difficult for students of color to survive in the school culture without support. Independent schools are attempting to address the issues of diversity and inclusivity by hiring a Director or Coordinator of Diversity to help mitigate the diversity gap, to facilitate affinity groups, and to help students navigate the school culture and community to feel more included.

For the purposes of this study, it is assumed that all of the Directors or Coordinators of Diversity who are interviewed have similar job descriptions. It is also assumed that affinity groups increase a student’s sense of belonging in an independent school environment.

### **Limitations of the Study**

This research study will have the following limitations, which are beyond the control of the researcher.

- This study will be limited to NAIS schools that have Directors or Coordinators of Diversity.

- According to a survey conducted by NAIS in 2010, approximately 16% of the member schools that responded have Directors of Diversity.
- Purposive sampling will be used to include or exclude participants in the study.
- There is very little literature relating to affinity group usage in independent schools.

## **Definitions of Terms**

The following definitions will help to explicate the terms as they are used in this study.

1. *Affinity Groups*: This term is used to mean a gathering of people who have a shared identifier, e.g. race, gender, profession, or special interests (Batiste, 2006).
2. *Cultural Diversity*: For the purposes of this study, this term is used interchangeably with diversity to mean, “the array of differences that exist among groups of people with definable and unique cultural backgrounds” (Moule, 2012, p. 11).
3. *Cultural Competence*: Cultural competence “is the ability to successfully teach students who come from cultures other than your own” (Moule, 2012, p. 11). In a broader sense, cultural competence spans more than just the educational arena. Mendenhall, Osland, Bird, Oddou, Maznevski, Stevens and Stahl (2013) define cultural competence from a global leadership perspective. They define cultural competence as the ability to collaborate across cultures while noting the various components of different cultural systems and when dealing with ambiguous situations.
4. *Director/Coordinator of Diversity*: This person is a member of the administrative staff, who is involved in decisions about recruitment and retention of students and faculty. According to NAIS (2015b), the following is a list of job duties that a person in this position would carry:

- Work with the admission office to recruit, welcome, and retain students from diverse backgrounds.
  - Work with the head of school and division heads to recruit, welcome, and retain faculty and staff from diverse backgrounds.
  - Act as a resource for faculty and staff in providing academic, emotional, and social support for students/families of diverse backgrounds.
  - Work with the division heads to ensure that the school's curriculum reflects the diversity of local and global communities. Coordinate programs for educating the school community (faculty, staff, students, parents) about issues related to diversity.
  - Coordinate or facilitate affinity group programs. (NAIS, 2015b, p. 1)
5. *Diversity Practitioner*: For the purposes of this study, Diversity Practitioner will be used interchangeably with Director/Coordinator of Diversity.
  6. *Faculty/Teachers of Color*: This term represents teachers who self-select that they “represent various races and ethnicities” (Kane, 2003, p. 3).
  7. *Independent School*: NAIS (2015a) defines independent schools as 501(c)3 nonprofit corporate entities that are independent in both governance and finance.
  8. *Institutional Racism*: Institutional racism refers to the policies and practices of a school community that restrict the personal opportunities of students of color (Tatum, 2003).
  9. *Internalized Oppression*: Internalized oppression occurs when a member of an underrepresented group believes the stereotypes about their own group (Tatum, 2003).



10. *National Association of Independent Schools* (NAIS): “The National Association of Independent Schools, governed by a board of trustees and staffed by approximately 40 individuals, is a membership organization and the national voice of independent education” (NAIS, 2015a, Para. 1).
11. *Oppositional Identity*: Oppositional identity is “embracing of membership in a racial or ethnic group that is oppressed due to visible markers of identity (e.g., skin color)” (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986, p. 181).
12. *Private School*: Private schools are established, conducted, and supported by non-governmental entities (Merriam Webster, 2016).
13. *Racial Identity*: Racial identity is a social paradigm that “refers to a sense of group or collective identity based on one’s perception that he or she shares a common heritage with a particular racial group” (Helms, 1993, p. 3).
14. *Sense of Belonging*: A sense of belonging occurs when “students feel personally accepted, respected, included, and supported by others in the school social environment” (Goodenow, 1993, p. 80).
15. *Students of Color*: Students of color are defined as non-White and include African American, Native American, Hispanic, and Asians (Boser, 2011).
16. *White Privilege*: “White privilege is any advantage, head start, opportunity, or protection from systematic mistreatments, which Whites generally have, but people of color do not have” (Blackburn & Wise, 2009, p. 116).
17. *White(s)*: As used in this study, White(s) refers to “members of the dominant or majority group of European origin” (Moule, 2012, p. 11).

## **Summary**

Diversity in independent schools has slowly increased in the last four decades. Independent schools are challenged with not only increasing their cultural diversity, but also with supporting and maintaining those students of color who are already enrolled in their schools. Following the completion of this study, I hope to show that affinity groups help to increase diversity, help students of color to develop their racial identity, and help increase a sense of belonging for students of color in independent schools.

## **Organization of the Remainder of the Study**

This study is organized into five chapters. Chapter One introduces the topic, states the problem and the purpose of the study, presents the research questions, discusses the significance of the study, outlines the limitations, and defines the key terms. Chapter Two consists of a literature review of the areas relevant to this study, including independent schools and students of color, diversity in independent schools, school climate and culture, and affinity groups. Chapter Three contains the research design and approach, a description of the population, data collection method, protection of human subjects, the role of the researcher, and the data analysis process. Chapter Four reports the findings of the study. Finally, chapter five summarizes the study by drawing conclusions based on the findings and outlining implications for future research.

## **Chapter Two: Review of Literature**

We have become not a melting pot but a beautiful mosaic. Different people, different beliefs, different yearnings, different hopes, different dreams.

- Jimmy Carter, Speech, 1976

Diversity has become an increasingly important issue to independent schools.

Independent schools have worked harder to admit students of color into their programs.

Slaughter and Johnson (1988) showed the NAIS statistics of minority enrollment in independent schools at 4% as early as 1970. More recently, NAIS (2011a) reported the total enrollment of students of color for the 2010-2011 school year as 25.9%. While it is apparent that independent schools are numerically increasing their diversity, creating an inclusive community for students of color is imperative (Bassett, 2004). Schools must examine their culture to discern whether or not their students of color feel like they belong to the school community. Most independent schools have the quandary of balancing a vast history of privilege with the non-cognitive needs of their students of color. Affinity groups are one way to foster a sense of belonging and to help students of color build their racial/cultural identity.

### **Overview of the Chapter**

The literature review begins with the history of private schools and goes on to discuss independent schools more specifically. Then White privilege and students of color are examined within the context of independent schools. Racial Identity Models are discussed, and diversity in independent schools is explained. Next, school climate and culture are outlined, and finally, affinity groups are defined and reviewed as a means of helping students of color to feel a sense of belonging and to build their racial identity.

## History of Private Schools

Private schools began as schools that were opened in the sixteenth century by Catholic missionaries in Florida and Louisiana, predating formal education in Massachusetts (“Private Schooling,” 2016). Historically, public schools did not exist, as the first schools in America were private institutions (Kennedy, 2009). Only those who could afford a private school education sent their children, and segregation was the norm. Schools such as Phillips Andover Academy, one of the oldest private institutions in the United States, were large boarding schools that educated the children of wealthy colonists (Kennedy, 2009).

Private schools began as small institutions that were founded by families who knew the future importance of a well-educated citizen. Leaders of the new nation saw the need for intelligent leadership, an informed citizenry, and an educated professional class (“Private Schooling,” 2016). School existed in the forms of town schools, charity schools, and many different private schools. There was still no clear distinction between public and private education because those who could afford it went to private and those who could not, went elsewhere.

With the onset of industrialization, urbanization, and immigration, a new push for a *common school* arose. Private schools, especially religious schools, were seen as acrimonious and un-American (“Private Schooling,” 2016). Even though universal, free, compulsory primary schools opened, academies were still the schools, along with boarding schools, that educated beyond the primary years. According to “Private Schooling” (2016), academies hit their highest peak in 1850, numbering about 6,000. In 1879, private secondary school enrollment was 73.3%, but by 1890 when public secondary education boomed, private school enrollment dropped to 31.9%, and by 1900, it was down to 7.6% (“Private Schooling,” 2016). After World War I,

patriotism grew rapidly and all things American were valued. Private schools with any foreign affiliation were considered disloyal, and the government began to try to regulate private schools and minimize parental rights to choose private education.

Three United States Supreme Court decisions were monumental in the history of private education. The first case, *Meyer v. Nebraska* (1923), challenged the Nebraska law that made it a crime for any individual or teacher in a public, private, or religious school to teach any subject in any language other than English. Foreign languages were only allowed to be taught to students in the ninth grade and higher. Robert Meyer, a Lutheran school teacher, taught a 10 year-old boy German at the parents' request. In 1923, the U.S. Supreme court upheld his right to do so, and the parents' rights to hire him by stating that the Nebraska law violated the Due Process clause of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The next case also dealt with parental rights to choose private education. *Pierce v. Society of Sisters* (1925) challenged the Oregon law that required all Oregon children, ages of eight and sixteen, to attend public school. This law was aimed at eliminating both parochial and private schools. The Society of Sisters of the Holy Names of Jesus and Mary and the Appellee Hill Military Academy separately sued the governor, Walter Pierce, representing parochial and private schools respectively. The Society of Sisters fought for the parents' rights to choose a Catholic education, while Hill Military Academy fought for their loss in revenue. Both sides won in the lower courts, but Pierce appealed the case to the U.S. Supreme Court. After ten weeks of deliberation, the decision to uphold the lower court was unanimous stating that the law was in violation of Due Process of the Fourteenth Amendment.

The third decision was issued in *Farrington v. Tokushige* (1927). In this case, the then Territory of Hawaii passed a law that stated that all schools that taught a foreign language

without a permit was illegal. The U.S. Supreme Court affirmed the lower court's decision that parents have the right to educate their children as they see fit under Due Process of the Fifth and Fourteen Amendments.

After World War II, private school enrollment, especially in Catholic schools, increased 118% ("Private Schooling," 2016). Men and women founded schools to further their own visions of education (Powell, 1998). Many private schools started during the great age of educational entrepreneurship or out of parental fear. Children of friends, and those of friends of friends populated schools, and word of mouth helped to increase enrollment. Parents of students who enrolled in private schools were from "unusually high social and educational backgrounds" (Baird, 1977, p. 10).

Private schools have much to offer. They are autonomous in that they hire teachers of choice, select their own textbooks and curriculum, and set their own rules for student conduct (Ravitch, 1992). Deal (1991) discusses how private schools have an advantage because of their size, autonomy, selectivity, and stability. All of these factors combined "encourage a cultural cohesion rather than rational rules to hold the school together" (p. 418).

### **Independent Schools**

Independent schools are defined as private schools that are not affiliated with a church or other agency and include the most prestigious and privileged of private schools (Hall & Stevenson, 2007). NAIS (2011a) defines independent schools as follows:

Independent schools are 501(c)3 nonprofit corporate entities, independent in governance and finance, meaning:

1. Independent schools "own themselves" (as opposed to public schools owned by the government or parochial schools owned by the church) and govern themselves,

- typically with a self-perpetuating board of trustees that performs fiduciary duties of oversight and strategic duties of funding and setting the direction and vision of the enterprise, and by delegating day to day operations entirely to the head of school.
2. Independent schools finance themselves (as opposed to public schools funded through the government and parochial schools subsidized by the church), largely through charging tuition, fund raising, and income from endowment.

Independence is the unique characteristic of this segment of the education industry, offering schools four freedoms that contribute to their success: the freedom to define their own unique missions; the freedom to admit and keep only those students well-matched to the mission; the freedom to define the qualifications for high quality teachers; and the freedom to determine on their own what to teach and how to assess student achievement and progress. (NAIS, 2015a, p. 1)

**Characteristics.** Kane (1992) states that even though independent schools vary in their missions and approaches to teaching, there are six basic characteristics that they all share: self-governance, self-support, self-defined curriculum, self-selected students, self-selected faculty, and small size.

***Self-Governance.*** Independent schools self-select a board of trustees, which perpetuates as board members come and go. A president or chairman is chosen by the other trustees to oversee the board. The board is then responsible for selecting the head of school to oversee the daily operations of the school itself. “Self-governance results in responsiveness to the particular needs of the individual school and freedom from the bureaucratic intrusion by local, state, and federal governments that often comes with financial aid” (Kane, 1992, p. 7).

***Self-Support.*** Independent schools rely mainly on tuition to pay their expenses, but without the support of parents, alumni, and other corporations, most of these independent schools could not survive. They are incorporated as not-for-profit corporations that are tax-exempt (Kane, 1992). Tuition is high in independent schools because they are self-supporting. Independent schools are leery to take much help from the government for fear of losing their self-governance. According to NAIS (2011d), the median tuition for a coed independent day school ranges from \$13,800 for preschool to \$21,400 for twelfth grade, and the median 7-day boarding tuition ranges from \$42,950 for sixth grade to \$42,700 for twelfth grade. High tuition allows independent schools to maintain low student-teacher ratios, build stellar facilities, and have competitive salaries to attract the best teachers. It also limits how majority of the student body is composed, favoring the wealthy who can afford to pay (Kane, 1992).

***Self-Defined curriculum.*** Independent schools have the freedom to make up their own curriculum to meet the needs of their students. The lower schools tend to be more nurturing in nature, and the upper divisions prepare students for college. Although they are free to choose their own curricula, independent schools offer highly academic and rigorous programs (Kane, 1992). Wilson (1992) explains that the curriculum in independent schools is individual, rigorous, and varied.

The individual courses in an independent school are structured along traditional liberal studies lines and are assumed, though not always articulated to be, major and minor subjects; in addition, nationally administered tests are widespread; athletics – usually competitive and interscholastic – are important and often considered part of the school’s mission; art, music, and drama are also offered and encouraged; other extra curricular pursuits, usually organized into clubs, exist; and an adviser system, centered around an



official relationship between a teacher and a student, is a highly publicized characteristic of the curriculum. (p. 209)

Independent schools also engender values such as the individual, high academic standards, moral behavior, and community service. Students are nurtured to succeed in the lower grades and challenged to their fullest extent in the upper grades.

***Self-Selected faculty.*** Independent schools pride themselves on being able to hire faculty who are considered top in their field of study. They are not bound by state credentialing requirements as public schools are, nor are they required to hire teacher who have any teacher training whatsoever (Kane, 1992). Many independent school teachers, especially in the secondary level, have vast knowledge of their subject area, but have little, if any, pedagogical or classroom management training.

According to the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES, 2010), the average full-time public school teacher in 2007-08 made \$49,600, and the average full-time private school teacher made \$36,300. Teachers in independent schools are willing to work for less money, but see the benefits gained as an equalizer. Curricular autonomy, reimbursement for classroom materials, smaller class sizes, and parental support are all factors that contribute to why a teacher would choose to work at an independent school for less money than at a public school.

Independent schools, except for a few, are not affiliated with local teacher's unions. This freedom gives independent schools the ability to release teachers who are not meeting the needs of the students or the school, without dealing with all of the bureaucracy of public schools (Kane, 1992).

***Self-Selected students.*** Being able to choose who attends the school is another important characteristic of independent schools. Depending on the school's mission, independent schools

choose different types of students and in turn, different types of students choose different types of schools. This *mutual selection* has implications for both the students and the schools (Kane, 1992). Knowing that a school can release a student for academic or social misconduct helps to keep students motivated to do well, and conversely, the knowledge that students can choose to leave at any time provides similar motivation for schools to meet the needs of their students.

“Mutual freedom of association by students and schools is fundamental to the sense of community that shapes the educational effectiveness of independent schools” (Kane, 1992, p. 11).

***Small size.*** NAIS (2011) reports that the average number of students enrolled in an independent school of any type (boarding, boarding-day, day, day-boarding) is 488. The average enrollment in a day school, which represents the largest number of independent schools, is 505. Independent schools remain small by choice. “Smaller schools also allow for increased student participation in extracurricular activities – athletics, clubs, student government, dramatic productions – which give students opportunities for leadership” (Kane, 1992, p. 12). Because class and school sizes are smaller, students who attend independent schools have opportunities that they would not have had if they were enrolled in a public school. Independent schools provide more individualized or personal attention to their students, motivating all degrees of ability to push themselves further (Kane, 1992).

Many independent schools were formed in the early 1980s, when public school integration began and wealthy White people did not want their children going to school with African Americans (Blackburn & Wise, 2009). Private schools, and more specifically independent schools, were considered to be elitist. Being able to pick and choose whom they

admitted made it difficult for students of color to gain entrance into these private schools that offered more opportunity.

**White privilege.** The issue of *White privilege* also plays an important role with regards to students of color and independent schools. According to Blackburn and Wise (2009), “White privilege is any advantage, head start, opportunity, or protection from systematic mistreatments, which Whites generally have, but people of color do not have” (p. 116). It is not about blame or criticism, but rather more about understanding racial inequality. Underlying racial inequalities affect the success of students of color in independent schools.

White privilege is rooted in society as much as it is in people. Much of the work on privilege starts with the individual, but societal change does not occur. There is also the problem of being privileged without feeling privileged. This happens because privilege is more about social categories than the individual. It has to do with whom you compare yourself to and who compares themselves to you, otherwise known as reference groups. “We use reference groups construct a sense of how good or bad, high or low we are in the scheme of things” (Johnson, 2006). When using these reference groups for comparison, we tend to look at our level and above, not below. This is why Whites tend to compare themselves to other Whites, and not to people of color. By comparing themselves to their own racial group, Whites do not see themselves as privileged because their reference group experiences the same things that they do (Johnson, 2006).

Wise, as cited in Denevi (2004), describes how “White people were diminished because of racism: denial of family histories because of assimilation, segregated lives, lack of knowledge of others, and a lessening of one’s own humanity because of complicity with a system of

oppression” (p. 86). Shearer (2002) explains what he terms as *White spaces*, which are spaces that White people are being hurt because of their internalized superiority:

- Isolation – a space where White people cannot see themselves as part of a group, but rather individuals who do not need to see themselves as part of the collective White identity.
- Control – a space where White people think they can define and fix racism because they are used to having control.
- Loss – a space where White people do not recognize what they have lost because of racism. “In the process of becoming White, European Americans lost much of their culture and history. We disowned an intimate understanding of where we came from and how we came to be” (p. 18).
- Loathing – a space where White people actively dislike themselves and distrust other White people for their racist thoughts and beliefs. This is the most difficult stage because people sometimes lash out at others because of their thoughts or actions. “This final White space of loathing must be countered with the difficult task of learning to love ourselves and others” (p. 19).

In order to counteract these White spaces, Denevi (2004) has several suggestions. To fight against isolation, White people need to get together with other White people who might be struggling to recognize their White privilege and discuss what it means to be White and the benefits that come naturally. To counter control, White people need to understand that this situation is larger than their own individual control, and that they need to be part of the larger solution. To deal with loss, White people need to reclaim their culture, history, and stories and

rediscover who they are without societal influences. To combat loathing, White people have to accept others for who they are, despite their different backgrounds and beliefs.

Many of the privileges Whites benefit from are inherent, and are not things that can be earned. White students in independent schools have a feeling of belonging, whereas students of color have to worry about people thinking they do not belong, or that standards were lowered for their admission (Blackburn & Wise, 2009). Also, White students also do not have to overcome racial stereotypes, as students of color do. Students of color also feel like they have to work hard to negate assumptions about their racial group. Some of the stereotypes often felt are that they have lower intelligence or only excel in certain areas, like sports for African-Americans, or math and science for Asians (Blackburn & Wise, 2009).

Because private schools were founded for the education of the wealthy, White privilege can be subtle. Just the virtue of a school's history, traditions, and origins might affect how a student of color fits into the landscape of the school. Because students of color are still in the minority in independent schools, oftentimes, they feel a sense of responsibility. According to Blackburn and Wise (2009),

Research has found that students of color in mostly White schools, regardless of their family's economic status, experience a "burden of representation" not generally experienced by Whites. This burden refers to the way in which Black and Brown students feel the need to succeed, not only for their own sake, but also for others of color coming after them. (p. 116)

One of the claims most often used by educators is that they treat all of their students the same, no matter what color their skin is. This *colorblindness* is the opposite of what needs to happen. By not acknowledging that their students are different, educators deny their students of

color their identity. “To not see color is, as Julian Bond has noted, to not see the consequences of color; . . . the odds are pretty good that you’ll underserve the needs of the students in question, every time” (Wise, 2008, p. 40).

Jensen (2005) brings about the notion of the “ultimate White privilege: the privilege to acknowledge that you have unearned privilege but to ignore what it means” (p. 129). White privilege is not a choice; it is a birthright. This is not to say that White people do not work hard for what they have, but White privilege is a reality that must be acknowledged for students of color in independent schools. McIntosh (2008) describes her realization that she “was taught to see racism only in individual acts of meanness, not in invisible systems conferring dominance on my group” (p. 127). In McIntosh’s *Invisible Knapsack*, she identified several daily effects of White privileges in her life that were based on skin-color privilege that she could rely on, but her colleagues of color could not. The following is an excerpt of those privileges that might apply to how students of color do not feel while attending independent schools:

- I can if I wish arrange to be in the company of people of my race most of the time.
- I can go shopping alone most of the time, pretty well assured that I will not be followed or harassed.
- I can turn on the television or open to the front page of the paper and see people of my race widely represented.
- When I am told about our national heritage or about “civilization,” I am shown that people of my color made it what it is.
- I can swear, or dress in secondhand clothes, or not answer letters, without having people attribute these choices to the bad morals, the poverty, or the illiteracy of my race.

- 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. (pp. 124-125)

Jensen (2005) talks about three fears that White people face. The first fear is that much of what White people have is unearned, basically the premise of White privilege. If most White people were truly honest with themselves, they would have to admit that they did not get to where they are today by themselves. The second fear is that White people have a fear of losing what they already have. If there is an economic, political, or social system shift, they could lose the comforts that they enjoy. What would happen if society became more just and equitable? The third fear that White people have is that someday a non-White race will gain power over White people the way that White people have held power for so many years. White people have the fear of becoming the *they* that is often spoken of to represent *others* (Jensen, 2005). White people have a deep fear of losing their privilege and power, even if they do not readily abuse them.

**Ethnocentric multiculturalism.** Students of color who attend independent schools also have to deal with having less power than their White peers. “Ethnocentric monoculturalism is the individual, institutional, and cultural expression of the superiority of one’s group’s cultural heritage over another and the possession of power to impose those standards broadly on the less powerful group” (Sue, 2003, p. 104). In the United States, this belief manifests itself as a form of racism because White Euro-Americans are mostly responsible for the oppression of people of color. D. W. Sue and Sue (2008) explain the five components of ethnocentric monoculturalism:

1. Belief in superiority – This stage is White privilege, wherein the dominant culture (White Euro-American in this case) affords more opportunities and rewards for being in the norm.

2. Belief in the inferiority of others – This stage follows because if one believes that their culture is superior, they also believe that other cultures are inferior.
3. Power to impose standards – Power is the most important part of this component. Most groups are ethnocentric, but without the power to impose one's culture over another's, oppression would not happen.
4. Manifestation in institutions – This is *institutional racism* wherein policies, procedures, and services are made to benefit the dominant group.
5. The invisible veil - This is the unconscious and unintentional bias that is learned from society. It is the erroneous assumption that everyone's reality is the same.

**Tuition and financial aid.** Another barrier that stood in the way of students of color attending private schools was the prohibitive cost. Students of color, or minorities as they were previously classified, were directly associated with financial aid. An NAIS survey from 1969-1970 showed that 53.5% of minority students enrolled were on financial aid. By 1983, the number of students on financial aid decreased to 33.3% (Slaughter & Johnson, 1988). In NAIS's most recent survey, for the 2010-2011 academic year, 35% of students of color are on financial aid (NAIS, 2011a). Even though the numbers of students of color on financial aid has stayed about the same, the stigma persists. "We need to remind each other that students of color do not automatically equate to financial aid recipients" (Bisgaard, 2005, p. 44). These days, there is a much larger group of financially comfortable families of color who are choosing to send their children to independent schools (Blackburn & Wise, 2009).

### **Racial Identity Development Models**

Through the years, several racial/cultural identity models (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1993; Kim, 1981; Ruiz, 1990) have been proposed that acknowledge how people from various cultures



(Asian Americans, African Americans, Latino/Hispanic Americans, Native American Indians, Whites) develop their identities differently. It is possible to gain a better understanding of how to support students of color by examining how their identities are developed.

**Black identity development model.** One of the major contributors to the area of research in Black identity development is William E. Cross. Cross (1991) originally published his theory of nigrescence in 1971, later revising it after a critical review of the literature warranted changes. The Cross Model of psychological nigrescence, developed during the civil rights movement, goes through the process of how “Blacks in the United States move from a White frame of reference to a positive Black frame of reference” (Sue & Sue, 2008, p. 236). Cross (1991) posits that African Americans go through a five-stage process as they build their identity of being Black:

1. Pre-encounter – This stage has two identities: pre-encounter assimilation and pre-encounter anti-Black. In the assimilation identity, being Black is devalued and White values are given importance. In the anti-Black identity, Black people feel self-hatred and low self-esteem. Miseducation occurs, and Black people begin to doubt their own self worth.
2. Encounter – This is a two-stage process wherein something so profound occurs that causes a Black person to reassess how they are thinking and behaving, which in turn causes that person to begin thinking differently. An example is when Martin Luther King, Jr. was slain; many African Americans felt guilt and anger about being brainwashed by White society (Sue & Sue, 2008).

3. Immersion-emersion – During this stage, African Americans withdraw from the dominant culture and immerse themselves into their own culture. Pride in their culture begins and continues to grow. Black pride and anti-White identities form.
4. Internalization – Internal conflicts begin to dissipate, and anti-White feelings diminish. The result is someone who is comfortable with being Black and is a more flexible, tolerant, and multicultural individual. Three identities form as a result: Black Nationalism, Biculturalism, and Multiculturalism. “Black Nationalism is characterized by a focus on Black empowerment, economic independence, and a heightened awareness of Black history and culture” (Vandiver, Fhagen-Smith, Cockley, Cross & Worrell, 2001, p. 180). Biculturalism is accepting being both Black and American, and Multiculturalism is identifying with other cultural groups, as well as being Black (e.g., Black, female, and gay) (Vandiver et al., 2001).

**Asian-American identity development model.** Kim (1981), as cited in D. W. Sue and Sue (2008), proposes a model for Asian American Identity development that “integrates the influence of acculturation, exposure to cultural differences, environmental negativism to racial differences, personal methods of handling race-related conflicts, and the effects of group or social movements on the Asian American individual” (p. 239). There are five stages that Kim (1981) suggests:

1. The ethnic awareness stage – this stage begins around three or four years of age and is influenced by the individual’s family (caretakers). Attitudes toward ethnic origin and culture are based on the adults’ conveyance.
2. The White identification stage – this stage occurs with school-aged children and is influenced by peers and social surroundings. Self-esteem and identity are negatively

- impacted by the realization of their being different. This leads them to want to escape their own racial heritage and to identify with their White peers.
3. The awakening to social political consciousness stage – this stage usually stems from a political event that opens the individual's eyes to oppression and oppressed groups, resulting in the de-identification with White society.
  4. The redirection stage – during this stage, Asian's reconnect with their own cultural heritage. Anger usually ensues and White society is blamed for negative experiences. Asian American self and group pride are results.
  5. The incorporation stage – this is the culmination of identity development for Asians. During this stage, Asian Americans become comfortable about whom they are and learn to value and respect other cultures. White culture no longer has any bearing on who they are.

**Latino/Hispanic American identity development model.** Ruiz (1990) proposed a model for Hispanic identity that is similar to its African American and Asian American counterparts. There were several underlying assumptions to this model: there are culture-specific identities for Hispanic cultures; Latinos' maladjustment is highly correlated with marginality; forced assimilation has negative repercussions; cultural and ethnic pride positively correlate with mental health; and ethnic pride affords freedom of choice (Sue & Sue, 2008). There are five stages in Ruiz's (1990) Hispanic/Latino model of identity development:

1. Causal stage – ethnic heritage is negated by negative societal influence, causing the individual to not identify with their Latino culture.

2. Cognitive stage – negative societal messages contribute to three erroneous beliefs: (a) belonging to an ethnic group is associated with poverty and prejudice; (b) assimilation is the only way out; and (c) assimilation equals success.
3. Consequence stage – shame and low self-image leads to the rejection of one's own heritage and culture. Individuals are embarrassed by the characteristics of their appearance that associates them with their ethnic group.
4. Working-through stage – reintegration into one's ethnic heritage is caused by the inability of the individual to cope with the internal identity conflict and also because the individual can no longer pretend to be someone he/she is not.
5. Successful resolution stage – self-esteem and self-image are increased. Individuals identify with their own culture and ethnicity and accept who they are.

**Native American identity development model.** Because there are so many different tribes and languages, Peavy (1995) developed a model based on cultural self-definitions used by Native American Indians.

- A “traditional” Native supports and lives the traditional way of life through use of foods, medicines, social organization, ceremonies, and communication, and is happy with this way of life.
- An “assimilated” Native supports and lives the modern, dominant society way of life through use of foods, social organization, and communication, and is happy with this way of life.
- A “transitional” Native identity fluctuates between traditional and dominant society, and often exhibits dysfunctional ways of living. The transitional individual is not committed to either culture and may be unhappy, uncertain, or unaware of his or her

own lifestyle. He or she is often abusive, substance addicted, manifests low self-esteem and lack of personal stability.

- A “bi-cultural” Native person lives and supports both traditional and dominant society ways of living. The bi-cultural person uses both traditional and dominant society foods, medicines, and social organization, and may engage in both clan and nuclear family patterns. In contrast to other identities, the bi-cultural individual has reconciled cultural differences and is at peace with reconciliation. (p. 1)

**Minority identity development model (MID).** Atkinson, Morten, and Sue (1998) define five stages that oppressed people may experience as they struggle with the relationship between their own culture and the White culture. Everyone may not experience all stages, nor will everyone begin at stage one. This model can be seen as more of a continuum than one of linear stages. Each stage explicates a person’s attitude toward self, attitude toward others of the same minority, attitude toward others of a different minority, and attitude toward the dominant group. The MID stages of Atkinson et al. (1998) are described as follows:

1. Conformity – people in this stage prefer the cultural values of the dominant group to those of their own heritage.
  - *Attitude toward self:* self-depreciating – physical and cultural characteristics are a source of shame, both consciously and sub-consciously
  - *Attitude toward others of the same minority:* group-depreciating – other members of the same minority group are viewed using the lens of the dominant group
  - *Attitude toward others of a different minority:* discriminatory – other minority groups are viewed unfavorably, but the ones who resemble the dominant group most closely gain more favor

- *Attitude toward the dominant group:* group-appreciating – cultural values, behavior, and physical traits of the dominant group are admired and respected.
2. Dissonance – this stage is fraught with conflict over the negativity adopted in the conformity stage and the exposure to positivity from members of the same ethnicity.
- *Attitude toward self:* conflict between self-depreciating and appreciating – individuals in this stage feel a conflict between shame and pride in their minority group.
  - *Attitude toward others of the same minority:* conflict between group-depreciating and group-appreciating – individuals feel conflicted over believing the dominant views of their minority group's strengths and weaknesses and realizing that their culture has aspects of value.
  - *Attitude toward others of a different minority:* conflict between dominant-held views of minority hierarchy and feelings of shared experience – camaraderie with other minority groups is felt and stereotypes are questioned.
  - *Attitude toward the dominant group:* conflict between group-appreciating and group-depreciating – distrust of the dominant group grows as the individual realizes that not all values of the dominant group are good.
3. Resistance and immersion – members in this stage completely reject the dominant culture and completely support their own minority group.
- *Attitude toward self:* self-appreciating – people at this stage actively seek out information and artifacts from their culture to augment their identity. Cultural and physical characteristics that were once shameful are now prideful.

- *Attitude toward others of the same minority:* group appreciating – cultural values of their minority group are accepted and other members are admired and respected.
  - *Attitude toward others of a different minority:* conflict between feelings of empathy for other minority experiences and feelings of culturocentrism – camaraderie with other minority groups begins to grow as they share similar oppression, but disagreement ensues when values of the individual's minority group conflict with the values of other minority groups.
  - *Attitude toward the dominant group:* group-depreciating – individuals dislike and distrust members of the dominant group and their culture is no longer held in high regard.
4. Introspection – individuals become disgruntled with the negativity toward the dominant group and strive to become more autonomous. As they gain comfort in their own identity, they realize that there are both positive and negative elements of the dominant culture.
- *Attitude toward self:* concern with basis of self-appreciation – individuals are conflicted between allegiance to their minority group and their own personal autonomy. Independent attitudes begin to develop.
  - *Attitude toward others of the same minority:* concern with nature of unequivocal appreciation – individuals begin to notice that some members of the minority group members do not have positive attitudes, and thus members should be seen and judged as individuals.

- *Attitude toward others of a different minority:* concern with ethnocentric basis for judging others – individuals become concerned with minority group stratification stemming from ethnocentrism and start to value other groups who are also oppressed by society.
  - *Attitude toward the dominant group:* concern with the basis of group depreciation – individuals are conflicted by complete distrust of the dominant group and selective distrust. They realize that not all elements of the dominant culture are bad, but do not yet know how to incorporate them into their own culture and identity.
5. Synergistic – individuals in this stage have reached a comfort level with their cultural identity. Internal conflicts are resolved, and they can objectively judge cultural values of other minority groups as well as the dominant group.
- *Attitude toward self:* self-appreciating – individuals are confident and comfortable with their identity as an individual, as a member of their minority group, and as a member of the dominant culture.
  - *Attitude toward others of the same minority:* group-appreciating – individuals understand that belonging to the group does not mean giving up individuality. Group pride is strong, as is empathy for others.
  - *Attitude toward others of a different minority:* group-appreciating – individuals are empathetic toward other groups and respect their cultural values and individuality.



- *Attitude toward the dominant group:* selective appreciating – individuals are selective in their alliance and allegiance to the dominant group. They are also open to some positive aspects of the dominant culture.

**Racial/cultural identity development model (R/CID).** D. W. Sue and Sue (1990, 1999) extend the MID to comprise a wider population, including White identity development. The first four stages are the same as the MID, but the last stage is changed to integrative awareness. So as not to be redundant, only the final stage will be explicated below as described by D. W. Sue and Sue (2008):

Stage 5 – Integrated Awareness – people in this stage are no longer in conflict with their own minority culture and the dominant culture. They have a sense of security in their identity and have a strong desire to eradicate oppression.

- *Attitude toward self:* self-appreciating – three levels of identity are achieved: individual, group, and universal. Racial pride leads to a positive self-image and self-worth.
- *Attitude toward others of the same minority:* group-appreciating – group pride and group empathy are developed.
- *Attitude toward others of a different minority:* group-appreciating – individuals try to understand cultural values of other minority groups because the more understanding that is garnered, the more within group understanding there will be.
- *Attitude toward the dominant group:* selective appreciation – during this stage, individuals believe that White racism is a given in society and that White people can also be victims. Individuals selectively trust those in the dominant group and are open to the constructive nature of the dominant group.

**White racial identity development model.** Helms (1993) constructed a model for White racial identity development. In order for White people to understand the innate privilege they are born with, they must understand their own identity. Helms (1993) suggests a six-stage model that is further divided into two phases of abandonment of racism (stages 1-3) and defining a positive White identity (stages 4-6):

1. Contact stage – in this first stage, White people do not think about being White. They consider themselves in the norm and free of prejudice.
2. Disintegration stage – during this stage an awareness of how inequitable society is for people of color and how much racism affects everyday living. Individuals begin to feel discomfort and will either deny the racism or deal with their guilt and want to help. People often feel helpless during this stage. They also worry about how they will be treated and perceived by their friends if they challenge someone who is being racist.
3. Reintegration stage – much dialogue is needed to talk an individual through this stage. Oftentimes, White people try to explain racism by making more assumptions about those who are being discriminated against, essentially blaming the victim for their circumstances. Hopefully helping people to recognize the sources of their discomfort will help them continue to develop a healthy identity.
4. Pseudo-independent stage – during this stage, individuals seek friendships with those who share their perspectives about racism. This could mean that individuals seek out people of color to distance themselves from their own racial group. Being White is still a source of shame and not pride.

5. Immersion-emersion stage – this stage is a soul-searching stage for White individuals.

They seek out role models who can show them how to be non-oppressive. Often during this stage, shame and guilt are replaced with excitement and pride.

6. Autonomy stage – this final stage culminates all of the learning from the other stages.

A new sense of self is defined, and an individual's whiteness is seen differently.

Banks and Banks (1993) posit that children, as young as three and from all different backgrounds, are able to recognize differences in skin color and associate hierarchical patterns with these differences. When students of color negatively identify with their race, they deny their group by changing their appearance and adopting majority-group behaviors. Sometimes, their own racial/ethnic groups turn on them in anger and derogatory names have been created to describe them: *Oreos* within African Americans, *coconuts* within Latinos/as, *apples* within Native Americans, and *bananas* within Asian Americans (Moule, 2012). It is important to understand how students of color, as well as their White counterparts, develop their identities so that diversity in independent schools can be successful for all parties.

### **Diversity in Independent Schools**

“In our increasingly global and diverse world, the ability to work with people whose backgrounds and lived experiences are different from our own has become a necessary skill” (Moule, 2012, p. 23). It was not until the latter part of the twentieth century that independent schools began to glean interest in diversifying their student bodies. “Contrary to the image of the elite schools as protective enclaves of an exclusively White society, the schools have actively sought Black and other minority students” (Baird, 1977, p. 36). According to the Private School Universe Survey, conducted by the NCES in 2009-10, there are more than 33,000 private schools in the United States, approximately 1,500 of which belong to NAIS. In 2011, the NAIS Board of

Directors revised their Principles of Good Practice for Equity and Justice that was originally created in 1996 (NAIS, 2016a). These principles were developed for “creating and sustaining an inclusive, equitable, and just independent school community” (NAIS, 2016a, p. 1). The principles “define high standards and ethical behavior in key areas of school operations to guide schools in becoming the best education communities they can be” (NAIS, 2016a, p. 1). As such, mission statements for many, if not all, independent schools now include a statement on diversity.

How do independent schools define diversity? According to NAIS (2016a), “Diversity is who we are. It is quantitative. It is defined by ‘otherness.’ Most obviously it is determined by race, gender, and culture. On a more subtle level, it includes class, sexual orientation, religion, ability, and appearance” (p. 1). Although each independent school uses different verbiage about diversity in their mission statements, the main point is taken from the NAIS definition. Many independent schools publish their diversity initiatives on their websites and explain what efforts are being made as a school toward diversity.

**Diversity practitioners.** When independent schools talk about diversity, there is an assumption that everyone is talking about the same thing. Creating a culture of change is difficult, especially when every person asked has a different picture of what change looks like. To try to unify the school’s views, many independent schools have brought on staff an individual to serve as a diversity director or diversity coordinator. This position is often a part-time position, with other responsibilities in its job description. The diversity director at an independent school wears many hats. The position is fraught with organizational contradictions and dichotomies of being both powerful and powerless and both a leader and a follower

(Kaufman, 2003). Oftentimes, many people who fill the position of diversity director/coordinator feel immense frustration with work. According to Kaufman (2003),

It is the diversity director in whom we imbue our hopes for assuaging the angst many students of color feel throughout their tenure in independent schools. We ask diversity directors to mitigate the circumstances that impede students of color from thriving in schools. And, indeed, it is the relationship of the diversity director with all school constituencies that creates the possibility for students of color who feel marginalized or under-represented to have a more vibrant, health experience in independent schools. (p. 22)

Oftentimes, the person who holds the position of diversity director/coordinator is a person of color and is charged with the task of watching over the multicultural health of the school. The stress of this position can manifest in one of two ways: the diversity director/coordinator becomes an effective leader in this charge, or he/she becomes a token of diversity for the institution. For a diversity director/coordinator to be an effective leader in the school, he/she must be a member of the senior administrative team and must be given full access to all constituencies involved (Denevi & Richards, 2009). When diversity directors/coordinators are supported to be leaders rather than seen as tokens, the culture of diversity becomes one of growth rather than one of recovery.

### **School Climate and School Culture**

School climate and school culture are two distinctive, but interconnected entities. The climate of a school is created by the beliefs, attitudes, and values that motivate the instructional practices, the level of academic achievement, and the operation of a school (Saufler, 2005). Climate can also be described as the feeling on campus. It is created by how the adults on campus

implement school values, attitudes, beliefs, and norms. Schools with a strong climate have adults that model best practices. Adults take the time to learn and greet students by name, show genuine concern for their students, and use positive reinforcement (Saufler, 2005). Strong school climates create strong school cultures.

According to Lindsey, Robins, Lindsey, and Terrell (2009), school culture is specific to each school. Students, faculty, and staff at a school with a strong culture can explain exactly how things are done at their particular school. It is the way that things are done at each particular school, which also follows Schein's (2004) definition of culture. Norms, values, and patterns of interactions work subconsciously, making them often hard to explain to an outsider. Ginsberg and Wlodkowski (2009) suggest that the ways in which we experience a learning situation are facilitated by our own cultural influences.

Saufler (2005) describes three important relationships that define culture for schools: faculty-to-faculty, faculty-to-student, and student-to-student. Because a school's culture and climate are interrelated, the nature and quality of these relationships also affects the school's climate. If any of these relationships go awry, the school climate and culture could be negatively affected, building a case for creating inclusive environments where students feel valued and supported in independent schools.

Inclusive environments are ones that promote respect and connectedness, and "include a host of ways in which students become familiar with and support one another" (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009, p. 92).

"In education, the day-to-day, face-to-face feelings matter tremendously with respect to whether people stay or leave and whether they are willing to direct their energy toward learning"

(Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009, p. 3). Educators understand that students are only motivated to learn and will only take risks in their learning when they feel safe, capable, and accepted.

Within our own teaching environments, we understand that students' concentration, imagination, effort, and willingness to continue are powerfully influenced by how they feel about the setting they are in, the respect they receive from the people around them, and their ability to trust their own thinking and experiences. People who feel unsafe, unconnected, and disrespected are often unmotivated to learn. (Ginsberg & Wlodkowski, 2009, p. 3)

### **Sense of Belonging**

According to Bassett (2003), there are significant differences in the overall quality of experience of students of color in independent schools by race. As diversity in independent schools has increased, so has the need to create inclusive environments where everyone honors diversity and all students feel like they belong. Schools that can garner the support of their board of trustees, faculty, students, and parents and create a curriculum rich in diversity, create an inclusive environment (Gow, 2001). Independent school communities that embrace the notion that everyone is responsible for the success of every student fully understand the needs of diversity. Arrington et al. (2003) report that independent schools have an obligation to pay attention, not only to the academic achievement of students of color, but also to the emotional and structural challenges they face. By helping students of color to feel a sense of belonging eases some of the emotional struggles these students face. Baumeister and Leary (1995), as cited in Anderman (2002), argue,

the need to belong is a fundamental human motivation, that individuals desire to form social relationships and resist disruption of those relationships, and that individuals have

the need to experience positive interactions with others and these interactions are related to a concern for the well-being of others. (p. 796)

Anderman (2002) also found that a high perceived sense of belonging could correlate to higher achievement, motivation, and attitudes toward school. Moreover, when students feel like they are in a supportive environment, they can experience positive outcomes.

Social support is an important component in one's emotional well-being. It provides stability through problems of social isolation (Sarason & Sarason, 2009). Students of color at predominantly White independent schools seek a sense of belonging and connectedness. Sarason and Sarason (2009) state, "One of the reasons social support is such an important feature of life is that, while how it is expressed might change, feelings of acceptance, belongingness, and being valued by others stay with us all our lives" (p. 120).

### **Group Dynamics**

Group partnerships, or subsystems, are also important phenomena to discern and identify. Groups tend to structure into smaller divisions, each having a distinct set of rules or norms that standardize behavior. Each of these smaller groups has certain unspoken rules that control who can say what to whom. Pinto, Marques, Levine, and Abrams (2010) discuss the subjective group dynamics model with respect to judgments of in-group members being the result of descriptive and prescriptive norms. In groups, members will also affiliate themselves with others according to shared values and interests. Different group members find commonalities and stay together.

People join groups for all different reasons, usually based on need. Maslow (1943), as cited in O'Connell and Cuthbertson (2009), posits in his hierarchy of needs that people need to feel belongingness and love. They want to belong to a group and have people who they can confide in. Schutz (1958), as cited in O'Connell and Cuthbertson (2009), added that people have



a need for affiliation, and those with a high need, join groups more readily. People join groups for interaction and camaraderie. They also join groups due to similar interests or activities. Students and adults in independent schools look to be with others who fill these needs, generally people who share a common interest.

**Affinity groups.** Affinity groups, also known as resource groups, peer networks, or employee networks, can be formed around age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability (Arnold, 2006; Batiste, 2004; McGlothlen, 2006). These groups can help people to feel a sense of belonging in a culture that can feel unwelcoming to those who are not in the dominant group (Arnold, 2006). Baird (1977) found that Black students, when faced with problems, would not readily turn to White students for help. Students of color want to share their experiences with other students of color, and look to each other for support and understanding, which might not happen with their White friends. This is seen as a positive coping strategy for students of color who are faced with stress (Tatum, 1992). Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) found that “students look for opportunities to be, as one student put it, ‘surrounded by people who are like you.’ Students search for affinity groups, both formal, as in student clubs, and informal, as with tablemates in the dining hall” (p. 168).

Rowe (1993), as cited in Digh (1997), states that affinity groups help people satisfy the human need of validation:

By belonging to a group of individuals like yourself or who have undergone similar experiences, ‘you can put your own experience in a larger context . . . When you’re a part of a little group within a larger whole, you always feel like it’s your job to adapt. (p. 82)

**Origins of affinity groups.** Affinity groups started in the 1960s in response to the racial conflict that erupted during that time. In 1964, Rochester, New York experienced a violent race

riot. Joseph Wilson, a pioneer in race relations, led the Xerox Corporation, which was headquartered in Rochester. He integrated Xerox, and supported Black employees to create “the first caucus group to address the issues of overt discrimination and agitate for a fair and equitable corporate environment” (Douglas, 2008, p. 12). The National Black Employees Caucus was created in 1970, and later, the Black Women’s Leadership Caucus was created. Xerox was a pioneer in the vision of diversity through its use of race-based caucus groups.

Pepsi Corporation was also a leader in the area of diversity and affinity groups. In the 1940s, PepsiCo was the first to hire African Americans in corporate America. This sales team to helped PepsiCo to reach into new markets (Capparell, 2008). They also named an African-American Vice President in 1962, and hired the first Black man to graduate from Harvard Business School. Also, in 1980, the Pepsi-Cola Black Employees Association was created to help the company deal with issues of diversity (Douglas, 2008).

***Affinity groups in business.*** Affinity groups have been used in business since the civil rights movement. Companies face the same issues that independent schools do – employees wonder if they will fit into the culture of the company when they do not see many faces that look like they do. Texas Instruments (TI), a Fortune 200 semiconductor company, wanted to hire a very talented engineer of Indian decent. She was leery of taking the job because she was not sure that the culture at TI would be welcoming to an Indian woman. Fortunately, TI supported employee networks or affinity groups and had a group called the Indian Diversity Initiative. Members from the group called the candidate and made her feel more comfortable about taking the job and fitting into the culture (Arnold, 2006). Stories like this are not uncommon, but companies do not always have the resources to address the situation.

The Society for Human Resource Management (SHRM), the world’s largest organization

devoted to human resource management, conducted Workplace Diversity Practices Surveys 2005 and 2010, which asked human resource professionals questions about the diversity practices in their organizations. “For the purposes of this survey, workplace diversity was defined as an inclusive corporate culture that strives to respect variations in employee personality, work style, age, ethnicity, gender, religion, socioeconomics, education and other dimensions in the workplace” (Esen, 2005, p. v). The 2010 survey compared the results from both surveys to discover how time has changed diversity and inclusion. In 2005, SHRM reported that 29% of the 400 organizations supported employee affinity groups or networks, whereas in 2010, the survey showed that 30% of the 402 organizations supported affinity groups.

There are many benefits to employee affinity groups. Not only do they help to recruit employees by creating a place where people feel like they belong, but they also help companies to retain talented, diverse employees who can give the company a broader, more global perspective (Arnold, 2006). According to the Career Communications Group (2009), the following is a sample of companies that have affinity or resource groups for their employees:

- Northrup Grumman Corporation – Employee resource groups for women, African Americans, Hispanics, Asian-Pacific Islanders, people with disabilities, Veterans, Gay Lesbian Bisexual Transgender (GLBT), new hires, and X and Y generations
- The L’Oreal Group – Employee resource groups for nationality, ethnic origin, social origin, gender, disability, and age
- PepsiCo – Employee affinity groups for race/nationality, gender, sexual orientation
- Eli Lilly – Employee affinity groups for gender and ethnic groups

- Cargill – Diversity councils include the Asia America Alliance, Disability Awareness Council, the Ebony Council, Hispanic-Latino Council, Rainbow Alliance, and the Women’s Council
- Macy’s – Diversity councils and resource groups for women, African-Americans, Latinos, Asians, and Native Americans
- Marriott International, Incorporated – Established eleven different diversity councils to support their employees
- KPMG – Network groups for African Americans, Asians, Hispanics, women, and GLBT
- McDonald’s – Employee affinity groups include the Women’s Leadership Network, Home Office Asian Network, McDonald’s Black Employee Network, the Hispanic Steering Committee, and others
- Microsoft – Has over 40 affinity groups known as diversity advisory councils
- General Electric – Networking groups include the African American Forum; Asian Pacific American Forum; Hispanic Forum; Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender & Ally Alliance; and the Women’s Network

Eugene Wiggins (as cited in Digh, 1997), executive director of the National Black Association for Speech language and Hearing (NBASLH), says that many affinity groups exist “to identify the critical issues facing their own populations and to address issues that might only be a small blip on the radar screen of larger associations” (p. 82).

***Affinity groups in independent schools.*** Being able to support a student of color in a predominantly White community is integral to the success of the student, and affinity groups can provide this support. According to Gene Batiste (2006), NAIS Vice President of Equity and

Justice Initiatives, the term affinity group describes a “bringing together of people who have something important in common, e.g. race, gender, profession, or special interests” (slide 4).

Affinity groups allow students and faculty to build community, identify issues, share successes, and have honest cross-cultural dialogue (Batiste, 2006). Aguilar and Gross (1999) state that,

Cultural or racial affinity groups bring students of the same racial background together to discuss issues and topics that relate to their everyday school experiences. They can focus on reducing the isolation felt by minority students in predominantly White schools, and help them develop their own cultural and racial identities. The group serves as a safe place for open discussion and empathy among its members. (p. 24)

The face of affinity groups in independent schools has moved beyond race, to include groups of people within an organization who share ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, or other aspects. Members of these groups often face challenges that are similar, so they come together to share experiences and garner support (Douglas, 2008). Belonging to an affinity group provides support and opportunities for growth. Affinity groups not only support diverse individuals, but also support a school’s diversity initiative. Batiste (2006) conveys NAIS’s official statement about affinity groups as:

NAIS has long supported the development and operation of racial/ethnic/cultural affinity groups. The overarching vision for NAIS affinity group work is to provide a safe space for all participants to identify salient issues and common concerns through dialogue, using our individual voices to bring about affirmation, fellowship, connection (networking), and empowerment: to come together for sharing and listening and offering support in the service of greater understanding. (slide 58)

Under the guidance of NAIS, many regional People of Color in Independent Schools

(POCIS) groups were created. Mirroring the NAIS definition of affinity groups, POCIS groups advocate and support the development of affinity groups in independent schools at the K-12 level. POCIS groups believe that affinity groups are a vital part of supporting and empowering people of color in school communities (Bay Area-POCIS, 2008). It is important that students of color strengthen their self-image by creating a structure through which racial identity development can be nourished (Hoffman, 2003). Affinity groups not only provide the arena to empower students of color, but they also help them to develop their identities within their own minority groups.

Affinity groups are places where students build connections and process “ouch” moments from their classes. Children talk about the isolation they sometimes feel. The relationships students gained through race-based affinity groups enable them to feel less alone with their emotions and help them build a stronger sense of self. (Parsons & Ridley, 2012, para. 3)

Teachers, advisors, and administrators can support students of color by providing ample opportunity for affinity groups to meet and by providing an environment where students feel safe to share their experiences at school, both good and bad. These conversations will give schools valuable insight on how schools can support students of color in their identity development.

***White affinity groups.*** According to Denevi (2004), creating White affinity groups help White students to understand their own racial identity, which in turn helps them to understand the experiences of students from other racial groups. “They give Whites a space to reflect on what being White means to them” (p. 81).

Another support structure created by affinity groups is White allies who are completely supportive of all diversity. Allies are students who do not necessarily belong to a particular

cultural group, but who support that group and want to help promote its success (Hoffman, 2003). Tatum (1994) defines a White ally as, “an antiracist activist, a White man or woman who is clearly identifiable as an ally to people of color in struggle against racism” (p. 462). White allies also need to be courageous because they can face the same rejection and ostracizing that students of color feel. Historically White allies are those who resisted the oppressor and helped people of color. They speak up for social change and resist racism (Tatum, 2003). White allies also become role models for other White students in their own identity development. White allies are important in independent schools to help create a tide of change.

## **Conclusion**

Diversity has been a hot topic for independent schools for the last three decades. Independent schools, while trying to diversify their student bodies, must take care of the most vulnerable populations at their schools. Increasing diversity and multicultural awareness has helped independent schools to better attract students of color. Learning about how students of color build their racial identities is also helpful. By understanding the stages that students of color go through to accept who they are racially, teachers and administrators can support students in their endeavor. Having affinity groups available for peer support during identity development is helpful so that students do not feel alone. “Affinity groups don’t take the place of multi-racial dialogue, but rather add to the cross-racial communication” (Denevi, 2004, p. 81). Are affinity groups the right answer to support these increasingly diverse schools? Can schools that were founded on the ideals of educating wealthy, White students change their culture to support students of color? A variety of literature has been published that investigates what teachers of color experience, and also what parents and students of color feel, but none of it addresses ways to mitigate those feelings. Affinity groups can help to assuage some of the

feelings of isolation and exclusion. Affinity groups do not just have to be for students. Faculty of color, as well as parents of color, can create affinity groups to support each other. Creating an entire community of support is ideal, and affinity groups can help to lead the charge.



### **Chapter Three: Research Design and Methodology**

Although diversity success in independent schools has historically been measured numerically, this study looks at the phenomenon of using affinity groups in independent schools to create inclusive environments for students of color. Creating inclusive environments in independent schools is necessary to ensure the success of all students. The purpose of this study is to discover best practices of affinity groups in independent schools.

#### **Chapter Overview**

This chapter explains the design of the research study and the methods used to gather and analyze the data. Sources of data, data collection strategies, the role of the researcher, and protection of human subjects will also be discussed. Validity, reliability, and data analysis will be addressed, concluding with a summary of the chapter.

#### **Research Design**

Qualitative research seeks answers to questions about social situations and everyday experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Flick, 2006). “Qualitative research becomes a continuous process of constructing versions of reality” (Flick, 2006, p. 19). Creswell (2009) defines qualitative research as a “means for exploring and understanding the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem” (p. 4). “Qualitative analysis seeks to capture the richness of people’s experience in their own terms” (Klenke, 2008, p. 11).

A qualitative approach was used to gather information about the lived experience of the participants in this study, namely the diversity practitioners who oversee affinity groups at their schools. “We conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories, hear their voices, and minimize the power relationship that often exist between a

researcher and the participants in a study” (Creswell, 2007, p. 40). A qualitative design was chosen because it supports the purpose of this study.

Qualitative designs are best utilized for research that is about current social issues. “Advocacy research provides a voice for those participants, raising their consciousness or advancing an agenda for change to improve their lives” (Creswell, 2009, p. 9). Studying about using affinity groups to make independent school environments more inclusive falls under this category, making a qualitative design the best choice for this study.

Qualitative research is also best suited for studies where there is limited literature on the topic being studied (Creswell, 2007). According to Leedy and Ormrod (2005), “when little information exists on a topic, when variables are unknown, when a relevant theory base is inadequate or missing, a qualitative study can help define what is important – that is, what needs to be studied” (p. 134). Data collected from this qualitative study will not only help to define best practices of affinity groups in independent schools, but it will also add to the dearth of literature on this topic.

According to Creswell (2009), qualitative studies help individuals gain an understanding of the world around them. Studying phenomena includes studying, “a person’s perception of the meaning of an event, as opposed to the event as it exists external to the person” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 153). Researchers attempt to understand the cultural and historical settings of the respondents through open-ended questioning. Klenke (2008) wrote, “qualitative methods produce a wealth of detailed data about a small number of people and cases; they provide depth and detail through direct quotation and careful description of situations, events, interactions, and observed behaviors” (p. 33).

One pertinent characteristic of qualitative research is that it gives a holistic account of a situation, meaning that there is not one truth to be discovered, but rather multiple perspectives of equal value (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005). According to Creswell (2007), “Qualitative researchers try to develop a complex picture of the problem or issue under study. This involves reporting multiple perspectives, identifying the many factors involved in a situation, and generally sketching the larger picture that emerges.” (p. 39). Because this study looks at how affinity groups help students of color feel more included, and because the types of affinity groups are unique to each school, qualitative research is appropriate in that it will view multiple perspectives to delineate best practices of affinity groups in general.

This study used a narrative approach to garner multiple perspectives about affinity groups. Narrative research “situates individual stories within participants’ personal experiences (their jobs, their homes), their culture (racial or ethnic), and their historical contexts (time and place)” (Creswell, 2007, p. 56). According to Chase (2011), “narrative inquiry revolves around an interest in life experiences as narrated by those who live them” (p. 421). Narrative research not only tells individual stories, but it can also reveal social and cultural patterns (Creswell, 2007). Narratives are social in that they produce new understanding for the individual and for the community at large (Chase, 2003). When speaking of the value of the narrative, Chase (2003) states:

When we listen carefully to the stories people tell, we learn how people as individuals and as groups make sense of their experiences and construct meanings and selves. We also learn about the complexities and subtleties of the social worlds they inhabit. We gain deeper understandings of the social resources (cultural, ideological, historical, and so forth) that they draw on, resist, and transform as they tell their stories. (pp. 80-81)

Creswell (2007) draws the conclusion that “in the end, the narrative study tells the story of individuals unfolding in a chronology of their experiences, set within their personal, social, and historical context, and including the important themes in those lived experiences” (p. 57). Narratives allow the researcher into the participant’s world of experience (Flick, 2006). Learning about the stories of how affinity groups are defined and used in different independent schools will help the researcher to find central themes and to decipher best practices of affinity groups. “Life and narrative are inextricably connected” (Patton, 2002, p. 89).

**Dynamic Narrative Approach.** The Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) was used as a method of compiling participant stories. According to Hyatt (2011), “The Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA) is a contemporary research method to engage the past and present to inform the future” (p. 197). There are two main components that make this research method unique, the use of Renga techniques and virtual technology for collecting data. Renga is an ancient form of collaborative storytelling from Asia where storytellers build on the stories of others, and themes emerge (Hyatt, 2011). Storytelling is a way to make sense of the lived experience without the beginning, middle, and end confines of a personal narrative (Boje, 2001). The DNA utilizes the Renga storytelling and linked narrative approach for participants to share their stories and experiences (Hyatt, 2011). Klenke (2008) posits, “qualitative data are derived from the participant’s perspective...the authentic voice of the informant must be represented” (p. 11). When discussing cultural issues, storytelling is a powerful tool because the meaning behind the story lies in the person who is telling the story (Sandelowski, 1991). The DNA methodology fits this study because finding the best practices of affinity groups is most powerfully told through the stories of those who live the experience of creating, supporting, and mentoring affinity groups in independent schools.

The DNA uses methods of virtual technology to collect data. According to Klenke (2008), “Computers have long been employed by quantitative social researchers, but new information and communication technologies have recently opened up new opportunities for qualitative researchers as well” (p. 134). Using a password-protected wiki, this study will elicit written responses from diversity practitioners who facilitate and support affinity groups at their independent schools. Internet interviewing provides for anonymity, a cost-effective way for collecting data, asynchronous communication, and immediate transcription of the interview (Hyatt, 2011; Klenke, 2008). Having participants answer interview questions in writing can generate better quality answers (Fontana & Frey, 2005). Handy and Ross (2005) state:

Written accounts can have a greater degree of temporal ordering, coherence, and self-reflection than oral accounts. Both speech and short-term memory are transitory mediums and respondents may well forget earlier responses, lose their train of thought or be unprepared for, and therefore unable to answer, verbal questions. In contrast, written questions can be considered before being answered, responses can be referred back to and answers can be written at a time and pace of the respondent’s own choosing. (p. 41)

Most qualitative research organizes its data into themes that emerge from the data (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002). In the DNA, “responses are inherently linked in this case by the questions, which allow for emergent themes” (Hyatt, 2011, p. 199). Qualitative research needs to be flexible, as it provides information in areas that were previously unknown or had little information (Creswell, 2007; Klenke, 2008).

### **Restatement of the Research Questions**

1. How are affinity groups in independent schools defined?
2. How do affinity groups define and measure success?

3. What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups?
4. What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them?
5. What are the lessons learned from having affinity groups?

## **Sources of Data**

Independent schools that are moving toward a more diverse community have created personnel positions to help manage this change. The people in these positions hold several different titles: Diversity Directors, Coordinators of Diversity, or Directors of Multiculturalism and Inclusion, among others. For the purposes of this study, the term diversity practitioners will be used to represent all people who hold such positions in independent schools.

**Population and sampling methods.** NAIS (2011) reports that out of 1,202 member schools, 200 have diversity practitioners, and of those schools, even fewer have affinity groups on campus. For this reason, a sample of 10 participants was chosen for this study from the population of diversity practitioners using purposeful sampling. Diversity practitioners are charged with helping an independent school have a more diverse and inclusive environment, oftentimes creating affinity groups that stem from student interest. Creswell (2007) states, “the inquirer selects individuals and sites for study because they can purposefully inform an understanding of the research problem and central phenomenon in the study” (p. 125). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) explain the strengths of purposeful sampling:

- Less costly and time-consuming
- Ease of administration
- Usually assures high participation rate
- Generalization possible to similar subjects

- Assures receipt of needed information (p. 140).

McMillan and Schumacher (2010) also note, “purposeful sampling is a strategy to choose small groups or individuals likely to be knowledgeable and informative about phenomenon of interest” (p. 343). Seidman (1998) concurs by stating, “interviewing applied to a sample of participants who all experiences similar structural and social conditions gives enormous power to the stories of a relatively few participants” (p. 48). Purposeful sampling helps to illuminate the questions being studied (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002; Seidman, 1998).

Maximum variation sampling was used to account for the small sample size. Patton (2002) posits, “For small samples, a great deal of heterogeneity can be a problem because individual cases are so different from each other” (p. 235). McMillan and Schumacher (2010) suggest that there are no statistical rules for sample size, but rather samples can be any size from one to 40. Criteria of gender, experience, and geographic location were used to create a qualifying sample of participants. Participants for this study were selected to participate after meeting the following criteria: (a) hold the job/title of diversity practitioner, (b) have a minimum of 1-year experience in this capacity, and (c) work at an NAIS member school that has affinity groups. In order to gain the most information rich and qualified sample, snowball sampling was used. Snowball sampling is the process of starting with a few people and then using those people to help find other participants who meet the criteria for the study (Patton, 2002; Vogt, 2005). The first participant was chosen based on geographical proximity to the researcher.

### **Protection of Human Subjects**

Researchers must ensure that studies are conducted in an ethical manner. To this end, it is important that the university’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) reviews the research plans, making certain that ethical standards are being met (Creswell, 2009; McMillan & Schumacher,

2010). Pepperdine University Institutional Review Boards' (2009) policy specifically states that, "all research involving human participants must be conducted in accordance with accepted ethical, federal, and professional standards for research and that all such research must be approved by one of the university's Institutional Review Boards (IRBs)" (p. 1). This study complied with the policies and standards set forth by the Pepperdine University IRBs and conducted research accordingly. "The primary goal of the Pepperdine University IRBs is to protect the welfare and dignity of human subjects. A secondary goal of the Pepperdine IRBs is to assist investigators in conducting ethical research that complies with applicable regulations" (Pepperdine University Institutional Review Boards, 2009, p. 1).

An application for exempt status was submitted to the Pepperdine University IRBs in accordance to policies and procedures. There are no known social, physical, psychological, or legal risks involved in this research. This study will add to the body of research on the effectiveness of instructional techniques in independent schools. The U.S. Department of Health & Human Services (2010) states:

Research conducted in established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal educational practices, such as (i) research on regular and special education instructional strategies, or (ii) research on the effectiveness of or the comparison among instructional techniques, curricula, or classroom management methods. (p. 3)

**Ethical Framework.** In 1979, National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research created *The Belmont Report*. Pepperdine University's policy is driven by the principles set forth in *The Belmont Report*, and abides by all federal, state, and local laws and regulations. According to this report, three fundamental ethical principles must underlie all research that involves human subjects: respect for persons,



beneficence, and justice. All of these moral standards have been given careful consideration in this study.

***Respect for persons.*** There are two ethical considerations that have to deal with respect for persons: “first, individuals should be treated as autonomous agents, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection” (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 2010, Part B, para. 2). This clause requires that participant opinions and perspectives are respected and accepted without bias or prejudice during the research process. Because participation in this study was voluntary, the researcher provided the subjects an informed consent form prior to the inception of the study. According to Johnson and Christensen (as cited in McMillan & Schumacher, 2010), consent forms should include ten informational points:

1. Purpose of the study
2. Description of the procedures and the length of time needed
3. Description of any risks or discomforts that may be encountered
4. Description of the benefits from the research
5. Description of an alternate procedure or intervention that would be advantageous
6. Statement of the extent of confidentiality
7. Names of people who may be contacted about the study
8. Statement that participation is voluntary and participants can refuse to participate at any time without penalty
9. Statement of the amount and schedule of payment for participation
10. Statements written at no more than an eighth-grade level (p. 119)

According to Creswell (2009), “this form acknowledges that participants’ rights will be protected during data collection” (p. 89). A copy of the informed consent form is included in Appendix A.

**Beneficence.** According to the United States Department of Health, Education, and Welfare (2010), there are two criteria for compliance of beneficence. The first is to do no harm, and the second regards the maximization of benefits and the minimization of possible harms. This research will attempt to manage both by maintaining absolute confidentiality of all participants and by completing the most comprehensive study possible. Christians (2011) states, Confidentiality must be assured as the primary safeguard against unwanted exposure. All personal data ought to be secured or concealed and made public only behind a shield of anonymity. Professional etiquette uniformly concurs that no one deserves harm or embarrassment as a result of insensitive research practices. (p. 145)

Anonymity will be preserved by giving participants pseudonyms, and a professional and collaborative research environment will be maintained at all times.

**Justice.** The third basic principle in *The Belmont Report* requires the fair and equitable treatment of all participants by ensuring equal distribution of both benefits and burdens. Participants were chosen for this study based on clearly defined criteria, and not because of their ease of manipulation or availability. The criteria for inclusion or exclusion in the study were selected to give importance to the study. This study will have a positive effect on the future of affinity group usage in independent schools. This benefit outweighs the burden of the fact that not many independent schools are using affinity groups to create inclusive environments for their students of color.

A stipulation of the Pepperdine University IRBs is that prior to conducting research, “All Pepperdine faculty, students and staff involved with research activities must complete training on the federal guidelines for the protection of human participants/subjects” (Pepperdine University Institutional Review Boards, 2009, p. 13). To comply with this guideline, the course was completed and the certificate of completion is located in Appendix B.

### **Data Collection**

Data were collected using semi-structured interview questions through the Dynamic Narrative Approach. According to Klenke (2008), “qualitative interviewing provides a way of generating empirical data about the social world of informants by asking them to talk about their lives” (p. 120). Semi-structured interview questions revolve around central themes in the research (Creswell, 2007; Leedy & Ormrod, 2005; Patton, 2002). The interview questions were designed based on the research questions of the study, both of which were informed by the literature review, and were created to discover the best practices of affinity groups in independent schools. The questions were written to garner maximum participation and response. “Interview questions should encourage people to talk about a topic without hinting that they give a particular answer” (Leedy & Ormrod, 2005, p. 147).

Once participants were selected based on criteria, and they gave their informed consent, the following procedure was used in data collection following the process of DNA:

- Interview questions were presented in a password-protected wiki (a virtual and secure environment).
- Participants’ confidentiality was protected by the use of pseudonyms.
- Participants had continual and free access to view, add, or change their responses.

Given the asynchronous nature of using virtual technology, researcher bias was minimized due to the distance in relationship over the Internet (Klenke, 2008).

To ensure the security of the data collected, the following precautions were taken:

- All data will be stored in a locked file cabinet for 5 years after the study, and then it will be destroyed.
- Subject identities will be stored separately from subject data, as subjects were coded during data collection.
- The only people who had access to the data from this study were the researcher and the second rater.

## **Participants**

A sample of 10 participants were chosen for this study from among the approximately 200 diversity practitioners who work in independent schools that belong to NAIS. As stated before, purposeful/purposive sampling was used, and participants were selected if they met the following criteria:

1. Hold the job/title of diversity practitioner
2. Have a minimum of 1-year experience in this capacity
3. Work at an NAIS member school that has affinity groups.

Maximum variation sampling was used to account for the small sample size, and snowball sampling was employed to find the most information rich and qualified participants. Diversity practitioners who met the criteria were invited to participate in the study. Participants who were identified early on in the process were asked to give the researcher referrals to those who might also be qualified to participate in the study. The first participant was sought out based on being the closest in proximity, geographically.

To ensure confidentiality, participants were coded and the schools with which they are associated were not identified by name. Participants were coded using pseudonyms, Participant A through Participant M, excluding letters E, I, and L. Participant letters E, I, and L were excluded to ensure anonymity from anyone trying to figure out how participant pseudonyms were created. This anonymity provided for increased confidentiality, which allowed participants to openly answer the interview questions. In this way, participants were able to provide rich information to inform the study about how affinity groups are being used at their respective schools.

### **Instrument**

Figure 1 shows the interview protocol designed for this study. The questions on the protocol were informed by the findings in the literature. The protocol, as shown, was tested for content validity by using a panel of experts, as stated previously. A few demographic questions were asked in the beginning for analyzing trends in the data.

### Interview Protocol Before Validation

- A. Discuss and acquire the signature for voluntary consent from the participants.
- B. Once participants have voluntarily agreed to participate in the study they will be directed via email to a password-protected wiki.
- C. Questions:
  - Demographic Questions:
    - Did you attend an independent school for k-12?
    - Position title
    - Years at current position (or in current field)
    - Race/Ethnicity
  - 1a. How do you define affinity groups?
  - 1b. How do you know that there is a need for an affinity group to be formed?
  - 2a. How do you define success for an affinity group?
  - 2b. How is success of an affinity group measured?
  - 3a. How are affinity groups used at your school?
  - 3b. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.
  - 3c. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.
  - 4a. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?
  - 4b. Was there a lot of push back from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups?
  - 4c. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? If so, were they overcome?
  - 5a. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?
  - 5b. Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups?
  - 5c. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe and explain why.
- D. Thank the participants. Remind them about the timeframe and their ability to verify and/or delete their responses.

Figure 1. Interview protocol before validation by the panel of experts.

**Validity of the interview protocol.** Leedy and Ormrod (2005) describe, “the validity of a measurement instrument is the extent to which the instrument measures what is actually intended to measure” (p. 92). Face validity deals with whether or not the instrument looks like it is

measuring what it is supposed to be measuring. Content validity refers to “the degree to which the evidence suggests that the items, tasks, or questions on your test represent the domain of interest . . . it is also based on the formatting, wording, administration, and scoring of the test” (Johnson & Christensen, 2010, p. 145). Both face and content validity were addressed first by a thorough review of the literature and second by using a panel of experts.

To establish the validity of the instrument, first, the relationship between the interview questions (IQ) and the research questions (RQ) for the study were established as shown below:

RQ1. How are affinity groups in independent schools defined?

IQ1. How do you define affinity groups?

IQ2. How do you know that there is a need for an affinity group to be formed?

RQ2. How do affinity groups define and measure success?

IQ3. How do you define success for an affinity group?

IQ4. How is success of an affinity group measured?

RQ3. What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups?

IQ5. How are affinity groups used at your school?

IQ6. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.

IQ7. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow, or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.

RQ4. What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them?

IQ8. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?

IQ9. Was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups?

IQ10. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? If so, were they overcome?

RQ5. What are the lessons learned from having affinity groups?

IQ11. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?

IQ12. Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups?

IQ13. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe and explain why.

Next, a panel of experts was selected to review the relevance of each interview question to the research question for which it was designed.

***Panel of experts.*** To increase content validity of the study, a panel of experts reviewed the interview questions for their relevance to the research questions. The panel consisted of three educators who have worked in the field of education for many years and who have specifically taught in independent schools.

Pauline Rowe has taught for 23 years in both public and independent schools. She is a teacher of color who received both a Bachelor of Arts degree in English and a California Clear Multiple Subject Teaching Credential from the University of California Los Angeles. Pauline earned her Master of Arts degree in Education from Pepperdine University. She most recently became a National Board Certified Teacher, earning the highest credential available to American educators from the National Board for Professional Teaching. Pauline has mentored both



teachers and students of color in the independent school setting. She created a program to guide associate teachers on their way to becoming full classroom teachers.

Michele McKenzie received her Bachelor of Arts in Communication with an emphasis in Interpersonal and Group Dynamics from the University of New Hampshire. She has a Master of Arts degree in Communication with an emphasis in Social Impact of the Media. Michele is a teacher of color who has taught for 24 years in the independent school setting. She has been the advisor of an elementary age culture club, which promotes cultural awareness to all students and provides a venue of support for students of color. Michele also co-chaired a faculty of color affinity group for new women teachers of color.

Dr. Steven Totland received both his Bachelor of Science and his Doctor of Philosophy in Performance Studies from Northwestern University. He has taught extensively (16 years) in grades kindergarten through twelve and also at the college level at both public and private institutions. His most recent experience is teaching kindergarten through eighth grade at an independent school for the last eight years.

After agreeing to help validate my research instrument, each member was sent an email containing an attachment that included a letter formally asking for their participation and a list of the interview questions as they related to the research questions (see Appendix D). Members of the panel were given three choices as to rate each interview question as they were stated:

1. adequately supports the research question and should be retained
2. does not adequately support the research question and should be deleted
3. should be modified as follows to adequately support the research question

If a member chose modification, a space was given to indicate what additions, deletions, or modifications should be made to the interview questions.

Interview questions were kept on the instrument when all three members of the panel agreed to keep it. If two of the three members indicated that a question should be deleted, it was. If one member indicated that a question should be deleted, the researcher discussed the question with the Dissertation Chair and a decision was made. Also, when modifications were suggested, they were discussed with the Dissertation Chair and modified accordingly.

All three members of the expert panel agreed that interview questions 1a, 2a, 2b, 3a, 3b, 3c, 4a, 4b, 5a, and 5b adequately supported the research question and should be retained. Question 1b was changed to, “How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group?” In question 4c, the second part of the question was changed to, “If so, how were they overcome?” One panel member suggested that question 5c did not adequately support the research question and should be deleted. After discussing this concern with the dissertation chair, it was decided that the question should remain as part of the study because the two other panel members indicated that they thought the question supported the research question; therefore, the third person was outvoted.

After questions were validated and revised, a new interview protocol, as shown in Figure 2, was created.

### **Interview Protocol**

- A. Discuss and acquire the signature for voluntary consent from the participants.
- B. Once participants have voluntarily agreed to participate in the study they will be directed via email to a password-protected wiki.
- C. Questions:
  - Demographic Questions:
    - Did you attend an independent school for k-12?
    - Position title
    - Years at current position (or in current field)
    - Race/Ethnicity
  - 1a. How do you define affinity groups?
  - 1b. How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group?
  - 2a. How do you define success for an affinity group?
  - 2b. How is success of an affinity group measured?
  - 3a. How are affinity groups used at your school?
  - 3b. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.
  - 3c. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.
  - 4a. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?
  - 4b. Was there a lot of push back from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups?
  - 4c. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? If so, how were they overcome?
  - 5a. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?
  - 5b. Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups?
  - 5c. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe and explain why.
- D. Thank the participants. Remind them about the timeframe and their ability to verify and/or delete their responses.

*Figure 2.* Interview protocol after validation and revision.

## **Validity and Reliability**

Creswell (2009) states that “qualitative validity means that the researcher checks for the accuracy of the findings by employing certain procedures, while qualitative reliability indicates that the researcher’s approach is consistent across different researchers and different projects” (p. 190). Eisner (1991) posits that reliability and validity are necessary for replicability and relevance, respectively. Validity and reliability are used to ensure objectivity of qualitative research (Kirk & Miller, 1986).

**Validity.** Maxwell (2002) posits that validity in qualitative research deals with different kinds of understandings derived from a research study. Descriptive validity is factual accuracy of a respondent’s account through precise transcription (Maxwell, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2010). The researcher addressed descriptive validity by using the DNA method, which allowed for automatic transcription of the participant’s answers via the password-protected wiki. Interpretive validity seeks to understand the phenomena being studied through a participant’s perspective (Maxwell, 2002; Johnson & Christensen, 2010). Being that the participants answered the questions from their points of view, interpretive validity was also established.

**Reliability.** “Reliability is the degree to which the finding is independent of accidental circumstances of the research” (Kirk & Miller, 1986, p. 20). Leedy and Ormrod (2005) advise that consistency of instrument distribution will increase reliability. The instrument used in this study was delivered through a password-protected wiki, ensuring the same delivery method to all participants and transcription was accurate because respondents created their own record as they answered the questions.

Interrater reliability provides for cross checking during data analysis. “Intersubjective agreement, consensus between two or more observers, is necessary in establishing reliability in

any scientific study” (Thyer, 2010, p. 356). Patton (2002) notes that there is value in the different ways that people assess data, making it important to have more than one person code the data. The following steps were taken to ascertain interrater reliability:

1. The primary researcher reviewed the transcripts through epoche, phenomenological reduction, imaginative variation, and synthesis of meanings (Moustakas, 1994).
2. The primary researcher met with the second rater to review, discuss, and teach the coding process for identifying themes.
3. The primary researcher and the second rater analyzed a transcript together to ensure understanding.
4. The primary researcher and the second rater each read the transcript three times. The first to familiarize themselves with the data, the second to answer any questions about the transcript, and the third to analyze the data.
5. The primary researcher and the second rater analyzed one transcript together to ensure continuity of practice. The findings were compared for similarities and dissimilarities. Where there were consistent similarities, the data was kept. Where there were inconsistencies, discussions ensued and resolutions and revisions were made. When the researcher and rater could not resolve the inconsistencies, the Dissertation Chair made the final decision.
6. The rest of the transcripts were analyzed in the same way, but independently until all transcripts were ready for discussion.

Thyer (2010) suggests several ways to increase reliability: purposive sampling, keeping a detailed account of the entire research process, and applying a consistent analytic method.

Purposive samples allow for more homogeneous participants, which decreases variability and

increases reliability. This study used purposive sampling not only to ensure that participants met the criteria, but also to increase reliability. The DNA method and a consistent analytic method were also used in this study to increase reliability.

### **Role of the Researcher**

Leedy and Ormrod (2005) believe that in order to understand phenomenon, researchers must try to make sense of what they see and hear. Creswell considers, “qualitative research is interpretative research, with the inquirer typically involved in a sustained and intensive experience with the participants” (p. 177). Researchers bring personal background to the study that must be acknowledged to increase credibility. According to Maxwell (2005),

Qualitative research is not primarily concerned with eliminating variance between researchers in the values and expectations they bring to the study, but with understanding how a particular researcher’s values and expectations influence the conduct and conclusions of the study (which may be either positive or negative) and avoiding the negative consequences. (p. 108)

Being able to reflect on one’s own background and beliefs helps to mitigate biases, known or unknown, which a researcher might bring to a study. “Being reflexive involves self-questioning and self-understanding” (Patton, 2002, p. 64). Creswell (2009) states, “self-reflection creates an open and honest narrative that will resonate well with readers” (p. 192).

Reflexivity reminds the qualitative inquirer to be attentive to and conscious of the cultural, political, social, linguistic, and ideological origins of one’s own perspective and voice as well as the perspective and voices of those one interviews and those to whom one reports. (Patton, 2002, p. 65)

Gilgun (2010) suggests that researchers need to be reflexive in three areas: the topics for investigation, the experiences and views of all who are involved in the research study, and the people who are interested in the findings. “Accounting for all three of these areas enhances the quality of both processes and outcome” (p. 6). Following Gilgun’s suggestions, the researcher was reflexive in the following ways:

- The researcher reflected on the topics for investigation, namely affinity groups in independent schools, and thought about the personal and professional meanings this research could have. Personally, the researcher has had both positive and negative experiences with affinity groups. At times the researcher has drawn comfort from peers of her own background, but at other times, she did not relate to them, and often avoided contact. Professionally, the researcher has discussed the need for affinity groups in independent schools extensively with both Whites and people of color. She has attended many People of Color conferences that were sponsored by NAIS, and sees the need for affinity groups in independent schools.
- The researcher reflected on the perspectives and experiences of the participants, as well as the community of students, parents, and faculty who would benefit from affinity groups. The researcher understands that starting affinity groups in independent schools can be challenging because the community may not buy into the notion.
- The researcher reflected on all of the different audiences who would best be served by the information gleaned from this study. The researcher plans to present the findings at a future NAIS People of Color conference, and will make the study available to all participants and their administration.

By being reflexive in these three areas, the researcher can identify personal biases that may have bearing on this study.

**Statement of researcher bias.** Patton (2002) posits that to establish researcher credibility, “the principle is to report any personal and professional information that may have affected data collection, analysis, and interpretation – either negatively or positively – in the minds of users of the findings” (p. 566). The researcher is a former teacher of color at an independent school, and is currently an administrator at an independent school. “Inquirers explicitly identify reflexively their biases, values, and personal background, such as gender, history, culture, and socioeconomic status, that may shape their interpretations formed during a study” (Creswell, 2009, p. 177). The researcher has participated in adult affinity groups based on race and has assisted in administering elementary grade culture clubs. The researcher has also attended several NAIS People of Color conferences and has supported school movements on diversity. The researcher will bracket these and any other biases that arise during this study.

Every effort was made to alleviate biases that the researcher might have brought to the study. To mitigate biases, the researcher:

- Conducted a thorough review of the literature
- An expert panel to evaluate the interview questions
- Used reflexivity
- Involved a second rater in the data analysis

## **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is gaining a deeper understanding of the data collected. Creswell (2009) believes that data analysis is an ongoing process that is “conducted concurrently with gathering data, making interpretations, and writing reports” (p. 184). Data was analyzed for themes,



generating meaning units to develop an essence description. Qualitative data analysis should involve multiple levels, from the specific to the general. Data was analyzed using the following steps suggested by Creswell (2009):

Step 1. Organize and prepare the data for analysis

Step 2. Read through all the data to get a general sense of that data.

Step 3. Begin detailed analysis with a coding process.

Step 4. Use the coding process to generate a description of the setting or people as well as categories or themes for analysis.

Step 5. Advance how the description and themes will be represented in the qualitative narrative.

Step 6. A final step in data analysis involves making an interpretation or meaning of the data. (pp. 185-189)

Being that the interviews were conducted on a password-protected wiki, transcripts were naturally created, eliminating any error in transcription.

Once the researcher coded the data into themes, a second rater was enlisted to ensure reliability. The second rater was given the first three chapters of the study to allow for contextual understanding and was then familiarized with the coding methodology. Meetings were held as needed to clarify questions and to ensure understanding. Findings were compared for similarities and dissimilarities. Consistent similarities were kept, and dissimilarities were discussed between the researcher and the second rater. Discussions resolved most inconsistencies, but if a mutual decision could not be made, the Dissertation Chair made the final resolution.

## **Summary**

This chapter described the nature and design of the research study. A qualitative design was used to discover best practices of affinity groups in independent schools. The DNA was explained, and research questions were restated. Human subjects protection, as prescribed by the Pepperdine University IRBs, was discussed as well as sources of data and sampling methods. Data collection techniques, validity, and reliability were described. The role of the researcher and researcher bias were also addressed. Finally, data analysis procedures were explicated.

## **Chapter Four: Analysis of Findings**

Creating inclusive communities and using affinity groups are relatively new concepts for dealing with diversity in independent schools. Many independent schools have struggled with creating a community that feels welcoming to students of color. Allowing students to form affinity groups is one way to mitigate a student's sense of not belonging.

The purpose of this study is to discover best practices of affinity groups in independent schools and how they are used to create a sense of belonging and inclusion for students of color. This chapter presents the data that was collected and analyzed in this study. Best practices of affinity groups in independent schools were collected through the Dynamic Narrative Approach (DNA), which utilized semi-structured interview questions. Diversity practitioners served as the sample for this study.

### **Organization of the Chapter**

This chapter begins with a brief overview of the study, including a restatement of the purpose and research questions. Next, profiles of the diversity professionals who participated are reviewed. Strategies for data collection and analysis are explained, along with methods used to ensure and maintain validity and reliability. Data is then displayed according to research questions, and the chapter concludes with a brief summary.

### **Overview**

**Purpose of the study.** The purpose of this study is to discover best practices of affinity groups in independent schools and how they are used to create a sense of belonging and inclusion for students of color. The lack of literature on this topic suggests the need to further explore affinity groups in independent schools. Diversity professionals provided a wealth of

knowledge and perspective on how affinity groups are being used in independent schools to support the independent school experience for students of color.

**Research questions.** The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How are affinity groups in independent schools defined?
2. How do affinity groups define and measure success?
3. What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups?
4. What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them?
5. What are the lessons learned from having affinity groups?

In order to address these research questions, virtual interviews were conducted through a secure wiki. The following 13 interview questions were posed:

1. How do you define affinity groups?
2. How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group?
3. How do you define success for an affinity group?
4. How is success of an affinity group measured?
5. How are affinity groups used at your school?
6. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.
7. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.
8. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?

9. Was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups?
10. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school?  
If so, how were they overcome?
11. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?
12. Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups?
13. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe and explain why.

**Participant profiles.** The 10 participants in this study met the following criteria: (a) hold the job/title of diversity practitioner, (b) have a minimum of 1-year experience in this capacity, and (c) work at a National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS) member school that has affinity groups. Interviews were conducted using the DNA, and participants were assigned pseudonyms to protect their anonymity and to maintain participant confidentiality. All documentation and information gathered during data collection will be maintained in a locked cabinet for five years and then permanently destroyed as per the guidelines regarding the protection of human participants.

In this study, eight of the participants were female (80%) and two were male (20%). Although all of the participants were diversity practitioners at their schools, their actual position titles varied with some participants holding more than one title. Tenure ranged from three years to 30 years in this field. Five of the participants (50%) work at independent schools in California. There was one respondent (10%) from independent schools in each of the following states: Oregon, New York, Washington, and Ohio. The final contributor worked at an independent school in London, England. Of the 10 participants, two (20%) attended an

independent school, one for kindergarten through sixth grade and the other for grades 8-12.

Three of the participants (30%) identified their race/ethnicity as African American, three (30%) as White, one as Latina, one (10%) as White/Chicano, one (10%) as Black/Asian, and one (10%) as Asian/Pacific Islander/Korean American. Table 1 summarizes the demographics of the participants in this study. Participant pseudonyms E, I, and L were excluded from use in this study to ensure anonymity from anyone trying to figure out how participant pseudonyms were created.

Table 1

*Participant Professional Demographic Information*

Participant	Gender	State/ Country	Title	Race/Ethnicity	Attend Independent School?
A	F	Oregon	Director of Equity Outreach	African American	K-6
B	M	California	Director of Breakthrough	White/Chicano	No
C	F	England	Grade 4 Teacher	Black/Asian	No
D	F	New York	Upper School Diversity Coordinator, Theater Arts Teacher, Upper School Director of Service Learning	White	Grades 8-12
F	F	California	Director of Diversity	Latina	No
G	F	California	Director of Multicultural Affairs	African American	No
H	F	Washington	Faculty and Outreach Specialist	Asian/Pacific Islander/Korean American	No
J	F	California	Ninth Grade Dean, Upper School Diversity Director	White	No
K	M	Ohio	Director of Diversity and Community Life	White	No
M	F	California	4th Grade Teacher/Culture Club Advisor	African American	No

***Participant A.*** Participant A is a diversity practitioner who holds the title of Director of Equity Outreach. She works at a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school in Oregon with an approximate enrollment of 760 students. Participant A has worked in the field of diversity for 8 years, and self identifies as African American.

***Participant B.*** Participant B is a diversity practitioner who holds the title of Director of Breakthrough. He works at a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school in California with an approximate enrollment of 503 students. Participant B has worked in the field for 10 years, and self identifies his race/ethnicity as White/Chicano.

***Participant C.*** Participant C is a fourth grade teacher who has worked in the field of diversity for 14 years. She works at a kindergarten through twelfth grade school in England that has an approximate enrollment of 1,344. Participant C self identifies as mixed race – Black and Asian.

***Participant D.*** Participant D is a diversity practitioner who holds many position titles at her school. She is the Theater Arts Teacher, Upper School Director of Service Learning, and the Upper School Diversity Coordinator. Participant D works at a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school in New York that has an approximate enrollment of 1,125 students. She has worked in the field for four years, and self identifies as White.

***Participant F.*** Participant F is the Director of Diversity at a kindergarten through twelfth grade school in California that has an approximate enrollment of 1,073. She has worked in the field for 13 years, and self identifies as Latina.

***Participant G.*** Participant G is the Director of Multicultural Affairs at a kindergarten through twelfth grade school in California that has an approximate enrollment of 733 students. She has worked in the field for nine years, and self identifies as African American.

***Participant H.*** Participant H is a diversity practitioner who holds the title of Faculty and Outreach Specialist. She works at a school in Washington that serves Grades 5-8, with an approximate enrollment of 119 students. Participant H has worked in the field for 15 years. She self identifies her race as Asian/Pacific Islander and her ethnicity as Korean American.

***Participant J.*** Participant J is the ninth grade Dean and also the Upper School Diversity Director. She works at a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school in California that has an approximate enrollment of 1,200 students. Participant J has worked in the field for 3 years, and self identifies as White.

***Participant K.*** Participant K is the Director of Diversity and Community Life at a pre-kindergarten through twelfth grade school in Ohio that has an approximate enrollment of 1,047 students. He has worked in the field for 4 years, and self identifies as White.

***Participant M.*** Participant M is a diversity practitioner who is a fourth grade teacher as well as the Lower School Culture Club Advisor. She works at a kindergarten through twelfth grade school in California that has an approximate enrollment of 830 students. Participant M has been the Lower School Culture Club Advisor for 8 years, but has worked in the field for 30 years.

## **Data Collection**

Participants were chosen by criteria, purposeful, and snowball techniques. The criteria were: hold the job/title of diversity practitioner, have a minimum of 1-year experience in this capacity, and work at an NAIS member school that has affinity groups. Diversity practitioners who met the criteria were invited to participate in the study. Participants who consented to participate were asked to give the researcher referrals to those who might also be qualified to participate in the study.



This study utilized the DNA to collect data using semi-structured interview questions. The protocol of the DNA was as follows: participants were selected based on criteria noted in the study; participants voluntarily consented to participate; participants' confidentiality was protected by the use of pseudonyms; interview questions were presented in a password-protected wiki (a virtual and secure environment); and participants had continual and free access to view, add, or change their responses.

A panel of experts who have worked in education for many years, and who have also worked in independent schools reviewed and validated the following semi-structured interview questions:

1. How do you define affinity groups?
2. How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group?
3. How do you define success for an affinity group?
4. How is success of an affinity group measured?
5. How are affinity groups used at your school?
6. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.
7. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.
8. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?
9. Was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups?

10. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school?  
If so, how were they overcome?
11. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?
12. Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups?
13. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe and explain why.

Once IRB approval was received, participants used the secure wiki platform to answer the semi-structured interview questions. The researcher provided each participant with her email address and phone number in case clarification was needed when answering the interview questions. A copy of the IRB approval letter is available in Appendix E.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is necessary to gain a deeper understanding of the data collected. Qualitative data analysis should involve multiple levels, from the specific to the general. Following Creswell’s (2009) steps for qualitative data analysis, data were managed, read through, coded, classified, represented, and interpreted. Interviews were conducted on a password-protected wiki, so transcripts were automatically created, eliminating any error in transcription. Data were coded in order to analyze the themes.

During the management step, transcripts that were naturally created from the secure wiki were organized and prepared for analysis. The next step involved reading through all of the transcripts to get a general sense of the data. After that, the researcher and the second rater met to discuss the coding protocol and to ensure mutual understanding of the transcripts. The second rater was used to ensure reliability and validity of the data analysis. The researcher and the second rater reviewed and coded the first interview question independently. Then, they met to

confirm consistency, discuss coding, and analyze themes. Once consensus was reached, the researcher and the second rater independently coded and analyzed the other 12 interview questions.

During the classification step, the researcher and the second rater met to ensure coding and thematic agreement on all 13 interview questions. There was little to no disagreement between the researcher and the second rater when determining the themes associated with the data analysis. Once consensus was reached for all 13 interview questions, the researcher created charts to represent the themes that emerged from the data. The final step involved the researcher interpreting or making meaning of the data.

### **Data Display**

Data were organized by research question in such a way that one or more of the interview questions corresponded to a research question posed in this study. Anecdotal evidence from interview transcripts is utilized to exemplify major themes. Participant pseudonyms continue to be used to ensure confidentiality. Both text and figures are used to display data.

**Research question 1.** Research question one stated: How are affinity groups in independent schools defined? To answer this question, two interview questions (IQ) were posed:

IQ1. How do you define affinity groups?

IQ2. How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group?

**Interview question 1.** The first interview question to respond to research question one was: How do you define affinity groups? Nine of the 10 participants (90%) responded to this question, and four main themes emerged: shared identifier, empowerment, first person perspective, and safety.

*Shared identifier.* Shared identifier in this study was used to mean something that individuals identify with other group members about such as identity, race, gender, religion, family status, etc. This theme garnered the most responses during coding, as all nine participants who responded (100%) used language coded into this theme. Items that were coded under this theme included:

- “share an identity or cause” (Participant A).
- “a space for people of a common identifier” (Participant F).
- “share a certain interest” (Participant B).
- “share an important social identity or significant life experience” (Participant K).

Participant C answered, “Affinity groups or communities are groups of people who are drawn together based on a common identifier such as race, common background, identity, gender, interests, and shared experiences.”

*Empowerment.* This theme represents responses that discussed supporting students who are underrepresented and giving them a larger voice. Entries that were coded under this theme included:

- “find themselves in the minority” (Participant A).
- “don’t have access to much social power” (Participant A).
- “provide service to the larger community” (Participant B).

Participant F said, “An affinity group is a space for people of a common identifier to come together in a safe space where common experiences can be shared, identity can be reflected on, and overall the experience leads to empowerment and affirmation so students are strengthened to bring their full selves to the larger community.”

*“I” perspective.* Speaking from the “I” perspective means that a group member can speak about experiences from the first person perspective. Responses that were coded under this theme included:

- “can speak from the ‘I’ perspective” (Participant D).
- “can speak from the first person perspective” (Participant M).

Participant H responded, “Affinity groups are for individuals who identify as members of the group and can speak to the experience of being a member of the group from the ‘I’ perspective.”

*Safety.* Emotional and psychological safety are represented by this theme. Answers that were coded under this theme included:

- “safe space” (Participant F).
- “support each other” (Participant B).

Participant B stated, “folks who share a certain interest based on common socio-cultural experiences gathering to support each other and provide service to the larger community.”

Figure 3 summarizes the main themes of how affinity groups are defined by diversity practitioners. Four main themes emerged from the data about how diversity practitioners define affinity groups: shared identifier, empowerment, speaking from the “I” perspective, and safety.

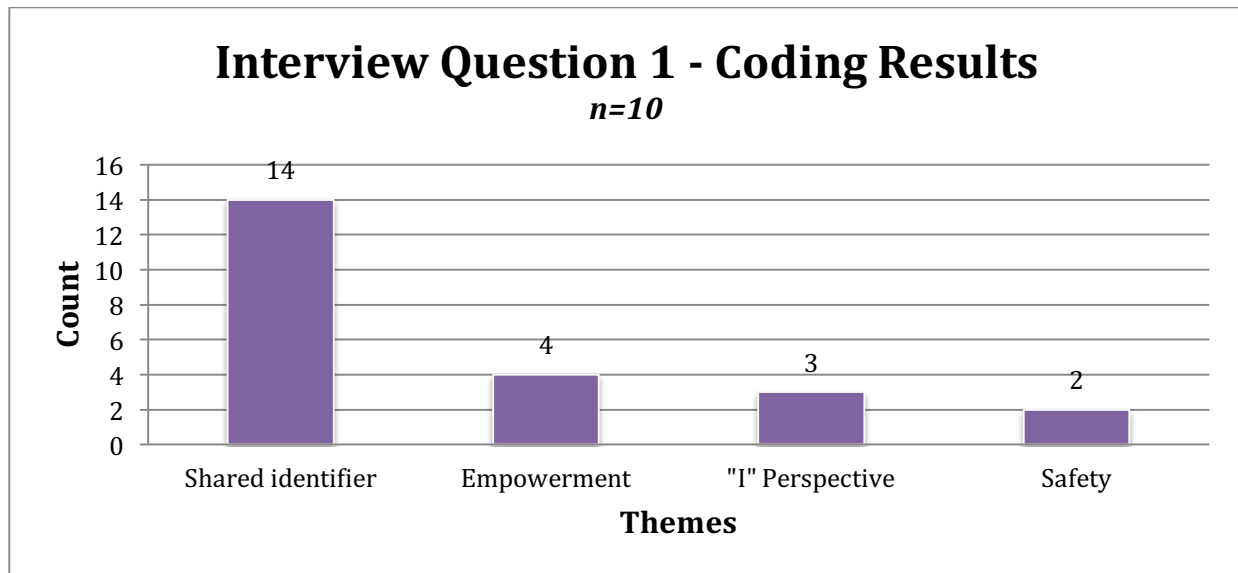


Figure 3. Affinity groups defined – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 2.** The second interview question also pertained to the first research question and asked: How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group? Nine of the 10 participants (90%) responded to this question. Three major themes emerged from the participant responses to this question: student/faculty/staff or parent desire, share marginalized experiences with adults, and feeling isolated.

*Student/faculty/staff or parent desire.* Student/faculty/staff or parent desire to have affinity groups had the most responses to how to gauge the need of an affinity group. Seven of the nine respondents (78%) used words that were coded into this theme such as:

- “students ask for them” (Participant F).
- “in response to student need” (Participant G).
- “students express a desire or need” (Participant D).
- “student interest” (Participant K).
- “in response to student/faculty/staff or parent need” (Participant J).

Participant D stated, “When students come to us and express a desire or need for a space that affirms their experience, we know it is time to support them.”

*Share marginalized experiences with adults.* This theme arose from many responses that noted that students seek out adults to talk through incidents or experiences they have encountered. Responses coded into this theme included:

- “students talking one-on-one with adults about incidents” (Participant K).
- “students flock to safe adults to talk” (Participant H).
- “some aggression from faculty towards students has been reported” (Participant B).

Participant H noted, “Students flock to safe adults to talk through challenges, emotions, etc. triggered by identity salient experiences and microaggressions.”

*Feeling isolated.* This theme developed from responses that indicated people or students were feeling isolated from others. Respondents who spoke of this used the terms like:

- “having a common experience individually” (Participant A).
- “feeling isolated” (Participant B).

According to Participant A, “When people start feeling isolated, when a certain group is having a common experience individually, it becomes important to gather together to know one is not alone.”

Figure 4 illustrates the main themes that arose from asking how do you know there is a need for affinity groups to be formed. The three main themes that emerged from the data were: student/faculty/staff or parent desire, share marginalized experiences with adults, and feeling isolated.

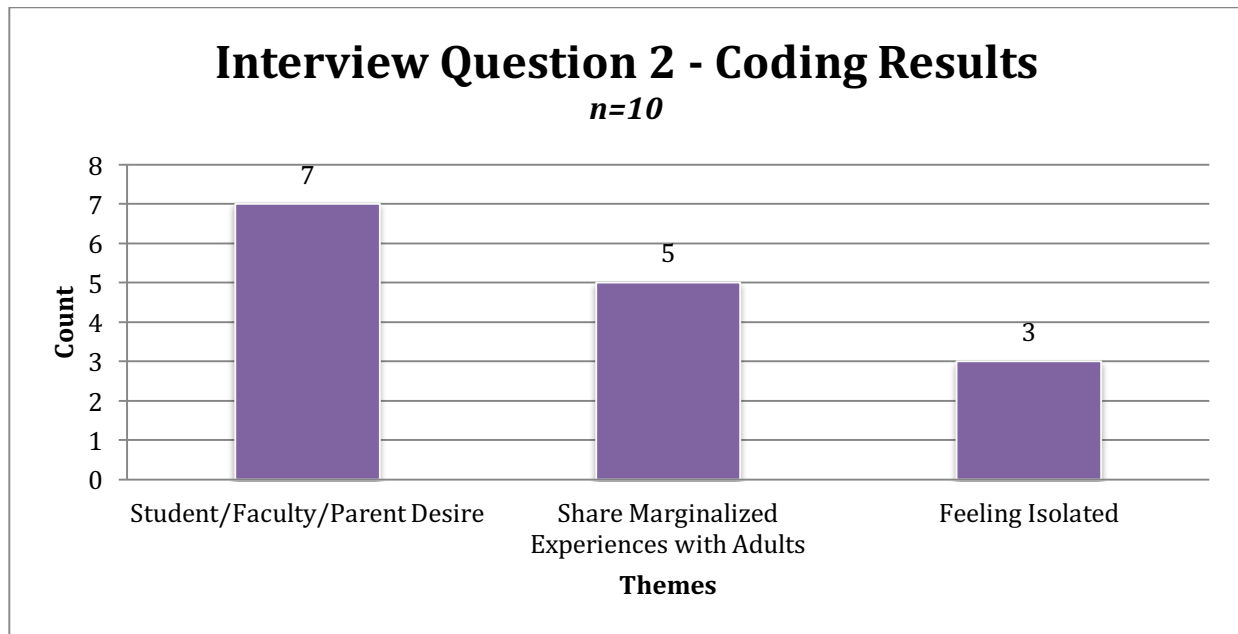


Figure 4. Need for affinity groups – multiple responses per interviewee.

*Summary of research question 1.* Five themes emerged from the two interview questions posed to address research question 1: How are affinity groups defined? Diversity practitioners define affinity groups around three themes: students group themselves based on a *shared identifier*; they gain *empowerment* from support of peers; they can speak to experiences from the “*I*” *perspective*; and they seek physical and emotional *safety* among similar peers. Diversity practitioners know there is a need for an affinity group to form based on *student/faculty/parent desire* to form a group; *students sharing marginalized experiences* with adults they trust; and when *feelings of isolation* are present. The literature supports that students of color want to share their experiences with other students of color, and look to each other for support and understanding, which might not happen with their White friends. This is seen as a positive coping strategy for students of color who are faced with stress (Tatum, 2003). Gaztambide-Fernandez (2009) found that “students look for opportunities to be, as one student put it,



‘surrounded by people who are like you.’ Students search for affinity groups, both formal, as in student clubs, and informal, as with tablemates in the dining hall” (p. 168).

**Research question 2.** The second research question asked: How do affinity groups define and measure success? To answer this question, two interview questions were posed:

IQ3. How do you define success for an affinity group?

IQ4. How is success of an affinity group measured?

**Interview question 3.** Interview question three was the first corresponding question that asked: How do you define success for an affinity group? Eight of the ten respondents (80%) answered this question, and four themes came to light: positive engagement, community acceptance, attendance, and building identity.

*Positive Engagement.* This theme developed based on participant responses that portrayed student participation in a positive light. Examples of words coded into this theme were:

- “conversations become deeper” (Participant A).
- “students enjoy participation...students not ashamed to attend” (Participant F).
- “feel empowered to improve the school for themselves” (Participant H).
- “participant feelings about being in the group are positive.” (Participant K).

According to Participant F, affinity group success is defined as:

When student and faculty mentor relationships are positive, when students enjoy participation and look forward to the meetings. When students are not ashamed to attend because they recognize the value of attending. Of course also when the school community understands the role and importance of affinity group spaces on campus.

Participant K also stated, “Student engagement in the groups. Participants’ feelings about being in the group are positive, and overall acceptance/value of the groups in the broader community.”

*Community acceptance.* This theme arose based on seven of the eight responses (88%) that discussed affinity groups being accepted by the greater community beyond their groups.

Some of the language used was:

- “group seen as a resource” (Participant B).
- “school community understands the role and importance” (Participant F).
- “individuals take on leadership in the community” (Participant J).
- “community acceptance” (Participant M).
- “overall acceptance/value of the group in the broader community” (Participant K).

As noted by Participant J, “Acceptance of the group in the larger community, as well as seeing individuals in these groups take on leadership roles within the community, where traditionally they are not represented or heard.”

*Attendance.* People showing up to meetings can also be seen as affinity group success.

Items coded into this theme were:

- “people continue to come” (Participant A).
- “student attendance” (Participant G).
- “feel the power of critical mass” (Participant H).

When asked about how success of an affinity group was defined, Participant G responded, “Student attendance, high student engagement, positive feedback about value, etc.”

*Identity building.* Affinity group success can also be defined when students are able to build on who they are. Concepts that were coded under this theme were:

- “feel affirmed in their identity...learn something about their history and experience” (Participant H).
- “identity building” (Participant M).

Participant H answered:

Affinity groups are successful when participants feel safety and comfort to be authentic, feel affirmed in their identity, feel the power of critical mass, learn something about their history and experience, gain tools to be resilient through challenges, feel better prepared to engage deeply with other groups, and feel empowered to improve the school for themselves.

Figure 5 portrays the main themes from interview question three that asked, how do you define success for an affinity group? The four main themes that emerged from the data were: positive engagement, community acceptance, attendance, and identity building.

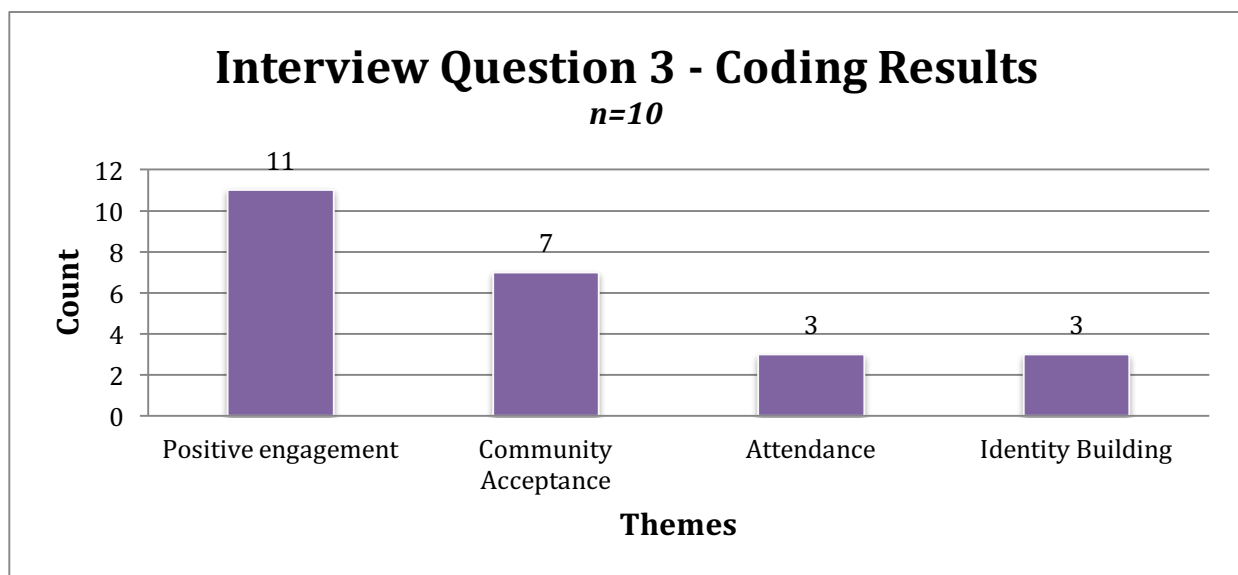


Figure 5. Defining success of an affinity group – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 4.** The second response to research question 2 is: How is success of an affinity group measured? Eight of the ten participants (80%) responded to this question. Of

the eight, two (25%) stated that they have no measurement benchmarks in place. Three major themes emerged from the responses to this question: engagement, community, and attendance.

*Engagement.* The first measure of success, as indicated by participants' responses, was engagement. Responses coded into this theme were:

- “participation” (Participant M).
- “experiences of the student” (Participant K).
- “students are participating actively” (Participant F).

“I think we are beginning to equate success with deepened student activism and solidarity/coalition building” (Participant D).

*Community.* The second theme that emerged from participant responses was a sense of community. Items coded under this theme were:

- “solidarity/coalition-building” (Participant D).
- “students benefitting from participation” (Participant F).
- “climate of the school” (Participant K).

According to Participant K, “Success can also be measured by the climate of the school. If affinity groups are working well, the climate for all should be improving.”

*Attendance.* Responses show that the final measure of success for an affinity group is attendance at meetings. Examples of phrases coded into this theme are:

- “why they attend” (Participant A).
- “attendance” (Participant H).

Participant M simply stated, “We see affinity group success as participation and formation.”

Figure 6 shows the themes that surfaced for interview question four that asked, how is success of an affinity group measured? The themes that emerged from the data were: engagement, community, and attendance.

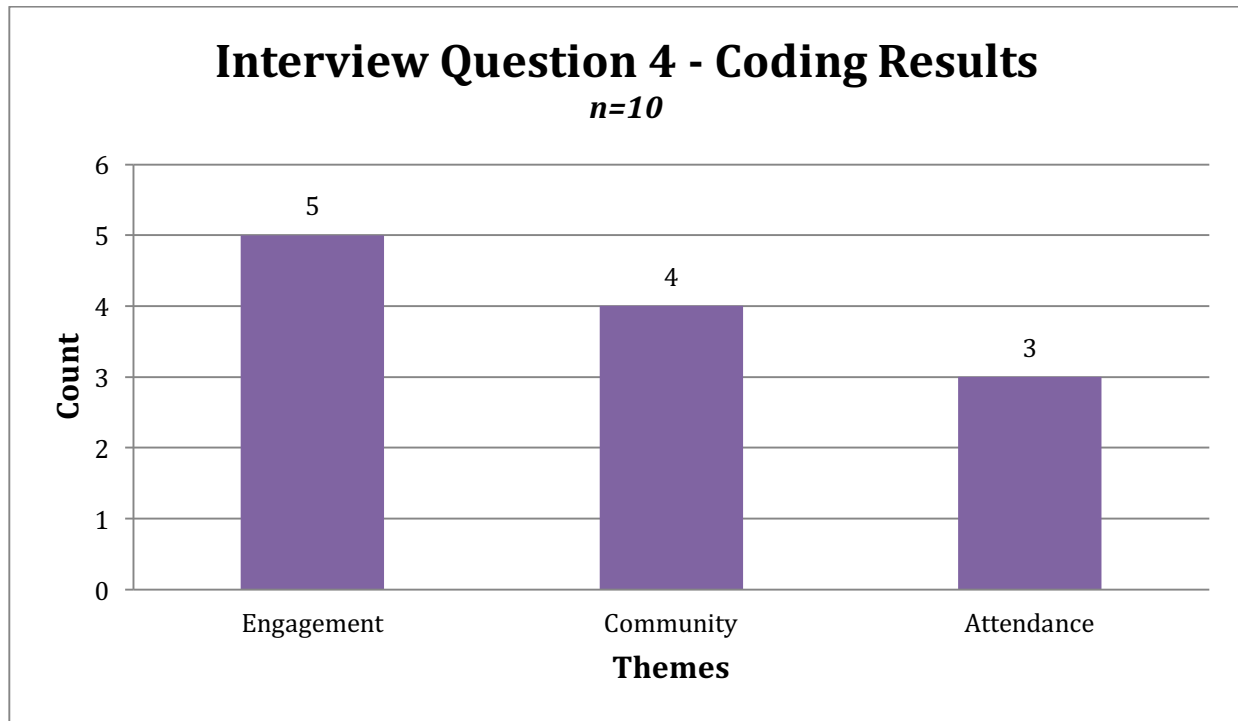


Figure 6. Measures of success of affinity groups – multiple responses per interviewee.

*Summary of research question 2.* Seven themes emerged from the two interview questions posed to address research question 2: How do affinity groups define and measure success? Diversity practitioners define affinity group success around four themes: when student have *positive engagement* with the groups and in the wider community; gaining *community acceptance* and support from the greater school community; consistent and high *attendance* at meetings; and students learning about *building identity* personally, within their affinity group, and in the broader community. Diversity practitioners measure success of an affinity group by positive and active *engagement* by members both inside and outside the group; the sense of *community* and the climate of the school; and group *attendance*. The literature supports that

affinity groups allow students and faculty to build community, identify issues, share successes, and have honest cross-cultural dialogue (Batiste, 2006). Through the years, several racial/cultural identity models (Cross, 1991; Helms, 1993; Kim, 1981; Ruiz, 1990) have been proposed that acknowledge how people from various cultures (Asian Americans, African Americans, Latino/Hispanic Americans, Native American Indians, Whites) develop their identities differently. Affinity groups help give students an understanding of who they are and how to develop their identities.

**Research question 3.** The third research question asked: What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups? Three interview questions address research question 3:

IQ5. How are affinity groups used at your school?

IQ6. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.

IQ7. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow, or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.

**Interview question 5.** Interview question five was the first question to answer research question three. It asked, how are affinity groups used at your school? Eight of the ten (80%) respondents answered this question. Five major themes emerged after coding the data: community building, safe space, education, identity development, and empowerment.

*Community building.* Five of the eight respondents (63%) spoke about affinity groups being used to build community. Some of the words coded into this theme were:

- “community building” (Participant B).
- “fellowship...connection” (Participant D).
- “share experiences” (Participant J).

Participant K posits “To create safe(r) space to share experiences, concerns, and questions that help foster positive identity, social awareness, and connections to the school community.”

*Safe space.* Affinity groups are used to create a safe space for students, faculty, and parents to gather together. Responses coded into this theme included:

- “provide a safe space” (Participant D).
- “to create safe(r) space” (Participant K).
- “safe environment.” (Participant M).

Participant D explained:

We meet in affinity groups to feel the safe space, solidarity, and rejuvenation that come from these groups. The overarching vision for affinity group work is to provide a safe space for all participants to identify important issues and common concerns through dialogue, using our individual voices to bring about affirmation, fellowship, connection, and empowerment.

*Education.* Participants shared thoughts about affinity groups also being used for educational purposes. Replies coded under this theme included:

- “educate the wider community about different perspectives” (Participant A).
- “discuss current events that pertain to the affinity group” (Participant J).
- “social awareness connections to the school community” (Participant K).

Participant H states, “We use Affinity Groups as an optional identity development curriculum to supplement what we already to in the core curriculum.”

*Identity development.* The final theme that developed out of interview question 5 was the notion of using affinity groups to build and develop one’s identity. Items coded into this theme included:

- “support students around their common identifier” (Participant F).
- “optional identity development curriculum” (Participant H).
- “help foster positive identity” (Participant K).

Participant M shared, “They are self-selected groups that are used to help students build their identity in a safe environment.”

*Empowerment.* Respondents discussed how affinity groups are also used to help students, parents, and faculty to feel more empowered in their environment. Answers coded under this theme included:

- “to feel more empowered” (Participant A).
- “affirmation...empowerment” (Participant D).

According to Participant A, “Affinity groups are used as moments in time to help students and faculty feel less isolated and to feel more empowered in a school system designed for the elite majority.”

Figure 7 shows the themes that emerged from interview question 5 that asked, how are affinity groups used at your school? The five themes that emerged were: community building, safe space, education, identity, and empowerment.



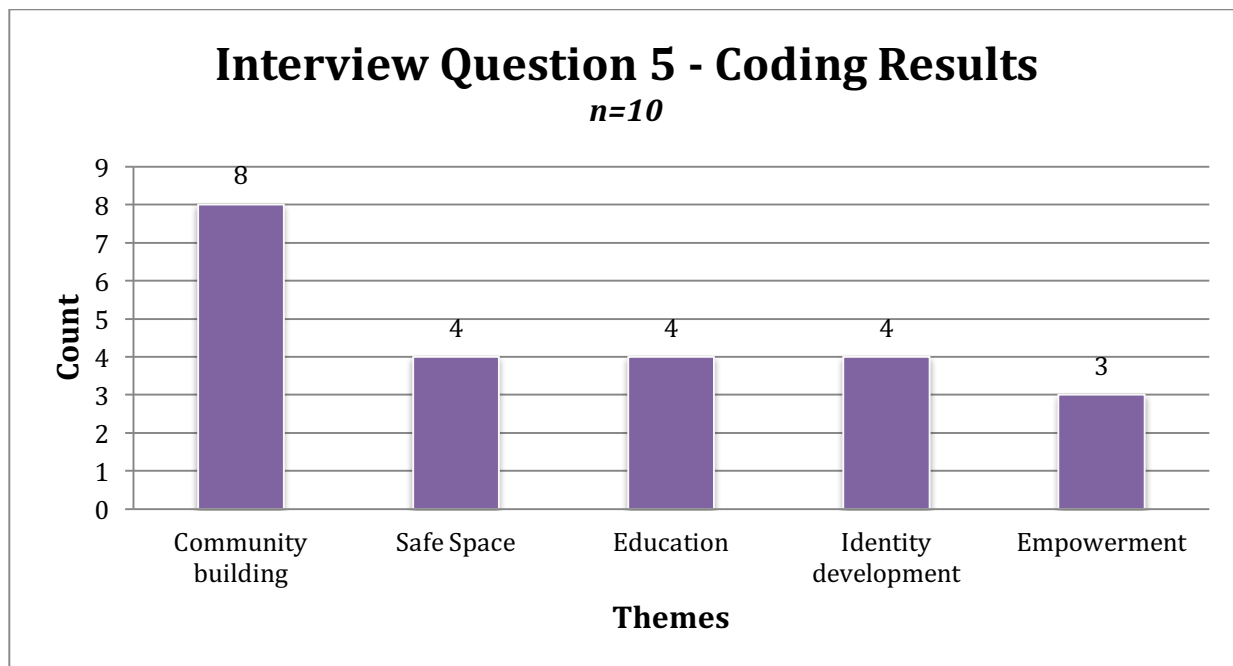


Figure 7. Ways affinity groups are used – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 6.** The second question that corresponded with research question three asked respondents to describe the affinity groups that are in practice at their schools. Nine of the ten participants (90%) responded to this question. For some schools, there were many, and for others, just a few. The themes that emerged from this question were categories of types of affinity groups schools are using. Nine themes emerged: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender (LGBT), Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino(a), Multiracial, Religious, faculty of color, White, and family structures.

**LGBT.** When looking at the data, there were 13 groups that supported either students or adults who self identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, or asexual (LBGTQIA). Some of the group names coded into this theme were:

- “Safe Space Group for Adults” (Participant A).
- “Faculty LGBT” (Participant C).
- “Alphabet Affinity (LBGTQIA)” (Participant H).

- “GLOW (Gay, Lesbian, or Whatever)” (Participant D).
- “GLBTQ” (Participant G).

Participant M lists their affinity groups as, “Upper School – African American, Asian, LGBT, and Multiracial.”

*Black/African American.* The data showed that there were 11 groups that supported Black or African American students, adults, or families. Some of the groups that were coded into this theme included”

- “Black Culture Club” (Participant A).
- “Black Student Alliance” (Participant D).
- “African American Affinity” (Participant H).
- “African American Boys...African American Girls” (Participant F).
- “MOSAIC...Black Organization of Students” (Participant K).

According to Participant A:

There is a Black Culture Club that focuses on activities that support the Black community and there is a Black Student Alliance that focuses more on reaching out to allies...There is a parent group for Black families called WickFAID = Families of African and Island Descent.

*Asian.* The respondents listed 10 groups that support Asian or Asian American students, adults, or families. Some of the groups were specific to one ethnicity of Asian heritage, but for this study, all Asian affinity groups were placed into this theme. Some of the groups included:

- “Chinese Culture Club...ImaginAsian Culture Club” (Participant A).
- “AAA (Asian American Alliance)” (Participant D).
- “Asian American Girls” (Participant F).

- “Asian and Pacific Islander Affinity” (Participant H).
- “Chinese Parent Association” (Participant K).

Participant F mentions, “5 Student Affinity Groups...Multiracial, African-American (7<sup>th</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> boys and 7<sup>th</sup> – 12<sup>th</sup> girls), LGBTQ, Asian American (7<sup>th</sup> -12<sup>th</sup> girls).”

*Hispanic/Latino(a).* The data showed that among the respondents, seven groups were listed that supported Hispanic or Latino(a) students or adults. Group names coded into this theme included:

- “Hispanic Culture Club” (Participant A).
- “Spanish Club” (Participant B).
- “HOLA” (Participant D).
- “Hispanic/Latino Families” (Participant F).
- “Latina Affinity” (Participant H).
- “Latino” (Participant M).

Participant D lists their affinity groups as: “Student groups: Closed LGBTQ+ Support Group, AAA (Asian America Alliance), BSA (Black Student Alliance), Exploring Whiteness, GLOW (Gay, Lesbian, or Whatever), HOLA (Hispanic Organization for Latino Awareness), and M&Ms (Multiracial and Multicultural Students).”

*Multiracial.* Multiracial has become a necessary category in recent years. People are identifying with several races, instead of the historic singular identification. Seven groups were identified to be categorized in this theme. Some of the group names included:

- “Cultural Connections” (Participant A).
- “M&Ms” (Participant D).
- “Multiracial” (Participant H).

- “Students of Color” (Participant G).

Participant G notes that they have affinity groups for “Students of Color (Middle School group and Upper School group).”

*Religious.* When coding the data, five groups could be categorized as affinity groups that support different religious groups. Some of these groups included:

- “Bible Study (Christian based)...Jewish Student Union” (Participant A).
- “Journey 511 (Christian Group)” (Participant K).
- “Jewish Affinity” (Participant H).

Participant K lists their affinity groups as: “Student groups: Black Organization of Students (BOS), Muslim Enrichment Club (MECCA), Jewish Club, Gay Straight Alliance with an associated confidential LGBTQ affinity group, Asian Affinity Group, DESI (Indian Affinity), GROW (Gender Relations in Our World), and Journey 511(Christian Group).”

*Faculty of color.* Four of the nine respondents (44%) had groups that were created to support faculty of color. Group names that were coded into this theme included:

- “Faculty and Staff of Color” (Participant A).
- “Faculty People of Color” (Participant C).

Participant C notes, “Currently there are only faculty and staff affinity groups: People of Color and LGBT.”

*White.* Four of the nine respondents (44%) indicated that they had White affinity groups on campus for either faculty or students. Groups coded into this theme were:

- “White Faculty” (Participant A).
- “Exploring Whiteness” (Participant D).
- “White Anti-Racist Affinity Group” (Participant G).

- “White Affinity” (Participant H).

Participant A explained, “There are several affinity groups in our school: For adults there is a Faculty and Staff of Color Group and a group of ‘White’ Faculty looking at White skin privilege and how to utilize their power as allies.”

*Family structures.* The final theme that emerged from interview question six was for affinity groups that supported different types of family structures. The two groups coded into this theme were contributed by Participant H who wrote:

Ever evolving, currently we have Affinity Groups (for individuals who identify as members of the group and can speak to the experience of being a member of the group from the “I” perspective): African American Affinity, Adoption Affinity, Alphabet Affinity (LGBTQIA), Asian and Pacific Islander Affinity, Banana Splits Affinity (Family Structures Outside of the Normative), Jewish Affinity, Latina Affinity, Multiracial Affinity, and White Affinity.

Figure 8 illustrates the breakdown of themes for interview question 6 that asked, what affinity groups are in practice at your school? Please include the population each one serves. The nine themes or groups that emerged were: LGBT, Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, Religious, Faculty of Color, White, and Family Structures.

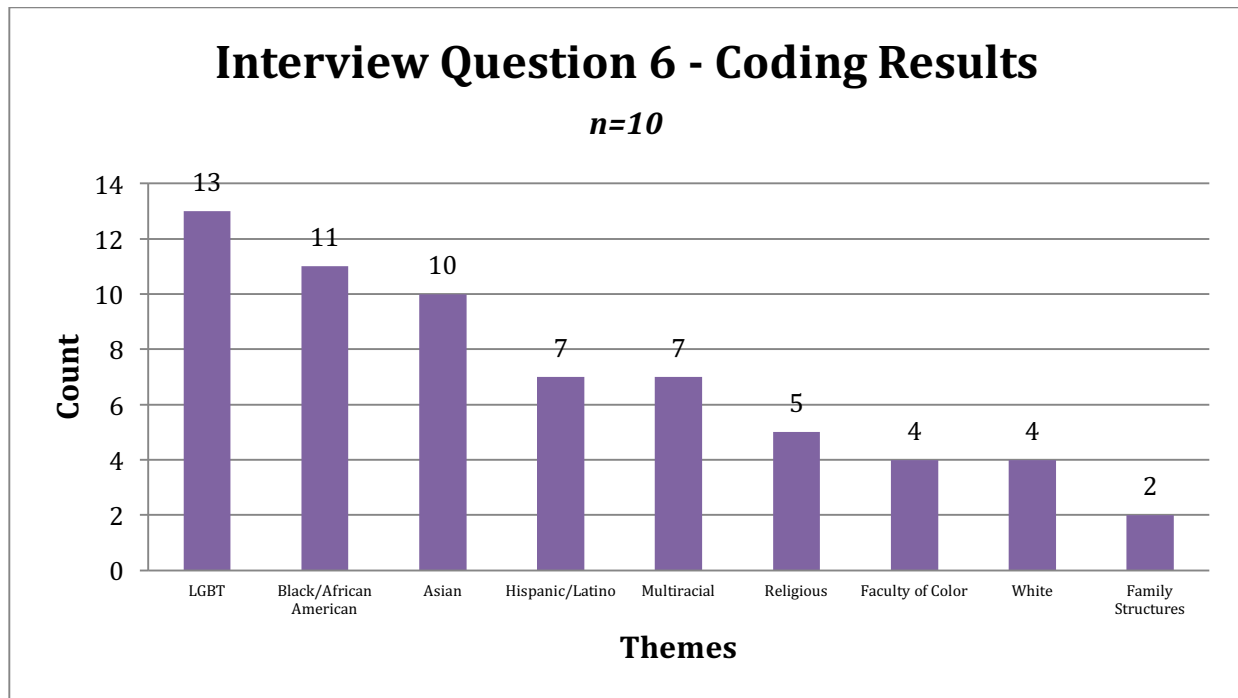


Figure 8. Affinity groups in practice – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 7.** The final interview question to contribute responses to research question three asked, Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow, or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process. Nine of the 10 participants (90%) answered this question, with three of the nine participants (33%) stating that they do not have protocols yet. Three themes emerged: shared norms, own protocol, and advisor support.

*Shared norms.* Four of the nine respondents (44%) stated that they use community or shared norms as their protocol for affinity group meetings. Some of the codes that were grouped into this theme included:

- “shared norms” (Participant H).
- “community norms” (Participant J).

Participant A explains, “Students do share a common goal of using our core values of Honesty, Compassion, Fairness, Responsibility, and Respect so as long as their club/group operates within the parameters of the core values, they can exist.”

*Own protocol.* Four of the nine respondents (44%) shared that individual groups create their own protocol for meetings. Answers that were coded into this theme included:

- “own protocol” (Participant F).
- “own needs” (Participant D).

Participant H responded, “Each group has its own protocol, but we do suggest shared norms.”

*Advisor support.* The final theme that emerged from interview question seven was having an advisor support and lead affinity group meetings. Some of the responses that were coded into this theme were:

- “faculty advisor” (Participant A).
- “diversity director” (Participant J).
- “diversity coordinator and director of community engagement” (Participant D).

Participant G explains, “We are also looking for community building and student leadership; however, the curriculum is largely led by adults and varies from group to group.”

Figure 9 portrays the thematic breakdown of the answers to interview question seven that asked, Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow, or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process. Three themes emerged from the data: shared norms, own protocol, and advisor support.

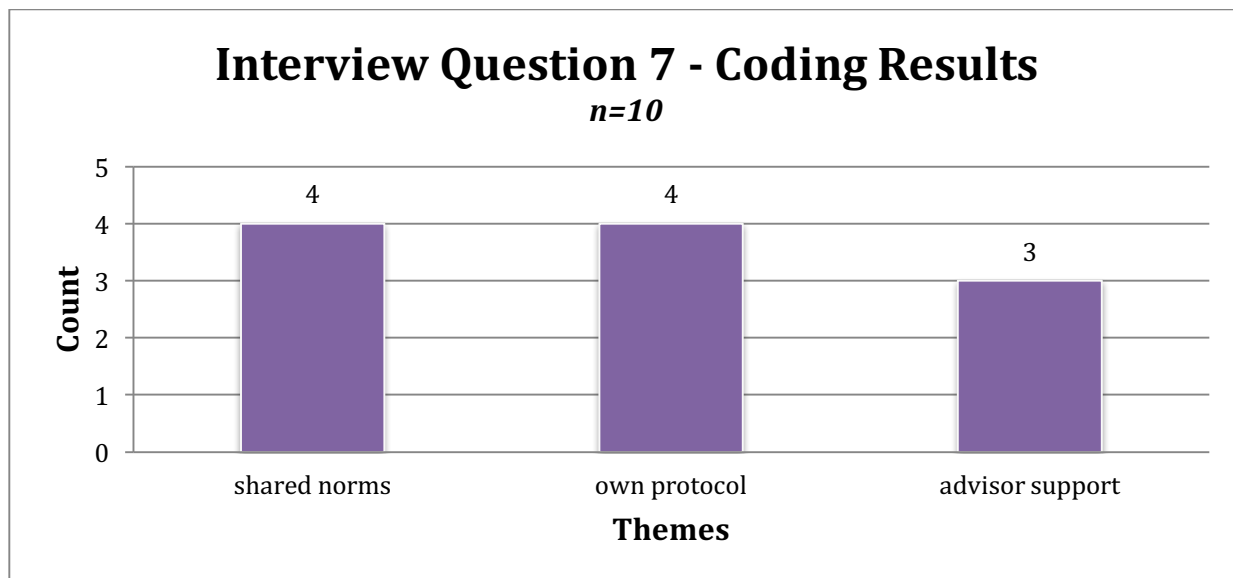


Figure 9. Meeting protocol – multiple responses per interviewee.

*Summary of research question 3.* Many themes emerged from the three interview questions posed to address research question 3: What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups? Diversity practitioners describe how affinity groups are used on their campuses around five themes: *community building*, both inside the groups and in the greater community; creating a *safe space* for individuals to speak about issues; providing *education* to the members of the group as well as the wider community; helping members in their *identity development* and growth; and providing *empowerment* to have a larger voice both personally and in the community. Diversity practitioners list the many different affinity groups in practice that revolve around nine main themes: *LGBT, Black/African American, Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Multiracial, Religious, Faculty of Color, White, and Family Structures*. Meeting protocols, as described by diversity practitioners, fell into three main themes: using *shared norms* during meetings, groups creating their *own protocols*, and using an *advisor to support* the meeting protocol. The literature supports that affinity groups, also known as resource groups, peer networks, or employee networks, can be formed around age, gender, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability



(Arnold, 2006; Batiste, 2004; McGlothlen, 2006). These groups can help people to feel a sense of belonging in a culture that can feel unwelcoming to those who are not in the dominant group (Arnold, 2006). Groups tend to structure into smaller divisions, each having a distinct set of rules or norms that standardize behavior. Each of these smaller groups has certain unspoken rules that control who can say what to whom. Pinto et al. (2010) discuss the subjective group dynamics model with respect to judgments of in-group members being the result of descriptive and prescriptive norms. In groups, members will also affiliate themselves with others according to shared values and interests. Different group members find commonalities and stay together.

**Research question 4.** The fourth research question asked: What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them? Three interview questions address research question four:

IQ8. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?

IQ9. Was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups?

IQ10. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school?

**Interview question 8.** The first question to address obstacles that affinity groups face asked, how long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition? Nine of the 10 respondents (90%) gave answers to this question, with one participant (10%) giving multiple responses based on different affinity groups. Four time groups or themes emerged: three to four years, one year or less, two years, and more than four years.

*Three to four years.* Four of the nine participants (44%) replied that it took either three, four, or three to four years. Participant H stated, “We went from an organically formed, impromptu Asian Affinity Group (which we didn’t really know was an affinity group) to a full-fledged program in about 3-4 years.”

*One year or less.* Two of the nine respondents (22%) said that their affinity groups took one year or less to form from thought to fruition. Participant F shared, “Less than a year for the first one and then even faster for new proposals that developed.”

*Two years.* Two of the nine contributors (22%) also stated that it took their groups two years to form. Participant G answered, “We probably had a 2 year process initially. It was a hard start, but has been smooth sailing since.”

*More than four.* Two of the nine respondents (22%) answered that their affinity groups took more than four years to form from thought to fruition. According to Participant D, “My school has had ‘affinity groups’ since the 1990s, but only this year are they true affinity groups (only open to those who can speak from the ‘I’ perspective).”

Figure 10 shows how the data from interview question 8 broke down into themes. The question asked, how long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition? Four themes emerged from the data: three to four years, one year or less, two years, and more than four years.

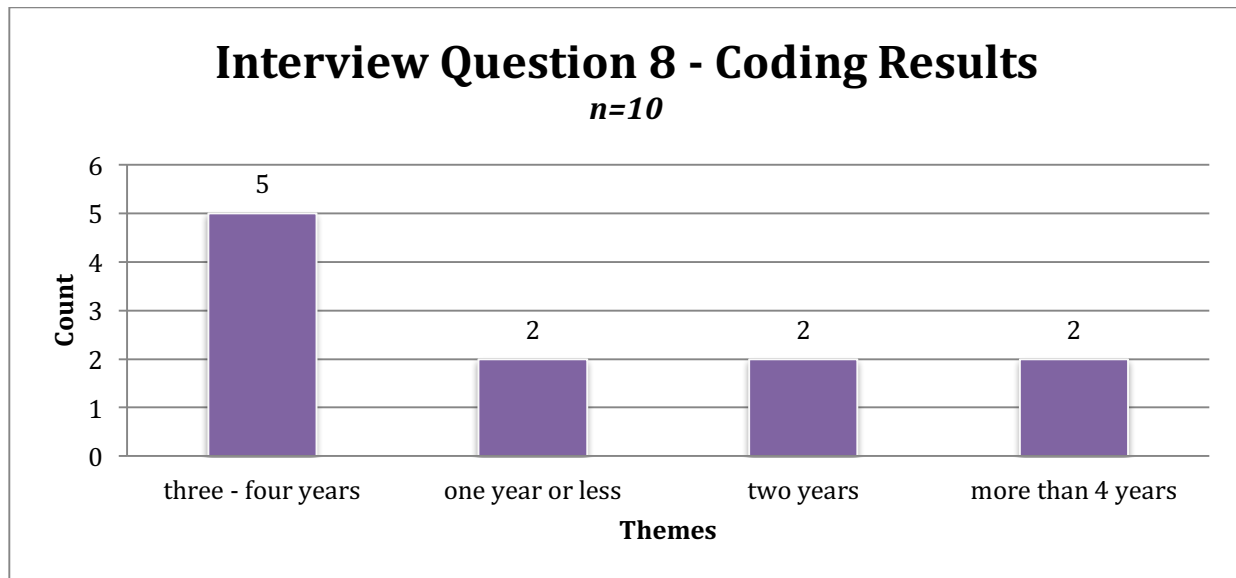


Figure 10. Years to form affinity groups – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 9.** The second question to contribute to the understanding of research question 4 asked, was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups? Nine of the 10 participants (90%) responded to this question. Four of the nine (44%) responded that there was no pushback, and four of the nine (44%) also responded that they did experience pushback. One contributor stated that they did not elicit feedback. All nine respondents (100%) added details to their answers and from those details, two major themes arose: questioning and fear.

**Questioning.** More than half of the respondents talked about the pushback they have witnessed being in the form of questioning. Some of the answers that were coded into this theme were:

- “questions about fragmenting community” (Participant A).
- “uncomfortable questions” (Participant H).
- “watercooler discussions that undermine” (Participant K).

According to Participant M, “Yes, some faculty still have strong feelings about why they are necessary, but once the Head of School said this is the way it was going to be, the dissenting voices quieted a bit. They are still there they just don’t speak or act out publicly about their feelings as much anymore.”

*Fear.* Three of the nine respondents (33%) answered that the pushback they experienced was from fear. Some of the items coded under this theme included:

- “some fear” (Participant D).
- “pushback from admin about expanding” (Participant K).

Participant K stated, “There is also pushback from admin about expanding them for gender and for fac/staff. Concern that this is ‘not a good strategy’ for promoting inclusion and equity and shouldn’t be so prevalent.”

Figure 11 portrays the themes that came about from interview question 9 that asked, was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups? Two themes emerged from the data: questioning and fear.

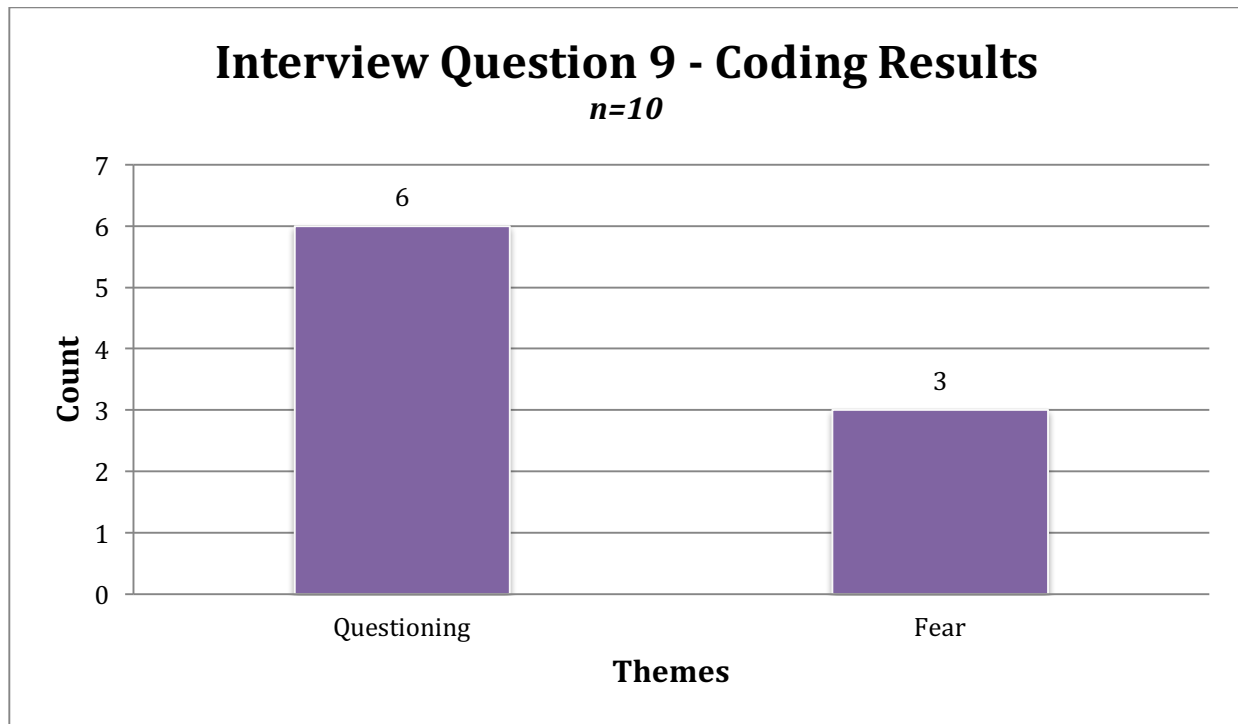


Figure 11. Pushback from faculty and administration – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 10.** The final interview question to correspond to research question 4 asked, were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? If so, how were they overcome? Because there were two parts to this question, the researcher coded each part separately to garner the best understanding of the responses. Nine of the 10 participants (90%) responded to this question. The first part of the question was coded, and three themes emerged: fear of segregation, resistance, and need/purpose. The second part of the question brought about two main themes: education about purpose and outside facilitator. All five themes are listed below.

*Fear of segregation.* Six of the nine respondents (67%) discussed fear of segregation as an obstacle to the formation of affinity groups at their schools. Some of the language coded in this theme was:

- “people feeling excluded” (Participant A).

- “we are not dividing” (Participant B).
- “segregate” (Participant J).
- “feelings of segregation” (Participant M).

Participant K replied, “Biggest obstacle is the belief that affinity groups segregate and undermine inclusion. A lot of work needs to be done to constantly address this concern and backlash.”

*Resistance.* The next obstacle that respondents spoke of was resistance. 33% of the respondents (three out of nine) talked about experiencing some form of resistance to affinity groups at their schools. Answers coded into this theme included:

- “resistance” (Participant H).
- “resistance in the form of anger and fear” (Participant G).
- “White faculty thought they may be divisive” (Participant F).

Participant G stated, “There was a lot of resistance in the form of anger and fear initially. We learned a lot from the process.”

*Need/purpose.* The final obstacle that was discussed was about whether or not affinity groups were needed and what is their purpose. Responses code into this theme included:

- “why affinity groups needed to exist” (Participant F).
- “questions challenging their need” (Participant H).
- “don’t understand purpose or need” (Participant M).

Participant A shared, “when I worked in an all-girls school, they had a difficult time understanding why affinity groups needed to exist when the whole school was one big affinity group.”

*Education about purpose.* This theme arose from the second part of the interview question that asked how obstacles were overcome. Several responses noted that education was needed about the purpose of affinity groups. Items coded under this theme included:

- “lots of discussions” (Participant A).
- “parent evenings...panel for faculty” (Participant G).
- “student panel from all affinity groups” (Participant F).

Participant H explained, “We overcame obstacles and resistance through a really intentional roll-out of the program every year with lots of education for all constituencies.”

*Outside facilitator.* Another theme that came out of the second part of interview question 10 was using an outside facilitator or resource to help people understand about the need for affinity groups. Three of the nine participants (33%) discussed using an outside source to help overcome obstacles. Answers coded with this theme included:

- “use language from NAIS” (Participant B).
- “outside facilitator” (Participant G).

According to Participant D, “Reframing the emphasis on who’s IN the room, rather than who’s NOT in the room was needed. Support from Mari Richards at ECFS was essential.”

Figure 12 shows the themes that emerged from the first part of interview question 10 that asked, were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? Figure 13 illustrates the themes that arose from the second part of interview question 10 that asked, if so, how were they overcome? Three themes emerged from part one of the question: fear of segregation, resistance, and need/purpose. Two themes emerged from part two: education about purpose and outside facilitator.

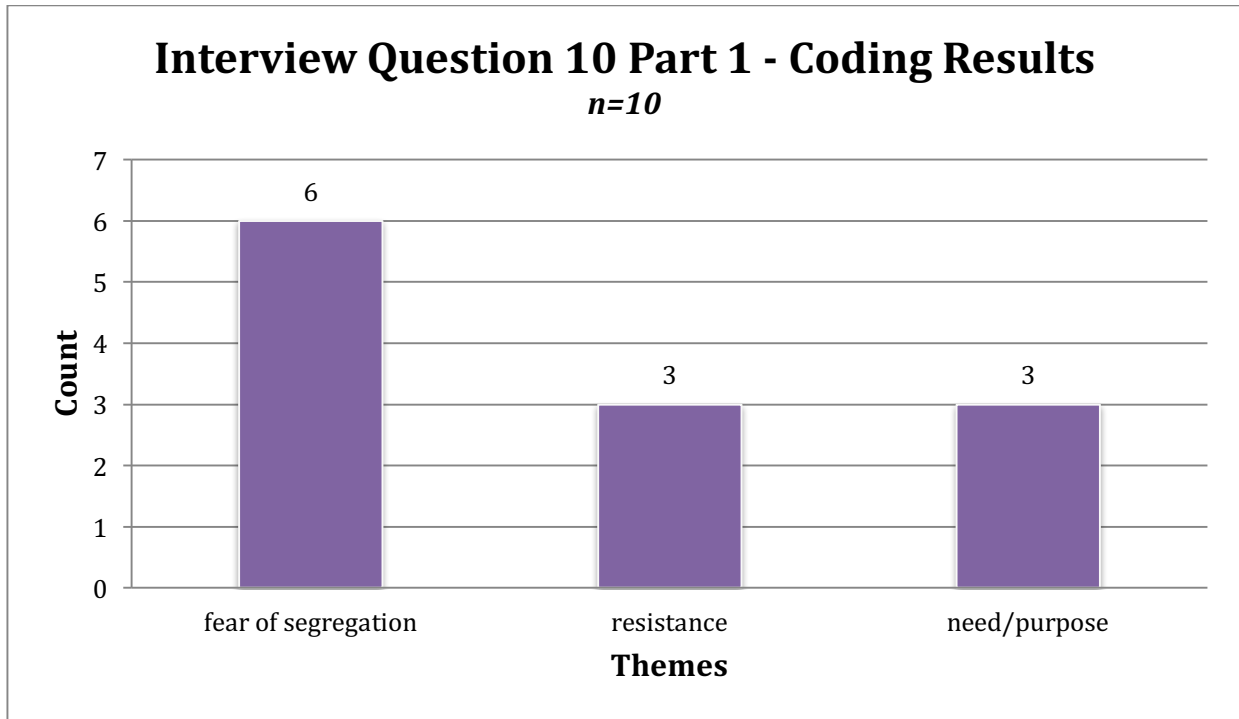


Figure 12. Obstacles to overcome – multiple responses per interviewee.

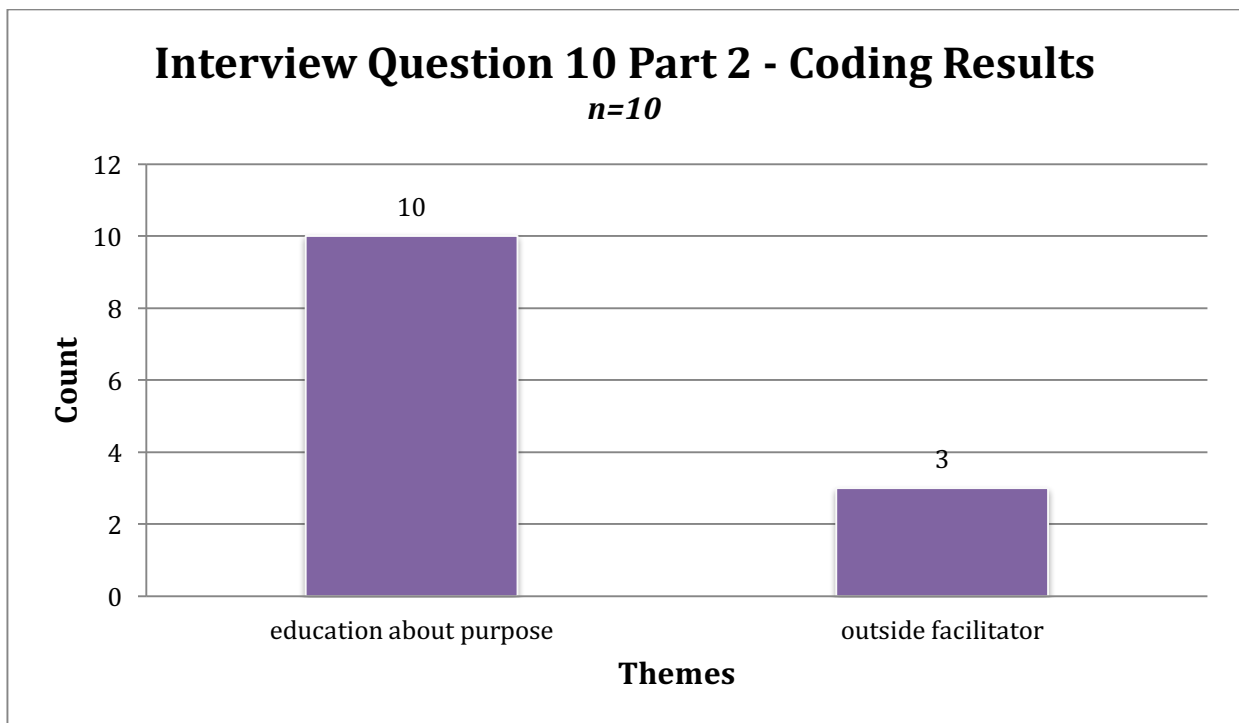


Figure 13. How were obstacles overcome – multiple responses per interviewee.



*Summary of research question 4.* Eleven themes emerged from the three interview questions posed to address research question 4: What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them? Diversity practitioners describe how long it took affinity groups to form at their schools from thought to fruition. Answers grouped into four themes: *three to four years, one year or less, two years, and four or more years*. Diversity practitioners describe that pushback from faculty and administration generally stem from *questioning* the need for affinity groups and *fear* of the unknown. Diversity practitioners describe that the main obstacles affinity groups face are *fear of segregation* in the sense of exclusion and division, resistance in the form of anger or fear, and questioning the *need or purpose* of affinity groups. These obstacles were overcome with a *lot of education and conversations about the purpose* of affinity groups and also with the help of an *outside facilitator*. Because independent schools are predominantly White, privilege is an issue and can create major obstacles to the formation of affinity groups. Jensen (2005) talks about three fears that White people face. The first fear is that much of what White people have is unearned, basically the premise of White privilege. If most White people were truly honest with themselves, they would have to admit that they did not get to where they are today by themselves. The second fear is that White people have a fear of losing what they already have. If there is an economic, political, or social system shift, they could lose the comforts that they enjoy. What would happen if society became more just and equitable? The third fear that White people have is that someday a non-White race will gain power over White people the way that White people have held power for so many years. White people have the fear of becoming the *they* that is often spoken of to represent *others* (Jensen, 2005). White people have a deep fear of losing their privilege and power, even if they do not readily abuse them.

**Research question 5.** The fifth research question asked: What are the lessons learned from having affinity groups? The final three interview questions address research question 5:

IQ11. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?

IQ12. Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups?

IQ13. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe.

**Interview question 11.** The first question that relates to research question five asked: How have affinity groups benefitted your school? All 10 of the participants (100%) responded to this question. Five themes emerged: raise awareness, build community, safe space, empowerment, and sense of identity.

*Raise awareness.* The first theme that grew out of interview question 11 was that affinity groups benefitted schools by raising awareness. Replies to this question that were grouped under this theme included:

- “multiple perspectives honored” (Participant A).
- “students become more empathetic” (Participant D).
- “raised awareness about different diversity related issues” (Participant F).
- “cross grade-level modeling and mentoring” (Participant H).

Participant G further explained, “It’s also served to increase allyship by White students as they increase their awareness and develop skills and competencies in understanding the significance and implications of race and race dynamics through participation in the White Anti-Racist Affinity Group.”

*Build community.* The second theme that arose was that one of the benefits of affinity groups is that they build community. Codes included in this theme were:

- “sense of connection and community” (Participant H).

- “enriched parent, student, staff, and faculty communities...created opportunities for cross cultural dialogue” (Participant C).
- “sense of belonging” (Participant D).

Participant M noted, “They have given students a place to feel comfortable with who they are. They also give students a sense of connection and community that they didn’t have before we began affinity groups.”

*Safe space.* The third theme that was highlighted was that affinity groups benefitted schools by creating a safe space. Responses coded with this theme included:

- “space where students feel their full selves” (Participant K).
- “space for voices to be heard” (Participant J).
- “place to feel comfortable with who they are” (Participant M).
- “safe space to discuss common experiences” (Participant F).

Participant G explicated, “The affinity groups have provided space for our underrepresented students to connect, process, let go, get support, feel a bit reenergized.”

*Empowerment.* The fourth theme that stood out was that affinity groups benefitted schools by empowering individuals. Responses included in this theme were:

- “allowed students to be empowered” (Participant A).
- “people were empowered to discuss” (Participant C).
- “empowered students to be their full selves” (Participant F).
- “feel empowered to share similar experiences” (Participant K).

Participant C shared, “People were empowered to discuss, highlight, share, and celebrate the diversity in our community in an open and honest forum.”

*Sense of identity.* The final theme that came out of interview question 11 was that affinity groups benefitted the school by helping students grow their sense of identity. Answers included:

- “reaffirmed student identity” (Participant F).
- “greater sense of personal identity” (Participant H).
- “comfortable with who they are.” (Participant M).

Participant D explained, “Students who have time to understand their identities and work through internalized biases become more empathetic and thoughtful community members and collaborators.”

Figure 14 portrays the five themes that emerged from interview question 11 that asked, how have affinity groups benefitted your school? The themes that emerged were: raise awareness, build community, safe space, empowerment, and sense of identity.

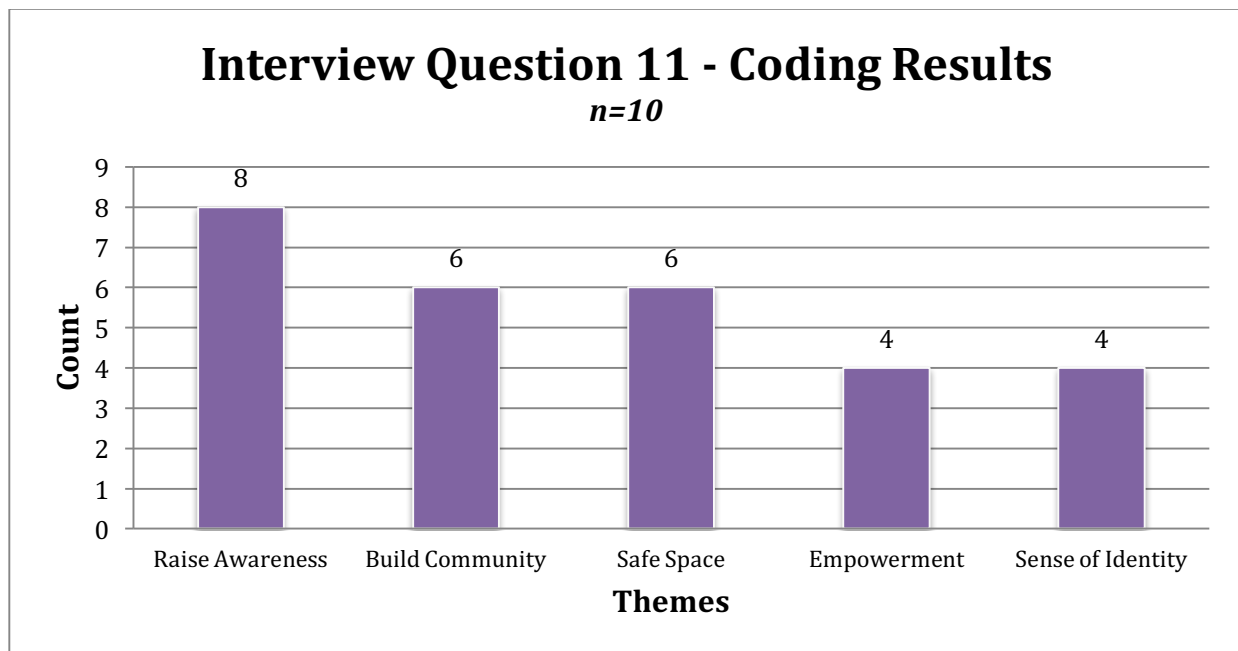


Figure 14. Benefits of affinity groups – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 12.** The second question that corresponds to research question 5 asked: Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups? Nine of the 10 participants (90%) responded to this question. Three main themes emerged from the data as downsides: creates division, insecurity, and poor facilitation.

*Creates division.* Many of the respondents spoke of creating division as a challenge and not necessarily a downside, but there was too much data about it to ignore. Some of the responses code under this theme included:

- “us vs. them” (Participant C).
- “divided the faculty...professional friendships tested” (Participant B).
- “internalized oppression” (Participant D).
- “groups feeling left out” (Participant J).
- “try to prevent friends from going” (Participant H).
- “faculty resentment” (Participant G).

Participant M stated, “Certain members of the community don’t understand the need for them. Others feel that they are reverse racism.”

*Poor facilitation.* The second downside that came out of the data was poor facilitation of affinity groups. Answers included:

- “hard to get student leadership going” (Participant G).
- “need to be advised and moderated well...lack of consistency” (Participant K).
- “adult facilitated” (Participant M).

Participant H noted,

Some facilitators reinforce a single version of identity, making kids outside of that version feel othered. For example, talking only about the experience of traditional Asian parents can feel exclusive to transracially-adopted students. Talking only about the experience of growing up Black in public housing in urban areas can exclude middle class or wealthy Black students.

*Insecurity.* The final theme that appeared revolved around affinity groups creating feelings of insecurity. Responses included:

- “people feel insecure” (Participant C).
- “feel pigeonholed” (Participant D).
- “students are self-conscious...students feel judged” (Participant A).

Participant C shared, “I suspect people are feeling insecure because they don’t understand the power or significance of an affinity group or the positive impact groups bring to a campus.”

Figure 15 illustrates the themes that emerged from interview question 12 that asked, do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups? The themes that emerged from the data were: creates division, poor facilitation, and insecurity.

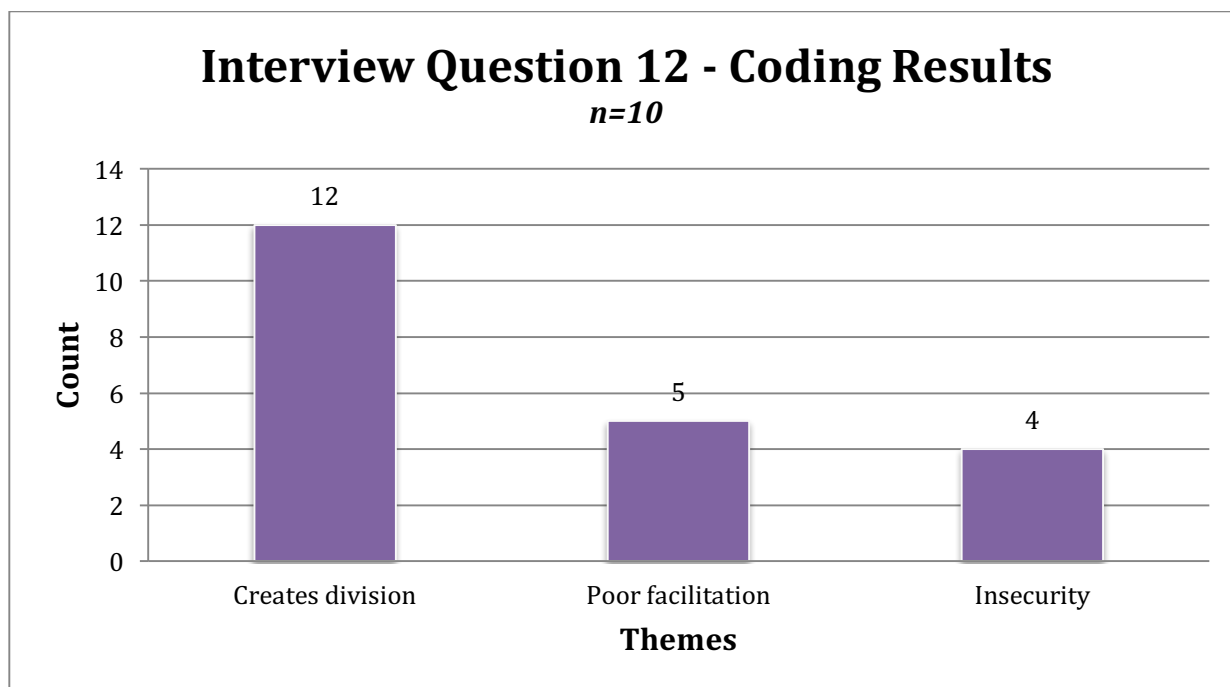


Figure 15. Downsides to affinity groups – multiple responses per interviewee.

**Interview question 13.** The final interview question that corresponded to research question 5 asked: Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe. Four themes emerged from this data: more training, more education, and more specific groups, and more time. 100% of the participants (10 out of 10) responded to this question.

*More training.* The first theme that came out of the data was that more training was needed in cultural sensitivity and facilitation. Some of the answers included:

- “more cultural sensitivity and cultural relevance training for the entire community” (Participant M).
- “train people on facilitation” (Participant J).
- “more consistency and facilitation training” (Participant H).
- “expand student leadership” (Participant G).
- “more faculty centered workshops on cultural sensitivity” (Participant C).

- “more PD for faculty mentors leading the groups” (Participant F).

Participant K stated:

I would do a few things differently. I would have done a lot more education in the community beforehand and consistently every year to ensure a culture of support for them. I also would have put into place policies and practices for them to create more consistency across groups and from year to year – this would include mandatory training for advisors and clear expectations for advisors, group leaders, and groups.

*More education.* The second theme that appeared from the data was more education for all constituencies. Items coded under this theme included:

- “pull some affinity groups into the curriculum” (Participant A).
- “continue to evolve the curriculum” (Participant G).
- “educate the community beforehand...ensure a culture of support” (Participant K).

Participant J replied, “I would like to educate the entire community around these conversations as well as train people on facilitation.”

*More specific groups.* The third theme that materialized from the data was that people would add more specific affinity groups to the mix. Responses included:

- “separate by culture, separate by social class, separate by birth order.” (Participant A)
- “add more intersectional spaces along race and gender, nationality and race.”

(Participant D)

Participant G noted, “We are also approaching a time that it might be valuable to have some ethnic-based affinity groups, instead of just students of color.”



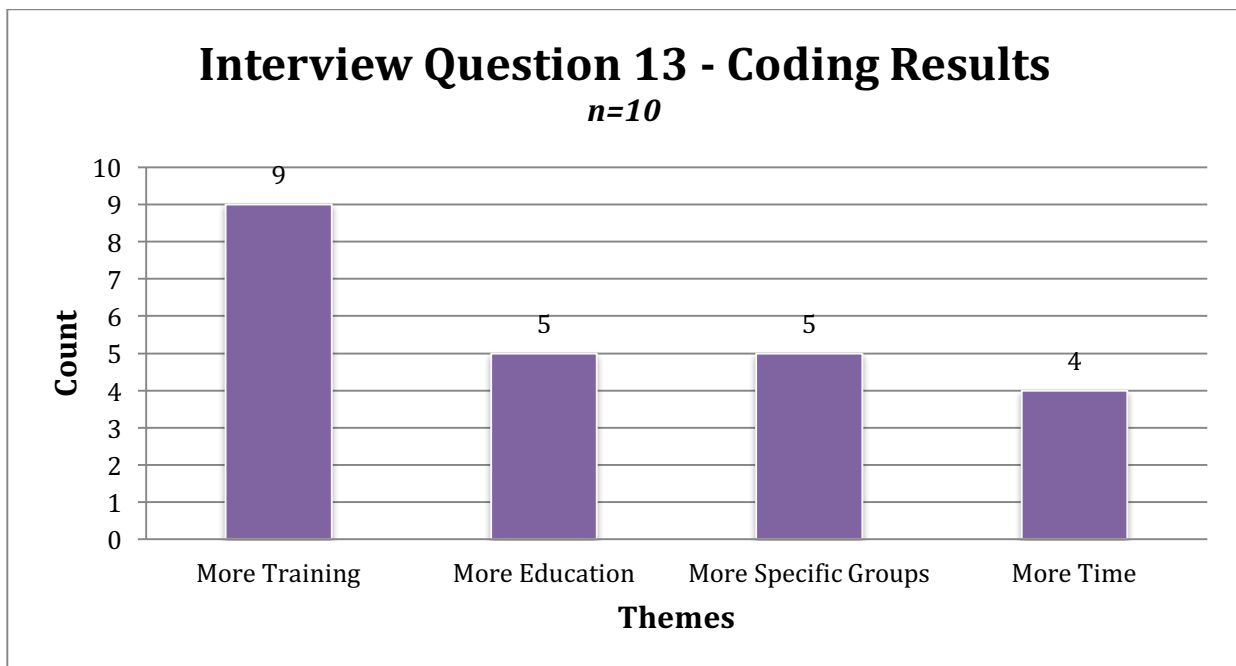
*More time.* The final theme that resulted from the data was the notion of more time.

Respondents did not only want more time for affinity groups, but different times so that students who identified with more than one group could attend multiple groups. Responses included:

- “time committed to this” (Participant B).
- “increase the frequency” (Participant G).
- “time for retreats” (Participant M).

Participant D shared, “I would try to protect times for all affinity groups to meet at different times and add some more intersectional spaces along race and gender nationality and race, etc.”

Figure 16 shows the major themes that emerged from interview question 13 that asked, would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe. Four themes emerged from this data: more time, more training, more education, and more specific groups.



*Figure 16.* Do anything differently – multiple responses per interviewee.

*Summary of research question 5.* Twelve themes emerged from the three interview questions posed to address research question 5: Would you do anything differently than how it is

currently done? Please describe. Diversity practitioners reported that affinity groups have benefitted schools by *empowering* individuals to share similar experiences and to be themselves, by helping students grow their *sense of identity* so that they are comfortable with who they are, by creating a *safe space* for shared experiences, and by *raising awareness* about different perspectives. Diversity practitioners also stated that the downsides that schools have experienced with affinity groups are that people still believe that they *create division*; they can create *insecurity* where students feel judged or self conscious; and they are *poorly facilitated* due to lack of consistency and training. The final information imparted by diversity practitioners was that if they could do things differently, diversity practitioners would devote *more time* to affinity groups in duration and in having groups meet at different times so that students can attend more than one if desired; do *more training* in cultural sensitivity and group facilitation; provide *more education* for all constituencies; and add *more specific affinity groups* to their repertoire. The literature suggests there are significant differences in the overall quality of experience of students of color in independent schools by race (Bassett, 2003). As diversity in independent schools has increased, so has the need to create inclusive environments where everyone honors diversity and all students feel like they belong. Schools that can garner the support of their board of trustees, faculty, students, and parents and create a curriculum rich in diversity, create an inclusive environment (Gow, 2001).

## **Summary**

A password-protected wiki was utilized to collect the data asynchronously. Semi-structured interview questions were posed to participants. Creswell's (2009) steps for qualitative data analysis were followed - the data were managed, read through, coded, classified, represented, and interpreted. There were five research questions, and each had two or three

corresponding interview questions from which themes emerged. Both text and figures were used to display data.

Interview question 1 - How do you define affinity groups? Four themes arose from the data showing that affinity groups are defined by a sharing an identifier, having the “I” perspective, safety, and empowerment. Interview question 2 - How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group? Indicators of when affinity groups are need surrounded three themes: when people are feeling isolated, if there is a student/parent/faculty desire to have one, or when students share marginalized experiences with adults. Interview question 3 - How do you define success for an affinity group? Success for an affinity group revolved around four themes: community acceptance, positive engagement, attendance, and identity building. Interview question 4 - How is success of an affinity group measured? The data showed that success of affinity groups was measured in three main ways: attendance, engagement or participation, and community. Interview question 5 - How are affinity groups used at your school? Affinity groups are used to create a safe space, to empower students or faculty, to educate students and the community, and to develop students’ identities. Interview question 6 - Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves. The different affinity groups listed were too numerous, so affinity groups were placed into thematic groups: Faculty of Color, White, LGBT, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, Religious, Asian, Multiracial, and Family Structures. Interview question 7 - Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow, or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process. The types of meeting protocols fell into three groups: using shared norms, develop their own protocol, and advisor support. Interview question 8 - How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your

school from thought to fruition? The amount of time for affinity groups to form centered on four different time frames: one year or less, two years, three to four years, and more than four years.

Interview question 9 - Was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups? Fear and questioning were the two main reasons for pushback from faculty and administration regarding the formation of affinity groups. Interview question 10 - Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? If so, how were they overcome? When discussing the obstacles that stood in the way of affinity group formation, three main obstacles emerged: fear of segregation, resistance, and questioning the purpose of the groups. When asked how these obstacles were overcome, two solutions appeared: education about the purpose of affinity groups and using an outside facilitator to assist.

Interview question 11 - How have affinity groups benefitted your school? Many benefits of affinity groups surfaced such as empowerment, giving a sense of identity, building community, creating a safe space, and raising awareness. Interview question 12 - Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups? Respondents discussed that the downsides that they have experienced with affinity groups such as creating division, feelings of insecurity, and poor facilitation, were also seen as challenges to overcome. Interview question 13 - Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe. In response to doing things differently, participants wanted more time for affinity groups, more training for the community and the facilitators, more education for all constituencies, and more specific affinity groups to reach more people.

## **Chapter Five: Results and Conclusions**

Diversity and inclusivity in independent schools is an ever-increasing focus and spans all constituencies of the school community. Educational institutions today are faced with the challenge of trying to communicate with and to educate students, particularly students of color, who may not fit in culturally with the school's majority population (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008). Affinity groups can help students feel a sense of belonging and garner success (Arnold, 2006).

Affinity groups, or resource groups that are formed around age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, or disability, can help students feel a sense of belonging and garner success (Arnold, 2006). Being able to support a student of color in a predominantly White community is integral to the success of the student, and affinity groups can provide this support. Affinity groups allow students and faculty to build community, identify issues, share successes, and have honest cross-cultural dialogue (Batiste, 2004).

Independent schools across the nation recognize the need to diversify their schools across all constituencies. They struggle to hold on to their organizational identity while also creating an inclusive environment for students of color. Tatum (2003) argues that if schools hope to create a sense of belonging among their students of color, they will have to examine both the structure and culture of their community.

Independent schools must embrace diversity and create communities in which students from all different cultures feel that they belong. If students of color are to feel included on campus, their culture needs to be included in the curriculum (Tatum, 2003). The literature review suggested that one of the many approaches that independent schools could use to address inclusivity is the creation of affinity groups. This study aimed to contribute to the dearth of

literature in this field and served to create a list of best practices of affinity groups in independent schools.

### **Discussions of the Findings**

This study found many common best practices of affinity groups based on the experiences and expertise of diversity practitioners.

1. Affinity groups are defined as a group that is created from a shared identifier (identity, race, gender, religion, family status, etc.); participants can speak about experiences from the “I” perspective; provides emotional and psychological safety; and empowers those who are underrepresented by giving them a larger voice.
2. Diversity Practitioners know there is a need for affinity groups when a group of people is feeling isolated; there is a desire to form a group; and when students begin to share marginalized experiences with adults.
3. Affinity group success is defined by community acceptance, positive student engagement, high attendance, and when students are able to build on who they are (identity).
4. Affinity group success is measured by attendance, engagement in the form of active student participation, and a positive sense of community.
5. Affinity groups are used to create a safe space for group members to gather and share, to help members feel more empowered in their environment, to educate group members and the wider community, to build community through fellowship and shared experiences, and to build one’s identity around the common identifier.

6. Affinity groups form based on need and interest. Each school had groups that spoke to their community's needs and interests.
7. Affinity groups create their own protocol based on the needs of the group, but shared norms and advisor support are recommended.
8. Depending on the support of your community, the time it takes to form affinity groups varies.
9. Pushback from faculty and administration generally stems from fear of the unknown and questioning the need for affinity groups.
10. The main obstacles affinity groups face are fear of segregation in the sense of exclusion and division, resistance in the form of anger or fear, and questioning the need or purpose of affinity groups. These obstacles were overcome with a lot of education and conversations about the purpose of affinity groups and also with the help of an outside facilitator.
11. Affinity groups have benefitted schools by empowering individuals to share similar experiences and to be themselves, by helping students grow their sense of identity so that they are comfortable with who they are, by creating a safe space for shared experiences, and by raising awareness about different perspectives.
12. The downsides that schools have experienced with affinity groups are that people still believe that they create division; they can create insecurity where students feel judged or self-conscious; and they are poorly facilitated due to lack of consistency and training.
13. If they could do things differently, diversity practitioners would devote more time to affinity groups in duration and in having groups meet at different times so that

students can attend more than one if desired; do more training in cultural sensitivity and group facilitation; provide more education for all constituencies; and add more specific affinity groups to their repertoire.

The key findings of this study were supported by the literature in this field. Banks and Banks (1993) suggest that children, as young as three and from all different backgrounds, are able to recognize differences in skin color and associate hierarchical patterns with these differences. Children of color who attend independent schools, even from a young age, feel different. Having cultures clubs or affinity groups to support these students gives them an environment where they can learn about and grow their identities in a healthy manner.

As diversity in independent schools has increased, so has the need to create inclusive environments where everyone honors diversity and all students feel like they belong. Findings in this study indicated the importance of educating the community about affinity groups and also gaining the support of the Head of School. All stakeholders shared an understanding of the need for affinity groups and a desire to make them meaningful for all constituencies involved. As a result, affinity groups at these schools are prevalent and thrive.

At schools where there was a lot of pushback from faculty, once the Head of School gave his/her mandate that this was the direction the school was taking, dissenting voices quieted. Administrative support is necessary for affinity group success. No matter if the school had a few affinity groups or many, information gathered showed that affinity groups help students feel more connected to their environment and give students a safe space to grow their identities and share their experiences. These experiences lead to a sense of belonging and help students feel more included in their environment. Arrington et al. (2003) note that independent schools have



an obligation to pay attention to the emotional and structural challenges that students of color face, as well as the academics in order to ensure a positive experience in independent schools.

One of the findings from this study defines affinity groups as a group that is created from a shared identifier (identity, race, gender, religion, family status, etc.); participants can speak about experiences from the “I” perspective; provides emotional and psychological safety; and empowers those who are underrepresented by giving them a larger voice. Tatum (2003) discusses how students of color want to share their experiences with other students of color, and look to each other for support and understanding. Even when formal affinity groups are not formed, informal ones happen because students want to be around other students that look, act, and feel like they do.

### **Implications of the Study**

The findings of this study have contributed to the body of knowledge about affinity groups and their purpose. Included in the study are several best practices derived from diversity practitioners who have worked with affinity groups for many years. The research showed how affinity groups are used to help in independent schools to create a safe space for members to share experiences and to grow their identities.

**Implications for educators.** Educators may be able to gain an understanding of why affinity groups are necessary to help underrepresented communities feel more included in environments where they may feel they have no voice. Teaching is not only about imparting academic knowledge, but also about helping students realize their full potential academically, socially, and emotionally. Educators today, in both public and private schools, are faced with the challenge of trying to communicate with and to educate students, particularly students of color, who may not fit in culturally with the school’s majority population (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008).

**Implications for diversity practitioners.** From this study, diversity practitioners may be able to learn best practices on how to start and how to best support affinity groups at their schools. The key findings from this study may also help diversity practitioners gain support from their administrators for the creation of affinity groups or the expansion of their existing program. This study not only discusses the positive aspects, but also the challenges that affinity groups may bring. Being fully informed about what pushback or challenges may happen can help diversity practitioners to navigate these situations a little easier. The presence of diversity in the independent school environment is critical to the success of students of color. Many non-cognitive obstacles inhibit the success of students of color who attend predominantly White schools including institutional racism, oppositional identity, and internalized oppression (Fordham & Ogbu, 1986; Tatum, 2003).

**Implications for administrators.** Administrators may gain a bit more insight into why students of color behave one way or another and why they may feel marginalized. Having groups where they can share their experiences in a safe environment may help students be more successful in environments where majority of the people do not look like them. Schools must make the necessary adjustments to ensure that students of color understand and feel included in their school communities (Delpit & Dowdy, 2008).

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

This study garnered meaningful information that resulted in common best practices, and opened opportunities for additional research in this area. Diversity is an ever growing and changing entity in independent schools. As the world becomes more diverse, so will the populations at independent schools. The following are recommendations for future studies in this area:

- A study with a larger sample size would give more information on how affinity groups are used at more schools.
- A study on just the best practices of how to educate communities on the importance and need for affinity groups.
- A study on student performance in independent schools, with and without the support of affinity groups.
- A qualitative analysis of student diversity populations and the number of affinity groups available to students.
- A study on student experience in independent schools with and without affinity groups.
- A study on faculty accountability when teaching about diversity or multiculturalism.
- A study on administrator understanding and feelings toward affinity groups.
- A study on student population diversity compared to affinity groups offered.

### **Final Thoughts**

Being an educator and an administrator of color not only prompted this study, but also gave the researcher personal insight into this topic. Even though the researcher did not attend an independent school, she had many similar experiences to those students who do, as she attended a school where she was one of a small handful of Asian/Pacific Islander students. This study only scratches the surface of the issues that students of color feel in an environment where they are greatly underrepresented. There is still much to learn about diversity and privilege, not only as it pertains to independent schools, but also as it pertains to the society at large.

Independent schools are working toward more diverse student populations and faculties. There is still much to learn about how to create inclusive environments for students who identify

with underrepresented groups such as race, gender, or sexual orientation. Affinity groups are being used in many independent schools to help mitigate feelings of being an outsider, being excluded, or just feel like the “other.”

This study provided so many interesting and important bits of information about the how affinity groups are being used in independent schools today. Diversity practitioners define and measure the success of affinity groups in very similar ways, mostly student engagement and participation. This is important to note because schools that do not have affinity groups to support their students of color may have students who feel unsupported and lost.

As an educator of color, I have found myself naturally forming informal affinity groups in many of my own settings. As a teacher, I found myself meeting with my fellow colleagues of color to have lunch or to discuss curriculum. As a doctoral student, I found myself sitting with others who look like me. I did not realize it was happening until another White student dubbed us the “So-Pac” group, short for South Pacific. It is natural for people to want to be surrounded by people who look like them, talk like them, and behave like them. We look for understanding from those who may have experienced things the same way we do. Even when I talk to Asian students today, we find commonalities in the ways we were raised...strict parents who hold on a little too tightly, who have high expectations for school, and who place a strong emphasis on family.

Another interesting outcome of this study was that even though diversity practitioners had different experiences with affinity groups in their respective schools, all 10 practitioners felt that affinity groups benefitted their students. This spoke volumes to me about the need of affinity groups in schools, both private and public. Having gone to a public school where I was one of 10 Asian/multi-racial students, I would have enjoyed having an affinity group to belong

to. Even though informal affinity groups occur, having the support of adults who also understand is beneficial. When I was in elementary school, I did not automatically gravitate toward people who looked like me, but when I got older and more aware, I felt the need to be around other Asians or Pacific Islanders.

As the world gets flatter and more diverse, people will look for support from those who understand. Businesses have used affinity groups as a form of support and employee recruitment for decades. Schools should take note and learn from their successes. Independent schools that are looking to diversify their student bodies may find it useful to have a parent affinity group reach out to new families of color.

The results of this study have so many positive implications for the future of students of color in independent schools. Further research in this area is vital to the continued understanding of how to support and nurture growth in students of color in independent schools. Giving students a forum of support and guidance will help to foster their sense of belonging in environments that may feel unwelcome to them. Independent schools provide a plethora of opportunity for all of its students. Adding support through the formation of affinity groups would enhance all of the cognitive and non-cognitive experiences of their students of color. Diversity is happening all around us. It is time to take notice and cultivate those who will be the leaders of our future.

## REFERENCES

- Aguilar, C. M., & Gross, F. E. (1999). Affinity groups. *Schools in the Middle*, 9(2), 23-26.  
Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 507658500)
- Anderman, E. M. (2002). School effects on psychological outcomes during adolescence. *Journal of Educational Psychology*, 94(4), 795–809. doi: 10.1037//0022-0663.94.4.795
- Arnold, J. T. (2006). Employee networks. *HR Magazine*. 51(6), 145-152. Retrieved from:  
[https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0606agenda\\_div.aspx](https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0606agenda_div.aspx)
- Arrington, E. G., Hall, D. M., & Stevenson, H. C. (2003). The success of African-American students in independent schools. *Independent School*, 62(4), 11-21. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nais.org/Magazines-Newsletters/ISMagazine/Pages/The-Success-of-African-American-Students-in-Independent-Schools.aspx>
- Atkinson, D. R., Morten, G., & Sue, D. W. (Eds.). (1998). *Counseling American minorities: A cross cultural perspective* (5th ed.). New York, NY: McGraw Hill Company.
- Baird, L. (1977). *The elite schools: A profile of prestigious independent schools*. Lanham, MD: Lexington Books.
- Banks, J. A., & Banks, C. A. (1993). *Multicultural education: Issues and perspectives* (2nd ed.). Needham Heights, MA: Allyn and Bacon.
- Bassett, P. F. (2003). Listening to students of color. *Independent School*, 62(4), 7-8. Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 10587084)
- Bassett, P. F. (2004). The inclusive independent school. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/The-Inclusive-Independent-School.aspx>

- Batiste, G. (2004). *The 2004 conference for assistant heads and division heads, New York State association of independent schools* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.nysais.org/uploaded/downloads/NYSAIS\\_Keynote.ppt](http://www.nysais.org/uploaded/downloads/NYSAIS_Keynote.ppt)
- Batiste, G. (2006). *Understanding affinity: Benefits and challenges for an independent school community* [PowerPoint slides]. Retrieved from <http://slideplayer.com/slide/6183062/>
- Bay Area People of Color in Independent Schools. (2008). *Affinity groups*. Retrieved from:  
[http://www.caryacademy.pvt.k12.nc.us/uploaded/Diversity/Bay\\_Area\\_People\\_of\\_Color\\_in\\_Independent\\_Schools\\_Affinity\\_Group\\_Q\\_&A.pdf](http://www.caryacademy.pvt.k12.nc.us/uploaded/Diversity/Bay_Area_People_of_Color_in_Independent_Schools_Affinity_Group_Q_&A.pdf)
- Blackburn G., & Wise, T. (2009). Addressing White privilege in independent schools: Frequently asked questions (and their answers). *Independent School*, 68(3), 114-120.  
Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 37214780)
- Boje, D. M. (2001). *Narrative methods for organizational & communication research*. London, England: Sage.
- Booth, S. (2008). *2007 Head of school leadership challenges survey*. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.nais.org/articles/pages/member/nais-2007-head-of-school-leadership-challenges-survey.aspx>
- Boser, U. (2011). *Teacher diversity matters: A state-by-state analysis of teachers of color*. Retrieved from:  
<https://www.americanprogress.org/issues/education/report/2011/11/09/10657/teacher-diversity-matters/>
- Capparell, S. (2008). *The real Pepsi challenge: How one pioneering company broke color barriers in 1940s American business*. New York, NY: Free Press, A Division of Simon & Schuster.

- Career Communications Group. (2009). Spotlight on employee resource groups. *U.S. Black Engineer & Information Technology*, 33(1), 68. Retrieved from:  
<http://connection.ebscohost.com/c/articles/36886780/spotlight-employee-resource-groups>  
(Accession No. 36886780)
- Chase, S. E. (2003). Learning to listen: Narrative principals in a qualitative research methods course. In R. Josselson, A. Lieblich, & D. McAdams (Eds.), *Up close and personal: The teaching and learning of narrative research* (pp. 79-99). doi:10.1037/10486-005
- Chase, S. E. (2011). Narrative inquiry: Still a field in the making. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 421-435). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Christians, C. G. (2011). Ethics and politics in qualitative research. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The sage handbook of qualitative research* (pp. 139-164). Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
- Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research design: Qualitative, quantitative, and mixed method approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Cross, W. E. (1991). *Shades of Black: Diversity in African-American identity*. Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press.
- Deal, T. E. (1991). Private schools: Bridging Mr. Chips and my captain. *Teachers College Record*, 92(3), 415-424. Retrieved from: <http://www.tcrecord.org/library> (ID Number: 324)



- Delpit, L., & Dowdy, J. K. (2008). *The skin that we speak: Thoughts on language and culture in the classroom*. New York, NY: New Press.
- Denevi, E. (2004). White on White: Exploring White racial identity, privilege, and racism. *Independent School*, 63(4), 78-87. Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 18075616)
- Denevi, E., & Richards, M. (2009). Diversity directors as leaders: Making the case for excellence. *Independent School*, 68(3), 60-68. Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 37214772)
- Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (2011). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Digh, P. (1997). When affinity groups matter. *Association Management*, 81-89.
- Douglas, P. H. (2008). Affinity groups: Catalyst for inclusive organizations. *Employment Relations Today (Wiley)*, 34(4), 11-18. doi:10.1002/ert.20171
- Eisner, E. W. (1991). *The enlightened eye: Qualitative inquiry and the enhancement of educational practice*. New York, NY: Macmillan.
- Esen, E. (2005). *2005 workplace diversity practices: Survey report*. Alexandria, VA: Society for Human Resource Management.
- Farrington v. Tokushige, 273 U.S. 284 (1927)
- Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Fontana, A., & Frey, J. H. (2005). The interview: From neutral stance to political involvement. In Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (eds.), *The Sage Handbook of Qualitative Research* (3rd ed., pp. 695-728). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

- Fordham, S., & Ogbu, J. U. (1986). Black students' school success: Coping with the burden of 'acting White'. *The Urban Review*, 18(3), 176-206. doi: 10.1007/BF01112192
- Gaztambide-Fernandez, R. (2009). *The best of the best: Becoming an elite at an American boarding school*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Gilgun, J. F. (2010). Reflexivity and qualitative research. *Current issues in Qualitative Research*, 1(2), 1-8. Retrieved from: <https://www.scribd.com/doc/36744417/Current-Issues-in-Qualitative-Research-Volume-1-1-8-August-2010>
- Ginsberg, M. B., and Wlodkowski, R. J. (2009). *Diversity and motivation: Culturally responsive teaching in college* (2nd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Goodenow, C. (1993). The psychological sense of school membership among adolescents: Scale development and educational correlates. *Psychology in the Schools*, 30, 70-90.  
doi:10.1002/1520-6807(199301)30:1<79::AID-PITS2310300113>3.0.CO;2-X
- Gow, P. (2001). Reaching every student: Conjoining curriculum & diversity. *Independent School*, 61(1), 42-47. Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 5308462)
- Hall, D. M., & Stevenson, H. C. (2007). Double jeopardy: Being African-American and "doing diversity" in independent schools. *Teachers College Record*, 109(1), 1-23. Retrieved from: <http://www.tcrecord.org/library> (ID Number: 12715)
- Handy, J., & Ross, K. (2005). Using written accounts in qualitative research. *South Pacific Journal of Psychology*, 16(1), 40-47. Retrieved from: <http://spjp.massey.ac.nz>
- Helms, J. E. (Ed.). (1993). *Black and White racial identity: Theory, research and practice*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

- Hoffman, J. P. (2003). Separation on the road to equity. *Independent School*, 62(4), 50-54.  
Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 10587099)
- Hotchkiss, C. W. (2005). Putting humanity first: A curriculum for the 21<sup>st</sup> century. *Independent School*, 64(4), 18-25. Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 18075559)
- Howard, G. R. (2007). As diversity grows, so must we. *Educational Leadership*, 64(6), 16-22.  
Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 24657419)
- Hyatt, L. (2011). The dynamic narrative approach. In D. M. Boje & K. Baskin (Eds.), *Dance to the music of story: Understanding human behavior through the integration of storytelling and complexity thinking* (pp. 189-204). Litchfield Park, AZ: Emergent Publishers.
- Jensen, R. (2005). *The heart of Whiteness: Confronting race, racism, and White privilege*. San Francisco, CA: City Lights Books.
- Johnson, A. G. (2006). *Privilege, power, and difference*. New York, NY: McGraw Hill.
- Johnson, B., & Christensen, L. B. (2010). *Educational research: Quantitative, qualitative, and mixed approaches*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Kane, P. R. (1992). *Independent schools, independent thinkers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass Publishers.
- Kane, P. R. (2003). *The colors of excellence: Hiring and keeping teachers of color in independent schools*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.
- Kaufman, I. (2003). Directing diversity: Advice for schools and diversity directors. *Independent School*, 62(4), 22-28. Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 10587086)

- Keigher, A., & Gruber, K. (2009). *Characteristics of public, private, and bureau of Indian education elementary and secondary schools in the United States: Results from the 2007–08 schools and staffing survey*. Washington, D.C.: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics.
- Kennedy, R. (2009). Are private schools elitist? Diversity rules! *Private Schools*. Retrieved from: <http://privateschool.about.com/od/usschoolsonline/qt/elitist.htm?p=1>
- Kirk, J., & Miller, M. L. (1986). *Reliability and validity in qualitative research*. Beverly Hills, CA: Sage.
- Klenke, K. (2008). *Qualitative research in the study of leadership*. Bingley, United Kingdom: Emerald.
- Leedy, P. D., & Ormrod, J. E. (2005). *Practical research: Planning and design* (8th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Prentice Hall.
- Lindsey, R. B., Robins, K. N., & Terrell, R. D. (2009). *Cultural proficiency: A manual for school leaders*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin
- Maslow, A. H. (1943). A theory of human motivation. *Psychological Review*, 50, 370-396. doi: 10.1037/h0054346
- Maxwell, J. (2002). Understanding and validity in qualitative research. In A. M. Huberman & M. B. Miles (Eds.), *The qualitative researcher's companion* (pp. 37-64). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Maxwell, J. A. (2005). *Qualitative research design: An interactive approach* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- McGlothlen, C. (2006). Inclusive, exclusive or outlawed? *HR Magazine* 51(7), 107. Retrieved from: <https://www.shrm.org/hr-today/news/hr-magazine/pages/0706legaltrends.aspx>

- McIntosh, P. (2008). White privilege and male privilege: A personal account of coming to see correspondences through work in women's studies. In M. McGoldrick & K. Hardy (Eds.), *Re-visioning family therapy* (2nd ed., pp. 238-249). New York, NY: Guilford.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in education: Evidence-based inquiry* (7th ed.). Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson.
- Mendenhall, M. E., Osland, J. S., Bird, A., Oddou, G. R., Maznevski, M. L., Stevens, M. J., & Stahl, G. K. (2013). *Global leadership: Research, practice, and development* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.
- Merriam-Webster. (2016). *Dictionary*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/private%20school>
- Moule, J. (2012). *Cultural competence: A primer for educators*. Belmont, CA: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning.
- Moustakas, C. E. (1994). *Phenomenological research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Meyer v. Nebraska, 262 U.S. 390 (1923)
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2005). *Diversity and multiculturalism*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/Diversity-and-Multiculturalism-147595.aspx>
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2011a). *Association facts at a glance*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nais.org/statsonline>
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2015a). *About NAIS*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nais.org/About/Pages/About-NAIS.aspx?src=utility>
- National Association of Independent School, (2015b). *Job description: Director of diversity*. Retrieved from: <http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/Member/Director-of-Diversity.aspx>

- National Association of Independent Schools. (2016a). *Equity and justice*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.nais.org/Series/Pages/Equity-and-Justice.aspx>
- National Association of Independent Schools. (2016b). *Principles of good practice (PGPs)*.  
Retrieved from: <http://www.nais.org/Articles/Pages/Principles-of-Good-Practice.aspx>
- National Center for Education Statistics. (2010). *The condition of education*. Retrieved from:  
<http://nces.ed.gov/programs/coe/>
- O'Connell, T. S., & Cuthbertson, B. (2009). *Group dynamics in recreation and leisure: Creating conscious groups through an experiential approach*. Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics.
- Ogbu, J. U. (1993). Variability in minority school performance: A problem in search of an explanation. In E. Jacob and C. Jordan (Eds.), *Minority education: Anthropological perspectives* (pp. 83-111). Norwood, New Jersey: Ablex Publishing.
- Ogbu, J. U., & Davis, A. (2003). *Black American students in an affluent suburb: A study of academic disengagement*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.
- Parsons, J., & Ridley, K. (2012). Identity, affinity, reality. *Independent School*, 71(2), 38-47.  
Retrieved from: Education Full Text Publications. (Accession No. 69904326)
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative research and evaluation methods* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Peavy, R. V. (1995). *Career counseling with native clients: Understanding the context*.  
Retrieved from: ERIC database. (ED399485)
- Pepperdine University Institutional Review Boards. (2009). *Human subject research*. Retrieved from: <http://services.pepperdine.edu/irb/policies/>
- Pierce v. Society of Sisters, 268 U.S. 510 (1925)

- Pinto, I. R., Marques, J. M., Levine, J. M., & Abrams, D. (2010). Membership status and subjective group dynamics: Who triggers the Black sheep effect? *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 99(1), 107-119. doi: 10.1037/a0018187
- Powell, A. G. (1998). *Lessons from privilege: The American prep school tradition*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.
- Private schooling. (2016). Retrieved from:  
<http://education.stateuniversity.com/pages/2334/Private-Schooling.html>
- Ravitch, D. (1992). A culture in common. *Educational Leadership*, 49(4), 8-11. Retrieved from:  
Academic Search Complete. (Accession No. 9202102223)
- Ruiz, A. S. (1990). Ethnic identity: Crisis and resolution. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 18(1), 29-40. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.1990.tb00434.x
- Sandelowski, M. (1991). Telling stories: Narrative approaches in qualitative research. *Journal of nursing scholarship*, 23(3), 161-166. doi:10.1111/j.1547-5069.1991.tb00662.x
- Sarason, I. G., & Sarason, B. R. (2009). Social support: Mapping the construct. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 26, 113-120. doi:10.1177/0265407509105526
- Saufler, C. (2005). School climate and culture. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.safeschoolsforall.com/schoolclimate.html>
- Schein, E. H. (2004). *Organizational culture and leadership* (3rd ed.). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Seidman, I. (1998). *Interviewing as qualitative research: A guide for researchers in education and the social sciences*. New York, NY: Teacher's College Press.
- Shearer, T. M. (2002). White spaces. *The Other Side*, 38(2), 16-20. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.whiteprivilegeconference.com/resources/08-White-Spaces.pdf>

- Slaughter, D. T., & Johnson, D. J. (1988). *Visible now: Blacks in private schools*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.
- Sue, D. (2003). *Abnormal psychology*. New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin
- Sue, D. W. & Sue, D. (2008). *Counseling the culturally diverse*. Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons.
- Tatum, B. D. (1992). Talking about race, learning about racism: The application of racial identity development theory in the classroom. *Harvard Educational Review*, 62(1), 1–25.  
doi:10.17763/haer.62.1.146k5v980r703023
- Tatum, B. D. (1994). Teaching White students about racism: The search for White allies and the restoration of hope. *Teachers College Record*, 95(4), 462-476. Retrieved from:  
ERIC database. (EJ490199)
- Tatum, B. D. (2003). *Why are all the Black kids sitting together in the cafeteria?* New York, NY: Basic Books.
- Thyer, B. A. (2010). *The handbook of social work research methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. (2010). *The Belmont Report*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/belmont-report/>
- Vandiver, B. J., Fhagen-Smith, P. E., Cokley, K. O., Cross, W. E., & Worrell, F. C. (2001). Cross's nigrescence model from theory to scale to theory. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development*, 29, 174-200. doi:10.1002/j.2161-1912.2001.tb00516.x
- Vogt, W. P. (2005). *Dictionary of statistics and methodology: A nontechnical guide for the social sciences*. London, England: Sage.



- Willams, K. (2003). From civil rights to the multiracial movement. In L. I. Winters & H. L. DeBose (Eds.), *New faces in a changing America: multiracial identity in the 21st century* (pp. 85-98). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Wilson, V. (1992). How independent is independent school curriculum? In Kane, P. R. (Ed). *Independent schools, independent thinkers*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.
- Wise, T. (2008). *White like me: Reflections on race from a privileged son*. Berkeley, CA: Soft Skull Press.

## APPENDIX A

### Informed Consent for Participation in Research Activity

**Title of the Study:** Best Practices of Affinity Groups in Independent Schools

**Participant:** Your participation is voluntary. Your selection to potentially participate in this study is based upon specific research criteria requirements. Your consent is requested to voluntarily participate in this research study conducted by Cindy P. Chun, a doctoral student at the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University. This project is research being conducted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for a dissertation. This study will be conducted under the supervision of Farzin Madjidi, Ed.D., faculty advisor at Pepperdine University.

**Purpose:** The purpose of this study is to find the best practices of affinity groups in independent schools.

**Procedures:** Your voluntary participation in this study will involve the following:

1. You will be directed to a password protected wiki site to complete the questionnaire.
2. Questions will be posed surrounding affinity groups in independent schools.
3. You will complete the questionnaire individually, at a time and place of your choosing.
4. The password-protected wiki allows only the participants and the researcher access to responses, but not to identifiable information.
5. It is anticipated that the questionnaire will take 30-60 minutes to complete.
6. Please complete the questions within a two-week timeframe.
7. You will have an opportunity to review, verify, delete or edit your transcriptions.
8. The password-protected wiki will be deleted once the data is collected.
9. You will not receive payment for participation in this study.
10. A summary of the findings will be available upon request.

**Potential Risks:** The potential risks of your voluntary participation are equal to that of daily life. There are no known risks identified with this study. You have the right to selectively answer the questions or delete your responses. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

**Potential Benefits:** The potential benefits of your voluntary participation are contributing the area of knowledge in regards to how affinity groups are used to make independent schools more inclusive for students of color. You may help to open the door to additional research. This may provide leaders with a more in depth understanding of the need for affinity groups and how they can be used successfully.

**Participation and Withdrawal:** Your participation is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. The researcher also has the right to cease your participation in the study.

**Confidentiality:** Your identity will not be revealed, and your name will remain confidential. The researcher will take all reasonable measures to protect the confidentiality of your records and your identity will not be revealed in any publication that may result from this project. All data collected from this study will be coded and kept within a locked file cabinet. The confidentiality of your records will be maintained in accordance with applicable state and federal laws. Under California law, there are exceptions to confidentiality, including suspicion that a child, elder, or dependent adult is being abused, or if an individual discloses an intent to harm him/herself or others.

**Questions:** If you have any questions regarding the research herein described, please contact Cindy P. Chun by phone ( ) or email (cpchun@pepperdine.edu). You may also contact Dr. Farzin Madjidi, Dissertation Advisor, by email (fmadjidi@pepperdine.edu) if you have any additional questions or concerns regarding this research. You may also contact Dr. Doug Leigh, Graduate and Professional School IRB Chair, Pepperdine University, (doug.leigh@pepperdine.edu).

**Signature of Research Participant:** I understand to my satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project. All my questions have been answered to my satisfaction. I have received a copy of this informed consent form, which I have read and understand. I hereby consent to participate in the research described above and agree to print, sign, scan, and email this form back to the Investigator at cpchun@pepperdine.edu.

Name of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Signature of Investigator:**

It is my determination that the potential participant has voluntarily signed this document. I have explained and defined in detail the research procedure in which the subject has consented to participate. Having explained this and answered any questions, I am cosigning this form and accepting this person's consent.

Name of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Investigator: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## APPENDIX B

### Protecting Human Research Participants Certificate of Completion



#### **Certificate of Completion**

The National Institutes of Health (NIH)  
Office of Extramural Research certifies  
that **Cindy P. Chun** successfully  
completed the NIH Web-based training  
course “Protecting Human Research  
Participants”.

Date of completion: 11/24/2009

Certification Number: 343196

## APPENDIX C

### Interview Protocol

- A. Discuss and acquire the signature for voluntary consent from the participants.
- B. Once participants have voluntarily agreed to participate in the study they will be directed via email to a password-protected wiki.

#### C. Questions

##### Demographic Questions:

Did you attend an independent school for k-12?

Position title

Years at current position (or in current field)

Race/Ethnicity

1. How do you define affinity groups?
  2. How do you know that there is a need for or what situation(s), if any, determined the need for the formation of an affinity group?
  3. How do you define success for an affinity group?
  4. How is success of an affinity group measured?
  5. How are affinity groups used at your school?
  6. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.
  7. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.
  8. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?
  9. Was there a lot of pushback from faculty and administration to the formation of affinity groups?
  10. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? If so, how were they overcome?
  11. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?
  12. Do you anticipate, or have you experienced, a “downside” to affinity groups?
  13. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe and explain why.
- D. Thank the participants. Remind them about the timeframe and their ability to verify and/or delete their responses.

## APPENDIX D

### Expert Panel Review Information

Expert Panel Member  
Organization  
Address

Dear (Expert Panel Member),

Thank you for your assistance in this research study. I am a doctoral student in the Organizational Leadership program in the Graduate School of Education and Psychology at Pepperdine University.

Independent schools are constantly striving to diversify their student bodies. Even with this effort, students of color find themselves in great minority to their White peers, and thus struggle to feel a sense of belonging or inclusion. To mitigate this, many independent schools are using affinity groups. This study seeks to find the best practices of affinity groups in independent schools.

Based upon your experience in the education and research arenas, I am asking you to evaluate my interview questions in relation to the stated research questions. This study is designed to elicit the experience of the participants. The purpose of this review is to ascertain whether the interview questions will provide information that will inform the study.

Enclosed you will find a form and instructions for reviewing the interview questions. Please complete the form and return to me via email at [REDACTED] by (date).

Thank you for your time, and I greatly appreciate your willingness to provide feedback. If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at [REDACTED] or by phone at [REDACTED]. You may also contact my faculty advisor, Dr. Farzin Madjidi at [REDACTED].

Best Regards,

Cindy P. Chun

Instructions: Please indicate, under the rating column, whether the interview question, as stated (a) adequately supports the research question and should be retained, (b) does not adequately support the research question and should be deleted, or (c) should be modified as follows to adequately support the research question.

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
1. How are affinity groups in independent schools defined?	1a. How do you define affinity groups?	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
1. How are affinity groups in independent schools defined?	1b. How do you know that there is a need for an affinity group to be formed?	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
2. How do affinity groups define and measure success?	2a. How do you define success for an affinity group?	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
2. How do affinity groups define and measure success?	2b. How is success measured for an affinity group?	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
3. What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups?	3a. Describe the affinity groups that are in practice at your school. Please include the population each one serves.	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		



Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
3. What are the characteristics and practices of affinity groups?	3b. Is there a specific meeting protocol for each group to follow or does each group create its own protocol? Please explain the process.	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
4. What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them?	4a. How long did it take for affinity groups to form at your school from thought to fruition?	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
4. What are the obstacles in developing affinity groups and the strategies to overcome them?	4b. Were there any obstacles to overcome when forming affinity groups at your school? If so, how were they overcome?	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
5. What are the lessons learned from having affinity groups at your school?	5a. How have affinity groups benefitted your school?	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

Research Question	Interview Question	Rating
5. What are the lessons learned from having affinity groups at your school?	5b. Would you do anything differently than how it is currently done? Please describe and explain why.	a. supports b. does not support c. modify as shown below
Modify as follows:		

## APPENDIX E

### Institutional Review Board Approval Letter

# PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

## Graduate & Professional Schools Institutional Review Board

October 8, 2013

Cindy Chun

Protocol #: E0313D09

Project Title: Best Practices of Affinity Groups in Independent Schools

Dear Ms. Chun:

Thank you for submitting your application, *Best Practices of Affinity Groups in Independent Schools*, for exempt review to Pepperdine University's Graduate and Professional Schools Institutional Review Board (GPS IRB). The IRB appreciates the work you and your faculty advisor, Dr. Madjidi, have done on the proposal. The IRB has reviewed your submitted IRB application and all ancillary materials. Upon review, the IRB has determined that the above entitled project meets the requirements for exemption under the federal regulations (45 CFR 46 - <http://www.nihtraining.com/ohsrsite/guidelines/45cfr46.html>) that govern the protections of human subjects. Specifically, section 45 CFR 46.101(b)(2) states:

(b) Unless otherwise required by Department or Agency heads, research activities in which the only involvement of human subjects will be in one or more of the following categories are exempt from this policy:

**Category (2) of 45 CFR 46.101**, research involving the use of educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures or observation of public behavior, unless: a) Information obtained is recorded in such a manner that human subjects can be identified, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects; and b) any disclosure of the human subjects' responses outside the research could reasonably place the subjects at risk of criminal or civil liability or be damaging to the subjects' financial standing, employability, or reputation.

In addition, your application to waive documentation of consent, as indicated in your **Application for Waiver or Alteration of Informed Consent Procedures** form has been approved.

Your research must be conducted according to the proposal that was submitted to the IRB. If changes to the approved protocol occur, a revised protocol must be reviewed and approved by the IRB before implementation. For any proposed changes in your research protocol, please submit a **Request for Modification Form** to the GPS IRB. Because your study falls under exemption, there is no requirement for continuing IRB review of your project. Please be aware that changes to your protocol may prevent the research from qualifying for exemption from 45 CFR 46.101 and require submission of a new IRB application or other materials to the GPS IRB.

A goal of the IRB is to prevent negative occurrences during any research study. However, despite our best intent, unforeseen circumstances or events may arise during the research. If an unexpected situation or adverse event happens during your investigation, please notify the GPS IRB as soon as possible. We will ask for a complete explanation of the event and your response. Other actions also may be required depending on the nature of the event. Details regarding the timeframe in which adverse events must be reported to the GPS IRB and the appropriate form to be used to report this information can be found in the *Pepperdine University Protection of Human Participants in Research: Policies and Procedures Manual* (see link to "policy material" at <http://www.pepperdine.edu/irb/graduate/>).

6100 Center Drive, Los Angeles, California 90045 ■ 310-568-5600

Please refer to the protocol number denoted above in all further communication or correspondence related to this approval. Should you have additional questions, please contact Michelle Blas, Director of Student Success (Interim GPS IRB Manager) at [gpsirb@pepperdine.edu](mailto:gpsirb@pepperdine.edu). On behalf of the GPS IRB, I wish you success in this scholarly pursuit.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Thema Bryant-Davis'.

Thema Bryant-Davis, Ph.D.  
Chair, Graduate and Professional Schools IRB

cc: Dr. Lee Kats, Vice Provost for Research and Strategic Initiatives  
Ms. Alexandra Roosa, Director Research and Sponsored Programs  
Dr. Madjidi, Graduate School of Education and Psychology