Affinity & Caucus Groups:
Serving faculty, staff & students for an inclusive environment

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9:45 - 10:20
Objectives
Community Agreements
What are Affinity/Caucus Groups?

10:20 - 10:45
Practicing Caucus Groups

10:45 - 11:00
Moving Forward
Objectives

1. Participants will develop understanding of solidarity-based group process (affinity/ caucus groups) to inform course instruction/group facilitation.

2. Participants will connect solidarity-based groups to equity, inclusion and student retention.
Community Agreements

Mutual Learning Environment
- We are all experts of our own experiences
- Dynamic Praxis
  - We are all responsible for contributions to our shared knowledge
- Embrace vulnerability to support growth
- Be curious, not judgemental

Dialogue as Transformation
- Develop an understanding of your dominant narrative as well as the narrative of others
- Listen to understand, not to respond
- Be aware of the space you take up or are able to step into

Meaning-Making
- Values are derived some socialization processes, and thus require deconstruction
  - Allow yourself to become aware of assumptions, bias, and dominant discourses
- Challenge by Choice
  - Your story is yours to tell; be willing to grow in this community but do not betray sacred knowledge that is yours to hold
- Be aware of power dynamics, our identities, and the way cis, hetero, class, or white privilege may enter our space

Intersectionality

Our identities are not singular; they are complex and based on interactions between our social group memberships


Intersectionality

Our identities are not singular; they are complex and based on interactions between our social group memberships.


We’ve got to be taught ...

Please take about five minutes to free-write your thoughts to the following questions:

▪ When you hear the word **Identity**, what comes to your mind? What early messages were given to you about identity and by who? What impact did these messages have?

▪ When you hear the term **Affinity Group**, what comes to your mind? Who taught you this? When did you first learn about it?

▪ When you hear the term **Caucus Group**, what comes to your mind? Who taught you this? When did you first learn about it?
What are **Affinity Groups?**
Affinity

NOUN

1. relationship by marriage

2. a: sympathy marked by community of interest : KINSHIP
   b: an attraction to or liking for something
   c: an attractive force between substances or particles that causes them to enter into and remain in chemical combination

3. likeness based on relationship or causal connection

4. a relation between biological groups involving resemblance in structural plan and indicating a common origin
I’ve met so many fantastic people; I’ve gotten to know so much more about Amazon. This has been a fantastic opportunity to really see the wider world and meet absolutely brilliant people across the company.
What are Caucus Groups?
Caucus

**NOUN**

1. a meeting of the members of a legislative body who are members of a particular political party, to select candidates or decide policy.
2. *synonyms*: meeting · assembly · gathering · congress · conference ·
3. [more]
4. a group of people with shared concerns within a political party or larger organization.
5. *synonyms*: members · party · faction · camp · bloc · group · set ·
Discussing Identity:

White Fragility
“...a state in which even a minimum amount of racial stress becomes intolerable, triggering a range of defensive moves (...) including emotions such as anger, fear, and guilt, and behaviors such as argumentation, silence, and leaving the stress-inducing situation.”

Robin DiAngelo, 2011
White Supremacy Culture

- Perfectionism
- Sense of urgency
- Defensiveness
- Quantity over quality
- Worship of the written word
- Only one right way
- Paternalism
- Either/or thinking

- Power hoarding
- Fear of open conflict
- Individualism
- I’m the only one
- Progress is bigger, more
- Objectivity
- Right to comfort

Examples of Fragility:

- Controlling the conversation by speaking first, last, and most often
- Argumentation or invalidation
- Victimization by “reverse racism” or focusing on other identity experiences to minimize racial dialogues
- Intellectualizing and Distancing
- Silence and Withdrawal
- Tearfulness or Crying

Triggers:

- Naming racialized frame of reference
- People of color not being willing to share their experiences
- Caucusing/Identity specific grouping
- Acknowledging that access is unequal between groups
- Not being protected by people of color in dialogues
- Challenging white racial codes
  - Politeness, Academic, Color-Blind Protocols


White people typically become very uncomfortable, agitated, and upset - even though this temporary separation is in the service of addressing racism. The irony is most whites live in racial segregation every day (...) This segregation is unremarkable until it is named as deliberate.

Course Examples
We’ve got to be taught ...

Please take about *five minutes* to free-write your thoughts to the following questions:

- What were you taught about **gender**? Who taught you gender and who challenged these lessons? What did it mean to be a “man” or a “woman”?

- What were you taught about **sex**? What early messages were given to you about sex and sexual relationships? What impact did these messages have?

- What were you taught about **sexual orientation** (folks who loved or had sex with folks of the same gender)? When do you first remember hearing the words homosexual, gay/lesbian/bi, or fag/dyke/queer?

- What were you taught about **family**? What did a family look like? What families were portrayed in media or popular culture?
Caucus Groups
- Students of Color
- LGBTQ Students
- White, Cis-Male Students
- White Cis-Female Students

Reflecting on Gender, Sex, Sexuality and Family:
- How is our content resonating and/or creating dissonance?
- What have you felt? What questions do you have?
- How did our content relate/differ from your own experiences?
This week's content on *Trauma, Resilience and Social Determinants of Health*:

- How is it resonating and/or creating dissonance?
- What have you felt? What questions do you have?
- How did our content relate/differ from your experiences completing the *Agency Assessment*?

Caucus Groups

- Students of Color
- LGBTQ Students
- White, Cis-Male Students
- White Cis-Female Students
Caucus Groups

- Not in romantic/sexual relationship(s)
- In romantic/sexual relationship(s)
- Parenting
- Parenting with others

This week’s content on Queering Relationships and Families:

- How is it resonating and/or creating dissonance?
- What have you felt? What questions do you have?
- How did our content relate/differ from your experiences?
Caucus Groups

- Those experiencing Mental Health challenges
- Those with family/friends experiencing Mental Health challenges

How does your identity and family impact your thoughts and feelings about mental health?

How does your community understand mental health?

How does your experience resonate or create dissonance with your Field placement practices?

What are you group treatments are you seeing?
Caucus Groups

Faculty/Staff/Student of Color

LGBTQ+ Faculty/Staff/Students

White, Cis, Male Faculty/Staff/Students

White, Cis, Female Faculty/Staff/Students

Share your name, role and pronouns
When I think about Affinity/Caucus Groups on my campus ... 

Think about the spaces you occupy: 
Classrooms? Faculty/Staff Meetings? 
Student Orientations?

Where do you see the need for Affinity/Caucus Groups?

What makes enacting these processes difficult?

What thoughts/feelings are coming up for you and your work?
What is \textit{Next}?
Moving Forward

One commitment I make..

- to myself
- my students
- to my institution
We are here to help shape a world where all people can flourish, beyond sexism, beyond racism, beyond classism, and beyond homophobia. It is upon our ability to look honestly upon our difference, to see them as creative rather than divisive, that our future success may lie.

Audrey Lorde, 1979