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Megan Mary Lambertz-Berndt
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

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COMMUNICATING ONE'S IDENTITY IN THE WORKPLACE AND AFFINITY GROUPS
SPACES

by

Megan M. Lambertz-Berndt

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ABSTRACT

COMMUNICATING ONE'S IDENTITY IN AFFINITY GROUPS SPACES

by

Megan M. Lambertz-Berndt

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2016
Under the Supervision of Professor Mike Allen, Ph.D.

The following dissertation examined affinity group creation and purpose. By using identity management theory and communication privacy management theory the author was able to understand what one both reveals and conceals within an affinity group and organization at large. Two studies addressed the utility of an affinity group for those currently involved in homogeneous racial and nonracial groups, as well as for future employees who may become the next affinity group attendees. Using a thematic analysis, Study I revealed affinity group perceptions including several subthemes (logistics, helpful, harmful, more heterogeneity, and exclusion of identity). Organizational diversity sessions at large revealed similar subthemes (legitimizing identity, lack of safe spaces, intersectionality, and surface level discussions). Using a qualitative content analysis, Study II revealed that racial and nonracial minorities found affinity groups beneficial, whereas all opposed identified as White. Additionally, varied results found for what one discusses within an affinity group space, including open to discussing anything, as well as closed to providing any personal information. Participants also reported socially appropriate workplace topics including surface level topics, whereas inappropriate topics included religion, politics, and race. Understanding how future employees see diversity in an organizational context will better equip organizations to enact specific diversity strategies that move beyond the mere rhetoric of diversity.

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Communication one's Identity in the Workplace and Affinity Group Spaces

Diversity remains a common goal of businesses, organizations, and educational institutions. The United States Department of Labor (2014, October 13) predicts by 2050, one in every four Americans will identify as a racial minority such as Hispanic, Black, or Asian American Pacific Islander (AAPI). Changing demographics require that organizations recognize the need to increase diversity and how to create and foster an inclusive climate. Starbucks president, Howard Schultz, recently implemented a race conversations campaign, which empowered Starbucks employees to discuss events and issues surrounding race into the workplace dialogue. Although, well intended, the campaign quickly became controversial, and subsequently fizzled after critics (1) claimed employees lacked the experience to engage in such sensitive dialogue (Harlan & Contrera, 2015, March 22) and (2) suggested Starbucks sought to capitalize on recent racial incidents (e.g. Ferguson) (Dean, 2015, March 22). Starbucks provided one of the first multi-million dollar campaigns to publicly integrate diversity into the workplace dialogue, however, "diversity rhetoric and initiatives do not necessarily lead to positive climates nor is the link between a positive climate and enhanced organizational effectiveness always a strong one" (Groggins & Ryan, 2013, p. 265). Therefore, companies must move away from the surface level discourse concerning diversity and understand the implications of communicating a personal identity in the workplace. To do so, first one must examine why current diversity initiatives lack permanence.

Diversity initiatives often fail due to a myriad of reasons including equating the campaigns to affirmation action, and treating the initiative as a set of legal guidelines (Roberts, 2011). Affirmative action's historic roots come from the civil rights movement where disadvantaged groups benefitted from a preference during the hiring process, while diversity

initiatives aim at changing organizational culture, including hidden biases within organizational practices (Stoney Brook University, 2015). U.S. organizational culture is rooted in white middle class blue collar bias and thus "it becomes clear that 'doing professional' is at least as much (if not more) about performing Whiteness" (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003, p. 27) than performing one's job requirements. Ashcraft and Allen (2003) argue that five messages convey the lack of diversity in most organizational contexts: (a) race as separate and only applicable in certain circumstances; (b) race only involves cultural differences; (c) cultures are homogeneous; (d) racial discrimination results from individual biases and interpersonal misunderstandings; (e) white-collar standards constitute universal guidelines. The challenge of conceptualizing diversity within an organization results from a complex web of intersecting identities and disruptive nature of focusing on sensitive and emotionally charged issues such as race (Blitz & Kohl, 2012). Using the five messages reflect an organization's inability to firmly conceptualize diversity and offer specific strategies to increase inclusion.

The decision of whether to share either one's social identity may depend on organizational culture, the cultural background of the employee, and the perception of the organization's willingness to accept diversity. Complex identities require employees to constantly negotiate what identity aspects to reveal or conceal (Gulati & Carbado, 2000). Business enthusiast magazines such as *Forbes* offer quick and easy tips to control revealing identity in the workplace including "adopt a new mindset, invest yourself continuously, and adjust your vision" (para. 6), yet the decision of whether or not to discuss identity becomes much more complex. Individuals must negotiate between the visible and invisible identities. Visible social identities, such as one's skin color or gender, may be easy to organizational members whereas invisible social identities such as one's sexual identity or, deep seated values and

attitudes are less easy to detect and manage within the workplace (Clair, Beatty, & Maclean, 2005).

Organizational communication scholars rarely include racial issues in research, yet there remains a need to examine whiteness while addressing race as a theoretical issue (Ashcraft & Allen, 2003). In an effort to continue with such standards as identified by Ashcraft and Allen (2003), this dissertation addresses race in the workplace from a communication lens. Organizations continue to employ a wide range of diversity initiatives intended to help promote inclusiveness in the workplace, yet one tactic few organizations employ to enhance diversity involves the creation and inclusion of both homogeneous and heterogeneous affinity groups. The following uses identity management theory and communication privacy management theory to examine affinity group creation and purpose, to better understand what one both reveals and conceals within an affinity group and organization at large. The results and implications of two studies which address the utility of an affinity group for those currently involved in homogeneous racial and nonracial groups, as well as for future employees who may be the next affinity group attendees, are provided.

Literature Review

Affinity Groups

Affinity groups, consisting of individuals or employees sharing a common characteristic, trait, or interest, discuss issues of shared identity (Segal, 2013) and provide emotional support or potential resources for employees (Douglas, 2008). Affinity groups include homogeneous groups, comprising of individuals sharing the same identity characteristic such as an African American affinity group, where all members must identify as African American. Heterogeneous groups include individuals with the same identity characteristic in addition to allies. Allies

include supporters for equal rights, and gender or racial equality that do not share the unique characteristic of the group.

Affinity groups remain voluntary, yet organizations differ on inclusivity. Some organizational affinity groups include all employees, even employees not sharing the primary characteristic (Fair Employment Practices Guidelines, 2006). Johns Hopkins University (2015) offers affinity groups to all who support or identify with the common characteristic. For instance, attending the LGBTQ groups does not require identification as LGBTQ, with all alumni, current students, and friends of the university welcome to interact. The inclusion of all individuals is not ubiquitous. "Teach For America," (TFA) a non-profit educational organization offers affinity groups to new employees. However attendees must identify with the characteristics of the group. For instance, a White person could not join the African American affinity group since he or she does not racially identify with the group. Meenai (2003) concludes that "groups formed on the basis of affinity offered their members much greater support, than groups pulled together that did not share similar bonds" (p. 29).

While some businesses and organizations either take on a homogeneous or heterogeneous approach to affinity group formation, other organizations prohibit certain types of affinity groups. General Motors (GM) excluded religious affinity groups due to the organization's affinity group guidelines stating groups cannot "promote or advocate particular religious or political positions" (McGlothlen, 2006, para. 24), which led to several discrimination law suits. When organization's offer affinity groups to some and not others, legal challenges most likely arise (McGlothlen, 2006). Few organizations offer both types of group formations due to financial limitations and a lack of organizational resources (e.g. office and room space). Affinity

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groups operate under the assumption that individuals share an affinity when entering a group space, yet such affinities differ depending on intersectionality.

Although inclusiveness remains contingent on the organization and the decision on whether to include allies, inclusiveness resides in the perceptions of the group members. Due to a variance in privilege, or a perception of social advantage, some group members become stigmatized. Privilege denotes a benefit or social position given to some and not others; often privilege becomes divided into racial and nonracial privilege. One racial privilege in the United States, white privilege[1], refers to the advantages received "simply by virtue of one's appearance and, to a lesser degree, the privilege lighter skinned people of color garner as compared to darker members of the same or different non-White racial groups" (Singleton & Linton, 2006, p. 183). For instance, within an African American affinity group, a biracial individual might be perceived as more privileged compared to monoracial African Americans (Sanchez & Bonam, 2009).

One form of nonracial privilege is heterosexual privilege. Heterosexual privilege describes the assumption that heterosexuality operates as the norm, and living without having to think or confront topics such as discussing one's relationship, fear of traveling to less accepting areas, and not questioning one's normality, to name a few (University of Duluth Minnesota, 2015). A bisexual individual within an LGBTQ affinity group may be perceived as more privileged due to social stigma's such as the ability to "choose" a heterosexual relationship.

The varying levels of privilege within perceived homogeneous groups reflect assumptions and attributes still containing heterogeneity. As indicated by Ashcraft and Allen (2003), assuming homogeneity for one particular culture hinders diversity efforts. Differences among perceived levels of privilege may create exclusivity within groups or a lack of socially

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[1] Privilege concerns the dominant group, which in the U.S. is White individuals. In Zimbabwe, it is currently black privilege, given current governmental policy.

appropriate cultural understanding. After studying surface and deep level diversity within workgroups, Mohammad and Angell (2004) found that even the slightest distinctions in one's demographic characteristics may result in feelings of hostility or animosity. Affinity groups operate under the assumption of shared identity. Therefore, discussing differences can cause disruption. Some organizations address such elements of intersectionality by including multiple racial and nonracial identity types such African American, Biracial, and People of Color, however offering multiple groups depends on organizational resources.

Additionally, affinity groups serve a variety of functions outside of the workplace including bullying prevention (Nurenburg, 2014), as a support group (Goldberg, 1990), educational development (Linchevski & Kutscher, 1998; Sheppard, & Kanevsky, 1999) and in-group-out-group status (Biernat, Vescio, & Billings, 1999). Each context utilizes affinity groups as a way to promote self-identification or create a support unit for persons sharing similar traits or experiences. A promising exploration involves using identity management theory (IMT) and communication privacy management theory (CPM) to assess how employees manage and negotiate cultural identity within the workplace, and how affinity groups facilitate and hinder the process. The following explores the two primary goals of an affinity group, an examination of IMT and CPM to better understand the relational and cultural identities an employee must manage within both racial and nonracial affinity groups, as well as the methods. The next section provides a better understanding of why individuals join affinity groups.

Affinity group purpose. Affinity group purpose falls into one of two categories: emotional and instrumental. The emotional purpose of an affinity group allows for an expressive outlet on highly sensitive topics. For instance, Parsons and Ridley (2012) claim "the relationships students gain through race-based affinity groups enable them to feel less alone with

their emotions and help them build a stronger sense of self" (p. 40). Affinity groups provide participants the opportunity to discuss emotional topics related to sharing identity characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, or religious beliefs, not readily available during classroom or work related discussions (Michael & Conger, 2012). Gathering persons sharing similar experiences and challenges, provides an important feeling of unity.

Unifying those within an affinity group results from the sharing of discrimination or separation from others within the workplace. Camins (2014) argues that the workplace, where multiple identities operate, experience an empathy gap. Individuals may try to empathize with each other, but the challenge exists for the "empowered to visualize what it is like to be disempowered, especially without social pressure to do so" (Camins, 2014, para. 6). Singleton and Linton (2006) argue that the empowered can ignore or walk away from conversations about race, while the disempowered must confront racial issues on a daily basis. Thus, empathizing requires more than merely attempting to place oneself in another's shoes. Instead, relational empathy in an intercultural interaction requires a "dynamic process that necessitates taking steps to synthesize conflicting perspectives" (Kurylo, 2013, p. 337), which could cause difficulty when a perspective differs from one's own. For instance, a White employee may find difficulty empathizing with a Black employee on racial profiling due to a lack of experience and a discomfort in sharing the identity characteristic of those committing the discrimination. Although sympathizing with an individual may lend emotional support, the potential for others to empathize creates a stronger connection. Companies such as Hewitt Packard, Microsoft, and Dell acknowledge the emotional purpose of affinity groups in retaining employees, and highlight the instrumental goals by sharing information, and increasing awareness of organizational policies

and procedures (Lengnick-Hill, 2007). Consequently, affinity groups within companies serve more than one function for employees.

Instrumental affinity groups move beyond emotional outlets to consider the actions needed to accomplish specific goals. Van Aken, Monetta, and Sink (1994) surveyed white collar affinity groups which "promote the sharing of information and knowledge across organizational functions; enhance employees' problem-solving skills; encourage systems thinking and an appreciation for the overall organization; help employees identify and address education and training needs; and advance horizontal and vertical communication" (p. 53). Moving the discourse of affinity groups to action steps enhances the organizational experience by improving policies or enhancing communication amongst employees. McLean-Conner (2008) claim that "successful affinity groups develop a business plan stating their goals and outlining initiatives to achieve the goals" (para. 7). When individuals discuss issues pertaining to changing the organizational structure, more tangible results are likely. Examples of tangible results include an increased social awareness concerning the challenges of one's identity characteristic.

Affinity groups increase social awareness. The International Leadership Association (ILA) created affinity groups for the purpose of providing networking tools, and to spread awareness about women in leadership positions. Additionally, college racial affinity groups remain instrumental in providing minority scholarship information, specifically to certain socially disadvantaged groups. Creating a space to share resources supports student's navigation through institutional requirements (Hallett, 2013). Without the racial affinity groups, some student populations may lack the necessary information to continue with a degree program. Hallett (2010) conducted an ethnography on peer support for undocumented Latino college students finding that due to the restraints of being far away from family and "the campus context

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limited resources, Latino/a students relied on peers to gain access to information necessary to remain in school" (p. 110). The peer groups helped the undocumented students navigate the institution requirements, while learning from those with experience successfully navigating the institutional process. Arguably, without the racial affinity groups, the Latino students in Hallett's study may have lacked the necessary information and confidence to continue with the degree program.

Regardless of the affinity group type, employees need a place for social sharing and support for identity, while simultaneously desire a discussion of issues pertaining to the workplace. For instance, an employee may vent about a threat to one's identity, as well as collaborate on how to address the issue in the workplace to avoid such instances. Both approaches deal with emotional issues and collaboration, by creating an attempt to legitimatize the identity, while avoidance simply conceals a potentially divisive or difficult issue. Racial and nonracial homogeneous affinity groups possess the ability to provide a supportive climate in an organizational context, however managing multiple identities within such spaces remain challenging.

Identity Management Theory

Different cultural groups possess varying expectations concerning the social appropriateness of communication behaviors (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). For example, within the African American community, many group members understand the environmental pressure of completing an education. Noguera (2003) ascertains that African American students "can be unfairly victimized by the labeling and sorting processes that occur within school in addition to being harmed by the attitudes and behavior they adopt in reaction to these processes" (p. 442). Such environmental factors play a role in the social discourse within the African American

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community and one must understand the developed perceptions when engaging in dialogue within an affinity group. Essentially, inequity within the field of education remains an unwritten perception adopted by many African Americans with group members understanding these perceptions in order to communicate effectively within the group setting.

Identity management theory (IMT) seeks to explain cultural identities over time based on interpersonal relationships (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). IMT applies to affinity group communication due to the underlying theoretical assumption that cultural identities result in communication difficulties (Oetzel & Ting-Toomey, 2005), understanding cultural norms, and justifying one's identity via affinity groups. Reoccurring causes of intercultural communication difficulties include "defensiveness, different world views, different values and beliefs, prejudices, different languages, different ways of using and interpreting non-verbal codes, different ways of constructing messages, unequal power, and the failure to allow for individual cultural differences within a group" (Singh & Rampersad, 2010, p. 1405). Understanding the cultural norms equips affinity group attendees with the requisite knowledge needed to fully comprehend the complexities of a culture. For instance, a young lesbian raised in an accepting community must understand the circumstance of many others, especially older members of the LGBTQ community who have faced numerous accounts of discrimination. Finally, one must justify one's affinity within a group space, rather than be a bystander due to the inherent goal of relating to those with shared experiences, which requires communicating those experiences to those within the group.

Socially Acceptable Identities. Due to the complexity of identity (e.g. social standing, gender, sexual orientation, race, ethnicity, etc.), a person must negotiate the most acceptable identity within the affinity group space. Individuals must communicate competently by

negotiating socially acceptable identities within an interaction (Imahori & Cupach, 2005). Socially acceptable identities might be difficult to determine due to unwritten social norms. For example, a member of an African American affinity group raised in a predominantly White neighborhood may lack exposure or awareness of the perceptions evolved from larger more homogeneous African American communities. The difference in upbringing might result in a group member's inability to relate to others within the group. Such an experience remains problematic due to the primary goal of an affinity group as a place for individuals with a shared identity characteristic to support one another. Individuals might not necessarily understand the appropriate social role associated with one's identity characteristic. Oetzel and Ting-Toomey (2005) claim that IMT presumes the formation of intercultural relationships assuming sufficient commonalities. The commonalities within an affinity group might be difficult to assume. The lack of knowledge may create difficulty, since affinity groups invoke the notion of individuals sharing commonality.

Cultural Norms. Cultural norms may be based in organizational practices that have historically discriminated against minorities, impacting the management of social identity. Shih, Young, and Bucher (2013) ascertain that workplace discrimination remains common, and difficult to combat due to the often subtle nature of the practice. Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief, and Bradley (2003) conducted a two part study addressing everyday discrimination in the workplace and found that Blacks experienced more subtle forms of race characterized by frequency of reported levels of mistreatment from fellow employees than the white counterparts. Deitch et al. (2003) cautiously defined everyday racism as self-identified mistreatment, yet other scholars (Guerin, 2005) offer a more concrete definition of everyday racism including comments regarding internal attributions which "allow reference to a negative outgroup, by allowing a

conception of a problem beyond an abstract social/structural cause, by shifting the responsibility for change to another person, or by making it more difficult for someone to challenge your statements" (p. 47). Overt racist comments are becoming a rarity in the workplace, with everyday racism prominent and unacknowledged (Deitch et al., 2003; Guerin, 2005; Shih et. al., 2013). Unfortunately, non-white individuals find the need to work harder to overcome predetermined stereotypes developed based on racial identity (Parker, 2002).

By changing one's identity to accommodate for stereotypes, individuals face a difficult time displaying the authentic self in the workplace. For instance, an African American woman minimizing her passion during a meeting due to the common stereotype of the angry Black woman, limits her true identity. To assess identity negotiation, Parker (2002) used a thematic analysis of interviews with African American senior executives within a predominantly white organization, finding that some Black women employed a "self-surveillance in which they maintained a heightened awareness of their visibility as Black women" (p. 263). The senior employees continuously kept their racial identity at the forefront of each communicative act (Parker, 2002). Other Black women reported downplaying race as a potential constraint to their work when communicating with other employees (Parker, 2002). Both responses limit one's identity in the workplace by inhibiting ones authentic self.

Another example remains evident in nonracial communities such as those identifying as LGBTQ. Chrobot-Mason, Button, and DiClementi (2001) explored sexual identity management strategies in the workplace for lesbian and gay employees, revealing that the more inclusive the workplace climate, the more likely one reveals elements of his or her sexual identity. However, a large portion of responses suggested that maintaining a false identity may foster group interactions. Communicating identity in the workplace remains contingent on the workplace

climate, whether supportive or stigmatized, and the strategies deemed socially acceptable by the individual (Croteau, Anderson, & Vanderwal, 2008; Griffith & Hebl, 2002).

Justifying Identity. Since employees of minority groups tend to endure increased mistreatment and constantly monitor inherent identities, change remains necessary. Deitch, Barsky, Butz, Chan, Brief, and Bradley (2003) found that "typical, one time diversity training courses and nondiscrimination polices do little to alleviate the existence of everyday discrimination in the workplace" (p. 1317). Affinity groups may provide a space to discuss these common everyday discriminatory behaviors that remain prevalent in the workplace. In addition to understanding the differences within even the most homogenous groups creates communication difficulties, IMT provides an important lens into the perspectives concerning the justification of incorporating an affinity group within the workplace.

Businesses and organizations looking to incorporate affinity groups, must better understand the cultural norms of future employees and the justification of which type of affinity group would foster the most diversity within the workplace. Lambertz (2014) found negative perceptions of affinity groups due in part to whether individuals felt as though the identity characteristic became justified. For example, a white female employee from an educational non-profit organization in Phoenix stated of affinity groups, "To me, it seemed as though you were unwelcome or not as highly encouraged to attend groups that did not fit your characteristics." Based on the aforementioned statement, the employee felt as though heterogeneous affinity groups would have been more inclusive. Cole and Salimath (2013) conducted a study concerning identity management in diversity programs offered by organizations. They found that "implementing diversity programs that are (perceived as) unjustified, results in negative attitudes and feelings directed toward the organization such as feelings of incompetence, dissatisfaction,

and lack of commitment" (p. 159). The tactic to foster diversity in the workplace, became met with resistance, due a lack of understanding concerning cultural norms. In addition to understanding the preferred affinity group structure, individuals might find difficulty negotiating which elements of identity to share within the groups due to constant negotiations of which identity characteristic one should share in the workplace and appropriate social norms. Therefore, the following research questions were derived.

RQ1: Do affinity groups enhance diversity in the workplace?

RQ2: What employee perspectives will help to enhance diversity within the workplace at large?

RQ3: What elements of one's identity are shared within an affinity group space?

RQ4: What elements of one's identity are concealed within an affinity group space?

Communication Privacy Management Theory

Each organization creates unique workplace culture in which employees determine what personal information is considered appropriate to disclose to fellow colleagues. What remains less clear is what elements of our racial and nonracial identity one chooses to disclose in the workplace and why. Caucasian employees may fail to consider racial identity when communicating with others in the workplace until attending a diversity session offered by the organization, whereas people of color continuously reflect on what elements of identity is negotiated in the workplace context. (Lambertz, 2014). Communication Privacy Management Theory (CPM) helps to explain what information one decides to communicate about his or her identity. Designed to understand how individuals reveal and conceal information, CPM serves as a framework to assess how employees negotiate the public and private aspects of one's identity

in the workplace (Petronio & Durham, 2008). CPM includes six principles, yet the current

research focuses on two principles: the public-private dialectical tension, and privacy rules.

   Public-private dialectical tension. The first CPM principle incorporates the public-

private dialectical tension (Petronio & Durham, 2008). The public identity information available

to all workplace employees might include one's racial identity such as White, Person of Color,

Hispanic, etc. Racial identity tends to be prescribed for an individual. Such assumptions might be

correct, however others might identify in a way that does not match physical appearance. For

instance, an individual with lighter skin and blonde hair categorized as White by fellow

employees, might have a Black parent. Clair, Beatty, and MacLean's (2003) visible and invisible

identities directly relate to the public-private dialectical tension introduced by Petronio and

Durham (2008). Visible identities include characteristics apparent to all within the workplace

such as ones skin color, facial features, dress, hair, and accent, whereas invisible identities might

include one's sexual identity, deep seated values and attitudes, and illnesses. An individual fully

able to openly discuss both visible and invisible identity characteristics in the workplace,

experiences a sense of authenticity (Clair et al., 2003).

   When revealing an invisible identity, Clair et al. (2003) found three different strategies

including signaling, normalizing, and differentiating. Normalizing one's invisible identity occurs

when individuals describe identity as ordinary in an effort to assimilate to the organizational

culture, while differentiating involves employees discussing how identity differs from the

majority and often openly discuss challenges faced within the organization (Clair et al., 2003).

Finally, signaling one's identity entails using subtle clues that allude to a particular identity such

as displaying a rainbow flag in one's cubicle (Clair et al., 2003), which may be seen as a either a

supporter or member of the LGBTQ community. Although one's visible or public identity may

be readily available to other employees, misconceptions can be made about one's identity. Conversely, one's invisible identity remains hidden until the employee communicates his or her identity characteristic whether that be through signaling, normalizing or differentiating. The structure of the affinity group could determine what information individuals seek to share about their identity. Individuals may share more information to those able to support and validate identity (Clair et al., 2003; Schlenker, 1984), therefore results of the current study may reveal more support and information shared due to the homogeneous nature of the affinity group.

Private identity characteristics such as one's sexual orientation or religious beliefs are difficult to decipher based on the physical appearance of an individual. An employee might experience difficulty in deciding whether to include private information to employees. The difficulty might reflect socialization norms of topic appropriateness for discussion in the workplace. Topics such as one's favorite sports team or college attended might be considered innocuous, yet issues surrounding one's racial identity or sexual orientation may be considered too sensitive a topic for the workplace. Due to the inherent sensitivity, topics of race and sexual orientation become taboo.

The negotiations between managing private and public information are likely evident within affinity groups. Affinity groups may provide a space where individuals receive emotional support concerning the shared identity characteristic. This support function may fail when individuals become perceived as more privileged within the LGBTQ community. Historically, a bisexual individual is perceived as more privileged due to the perceived "option" of "choosing" heterosexual behaviors (Bagby, 2015). A negative connotation exists for bisexuality resulting in suspicion, rejection and invalidation (Rostosky, Riggle, Pascale-Hague, and McCants, 2010) from the LGBTQ community. A bisexual individual might decide not to disclose the private

aspect of his or her identity due to the associated privileges and negative connotation. An underlying presumption important to note is just because individuals share an affinity does not necessarily equate to prioritizing a certain element of an identity. The following research questions address the above inquiries:

RQ5: What elements of one's identity might an individual be willing to discuss in the workplace?

RQ6: What elements of one's identity might an individual be more reluctant to share in the workplace?

A common example of public information includes the type of physical artifacts one displays in the workplace conveying an element of their identity. Elsbach (2004) claims "physical identity markers may be defined as material artifacts that cue and/or affirm a person's workplace identity" (p. 100). Artifacts provide the most visible and immediate examples of how an individual communicates one's identity in the workplace (Slater, 2015). Workplace artifacts include objects meaningful to one or interpreted by another including pictures, degree certificates, college alumni pennants, etc., most of which considered an appropriate physical identity marker to display, while more taboo artifacts remain hidden in the workplace setting. For instance, a lesbian woman working in a highly conservative location might keep her wedding photos hidden. Perceptions of physical identity markers may or may not align with the intentions of the owner of the artifacts (Elsbach, 2004). If a lesbian has a photo of her posed with another woman, heteronormativeness might lead the employee to think of the other woman as a friend or family member. Artifacts may also include technological devices. LGBTQ members may restrict access to online social media profiles such as facebook if uncertain about the inclusiveness of the workplace. DiMicco and Millen (2007) examined 68 facebook user profile pages from a

company's employee network and found many presented multiple identities within one's social media site and the workplace. Managing multiple identities becomes an added stress for employees and although one can restrict access to certain information, such a feature remains ignored by many users (DiMicco & Millen, 2007). The point at which an individual decides to make an artifact publicly available in the workplace, whether physical or virtual, is largely unknown, therefore the following research questions address such inquiries:

RQ7: What artifacts related to one's identity does an employee publicly display?

    Privacy rules. The second CPM principle requires understanding privacy rules within the organizational context (Petronio & Durham, 2008) which govern interactions. Individuals use guidelines to decipher what information to hide or disclose including cultural, gendered, motivational, contextual, and risk-benefit ratio criteria (Petronio & Durham, 2008; Petronio, 2002). Additionally employees "calculate risk benefits to judge whether they should keep something private or reveal the information completely or partially" (Petronio & Durham, 2008, p. 312). In a national sample of 534 gay and lesbian employees Ragins and Cornwell (2001) found that the disclosure of one's sexual identity in the workplace was related to perceived discrimination. Employee reluctance to share information concerning identity increases if not accepted by the organizational culture.

    Some employees may conceal information due to notions of social appropriateness. In a qualitative study from Allen and Carlson (2003), some employees reported concealing disability due to the cultural norm not to complain. Some participants suppressed information due to a social protocol developed within the organization that deemed health related information as a taboo topic only discussed privately. Deciphering which elements of one's identity to reveal or

conceal in the workplace may be based on the privacy rules socially constructed or the cultural norms of the workplace. The next section describes the methods for the current study.

RQ8: What are privacy rules of one's workplace?

Methods

Data were collected from two different organizations for two different studies. Participants consisted of employees from a large educational non-profit organization and undergraduate students from a large mid-western University. College students are likely the next affinity group attendees in businesses and organizations. Thus, their input on the utility and function of an affinity group remains vital for businesses to understand employee expectations and social norms when entering the workforce. The current research seeks to understand the way individuals communicate aspects of identity in the workplace and requires that participants had prior or current workplace experience. The following includes two studies; the first study contains open-ended responses from the nonprofit organization, and the second includes survey responses from undergraduate communication students.

Study I

Participants

The data obtained from the nonprofit organization included 220 responses from employees within a non-profit educational organization over the last two years, including the summer of 2015 and 2014. The educational non-profit organization holds a six-week training session each year to equip employees with the skills and resources required for success. During the 6-weeks, employees may voluntarily attend both racial and nonracial affinity groups outside of the designated work-day schedule. Often, the affinity group spaces occurred in the evenings after employees fulfilled daily training duties. At the end of the training period, employees

completed a survey concerning experiences at the six-week training session, at six training locations over two years. Through a keyword search, the researcher assessed participant responses regarding identity within the workplace and affinity groups. Of the 220 responses, 62 addressed affinity groups directly, while 158 included a reflection of one's identity within the workplace in general. A majority of employees were female (69%) and between the ages of 20-61 ($M = 22$). Employee racial identities were only reported for the 2015 data. Of the 140 employee's from the 2015 training session, a majority identified as White (51%). Other racial identities included Latino/a (18%), African American (14%), people of color (10%), and Asian (7%).

Procedures and Measures

The first set of data entailed a thematic analysis of all open-ended survey items from the educational non-profit organization. Thematic analysis remains a useful analytic tool due to the volume of data obtained and the predetermined categories identified by the researcher (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Marshall and Rossman (1999) claim that thematic analysis brings "order, structure and interpretation to the mass of data" (p. 150). The data included two years of an open-ended survey question inquiring about the employee's experiences at the six week training session. During the training session, employees could attend various homogeneous racial and nonracial affinity groups. The open-ended survey question stated, "Please provide any other feedback you have regarding your response to the above questions." The prior questions included Likert type items (*strongly agree* to *strongly disagree*) addressing two statements including: "Affinity groups were a valuable space for me" and "I believe the diversity initiatives at sic (training session) enabled me to reflect on my identity, given my background." After a keyword search of identity, and affinity group within the survey responses, 220 met the inclusion criteria.

The results highlight the function and utility of an affinity group as well as the impact on identity during the training session.

Coding

The author used a combination of Attride-Stirling (2001) and Marshall and Rossman's (1999) thematic phases including code the data, identify themes, search for alternative interpretations, and write the analysis. Attride-Stirling (2001) states that the coding framework can be based on pre-established criteria developed from research questions posed by the researcher. After reading through the 220 responses multiple times, the author organized the data into two larger categories including affinity group perception, and organizational identity. Two general categories emerged to address RQ1 including affinity group perceptions and identity management within the workplace. Responses grouped into "affinity group perception" contained the keywords words "affinity group," whereas identity management in the workplace contained words such as "identity" and "diversity." The two categories had specific boundaries and definitions to keep them distinct by using the specific keywords to separate the two types of responses. Responses including the mention of affinity groups contained content about the experiences when attending the affinity group meetings, whereas responses including the mention of identity or diversity contained content about experiences within larger organizational diversity sessions involving multiple racial and nonracial identities. Once the data had been organized into two general categories, the author extracted salient subthemes (Table 1).

The author read through 62 responses several times addressing affinity group perceptions. After reading through the data, the author identified salient subthemes. Initially, the researcher identified 7 subthemes, however grouped similar subthemes together. For example, many participants reported the time and location of the affinity group meetings as problematic for

attendance. Initially, the researcher had both time and location as separate subthemes, yet condensed the theme to a larger subtheme titled logistics where time, location, and facilitation were then grouped together. Once the subthemes had been created, the author revisited the responses to refine them to be specific, yet general enough to include in one subtheme. Such a decision made the data more manageable for the researcher (Attride-Stirling, 2001). The general categories and their subthemes are reported below.

The coding framework consisted of multiple comparisons with another colleague to ensure the accuracy of the applied codes to each subtheme. Both coders had credentials in qualitative analysis. Both coders examined 25 responses for logistics, helpfulness, harmful, heterogeneity, and exclusion of identity. Subsequently, both coders did the same for 30 responses from the identity management category including the several subthemes: legitimizing one's identity, intersectionality, lack of safe-spaces, and surface-level discussion. Once the coders had each coded the 25 responses from each general category, reliability tests were conducted. To estimate variance and to measure agreement between raters, Fleiss' G was used. Results for affinity group perception revealed 1.00 logistics, 1.00 for helpfulness, 1.00 for harmfulness .89 heterogeneity and .93 for exclusion of identity. Results for identity management in the workplace revealed .93 legitimizing one's identity, .92 for intersectionality, 1.00 for lack of safe spaces, .and 1.00 for surface level discussions.

Results

RQ1: Are affinity groups considered a way to enhance diversity in the workplace?

Affinity Group Perceptions. 62 responses addressed affinity groups directly. From responses, several sub-themes emerged: (a) logistics, including those concerned about the time and location of the affinity group spaces, (b) helpful, where groups served as a space to discuss

topics not readily available in workplace dialogue, (c) harmful, which reminded employees of one's oppression or white guilt, (d) more heterogeneity, where either white participants sought to learn from blacks or individuals wanted to discuss more than one aspect of their identity, and (e) exclusion of identities including income level, women, Jewish religion, and LGBTQ.

Logistics. Several employees reported problems with the timing, marketing, and facilitation of the affinity group meetings. For example, a Latino male employee stated

> *Affinity groups are not set up for SUCCESS! Timing and marketing are not there*
> *which makes affinity groups hard to become successful and opportunity to make*
> *significant positive change state wide! Reconsider*
> *different date and time along with location of places would increase attendance of*
> *these groups.*

Many of the affinity groups took place late at night after the employees completed an eight hour work-day. The affinity group spaces used the same facility as employee housing, yet the late hours seemed less than ideal for many employees looking to attend. Additionally, several responses addressed the lack of credentials of affinity group facilitators. An African American Male stated "some of the facilitators were not adequate and underprepared to handle some of the in depth conversations." The educational non-profit organization used for the study did not hire employees to lead affinity group meetings, rather facilitators were voluntary positions, with no guarantee of professional or educational expertise sought to discuss aspects of the racial or nonracial identity characteristic. The qualifications needed to serve as an affinity group facilitator merely included identifying with the racial or nonracial group characteristic and exhibiting an interest in issues pertaining to the group identity.

Helpful. Other employee responses highlighted the supportive environment provided in affinity group spaces. For instance, a Female Asian American employee stated "Loved this section and breaking off into affinity groups. It was great to learn about ourselves as well as what our students might identify with." From the above statement and responses alike, employees felt the affinity groups provided a space to discuss sensitive topics such as race, gender, sexuality, and religion not readily available during workplace dialogue. A white female employee stated "Talking about our racial identity and how that comes into the classroom was extremely helpful." Most responses failed to articulate what about the affinity group was helpful, indicating only that sharing the same space as those with common features created a positive experience for employees as well as relating to one's students after the training session was complete

Harmful. Although many responses highlighted the supportive nature of an affinity group, just as many responses addressed the harmful nature such as evoking white guilt or reminding employees of oppression. A white female stated "As a white person, I can't help to feel that we're so focused on exploring and knowing other identities that ours has been lost and undervalued throughout the process" or a white male stating

Like many students in this program, I felt that the sessions aimed more at making

me feel guilty than at helping me value my identity. I am a white man from an

upper-middle class background, but I have signed up to join the organization's

effort.

The above responses demonstrate a lack of attention the organization provided to why one joined the movement and how one's white identity was only explored as a way to foster guilt. Joining the organization implies a shared goal of the overall mission, yet several white participants thought such an intention became lost when discussing the negative effects of one's white

identity. Several leaders from the non-profit organization expressed that white affinity groups intend to address one's privilege, not to foster white guilt. Regardless of the purpose, some affinity group participants did not exit the meeting with a positive experience.

Other affinity group attendees found group discussions harmful due to reminders of oppressed nature in society. An African American female stated

> *To me, it is a way of saying, "HEY CHANEL, YOU ARE BLACK AND YOU ARE*
> *OPPRESSED... STILL..... JUST IN CASE YOU FORGOT" I DONT NEED TO BE*
> *REMINDED OF HOW OPPRESSED MY PEOPLE ARE. What happened to*
> *shining light on the black community. We only see negative things, nothing*
> *positive.*

From the above response, this affinity group attendee desired more discussion pertaining to the strengths of the racial community. Due to a continuous reminder of one's oppression, the perception of balancing issues fostering strength and struggle in the community were lost. Framing identity as multi-faceted including both positive and negative aspects may have led to a more meaningful affinity group discussion.

More heterogeneity. Responses within this theme included a desire for more options to connect with other races. For example, a white female stated

> *I felt that there was never a proper debrief/reconnection after affinity group time.*
> *Instead, it felt like we were segregated and then awkwardly thrust back together*
> *to discuss something completely unrelated to whatever we had just talked about in*
> *our affinity groups. It felt to me like each group had come back from some secret*
> *conversation that the other group was not supposed to know about and I always*
> *felt extremely disconnected from the people of color after that separation.*

The above response viewed affinity groups as a way to segregate racial groups, rather than unify persons. Additionally, a desire to understand other affinity group topics remained a common response among white employees. Many white employees expressed a desire to learn from other races, rather than solely reflecting on self-identity with other white employees. A white male, for instance stated

> *Their (affinity groups) design separated us from each other rather than creating a*
> *space where we could learn from each other. I recognize that the affinity spaces*
> *are necessary, but I would have supported another option which allowed people*
> *who were comfortable to share and work through issues with a more diverse*
> *group.*

Similarly, this employee's response shows that a lack of affinity group attendance was due to the homogeneous design where separation was viewed as segregation. Had the organization taken on a heterogeneous approach to affinity group formation, white members may have found the discussions more beneficial.

Intersectionality. While heterogeneous groups were requested by many white employees as a way to learn from others of different races, many employees of racial minorities addressed the need for heterogeneity due to identifying with multiple racial identities. For instance, a female person of color (poc) stated

> *The 'affinity group' approach was very problematic and slightly traumatic for me.*
> *I identify as a mixed person of color. The stark division between poc and white*
> *people created a very difficult and hostile situation for me. I chose the poc group*
> *because that is my identity. But having to make that choice resulted in hurtful*
> *comments and negative reactions to my identity. This would not have happened if*

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the structure of these "affinity" groups had been different. A safe space was

announced, but didn't actually exist.

Having to choose a dominant identity remained both hurtful and frustrating to several employees. Employees not identifying as monoracial were required in some cases to choose between an identity characteristic. Such a decision faces difficulty for some employees since identity can involve choices among various racial affiliations. The organizational affinity group structure did not permit heterogeneous affinity groups. Training sites were limited to a certain number of affinity groups to offer due to the number of employees available to facilitate the affinity group meetings, thus the above response reflects the lack of options the non-profit organization was able to provide employees.

Exclusion of identities. Finally, several employees requested that other identities be present in the affinity groups including income level, gender, Jewish religion, and LGBTQ. Although some of the above requests were available at several training sites, such options were not ubiquitous throughout the organization as a whole. To highlight the exclusion of identity a White male employee stated "I, like many, think that the organization (sic)-required affinity groups should not only be only based on race. Class, gender, and sexual orientation also dictate a classroom environment." From his response, there was clearly a request for other elements of one's identity that were not readily offered nor discussed within the affinity group space.

RQ2: What will help to enhance diversity within the workplace at large?

Organizational Identity. 158 responses addressed one's identity in the non-profit organization in a general sense. Several diversity training sessions were offered throughout the six week training program that discussed topics related to one's racial and nonracial identity as it pertained to their career. Most diversity sessions tackled racially driven issues as it pertained to

K-12 education. Employees were given pre-work prior to entering the training session including

reading articles that addressed the racial divide such as excerpts from Beverly Tatum's (2003)

Why are all the black kids sitting together in the cafeteria? Of these responses, several sub-

themes emerged including legitimizing one's identity, intersectionality, lack of safe-spaces, and

surface-level discussion (Table 2).

Legitimizing one's identity. Many employees mentioned how the organization fostered

a productive climate to discuss issues related to one's identity. A Latino Male stated

> *They (organizational diversity training session leaders) helped me struggle*
>
> *through issues of identity and see how it relates to the classroom. I feel they*
>
> *created a safe space where employees (sic) could feel at home and share personal*
>
> *experiences that led to productive conversations.*

From the above response, the organization created a supportive environment for

employees to acknowledge their identities while navigating their new career roles. Historically

considered a taboo topic, race in the workplace appeared to be an encouraged topic to discuss

and thus was supported within organizational diversity sessions. Part of the supportive climate

evolved from organizational leaders supporting others to communicate their identity within the

workplace. An African American female stated

> *The diversity sessions were very heartfelt and I appreciate having those sessions.*
>
> *I believe my peers were able to express themselves freely and I was able to gain*
>
> *and understanding of how they felt and how my kids may feel as well if they were*
>
> *in their same shoes such as identity*

Not only did leaders of the organization help to legitimize one's own identity, they also

encouraged employees to discuss one's identity as a way to relate to their students.

Lack of safe spaces. Although many participant responses addressed the utility of an affinity group as a way to openly discuss one's identity, other participants felt the organization did not permit a safe environment. An Asian American male stated of a diversity training session that "I did not feel safe to speak," while a White female stated

The last 2 diversity sessions fostered an uncomfortable environment and tense

feelings surrounding race and identity. Employees (sic) felt unsafe sharing their

views and the conversations made our school team feel divided because of race

rather than united by the same cause.

The above response shows a lack of comfort to express concerns or ideas related to one's identity in the workplace at large. Some employees felt uncomfortable due to a lack of regard for identities other than race, while others like the above employee response were uncomfortable being challenged about racial topics and instead would rather focus on uniting all cultures. The conversations held within the diversity training sessions appeared to cause division for some, rather than an effort to bring multiple identities together to further the progressive efforts of the organization.

Intersectionality. Participants expressed concern about the need to acknowledge intersectionality when discussing identity in the workplace. For example, a white female stated "I understand race is big for the organization (sic), but if we are figuring out our own identities then we need to explore more of that. I think we should focus more on intersectionality." Similarly, some participants went as far as to change the label "identity" to "intersectionality." A person of color stated

Intersectionality competes with the idea of identity, because identity is a fixed

thing, so aside from an identification card no person has one single identity.

> *Instead of being used as a buzzword to signify the ambiguous idea of "diversity,"*
>
> *intersectionality (sic) actually provides a far more specific way to look at how*
>
> *positionality and identities intersect.*

How the organization labeled identity within the diversity session appeared problematic for some employees. The above response signifies the importance of labeling as a way to both legitimize and delegitimize one's identity. If employees believed the term 'identity' to be stagnant and relatively fixed, 'intersectionality' may have served as a more inclusive term.

Other elements of one's identity participants hoped to address was language and low income backgrounds. A white female discussed her desire for more discussion regarding language difference stating

> *Wish that there had been more discussion of different parts of identity in the (sic)*
>
> *training sessions...I think every student's experience with their identity is going to*
>
> *be so different and I think a lot of people didn't engage as much with things other*
>
> *than race... I'm teaching Latino students in the fall and bridging the language gap*
>
> *was something that I wish I had learned more about.*

Other employees thought that one's socioeconomic status was an important factor to their identity and relating to others within the workplace. A female Latino American stated

> *The one thing they do have in common is that they grow up in a low-income*
>
> *community. There are aspects of growing up in a low-income community that*
>
> *affect everyone regardless of their race, and we should have covered that at some*
>
> *point in a D&E (diversity and equity) session.*

From the above participant responses, employees preferred a more complex discussion of one's identity rather than merely one's racial characteristics. Other participants requested that the word

"diversity" or "identity" should be replaced with "intersectionality" to describe the training sessions addressing one's identity within the workplace.

Surface Level Discussions. Responses from the final subtheme emerged after many similar sentiments shared regarding the lack of depth in organizational diversity training sessions. Many participants emphasized the need to hold deeper discussions about what led employees to develop certain ideologies. For instance, a female Latino American stated

The sessions barely grazed the surface. I felt like I was in an introductory course as a freshman...these discussions should be held in smaller groups and with people who share the same identity in order to pick up and move on from a common place, and talk about more than the surface points. The facilitation also needs to be much more structured in the questions that are posed.

The above response highlights many sentiments from participants regarding the need for affinity groups to foster more productive conversations about race. The same participant also highlighted the need for homogenous groups to foster more productive conversations. The employee further states

I felt like I had to teach people my experiences and validate articles…I feel they (diversity sessions) were created to placate the white people in the room and get them thinking about race, which in all honesty if they haven't thought or had these conversations before they should not be teaching these kids

As seen in the above participant response, some minorities felt they had to teach white employees rather than learn themselves from well-structured sessions created by facilitators.

Study II.

Participants

Participants for Study II were recruited from undergraduate communication courses. Students received extra credit for participation in the study. A total of 268 students participated in the survey ($N = 268$). Participant ages ranged from 18-52 ($m = 21$), including all levels of undergraduate standings; freshman ($N = 45$, 17%), sophomore ($N = 83$, 31%), junior ($N = 69$, 26%), senior ($N = 43$, 16%) and super senior ($N = 27$, 10%). A majority of students were female ($N = 165$, 62%) and identified racially as White ($N = 183$, 69%). Other racial identities included African American ($N = 31$, 12%), Asian ($N = 22$, 8%), Hispanic ($N = 16$, 6%), American Native ($N = 4$, 2%) and other ($N = 11$, 4%). Participants who selected other reported their preferred racial identities including Biracial, Korean, and Arabian. Additionally, individual's sexual orientation and religious beliefs were reported. A majority of participants identified as straight ($N = 254$, 95%), while bisexuals ($N = 5$, 2%), Lesbians ($N = 2$, .7%) and Gay males ($N = 4$, 1.3%) made up a small portion of the data. Participants also reported a wide range of religious beliefs include Christians ($N = 100$, 38%), Catholics ($N = 69$, 26%), Atheists ($N = 25$, 10%), Agnostic ($N = 21$, 8%), Muslim ($N = 9$, 4%) and other ($N = 37$, 14%). Other reported religious beliefs included Lutheran, Shaman, spiritual, and nothing at all. Only 1% of the participant pool grew up in areas outside of the Midwest.

To gain insight into one's workplace setting, participants reported previously held positions including server ($N = 134$, 50%), customer service representative ($N = 93$, 35%), Military member ($N = 5$, 2%) and other (13%) including jobs such as life guard, manager, nurse, and teachers aid. Finally, participants were asked to describe their identity (a combination of things that describe who you are). A majority of responses included one's personality

characteristic (i.e. outgoing, hardworking, and friendly) ($N = 184$, 73%), while others included

their gender ($N = 20$, 8%) occupation ($N = 19$, 8%), and racial identity ($N = 18$, 7%). A small

portion of the sample included one's age, religious belief, and age to describe their identity

(Table 3).

Procedures and Measures

The survey began with several demographic questions inquiring about one's racial

identity, gender, age, sexual orientation, religious beliefs, educational standing, income level,

hometown, previous jobs held, and how they would describe their identity. Following the

demographic question, participants then entered the affinity group section of the survey, which

began with a definition of an affinity group as a space for individuals sharing a common

characteristic, trait, or interest, to discuss issues of shared identity (Segal, 2013) and provide

emotional support or potential resources for employees (Douglas, 2008). Several affinity group

types were provided as examples including racial affinity groups such as African American or

White, as well as nonracial affinity groups related to one's sexual orientation such as LGBTQ,

one's religious beliefs such as Atheists, or one's socioeconomic status such as first in family to

attend college. After providing the definition and types of affinity groups, participants completed

a series of questions concerning opinions about the utility of an affinity group in a future

workplace. Essentially, participants reported whether affinity groups were seen as a necessity

when entering the workforce and what type of affinity group would help foster diversity (e.g.

homogeneous, heterogeneous, both). A series of open-ended questions permitted participants to

share what type of information they might disclose relevant to their identity within an affinity

group. Participants who did not believe affinity groups would enhance organizational diversity

were prompted to provide what they deemed as a more beneficial solution.

The next portion of the survey inquired about identity within the workplace at large. Questions addressed how often one thinks about his or her racial or nonracial identity in the workplace as well as what one reveals or conceals about their identity. Additionally, participants were provided examples of an artifact including pictures, college pennants, and diplomas that may convey elements of our racial and/or nonracial identity and were asked to report any artifacts that are displayed in the workplace that convey an element of one's racial or nonracial identity. Finally, participants were asked to report what topics are considered socially appropriate and socially inappropriate for workplace dialogue.

Coding

After reading through the 268 responses, the author identified several themes for each open ended question using qualitative content analysis. Hsieh and Shannon (2005) describe qualitative content analysis as "a research method for the subjective interpretation of the content of text data through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns" (p. 1278). The researcher began by reading the first set of open-ended questions regarding racial affinity groups. After reading through the open-ended responses multiple times, the researcher extracted salient themes or emergent thoughts from participants (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005) and repeated for each open ended question asked. The coding framework consisted of multiple comparisons with another colleague (same colleague from study I) to ensure the accuracy of the applied codes to both the racial and nonracial group open ended questions as well as questions related to visible and invisible identities, and questions concerning what one reveals or conceals within the workplace. Once the coders had each coded 25 responses from each open-ended question, reliability tests were conducted.

Racial Affinity Groups. To estimate variance and to measure agreement between raters, Fleiss's G was used. Results for why individuals did not select an affinity group revealed race should not matter within the workplace .92, affinity groups do not affect me 1.00, not wanting to limit oneself to a single group 1.00, and affinity groups as outright "wrong" or a "racist" approach to organizational diversity .93.

The next two questions inquired what information participants would feel comfortable revealing or concealing within an affinity group. Reliability for revealing information included comfortability sharing anything 1.00, issues pertaining to the characteristics of the group 1.00, comfortable only sharing basic or surface level information 1.00, intention to share fundamental values and beliefs, 1.00, and nothing, 1.00. Reliability for concealing information personal related information .89, nothing at all 1.00, racial issues 1.00, and unsure 1.00.

The final set of racial affinity group questions asked participants why they selected a particular racial affinity group and whether one experienced any difficulty making a choice. Reliability for responses to why individuals selected the racial affinity group included best matching their racial identity 1.00, not seeing a point or personal need to join .88, wanting to learn about a new culture and/or increase heterogeneity .87, selection based on the comfort of sharing the same characteristic 1.00. After inquiring about why participants selected the chosen affinity group, they were then asked if there was any difficulty in making that decision. Reliability included no 1.00, yes 1.00, too many options 1.00, race is unimportant .93, and others were unsure .93.

Nonracial Affinity Groups. Reliability for why individuals did not select a nonracial affinity group revealed an inability to relate 1.00, lack of comfort 1.00, lack of need or desire and viewing the concept as outright "wrong" or a promoting segregation within the workplace 1.00.

The next two questions inquired what information participants would feel comfortable revealing or concealing within a nonracial affinity group. Reliability for revealing information included comfortability discussing anything 1.00, sharing characteristics related to the selected group 1.00, basic or surface level information 1.00, one's deep seated values and beliefs 1.00, and nothing 1.00. Reliability for concealing information in an affinity group space included nothing at all 1.00, aspects related to one's nonracial identity that would be concealed included personal issues .93, anything political .92, group differences .93, and others were unsure 1.00. The final set of questions consider the reasons for selecting the nonracial affinity group and any difficulty experienced wen making the choice. Reliability for responses to why individuals selected the racial affinity group included fitting with the nonracial identity 1.00, wanted to support the group and/or serve as an ally 1.00, wanted to learn more about the culture 1.00, did not see a need or point in attending 1.00, comfortability 1.00, and others were unsure 1.00. After inquiring about why participants selected the chosen nonracial affinity group, they were then asked if there was any difficulty in making that decision. Reliability included no 1.00, yes 1.00, not difficult because they could relate to those in the group 1.00, too many options to select from 1.00, unyielding support to those in the group 1.00, groups listed were perceived as unimportant to their own nonracial identity 1.00.

Identity (openly discuss vs. concealed). The next set of open-ended questions focused on the privacy management of one's identity characteristics within the workplace including what one reveals or conceals about identity. Reliability for responses addressing what aspects of their identity they would talk about in the workplace included general information, .93, work-related topics 1.00, contingent on the organizational members .88, closeness of the coworker .87, anything 1.00, and nothing 1.00. Reliability for responses addressing what aspects of their

identity they would not talk about in the workplace included religion and politics 1.00, finances 1.00, sexual orientation 1.00, race 1.00, and nothing 1.00.

Identity (visible vs. private). Participants were then asked several questions related to what about their identity is public knowledge as well as what is considered private that most employees do not know about. Reliability for responses addressing what aspects of one's identity remains clear to others included skin color .93, accent 1.00, hair color and texture 1.00, gender 1.00, language 1.00, and age 1.00. Participants also answered questions related to what elements of identity remain private in the workplace. Reliability for responses addressing what aspects of one's identity remain private in the workplace included religious beliefs, political affiliation, and personal finances .93, nothing 1.00, family 1.00, sexual identity 1.00, , romantic relationships .89, and languages spoken 1.00.

Artifacts. The third set of questions addressed what types of artifacts an employee displays and in the workplace. Reliability for responses addressing what artifacts are revealed in the workplace included no artifacts displayed 1.00, pictures .91 clothing or jewelry .88.

Workplace Privacy Rules. The final set of questions address social protocol within the workplace. Participants were asked what information is considered socially appropriate to discuss within the workplace, as well as what information should not be publicly discussed within the workplace. Reliability for responses addressing what topics were considered socially appropriate included basic or surface level information .92, work-related topics .88, any topic as long as considered inoffensive 1.00, everything 1.00, and political ideologies .87. Reliability for responses addressing what topics are considered socially inappropriate in the workplace included religion and politics .88, sex life .85, race .83, anything not work related .81, and sexual orientation .89.

Results

RQ3: What elements of one's identity are shared within an affinity group space?

RQ4: What elements of one's identity are concealed within an affinity group space?

To address the above three research question, several open ended questions inquired as to how individuals perceive the utility of an affinity group within the workplace. Participants selected from a variety of racial and nonracial affinity groups to attend. A participant selecting "none," was asked why no affinity group was selected and whether another approach would better foster diversity within the workplace setting. After participants selected from one racial and one nonracial identity characteristic for an affinity group, a series of questions asked what information they would share or conceal within the affinity group. The following results became organized by racial and nonracial affinity group responses.

Racial Affinity Groups. Of 258 responses, a majority of participants selected the white affinity group ($N = 115$, 45%). Other racial affinity groups selected included Biracial ($N = 19$, 7%), People of Color ($N = 13$, 5%), African American ($N = 13$, 5%), Latino/a American ($N = 14$, 5%), Asian American Pacific Islander ($N = 8$, 3%). Several participants selected other ($N = 13$, 5%) while providing which affinity group they would rather attend including Korean, Indian, Male, and Haitian. The second largest category included participants stating they would not attend an affinity group ($N = 63$, 24%). The reasons listed for a lack of attendance include, race should not matter within the workplace (i.e. "I would not join an affinity group because race shouldn't be a workplace concern or any concern"), affinity groups do not affect me (i.e. "I try not to involve myself in matters that don't directly affect me"), not wanting to limit oneself to a single group (i.e. "I enjoy interacting with all sorts of people, and I don't need to limit myself to one group"), and finally, some participants saw the concept as outright "wrong" or a "racist"

approach to organizational diversity (i.e. "It seems a bit racist too because you have to be a certain race to hold membership in the group. I would not partake in something like this").

Once participants reported which affinity group they would attend if any, a series of questions inquired about the comfort revealing racial identity within the group as well as what information would remain concealed. Of 237 responses, a majority stated they would feel comfortable discussing anything (i.e. "I am an open book") ($N = 95$, 40%). Others stated they would feel comfortable sharing issues pertaining to the characteristics of the group (N = 47, 20%) (i.e. "I would share similar things to others because then we'd all be on the same page") while others would feel comfortable only sharing basic or surface level information (n = 45, 19%) ("Basic information like name, major, age"). A small portion of the participants stated an intention to share fundamental values and beliefs ($N = 19$, 8%), whereas others stated they would share nothing, rather observe (4%). The next question asked participants to reflect on what aspects of identity remain concealed within the nonracial affinity group space. A majority of participants stated not sharing personal related information (i.e. relational, sexual, secrets, and financial/income) ($N = 98$, 45%). Other responses included nothing at all (i.e. "I'm an open book) ($N = 85$, 39%), racial issues ("how another race has been disrespectful. I am over the past and would hate to bring up ways I have been treated") ($N = 16$, 8%), and some were unsure what elements identity remain concealed (2%).

The final set of questions asked participants why they selected a particular racial affinity group and whether one experienced any difficulty making a choice. Of the 232 responses a majority of participants stated they selected the racial affinity group best matching their racial identity ($N = 132$, 57%). In descending order some participants reported not seeing a point or personal need to join ($N = 35$, 15%), others wanted to learn about a new culture and/or increase

heterogeneity ($N = 35$, 15%), while a few participants stated selecting the affinity group based on the comfort of sharing the same characteristic ($N = 15$, 6.5%). After inquiring about why participants selected the chosen affinity group, they were then asked if there was any difficulty in making that decision. Of the 232 responses, many stated no ($N = 129$, 75%), while a few said yes ($N = 18$, 11%). A narrow portion of the data provided a rationale behind their decision including it was difficult because of too many options ($N = 9$, 5.5%), race is unimportant ($N = 9$, 5.5%), and others were unsure (3%). Finally, participants were asked "How often do you think about your racial identity in the workplace?" On a seven point Likert scale from 1= very difficult to 7 = very easy $M = 5.01$, $SD = 1.65$ (Table 4).

Nonracial Affinity Groups. Many of the 257 responses selected the Christian affinity group ($N = 48$, 19%). Other nonracial affinity groups selected included first in one's family to graduate from college ($N = 31$, 12%), Catholic ($N = 28$, 11%), LGBTQ ($N = 26$, 10%), Atheist ($N = 13$, 5%), Muslim ($N = 10$, 4%), Parent ($N = 9$, 4%), while Jewish, low income background and immigrant made up a small portion of the data (6%). Several participants selected other (6%) providing which nonracial affinity group they would rather attend including veterans, military members, students, and political affiliation. Similar to the racial affinity group, the second largest category included participants who stated they would not attend any of the groups ($N = 59$, 24%). The reasons listed for a lack of attendance include, an inability to relate (i.e. "I have nothing in common with these groups"), lack of comfort ("there's not really one I'm comfortable enough going to"), lack of need or desire ("I still would have no desire nor feel I would benefit from joining one of this groups") and finally, some participants saw the concept as outright "wrong" or a promoting segregation within the workplace (i.e. "I would find it counter-productive to have socially segregated groups").

Once participants reported which nonracial affinity group they would attend if any, they were then directed to a series of questions inquiring about what nonracial identity characteristics they would feel comfortable revealing within the group as well as what they would conceal. Of 237 responses, a majority stated they would feel comfortable either discussing anything (i.e. "I am an open book") ($N = 66$, 30%) or sharing characteristics related to the selected group (i.e. "I would be comfortable sharing the identity traits of this group. I feel this group already knows the struggles we face daily, and they would be supportive of me" or "I would share my religious background and what I value because I feel as if they would agree and not judge me") ($N = 64$, 29%). Other comfortable aspects to share related to one's identity includes basic or surface level information (i.e. "Nothing personal, because it is personal") ($N = 27$, 12%), one's deep seated values and beliefs ("I would be interested in hearing what others have to say but I would also be comfortable with sharing my beliefs about what I have learned in my life") ($N = 20$, 0%) and a small portion of participants stated they would share nothing within the nonracial affinity group space ($N = 13$, 6%). Results mirror what participants considered revealing in a racial affinity group space. Participants considered revealing information to work colleagues similarly for both one's racial and nonracial identity. The similarity shows racial and nonracial as interconnected involving the same level of comfortability discussing issues pertaining to said characteristic.

The following question asked participants to reflect on what aspects of their identity would be concealed within the nonracial affinity group space. A majority of participants stated nothing at all (i.e. "not really any. If it's a solid group of Christians who are there to support and encourage each other, there shouldn't be a reason to hold much back") ($N = 89$, 44%). Other uncomfortable aspects related to one's nonracial identity that would be concealed included personal issues (e.g. sex, personal choices, financial status) ($N = 52$, 26%), anything political ("I

wouldn't share my political views because it isn't the place to discuss that") ($N = 22$, 11%), group differences (e.g. "the differences in our believes because it is a sensitive thing" or "I feel like I couldn't talk about negative aspects of my identity because it's a Christian group. Sometimes it feels like you have to be perfect to be a part of a religious group") ($N = 17$, 9%) and others were unsure (10%). Similar to what information one would reveal, participants reported similar topics for what one would conceal in a nonracial affinity group space. The major difference between the racial and nonracial included a concealing differences in belief or heterogeneity within homogeneous groups. Participants reported a desire to conceal information that would cause controversy in the group. Perhaps group members viewed the affinity group as a way to garner support, rather than discuss differences. Arguably, individuals in minority groups already feel a sense of difference from a majority in the workplace, thus a nonracial affinity group was viewed as a place for sharing similarities, not differences.

The final set of questions consider the reasons for selecting the nonracial affinity group and any difficulty experienced wen making the choice. A majority of the 232 participants stated selection of the nonracial affinity group due to the fit with the nonracial identity (i.e. "I am a Christian, so I would want to select a group that has some same values and beliefs as I do") ($N = 127$, 56%), wanted to support the group and/or serve as an ally (i.e. "I am a strong supporter of the LGBTQ community") ($N = 18$, 8%), wanted to learn more about the culture ("I don't really know that much about the LGBQT community. I would like to learn more") ($N = 16$, 7%), did not see a need or point in attending (i.e. Because I don't feel that I need to join one") ($N = 14$, 6%), comfortability (i.e. "This group is my comfort zone" or "That is what I grew up understanding, even if I don't believe everything Christianity does, it is basically a comfort thing") ($N = 14$, 6%), and others were unsure (15%). After inquiring about why participants

selected the chosen nonracial affinity group, they were then asked if there was any difficulty in making that decision. Of the 232 responses, many stated no ($N = 92$, 40%), while a few said yes ($N = 21$, 9%). A larger portion of the data provided a rationale behind their decision including it was not difficult because they could relate to those in the group ($N = 68$, 29%), while others found the decision difficult because of too many options to select from ($N = 23$, 10%). Some reported that the decision was not difficult due to an unyielding support to those in the group ($N = 12$, 5%), whereas others did not find the decision difficult because they found the groups listed to be unimportant to their own nonracial identity ($N = 12$, 5%). Finally, participants were asked "How often do you think about your non-racial identity in the workplace?" On a seven point likert scale from 1= very difficult to 7 = very easy, $M = 5.05$, $SD = 1.68$ (Table 5).

RQ5: What elements of one's identity might an individual be willing to discuss in the workplace?

RQ6: What elements of one's identity might an individual be more reluctant to share in the workplace?

The next set of questions focused on the privacy management of one's identity characteristics within the workplace. Several questions addressed what public information is available to other workplace employees relevant to their identity such as their skin color or accent, while several other questions inquired which elements of one's identity remain concealed in the workplace and why.

Identity (openly discuss vs. concealed). To gain an understanding of what participants openly discuss in the workplace, they were asked the following question "What aspects of your identity do you talk about in the workplace?" Out of 254 responses, a majority of participants stated they openly discuss general information related to their identity such as ("Basic things like

my personality and such") (29%). Several participants stated only work-related topics are openly discuss (22%) (i.e. "I don't, I'm simply there to get work done"), while others included a caveat that discussing their identity depended on the person within the organization (15%) (i.e. "It depends on who I am working with at the time. If it is a coworker I am close with, we will discuss deeper things. If it is a co-worker that I do not know that well, we will just discuss standard and given information about one another"). Many were open to discuss anything related to identity (22%), whereas several reported not disclosing anything (7%). Overall, participants openly discuss surface level topics related to identity with fellow workers, however if the coworker was deemed as a friend, deeper level topics were readily discussed. Unfortunately, what constituted as "deeper level topics" was not expanded on, rather participants reported moving beyond surface level discourse to topics considered deeper and perhaps more personal to those they saw as a friend. Others felt the workplace should merely include topics related to one's job, rather than personal information such as one's identity characteristics. Although a majority of participants deemed identity as a topic to conceal, rather than openly discuss, a quarter of participants reported a willingness to discuss anything as they deemed open communication related to one's identity helpful to a positive working culture.

Participants responded to the question "What aspects of your identity do you not talk about in the workplace?" Of the 254 responses a majority stated religion and politics (28%), finances (22%), sexual orientation (10%), race (9%) nothing-open (10%). The reported topics align with historical adages considering taboo topics such as religion, policies, money, and race as personal topics, not appropriate for workplace communication. Conversely, Mutz and Mondak (2005) found that since the workplace involves a wider variation of viewpoints than in one's family or friendship circle, exposure to different views increases one's understanding of various

political views and leads to political tolerance. A small portion of participants reported a willingness to discuss any topic related to their identity.

Identity (visible vs. private). Once participants reported what they openly discuss or conceal, they were then asked several questions related to what about their identity is public knowledge as well as what is considered private that most employees do not know about. Participants were asked "What aspects of your identity are clear to others (skin color, accent, etc) in the workplace?" Of the 245 responses, a majority of participants stated their skin color was the most publicly displayed (63%), while others reported their accent (13%). The remaining responses included one's hair (color and texture) (8%), gender (6%), language (5%), and age (2%). Most participants reported their skin color as the most visible aspect of their identity, followed by a small portion reporting their mid-western accent. The question included examples of visible identity characteristics such as one's skin color and accent, which may have led to the large report of such characteristics from participants. The researcher by providing examples, may create a cue that if perhaps other examples more aligned with the participant's actual sense of visible identity would generate different outcomes. A small fraction of participants, mostly of the minority, reported the texture of one's hair as a visible identity characteristic. Hair provides concern for minority women in the workplace due to a negative culture stereotypes impacting the professional image, resulting in minority women changing hair style to downplay a racial identity (Rosette & Dumas, 2007).

Participants answered questions related to what elements of identity remain private in the workplace with the question "What aspects of your identity do you consider private that are not shown in the workplace?" Of the 237 responses many stated that religious beliefs, political affiliation, and personal finances operate private elements of identity in the workplace (27%).

Some participants were completely open stating nothing was considered private or off limits (16%). Other persons concealed elements of identity characteristics including discussions of one's family (10%), sexual identity (9%), romantic relationships (6%), and second languages spoken (3%). Similar to what one conceals within the workplace, a majority of participants reported politically sensitive topics such as values and beliefs as private (Table 6).

RQ7: What artifacts related to one's identity does an employee publicly display?

The third set of questions addressed what types of artifacts an employee displays and in the workplace. Artifacts remain an important visual representation for employees in the workplace, therefore participants responded to an open ended question inquiring what artifacts represent an element of either their racial or nonracial identity. Participants received a definition of an artifact, along with several examples, prior to asking which artifacts are displayed.

Of the 228 responses, a majority said no personal artifacts were displayed (50%) due to the environment of the workplace. Many participants reported a lack of personal space to place items. Other responses included pictures as a visual representation of identity (21%) (i.e. "Pictures of family to show possibly racial and other identities") and clothing or jewelry (11%) (i.e. "The clothing I wear (such as jerseys and clothing with Mexican symbols on them)" "I wear heavy metal music t-shirts that may be interpreted as anti-Christian imagery" or "I wear a Mary/Jesus pendent on my neck every day. That is always visible"). A smaller portion of the data included artifacts such as one's physical appearance (e.g. skin color, tattoo, hair) (4%), college pennant (3%), flag (2%), and fan ship (e.g. jersey, green bay packer hat, etc.) (2%). Since a majority of participants worked in the service industry or retail, most were unable to place physical artifacts at a desk or specific location. The lack of personal space in the workplace may

reduce the number of artifacts reported. Others included photographs of family members that showed one's racial identity.

RQ8: What are privacy rules of one's workplace?

The final set of questions address social protocol within the workplace. Participants were asked what information is considered socially appropriate to discuss within the workplace, as well as what information should not be publicly discussed within the workplace. Of the 240 responses, a majority of participants reported basic or surface level information (e.g. sports, weather, food, social life) is appropriate topics to discuss in the workplace (41%). Other participants stated work-related topics (26%), any topic as long as considered inoffensive (12%), everything (10%), and political ideologies (values and beliefs) (5%). Similar to previous responses, participants reported surface level topics as the workplace norm for communication. Topics such as the weather, food, and one's job appeared to be low risk for participants and preferable for the workplace.

The final question asked participants "What do you consider inappropriate topics to discuss within the workplace?" Many of the 254 participants stated religion and politics as topics to avoid (24%), as well as sex life (23%), race (15%), anything not work related (8%), and sexual orientation (6%). The social norm of the workplace remained consistent throughout participant responses including an environment where politically based topics were considered taboo and thus not appropriate for workplace communication (Table 7).

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Discussion

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Both studies provided an important lens into the way individuals communicate identity within the workplace. Study I investigated current employee affinity group perceptions and larger organizational diversity sessions, while Study II examined college student affinity group

perception as a way to enhance diversity in the workplace as well as what information pertaining to one's identity would one reveal or conceal. The ensuing section discusses an area of overlap between studies including participant's desire for more intersectionality and heterogeneous group options in the workplace.

<div align="center">**Study I.**</div>

Intersectionality and Design: Affinity Groups and Organization Diversity Sessions

Tiger Woods once said I'm more than Black, "I'm Cablinasian," a term he coined for identifying as Caucasian, Black, Indian, and Asian (Fletcher, 1997). Woods identity directly relates to the sentiments shared from the non-profit organization employees regarding affinity group selection. When multiple options existed, affinity group attendees found difficulty selecting one racial group to attend. For instance, one employee, identifying as a Person of Color, reported feelings of difficulty and hostility for having to choose between one elements of identity. Such a decision remains prominent in organizations where employees feel the need to select between two or more identities they apply to label themselves (Rothbard & Ramajaran, 2009). Rothbard and Ramajaran (2009) claim when experiencing two conflicting identities in the workplace, employees may suppress one identity and thus may experience a negative affect including stress or tension. Individuals reported difficulty during nonracial affinity group selection. For example, a gay or lesbian parent may experience difficulty selecting between a parent and a LGBTQ group. When offering groups simultaneously, employees struggled negotiating which identity to preference.

Several explanations for the non-profit's organizational affinity group design and logistics include organizational resources, facilitator training, and time of day. First, some training sites possessed limited spaces to host affinity groups, whereas others were poorly

attended and thus combined with other groups. For example, few employees attended the People of Color (POC) affinity group at the Chicago training site and were instead directed to the African American affinity group. Such a move may have been problematic for those identifying as POC since organizational employees decided which identity characteristic was more popular, thus directing POC members to shift their identity due to logistical concerns. Organizations looking to incorporate affinity groups should consider the racial and nonracial identity characteristics of potential attendees to determine the types of affinity groups desired given the physical setting of the workplace.

Secondly, some employees were dissatisfied with the lack of experience from affinity group facilitators. The only requirement for facilitation was an expressed interest and identification with the racial or nonracial group. Affinity groups operate successfully when structured with leadership positions to ensure stability (McLean-Conner, 2008). Leadership positions require skilled facilitators beginning with meeting goals and outlining specific measures to achieving those goals (McLean-Conner, 2008). As seen, some employees remained frustrated with the lack of experience facilitating sensitive topics such as identity. For example, a white female employee reported a need for "collaboration with a professional dialogue facilitation group" while an African American male stated "Some of the facilitators were not adequate and underprepared to handle some of the in depth conversations." Perhaps hiring professional affinity group facilitators or offering current facilitator's diversity dialogue training would have enhanced one's affinity group experience. A number of existing organizations offer affinity group training such as Seeds For Change, a non-profit organization helping people to organize positive social change, or Organizing For Power, a community organization seeking to

combat racism. Each of the organizations offer guided programs for facilitators to learn skills emphasizing participation, democracy, support, and empowerment (Seeds For Change, 2015).

Third, some employees devalued the time of day affinity groups were held. Affinity groups were separated from the regular workday, which may have led to low participation in some groups. Allen (2011) reports that the top 50 organizations for diversity "consider affinity groups to be a crucial aspect to accomplishing business goals, and all of them allow groups to meet during the workday" (p. 89). Organizations looking to incorporate affinity groups should keep the following three guidelines in mind including sufficient meeting spaces and affinity group participants for each identity, quality facilitation, and offering meeting times during the workday, prior to initiating in the workplace.

In addition to logistical concerns, employees from the non-profit organization also desired more discussions about their intersectionality within the homogenous affinity group spaces as well as the diversity sessions at large. Hecht, Warren, Jung, and Krieger (2005) argue that individuals gain membership in a social group which then leads to a social identity, yet individuals maintain memberships in multiple social groups influencing aspects of one's identity. To limit an employee to one social group, the individual must suppress or deny the other identity characteristics. Clair, Beatty, and MacLean (2003) argue "groups that fail to sensitively respond to a person's revelations about a stigmatizing invisible social identity may suffer from decreased cohesion among group members" (p. 29). Invisible identities may include elements of intersectionality, not visible went entering an affinity group space such as identifying as both white and black. If groups fail to articulate differences, group members may become stigmatized or fail to attend subsequent group meetings. Since the organizational diversity sessions primarily focused on racial inequalities, some employees reported suppressing other nonracial identity

characteristics, which were seen as an important part of their identity makeup. For example, a female employee identifying as multi-racial stated the following of the larger diversity sessions offered

> *I still find it so disturbing that we only spoke about racial inequality. It actually makes me feel ill because it seems so obviously wrong to force people to prioritize one of their identities over another, and to create a sort of environment where other types of inequality aren't "relevant."*

Some employees went on to specifically address which identities remained suppressed in the larger organizational diversity sessions. A white female identifying as LGBTQ stated

> *No civil rights or social justice movement can be successful without acknowledging that all oppressed peoples are fighting parallel fights and we, as leaders, must uphold and honor the struggle of all marginalized identity groups (women, members of the LGBTQ community, those seeking political and religious freedom, those from economically disempowered communities, etc.)*

The above responses address a need for more communicating intersectionality in both affinity group spaces and larger organizational diversity sessions. Although intersectionality remained a common critique of the non-profit's organizational diversity efforts, many found the affinity group spaces and diversity sessions to be particularly helpful, yet few expanded on why such spaces were helpful. One might presume that affinity groups permitted individuals a space to discuss elements of one's shared identity that were not available in larger organizational discourse. For example, the above response from the LGBTQ member provides an important justification for the LGBTQ affinity group. Since issues pertaining to the community were not actively discussed

within the larger organizational setting, perhaps the affinity groups lent a space to do so. Overall, affinity groups were seen as a way to enhance diversity for some, yet the lack of communication about intersectionality and affinity group design remain problematic for many employees.

Study II.

American's spend, on average, 8.9 hours per day conducting work related activities and over 40 hours per week in the workplace (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2014). Yet within this time frame, most individuals discuss surface level topics related to their identity such as one's personality characteristics or topics related to their jobs. Few participants reported discussing identity characteristics such as race, sexual orientation, religious affiliations, political standings, and gender. Several explanations include the historic cultural norms that continues to dominate the workplace today, unrecognized racial privileges associated with one's identity, and the difficulties experienced by minorities to openly discuss their identity in the workplace.

Historic adages of not discussing politically garnered topics hinders political tolerance (Mutz & Mondak, 2005) and diversity initiatives such as affinity groups due to the function of actively discussing elements related to one's identity. A majority of participants attending affinity groups report membership in a racial minority, whereas all persons expressing opposition to affinity groups in the workplace identified as white. The following examines the importance of white-based and minority affinity groups as a way to foster diversity in the workplace.

IMT: White and Minority Affinity Groups

White Affinity Groups. Overall, affinity groups were seen as a way to enhance diversity in the workplace for minority college students, yet all opposed forming an affinity group identified as white. White affinity groups in particular serve as an exemplar example of needing

to incorporate both emotional and instrumental goals due to the discomfort of reflecting on one's privileges and the desire to change one's practices (Blitz & Kohl, 2012). As discovered, White employees rarely discussed or recognized race as an inherent part of identity. Most participants reported one's personality characteristic (i.e. outgoing, hardworking, and friendly) as a way to provide a self-description. Herring, Keith, and Horton (2004) argue that "Whites have the luxury of ignoring racial inequalities, and the privilege of denying the historical impact of constant and consistent negative acts relating to race" (p. 1998). Conversely, minority populations tend to keep race at the forefront of identity. Additionally, when asked about why individuals would not attend an affinity group, many stated it further segregated cultures.

Both formal and informal forms of white affinity groups deserve specific attention as many believe they serve as a way to further segregate or do not see the purpose since white remains the organizational cultural standard (Michael & Conger, 2009). Such perceptions deserve specific attention since increasing solidarity to discuss white privilege might not lead to productive conversations. White group members may gather to discuss how to further support members of the majority. For example, "boys clubs," usually including a powerful group of men whose alliances, often help to advance one another within the workplace (Segal, 2012). Bielby (2014) found organizational policies and practices can sustain racial and gender bias in the workplace in areas of recruitment. For example, a company emphasizing prior industry leadership experience limits women and racial minorities since industries continue to be dominated by men (Bielby, 2014). The intersection of gender and race for white men enhances one's privilege. Although affinity groups help to enhance organizational diversity, the inclusion of white affinity groups may further segregate minorities if discussions do not seek to address elements of white privilege. Instead of gathering to promote white ideals or further advance the

already privileged, affinity groups can reduce the ingrained white biased within the workplace. Understanding one's privilege remains contingent on the organizational culture, trained affinity group facilitation, and a discussion of instrumental goals.

Blitz and Kohl (2012) discuss several actions white people can take to help eliminate racism in the workplace including developing a new white identity, by acknowledging internalized privileges, understanding intent and impact of actions, and creating fellow alliances within the workplace to hold one another accountable to support antiracist efforts. To ease the disruptive nature of one's emotions and the necessary actions required to be an antiracist, many white people would rather learn from people of color or attend heterogeneous affinity groups (Michael & Conger, 2009). Such a perception remains problematic to a minority affinity group's function; to provide a place of support for persons with similar experiences.

Blitz and Kohl (2012) argue that becoming an antiracist white ally involves taking "responsibility for self-education without relying on people of color" (p.485). Homogeneous affinity groups parallel the logic of Blitz and Kohl (2012) due to the importance of sharing emotions with others able fundamentally to relate rather than "teaching" others their experiences. Catalyst (2004), a non-profit organization seeking to foster inclusive strategies for women in the workplace report that Black women often withhold personal information related to their racial identity in the workplace due to welcoming possible scrutiny. Catalyst further reports "African American women are often well aware of the negative consequences of withholding personal information, but often find advances from coworkers too intrusive to respond to" (p. 17). If white employees felt too comfortable, offensive questions were often asked such as "Do you sunburn?" or "How often do you wash your hair?" (Catalyst). Becoming an ally involves taking responsibility for understanding different cultures without expectations of being "taught." Since

many organizations seek to foster more inclusiveness, taking responsibility to understand one's privileges helps to serve as the needed alliance for minority groups. Though many participants viewed white affinity groups as a way to further segregate cultures, those of the majority play a pivotal role in fostering inclusion within the workplace due to organizational power and resources (Blitz & Kohl, 2012). Although the study consisted of mostly White individuals, those of the minority included a different outlook on identity in the workplace at large and in affinity group spaces.

Minority Affinity Groups. All minority participants selected a racial affinity group to attend, whereas all opposed to affinity groups identified as White. Minority participant's responses differed greatly from White responses when it came to the difficulty experienced discussing identity. Participants responded to the question "In your life now, how easy is it to discuss issues pertaining to your racial identity?" A majority of minority participants expressed difficulty in discussing issues pertaining to their racial identity. Several reasons may include facing scrutiny (Catalyst, 2004), perceived lack of cultural understanding by fellow White employees, and having to "teach" White people about what it means to be a person of color. Due to the structure of the affinity groups, perhaps minorities saw affinity groups as a way to deviate from the above discourse often experienced in the workplace and instead, interact with those sharing similar challenges. Minorities also described their identity differently than White participants.

When asked to describe one's identity (a combination of things that describe who you are), a majority of participants reported a personality characteristic such as outgoing, fun, motivated, hard-working, etc., yet all those mentioning race or ethnicity as an element of identity were a minority. For example, a 19-year-old female from Milwaukee reported "a young Asian

female," or a 24-year-old female from Milwaukee stating "a loving Hispanic woman with goals and aspirations." Based on the variance in responses to the following question, it appears minorities view race and ethnicity as major elements of identity, whereas White individuals rarely consider race as an important construct of identity. Those of nonracial identity minority groups including members of the LGBTQ community reported their sexual orientation as a way to describe one's identity. For instance, a White male stated "gay, boy, music lover, and personable." Similarly to one's white racial identity, those identifying as heterosexual did not report their sexual orientation as a way to describe one's identity. Results support existing identity development literature (Martin & Nakayama, 2013; Ojha, 2005), which ascertains different stages based on one's racial identity.

There remain different stages of identity development for those of the majority and minorities and the rate at which the stages are navigated (Martin & Nakayama, 2013; Ojha, 2005). Minority identity development consists of four stages including unexamined identity, conformity, resistance and separation, and integration, whereas Majority or white identity development entails five stages including unexamined identity, acceptance, resistance, redefinition, and integration (Hardiman, 2003; Martin & Nakayama, 2013). The conformity stages of minority identity development occur much faster than the beginning stages of majority identity development due to constant societal influences and reminders of how one remains different from the norm (Martin & Nakayama). Based on participant responses, it appears minorities have at some level considered race as a defying factor of one's identity development. Homogeneous affinity groups appear particularly relevant for college students due to varying levels of identity development in one's adolescence. Such differences matter to the conversations had in affinity group spaces. Minorities have likely navigated similar stages of identity

development, whereas White individuals may lack understanding of one's privileges in the early years of college. Homogeneous affinity groups assume a similar level of identity development and thus potentially involve fewer needs to explain or debate already established levels of understanding. Although affinity groups can help individuals recognize privileges and develop antiracist efforts, as well as serve as a space for shared understanding, what topics one communicates resides in the cultural norms of the workplace at large.

CPMT: Revealing and Concealing Identity and Employee Artifacts

The current study supports existing research that assumes political topics are not appropriate for workplace discussion (Mutz & Mondak, 2005). A majority of participants reported revealing only basic or surface level information about their identity including personality characteristics or low risk topics such as the weather. The responses mirror topics historically considered taboo including politics, religious beliefs, relational intimacies, or anything that could be perceived as offensive by others. Such a finding aligns with communicative patterns from millennials regarding racial topics. *PBS* reporter Sen (2015, March 25) argues that the millennial generation lacks an in-depth understanding of different cultures and thus do not know how to talk about race. Although millennials tend to be more accepting than past generations and understand racism still exists, few are able to articulate systemic forms of racism (Sen). Arguably, the lack of cultural knowledge influences what one will reveal or conceal within a racial or nonracial group.

A number of participants reported wanting to attend a racial or nonracial group different from their own identity characteristic to "learn" more about a culture, thus revealing a lack of requisite knowledge needed to engage in productive dialogue about racial or nonracial issues. Overall most participants reported a lack of in-depth identity disclose in the workplace. Future

research should contextualize disclosure in the workplace by examining varying relationships, the identity of the work colleagues, and the overall workplace culture. Workplace culture was partially evident in the question inquiring what artifacts one displays related to identity and topics considered both appropriate and inappropriate to openly discuss in the workplace.

Many participants reported a lack of personal office space to display artifacts, yet those reporting artifacts included pictures, clothing, and jewelry. Some participants reported pictures as a way to convey an element of identity. For example, one participant stated "I have displayed pictures. They display my identity within my family and with my friends." The racial identity of those in the photographs may elude to one's family heritage. Others reported clothing as an expression of identity such as cultural symbols. A Latino male participant stated "The clothing I wear (such as jerseys and clothing with Mexican symbols on them)" conveyed an element of his identity in the workplace. Another Latino male participant reported paintings conveyed an element of his racial identity stating "A sugarskull painting from Mexico because it clearly identifies me with my Mexican heritage." Some participants included artifacts to convey a nonracial identity including religious affiliations. A White female stated "I wear a Mary/Jesus pendent on my neck every day. That is always visible" whereas others reported anti-religious artifacts including a white Male stating "I wear heavy metal music t-shirts that may be interpreted as anti-Christian imagery."

A majority of participants viewed tangible items as artifacts including pictures, clothing, and jewelry, perhaps in part due to the examples provided within the survey question design, yet technical artifacts may also pertain to the millennial generation as a way to convey an element of identity. Stein, Galliers, and Markus (2013) urge identity research to expand the frame of artifact use in the workplace to technological means. Based on current study's findings displayed

artifacts clearly convey elements of either one's racial or nonracial identity, however many participants lacked physical space to project artifacts. Perhaps including examples such as one's phone or physical traits may have been viewed as identity markers. Educating participants about the vast definition and various types of artifacts would prove more fruitful responses for those without a physical office space.

Limitations and Future Directions

With more educational institutions offering intercultural communication courses and revising curriculum to include more diverse topics, many students enter the workplace with the perception that diversity should be instrumental. University of Oregon's Holden Leadership Center (2015) lists twelve competencies students expect to master when graduating from any program. First on the list is learning to work in a diverse environment. To be competitive within the business sector, recent college graduates must recognize the qualifications sought for companies and organizations. Many qualifications include candidates with diverse backgrounds and experiences, yet such qualifications do not specify how to discuss one's identity in the workplace. The perspectives gained from college student's offers insight into how to foster diversity within the workplace given the new set of skills obtained from higher education, however the research shows potential privileges and ideologies that may not align with progressive efforts. Additionally, as seen from excerpts within the nonprofit organization and businesses such as Starbucks, workplace affinity groups appear out of touch with the needs of recent college graduates. Therefore, understanding how future employees see diversity in an organizational context will better equip organizations to enact specific diversity strategies that move beyond the mere rhetoric of diversity. Although the current study offers important insights

into what current and future employees deem as beneficial diversity initiatives in the workplace, there remain a number of limitations.

First, the study lacked racial and nonracial diversity from the college student perspective. Roughly 70% of participants identified as white and heterosexual. Understanding whether affinity groups would be considered beneficial may not apply to white individuals, as many did not report one's race as a component of identity. A majority of white participants believed affinity groups as unimportant or further segregated, whereas almost all minority students selected an affinity group to attend. Future research may want to further uncover the hidden social norms of why separation equates to segregation for white individuals. Additionally, future studies should include a more diverse sample population to discover why affinity groups may be particularly helpful for minorities.

Second, the questions may have directed participants to respond a particular way. For instance, participants in study 2 were asked to report what aspects of identity are clear to others and provided examples such as one's skin color and accent. The researcher, by providing examples may have cued the responses therefore the responses may not have reflected one's skin color and accent as predominant visible identity characteristics. A majority of participants listed one's personality characteristics with few discussing one's race or skin color. Future research may want to exclude examples of identity to determine exactly how individuals view themselves.

Third, the researcher was unable to access specific diversity session materials from the non-profit organization. Many employees commented on the lack of intersectionality in diversity sessions, yet the researcher was only able to communicate with two managers from the organization to offer their insights on the specific programs. Each training site had a slightly different diversity session, thus not making all employee experiences the same. To better

understand the experiences of employees, future research should address specific diversity training program materials and how those employee experiences may relate or differ.

Finally, participants reported communicative practices at a rather general level. For example, individuals responded generally to questions such as, what elements of your identity would you conceal or reveal in the workplace. Overall, responses included a lack of personal information, yet responses may differ if asking participants the racial identity of those they work with or communicate racial issues. A majority of participants included white heterosexuals, not considering race an important construct of identity, which proves problematic for affinity group communication. If white individuals do not recognize race as an inherent part of one's identity, they may find difficulty in relating to those of the minority who view race as a major part ones identity. Understanding differences supports the nature of homogeneous affinity group formation due to individuals not having to teach others about identity. Successful heterogeneous affinity groups would involve white individuals understanding how race impacts what one might be willing to reveal. Minorities do not often share elements of identity with whites due to not understanding one's experiences (Catalyst, 2004). If race becomes a major identity characteristic, individuals might be more willing to reveal information.

Minority participants may differ depending on the racial identity of the work colleague. Teboul (1999) examined the information seeking and uncertainty experienced for new hires and found that minorities were more likely than majorities to actively seek out who not to learn from or disclose information to. Such a finding stresses the importance of understanding the impact of the racial identity of those individuals one either reveals or conceals information from. Perhaps individuals feel more at ease when disclosing to groups with similar challenges and experiences in the workplace.

Theoretical and Practical Implications

Using IMT and CPM to better understand communication within the workplace and affinity group space extends both theoretical frameworks to a much-needed context. Abrams, O'Connor, and Giles (2002) argue IMT neglects to address identity as constantly changing, claiming current positions of the theory "treat identity as static input-output variable, not something dynamic that is constantly being reconstructed" (p. 229). Affinity group communication provides a dynamic workplace setting, constantly changing depending on the demographics of the workplace and cultural norms. IMT has yet to explore managing intersecting identities in the workplace, which appears a major concern for employees.

As seen in the current research, employees view identity as multi-facted and desire a space to discuss elements of one's changing identity. Additionally, IMT presumes an element of intercultural competence between individuals where implicit privilege remains based on dominant cultural norms (Collier, 1998; Imahori & Cupach, 2008). For example, a bisexual individual is seen as more privileged than a lesbian or gay male due to the cultural understanding of engaging in a heterosexual relationship. Cultural norms are constantly changing and thus, there are not one set of fixed cultural norms to establish cultural competence across contexts. With more attention being paid to the stigmatization of bisexuals, the cultural norms of the LGBTQ community may be changing and thus how individuals communicate about their identity may also change. Bisexuals may be more willing to discuss their identity if the cultural norm remains supportive. The current study uses IMT to assess a changing context such as workplace affinity groups to view the changing cultural norms. By understanding the changing cultural norms, employees may be able to better manage their identities within the workplace and affinity group spaces.

Petronio and Durham (2008) argue CPM must extend to applicable contexts such as coworker communication in the workplace. The tension between one's public and private identity can cause emotional stress for employees (Waldron, 2000), however affinity groups extend the theoretical lens to a space where employees may feel more at ease discussing elements of one's private identity. Since the current study reveals that race and religious beliefs are considered private or personal topics that should not be openly discussed in the workplace, perhaps the needed outlet for private identity remains evident in homogeneous affinity groups. Understanding what elements of an employee's identity he or she reveals or conceals and why equips businesses and organizations with information to enhance workplace and affinity group communication as well as understanding preferred group formation.

Currently, affinity group facilitation training remains ambiguous, yet businesses and organizations are beginning to incorporate both racial and nonracial groups in hopes of enhancing diversity in the workplace. *The Washington Post* (2008) estimated businesses and organizations spend between $200 and $300 million a year on diversity training. In 2015, Google planned on spending more than $150 million on diversity training with an attention to uncovering biases (Miller, 2015). Although businesses and organizations begin to recognize the importance of diversity initiatives by allocating resources to fund such efforts, results often prove ineffective (Miller). Trained facilitators and availability of affinity groups during workday hours remains a necessity for group members. In addition to logistical concerns, organizations must consider affinity group formation including the justification for white affinity groups, and elements of intersectionality.

Homogeneous Affinity Groups. Many participants equated homogeneous affinity groups to segregation efforts. Such a perception warrants caution in the workplace, not exclusion

of homogeneous groups. Although many disagreed with the principle of homogeneous groups, all participants identifying as a racial minority including African American, Hispanic, Asian, and AAPI, all selected an affinity group to attend. The workplace remains particularly challenging for minorities however if homogeneous affinity groups permit a needed outlet for discussions concerning minority identity, businesses and companies must recognize the utility. After interviewing Black professionals in the workplace, Wingfield (2015) found heterogeneous diversity training efforts

> actually became a source of emotional stress, as they (Black professionals)
> perceived that their white colleagues could use the training to express negative
> emotions about people of color, but that they were not expected to disclose their
> own honest emotional reactions to such statements (para. 4).

Homogeneous groups may permit a space for individuals to discuss instances of shared discrimination faced within the workplace, yet adopting homogeneous groups could lead to disruption. White employees may feel reluctant to uncover hidden biases and take ownership of past stereotypical views. Such employees might not view themselves as allies, rather as victims of reverse discrimination, thereby reinforcing bias and rejecting the affinity group as a place to advocate for the disempowered. The rejection of affinity groups for white employees may reaffirm oppression within the organization and make facilitation particularly challenging. Organizations seeking to integrate affinity groups should keep in mind the varying reasons why individuals join and the expectations formed of hopeful outcomes resulting from group discussions. Affinity group facilitators should outline the emotional and instrumental goals while highlighting that members must acknowledge and accept biases rather than reinforce.

Implementing homogeneous affinity groups could cause disruption in a workplace based on the perceptions formed, especially if the workplace remains dominated by White individuals. Disruption remains necessary for organizations to uncover historical power structures. White affinity groups may be particularly problematic when uncovering biases. Employees may feel threatened or experience guilt when learning of how one's culture has secluded or suppressed others. Uncovering power structures in the workplace may imply giving up or possessing power in the workplace. Kendall (2006) argues that White privilege remains difficult for White people to discuss because they do not view themselves as powerful or possessing privilege. Employees may resist or hesitate to join a White affinity group in which the sole purpose remains to provide ally-ship through recognizing one's privileges. Based on in-depth interviews of oppressed cultures in white workplaces, Reitman (2006) found that "the white workplace is created and maintained through a process of whitewashing in which everyday practices seek to deny racial politics, superimpose white culture and normalize that culture in the workplace" (p. 279). Examples of white culture include suppressing racial conversations in the workplace, as well as parts of one's identity due to cultural stereotypes. Black men may work longer hours to avoid the cultural stereotype of not working hard enough (Wingfield, 2015) whereas Black women may suppress frustration due to the cultural stereotype of being overly assertive or aggressive. Instead of perpetuating whitewashing in the workplace, businesses and organizations should adopt discussions of reframing white identity.

Reframing one's identity from guilt and shame to an ally will enhance workplace culture. Existing literature (Blitz & Kohl, 2012) supports homogeneous formation due in part for minorities to not feel as though they must "teach" others about their identity. Moving past

"learning" from minorities, to understanding privileges from well-trained facilitation will enhance the experience and effectiveness of white affinity groups in the workplace.

Future research may want to examine affinity groups using attribution theory to better understand one's thinking process and behaviors through both internal and external attributions. Sellars and Shelton (2003) report that attributions to discrimination likely influence minority group identification. Specifically, "whites are more positive toward Blacks who are less identified with their group than they are toward Blacks who are more identified with their group" (Sellars & Shelton, 2003, p. 1091). White affinity groups possess the possibility to instill such a change due to the power and resources obtained in the organization or further polarize community members as seen in Sellars and Shelton (2003) findings. If organizations possess the resources including space, trained facilitators, and finances, both homogeneous and heterogeneous groups should be offered, yet realistically, most businesses and organizations do not operate under the budgets of major companies such as Google. When determining which groups to offer, businesses must evaluate the situation first.

Successful organizational diversity initiatives should rely on situational needs (Jayne & Dipboye, 2004). Rather than establish predetermined types of racial and nonracial groups, businesses should assess the current organizational culture to determine the needs of employees. For example, an organization could distribute a demographic survey requesting which affinity groups one closely identities with. Management should pay special attention to low attendance or few employees identifying with more than one racial or nonracial group. If only two individuals identify as biracial, the affinity group would unlikely foster the emotional and instrumental goals needed for effective discussions. Additionally management must provide visible and consistent support for the diversity initiative to be successful as well as identify demographic trends (Jayne

& Dipboye, 2004). Once businesses and organizations take into account the situational needs of employees, the underlying goals of affinity groups must be reevaluated.

Elements of Intersectionality. The current study suggests moving beyond emotional and instrumental goals to incorporating discussions based on intersectionality. Many participants from the educational non-profit organization sought for more conversations regarding intersectionality. Affinity groups operate under the assumption of one shared identity characteristic, yet identity remains multifaceted. Both studies revealed a need for more intersectionality. Perhaps discussing more than one element of an identity could shift perceptions of affinity groups as segregated groups. Individuals must constantly negotiate elements of identity, thus these tensions should result in an important goal for affinity group discussions.

Conclusion

The implications from the two studies detailed above will hopefully help aid businesses and organizations with what information concerning one's identity may be difficult to discuss and why. The rationale provided for why individuals may conceal elements of their identity could directly reflect the culture of the organization including workplace norms, the structure of the affinity groups, and assumption of "safe spaces."

Including both homogeneous and heterogeneous affinity groups formation within the workplace provides options for employees to discuss identity yet both contain risks. Homogeneous affinity groups permit a setting for those with similar experiences to discuss topics not readily available in the larger workplace context, however such spaces can reaffirm cultural stereotypes and hostility toward other cultural groups. For instance, homogeneous White affinity groups could gather to discuss "reverse discrimination" which deemphasizes the role of a White ally. Similarly, homogeneous minority groups such as the LGBTQ community could

gather to merely vent about instances of discrimination. Both affinity group types pose a risk to the intended goal of affinity group formation, which includes a space for emotional support and seeking external resources to improve one's situation. Heterogeneous affinity groups also carry certain risks. Various cultures can meet in one setting to discuss differing perspectives to gain new insight into another culture, yet discussions within heterogeneous spaces might lead to "teaching" others about experiences. For instance, in a Black heterogeneous affinity group, a White member might ask a Black woman to describe her experiences or discuss the challenges faced. Although such an experience may lend important insight into a community, it also requires minorities to "teach" White individuals about their experiences. Having to "teach" others about emotionally sensitive issues negates the intended purpose of an affinity group, which is to provide emotional support.

The intended purpose of an affinity group may prove challenging if members do not consider it a "safe space" to discuss identity. For example, a group member may reject the idea of White privilege, potentially creating a dysfunctional place for others to further discriminate against minorities. Affinity groups may include "safe" spaces for some, yet become polarized if varying levels of privilege present weapons instead of a way to further discussion and enhance understanding of others.

Businesses and organizations must understand the potential risks and benefits of both affinity group formation types and the varying levels of privilege when implementing in the workplace. Regardless of the chosen affinity group formation, organizations must hire trained facilitators to ensure that emotional and instrumental goals are met. Failure to do so might result in the above risks posed and thus reluctant employees viewing affinity groups as another organizational diversity fad. Recognizing where companies need to improve begins with how

individuals communicate elements of their identity in both the workplace at large and in diversity sessions such as affinity groups. Conversations about identity can no longer include surface level statements such as those on Starbucks coffee cups, rather in-depth discussions uncovering internal and external attributions, elements of intersectionality and a desire to improve workplace communication remains the answer to improving organizational diversity.

Table 1
Affinity Group Perceptions

Themes	Examples
Logistics (including those concerned about the time and location of the affinity group spaces)	"Affinity groups are not set up for SUCCESS! Timing and marketing are not there which makes affinity groups hard to become successful and opportunity to make significant positive change state wide"
Helpful (where groups served as a space to discuss topics not readily available in workplace dialogue)	"Loved this section and breaking off into affinity groups. It was great to learn about ourselves as well as what our students might identify with"
Harmful (groups reminded employees of one's oppression or white guilt)	"Like many students in this program, I felt that the sessions aimed more at making me feel guilty than at helping me value my identity. I am a white man from an upper-middle class background, but I have signed up to join the organization's effort."
More Heterogeneity (where either white participants sought to learn from blacks or individuals wanted to discuss more than one aspect of their identity)	"Their (affinity groups) design separated us from each other rather than creating a space where we could learn from each other. I recognize that the affinity spaces are necessary, but I would have supported another option which allowed people who were comfortable to share and work through issues with a more diverse group."
Exclusion of Identities (including income level, women, Jewish religion, and LGBTQ)	"I, like many, think that the organization (sic)-required affinity groups should not only be only based on race. Class, gender, and sexual orientation also dictate a classroom environment."

Table 2
Organizational Identity

Themes	Examples
Legitimizing Identity (organization fostered a productive climate to discuss issues related to one's identity)	"They (organizational diversity training session leaders) helped me struggle through issues of identity and see how it relates to the classroom. I feel they created a safe space where employees (sic) could feel at home and share personal experiences that led to productive conversations."
Lack of Safe Spaces (organization did not permit a safe environment)	"The last 2 diversity sessions fostered an uncomfortable environment and tense feelings surrounding race and identity. Employees (sic) felt unsafe sharing their views and the conversations made our school team feel divided because of race rather than united by the same cause."
Intersectionality (organization needs to acknowledge multiple identities)	"I understand race is big for the organization (sic), but if we are figuring out our own identities then we need to explore more of that. I think we should focus more on intersectionality."
Surface Level Discussions (organizations need to hold deeper discussions about what led employees to develop certain ideologies)	"The sessions barely grazed the surface. I felt like I was in an introductory course as a freshman...these discussions should be held in smaller groups and with people who share the same identity in order to pick up and move on from a common place, and talk about more than the surface points."

Table 3
Sample Characteristics

	N	%
Sex		
Male	103	36
Female	165	57.7
Missing	18	6.3
College Year		
Freshman	45	15.7
Sophomore	83	29
Junior	69	24.1
Senior	43	15
Super Senior	27	9.4
Missing	19	6.6
Sexual Orientation		
Straight	254	88.8
Bisexual	5	1.7
Gay	4	1.4
Lesbian	2	.7

Missing	19	6.6

Racial Identity

White	183	64
Black or African American	31	10.8
Asian	22	7.7
Hispanic or Latino	16	5.6
American Native	4	1.4
Missing	19	6.6

Religion

Christian	100	35
Catholic	69	24.1
Atheist	25	8.7
Agnostic	21	7.3
Muslim	9	3.1
Jewish	3	1
Baptist	1	.3
Other	37	12.9
Missing	21	7.3

Yearly Income Level

0-9,999	160	55.9
10,000-19,999	62	21.7
20,000-29,999	20	7.0
30,000-39,999	8	2.8
40,000-49,999	4	1.4
50,000-59,999	2	.7
60,000 or more	10	3.5
Missing	20	7.0

Occupation

Server	134	46.8
Customer Service Rep.	93	32.5
Military Member	5	.01
Other	8	.02
Missing	20	.07

Identity description

Personality Characteristic	184	73
Gender	20	8
Occupation	19	8
Race	18	7

Table 4
Racial Affinity Group

	N	%
Group Selected		
White	115	40.2
Biracial	19	6.6
Latino/a	14	4.9
African American	13	4.5
People of Color	13	4.5
AAPI	8	2.8
I would not join	63	22
Other	13	4.5
Missing	28	9.8
Why Selected		
"Fits my racial characteristics"/ "who I identify with"	132	46.2
"No need to join"/ "No point"/ "Race is unimportant"	35	12.2
Wanting to "know" or "learn" about a different culture	34	11.9
Comfortability	15	5.2
N/A	16	5.6
Missing	54	18.9

Difficulty of Selecting Group		
No	129	45.1
Yes	18	6.3
Yes-too many options	9	3.1
Race is unimportant	9	3.1
Unsure	7	2.4
Missing	114	39.9
Identity/Comfortable sharing		
Anything/ "I'm an open book"	95	33.2
Characteristics pertaining to the group	47	16.4
Basic info/ "Surface level information"	45	15.7
Values and Beliefs	19	6.6
Other	22	7.7
Missing	49	17.1
Identity/ Uncomfortable sharing		
Personal Issues (relational, sexual, secrets, and income)	98	34.3
None-open book	85	29.7

Race (do not want to discuss negative aspects of race)	16	5.6
Unsure	9	3.1
Other	11	3.8
Missing	67	23.4
Generally, how easy to discuss your race		
Very Easy	62	21.7
Easy	57	19.9
Somewhat easy	32	11.2
Neutral	67	23.4
Somewhat difficulty	19	6.6
Difficult	12	4.2
Very Difficulty	9	3.1

Table 5

Nonracial Affinity Group

	N	%
Group Selected		
Christian	48	16.8
1st in one's family	31	10.8
Catholic	28	9.8
LGBTQ	26	9.1
Atheist	13	4.5
Muslim	10	3.5
Parent	9	3.1
Low income background	8	2.8
Immigrant	5	1.7
Jewish	3	1
Other	17	5.9
I would not join	59	20.6
Missing	29	10.1
Why Selected		
Fits my nonracial characteristic	127	44.4
Wanting to support the group/ally	18	6.3
Wanting to know or learn more about that culture	16	5.6
No need/no point/unimportant	14	4.9

Comfortability	12	4.2
Unsure	41	14.3
Missing	58	20.3
Difficulty of Selecting Group		
No	92	32.2
No (because I'm about to relate to that group/best option)	68	23.8
No (because I want to support that group)	12	4.2
No (unimportant)	11	3.8
Yes-too many options	23	8
Yes	21	7.3
Other	8	2.7
Missing	51	17.8
Identity/Comfortable sharing		
Anything	66	23.1
Characteristics pertaining to the group	64	22.4
Basic Info (surface level information)	27	9.4
Beliefs and Values	20	7
Other	28	9.8

Missing	68	23.8
Identity/ Uncomfortable sharing		
None-open book	89	31.1
Personal issues	52	18.2
Race (do not want to discuss negative aspects of race)	22	7.7
Things that may cause controversy in the group	17	5.9
Unsure	8	2.8
Other	18	6.3
Missing	80	28
Generally, how easy to discuss your race		
Very Easy	65	22.7
Easy	61	21.3
Somewhat easy	27	9.4
Neutral	55	19.2
Somewhat difficulty	27	9.4
Difficult	14	4.9
Very Difficulty	7	2.4

Table 6
Identity: Public and Private

	N	%
Public		
Skin Color	154	53.8
Accent	31	10.8
Hair	19	6.6
Gender	14	4.9
Language	12	4.2
Age	4	1.4
Other	11	3.8
Missing	41	14.3
Private		
Religious beliefs/political affiliation/or finances	62	21.7
Nothing	36	12.6
Family	22	7.7
Sexual identity	20	7
Romantic life	13	4.5
Language (another language spoken)	7	2.4
Other	10	3.5
Missing	116	41.6

Artifacts Displayed

None	115	40.2
Pictures/Paintings	47	16.4
Clothing/Jewelry	24	8.4
Physical appearance (skin color, tattoo, hair)	9	3.1
College pennant	7	2.4
American Flag	5	1.7
Fanship	2	1
Other	17	7.9
Missing	58	20.3

Table 7
Workplace Topics

	N	%
Appropriate		
Surface level (sports, weather, food, social life)	98	34.3
Work related topics	61	21.3
Everything-as long as it's not offensive	29	10.1
Everything	24	8.4
Beliefs, values, politics	11	3.8
Nothing	1	.3
Other	16	5.6
Missing	46	16.1
Inappropriate		
Politics and Religion	58	20.3
Sex-romantic life	54	18.9
Race	34	11.9
Anything not work related	21	7.3
Sexual Orientation	13	4.5
Depends on relationship with coworker	12	4.2
Other	49	17.1
Missing	45	15.7

Table 8
Frequency of thought: Racial Identity

	N	%
Never	117	47
Less than once a month	48	19
Once a month	24	10
2-3 times per month	14	6
Once a week	17	7
2-3 times per week	12	5
Daily	15	6

Frequency of thought: Nonracial Identity

	N	%
Never	99	40
Less than once a month	46	19
Once a month	22	9
2-3 times per month	20	8
Once a week	13	5
2-3 times per week	14	6

Daily   34   14

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Appendix

Affinity Group Survey

[The first set of questions include a list of demographic items.]

1.) What is your gender?

A. Man
B. Woman
C. Another gender, please specify

2.) What is your racial identity (please select all that apply)?

A. American Indian
B. Asian
C. Black or African American
D. Hispanic or Latino
E. Native Hawaiian or other pacific islander
F. White
G. Other (please specify)

3.) What is your sexual orientation?

A. Gay
B. Lesbian
C. Bisexual
D. Straight
E. Another sexual orientation (please specify)

4.) What is your religious preference?
A. Catholic
B. Christian
C. Muslim
D. Jewish
E. Baptist
F. Mormon
G. Other (please specify)

5.) What is your age (please include in years)?

6.) Where did you grow up (please provide city and state)?

7.) What year in school are you?

A. Freshman
B. Sophomore

C. Junior
D. Senior

9.) What is your yearly income?

A. 0-9,999
B. 10,000-19,999
C. 20,000-29,999
D. 30,00-39,999
E. 40,000-49,9999
F. 50,000-59,999
G. 60,000 or more

10.) What types of jobs have you previously held (i.e. server, bartender, manager, etc)?

11.) How do you describe your identity (a combination of things that describe who you are)?

[For the next set of questions, participants will be given the following instructions.]

The next set of questions asks you about how you communicate your identity in the workplace.

To foster diversity within the workplace, businesses and organizations alike are seeking to incorporate affinity groups. An affinity group is a space where individuals with a shared identity characteristic meet to discuss issues pertaining to that identity characteristic. The goals of each group may differ, yet all groups provide an emotional outlet on potentially sensitive topics and serve as a space to attain information on opportunities that you may benefit from based on your identity characteristic. Affinity groups are usually separated into racial and nonracial groups. Racial groups might include an African American Affinity group, or a White Affinity group, whereas nonracial affinity groups include LGBTQ affinity group, Christian group, or Parents affinity group. All groups are homogeneous, meaning you can only attend the group if you identify with the designated identity characteristic. Now that you have a better understanding of

what an affinity group is and the purpose of including them within the workplace, please answer

the following open-ended questions.

12.) If you were to attend an organizational affinity group, which <u>racial</u> affinity group

would you select?

A. African American Affinity Group
B. White Affinity Group
C. Latino/a Affinity Group
D. Asian-American Pacific Islander Group
E. Bi-racial affinity group
F. People of Color Affinity Group
G. I would not join an affinity group
H. Other ____ please specify which affinity group would better align with your racial identity

[If the participant selects G. I would not join an affinity group, he or she will be prompted to

answer an open-ended question inquiring why a racial affinity group was not selected and what

might be a better way to enhance diversity in the workplace, if an affinity group was not deemed

as appropriate.]

13.) Why did you select the <u>racial</u> identity affinity group in the previous selection?

14.) Did you have trouble choosing one <u>racial</u> affinity group? Why or why not?

15.) What aspects of your identity would you feel comfortable sharing within the chosen

<u>racial</u> affinity group space? Why?

16.) What aspects of your identity would you <u>not</u> feel comfortable sharing within the

chosen <u>racial</u> affinity group space? Why?

17.) In your life now, how easy is it to discuss issues pertaining to your <u>racial</u> identity?

A. Very easy
B. Easy
C. Sometimes easy
D. I don't think about it
E. Sometimes difficult
F. Difficult
G. Very difficult

[Participants would then be asked similar questions concerning a nonracial affinity group.]

18.) If you were to attend an organizational affinity group, which <u>nonracial</u> affinity group would you select?

A. LGBTQ
B. Christian
C. Muslim
D. Jewish
E. Catholic
F. Atheist
G. Parent
H. First in one's family to graduate from college
I. Low income background
J. Deferred Action for Childhood arrivals or Immigrants
K. I would not join an affinity group
L. Other ____ please specify which affinity group would better align with your nonracial identity

[If the participant selected K. I would not join an affinity group, he or she would be prompted to answer an open-ended question inquiring why a nonracial affinity group was not selected and what might be a better way to enhance diversity in the workplace, if an affinity group was not deemed as appropriate.]

19.) Why did you select the <u>non-racial</u> identity affinity group that you did?

20.) Did you have trouble choosing one <u>non-racial</u> affinity group? Why or why not?

21.) What aspects of your <u>non-racial</u> identity would you feel comfortable sharing within the chosen <u>nonracial</u> affinity group space? Why?

22. What aspects of your <u>non-racial</u> identity would you <u>not</u> feel comfortable sharing within the chosen <u>nonracial</u> affinity group space? Why?

23.) In your life now, how easy is it to discuss issues pertaining to your <u>nonracial</u> racial identity?

A. Very easy

B. Easy
C. Sometimes easy
D. I don't think about it
E. Sometimes difficult
F. Difficult
G. Very difficult

[The third set of questions would address how one manages both public and private aspects of their identity in the workplace.]

24.) What aspects of your <u>identity</u> do you talk about in the workplace?

25.) What aspects of your <u>identity</u> do you not discuss in the workplace? Why?

26.) How often do you think about your <u>racial</u> identity in the workplace?

Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Not Really   Never

27.) How often do you think about your <u>non-racial</u> identity in the workplace?

Very Often   Often   Sometimes   Not Really   Never

28.) In the workplace we may display various types of artifacts including pictures, college pennants, and diplomas that may convey elements of our racial and/or nonracial identity. What artifacts do you display in your workplace that convey an element of your racial and/or nonracial identity? Please explain.

29.) What aspects of your identity are clear to others (skin color, accent, etc) in the workplace?

30.) What aspects of your identity do you consider private that are not conveyed in the workplace?

31.) What do you consider appropriate topics to discuss within the workplace?

32.) What do you consider <u>inappropriate</u> topics to discuss within the workplace?

[The final question would ask participants if they want to include any additional information that they deem helpful based on the previous questions asked.]

33.) In the space provided, please add anything else you wish to share about the issues

covered in the survey that were not covered through my questions.

CURRICULUM VITAE
Megan M. Lambertz-Berndt

Address
Department of Communication Studies
California Polytechnic State University
San Luis Obispo, CA 93407
(702) 524-0704
lambertz@calpoly.edu

Education

2013-2016   ***UNIVERSITY OF WISCONSIN MILWAUKEE* (**Milwaukee, Wisconsin)
PhD Candidate in Communication Studies (ABD status; expected May 2016)
GPA 3.97

2011   ***UNIVERSITY OF NEVADA LAS VEGAS* (**Las Vegas, Nevada)
M.A. in Communication Studies
GPA 3.71

2009   ***DELAWARE STATE UNIVERSITY*** (Dover, Delaware)
B.A. in Mass Communication
Concentration: Public Relations
GPA 3.83

Positions

2015-Present   ***LECTURER*** (California Polytechnic State University)
•COM101: Public Speaking instructor
•COM102: Principles of Oral Communication instructor
•COM213: Organizational Communication instructor
> •Develop syllabi and course materials; grade student presentations, speeches, and papers; plan and execute lesson plans; hold extended office hours; advise students to meet their personal and educational goals; attend various professional development seminars and department meetings

2013-2015   ***TEACHING ASSISTANT*** (University of Wisconsin Milwaukee)
•COM350: Intercultural Communication instructor
•COM105: Business and Professional Communication instructor
> •Develop syllabi and course materials; grade student presentations, speeches, and papers; plan and execute lesson plans; hold extended office hours; advise students to meet their personal and educational goals; attend various professional development seminars; assist with the biannual department speech competition; partner with the ESL department, LGBQT center, Milwaukee LGBTQ center, and Milwaukee LGBTQ meet ups for student-based research projects

2011-Present   ***COMMUNICATION AND ENGLISH INSTRUCTOR*** (University of Phoenix)
• COM215: Business Communication (online and campus) instructor
• COM/170 Elements of University Composition and Communication I and II instructor
• COM315: Diversity Issues in Communication instructor
• ENG/220: University Academic Writing instructor

•Develop syllabi and course materials; grade student presentations, and papers; plan and execute lesson plans; lead weekly online discussion boards; balance both relational and transactional relationships in the online classroom

2014 Summer   **DIRECTOR OF UNIVERSITY LIFE** (Teach For America)
•Managed 3 college students to effectively accomplish tasks related to lodging, dining, maintenance, bulletin boards, and lunch distribution of corps members (CM) during an 8-week training program
•Incorporated Chicago and Regional educational cultures to enhance CM living and dining experiences on the Illinois Institute of Technology's campus
•Developed and led professional development concerning conflict management, public speaking, and affinity groups to all college students working for the summer training session

2012-2013   **FACULTY DEVELOPMENT ADMINISTRATOR** (University of Phoenix)
• Developed and delivered training workshops for new and existing faculty
• Resolved faculty academic and behavioral issues in and outside the classroom
• Supported and coached trainers for new faculty candidates

2011-2012   **ENROLLMENT ADVISOR** (University of Phoenix)
•Advised and enrolled international students pursuing bachelor and master degrees in business technology, business management, and psychology
•Developed and set student expectations for their academic careers
•Evaluated university credits and student visa types for admissions compliance

2009-2011   **GRADUATE TEACHING ASSISTANT** (University of Nevada Las Vegas)
•Taught three discussion sections of COM101: Oral Communication each semester, including one stand-alone over summer
•Taught a stand-alone section of COM102: Introduction to Interpersonal Communication
ASSISTANT BASIC COURSE DIRECTOR (University of Nevada Las Vegas)
•Maintained faculty and student records
•Developed final semester reports
•Organized, fundraised, and implemented the department speech competition

2010-2011   **UNLV SOFTBALL GRADUATE ASSISTANT** (University of Nevada Las Vegas)
•Advised players in academic, personal, and athletic growth
•Worked specifically with the development of hitters and pitchers
•Coordinated travel logistics during away games

2007-2008   **DISTRICT REPRESENTATIVE** (Las Vegas, Nevada)
•**Office of Congresswoman Shelley Berkley**
•Managed constituent casework involving education and immigration issues
•Located grants for constituents
•Represented the Congresswomen at local functions

Awards and Recognitions

•CSCA Top Student Paper Award: LGBTQ Studies Division (Spring 2015)
•NCA Top Student Paper Award: Conflict Resolution Division (Fall 2014)
•UNLV Thesis Symposium poster award (Spring 2011)
•UNLV Best Graduate Student award (2010-2011)
•DSU MEAC Conference Champions (2007-2008)

Publications

Lambertz-Berndt, M. (2015, in press). Internet Research and Ethical Decision Making. In M. Allen (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*.

Lambertz-Berndt, M. (2015, in press). Confederates. In M. Allen (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Communication Research Methods*.

Lambertz-Berndt, M., & Blight, M. (2015). "You don't have to like me, but you have to respect me": The impacts of assertiveness, cooperativeness, and group satisfaction in collaborative assignments. *Business and Professional Communication Quarterly*.

Lambertz-Berndt, M. (2015). Liminalizing progressive efforts in Chicago: Moving past violence. *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*. DOI: 10.1002/crq.21123

Convention Presentations

Lambertz-Berndt, M., Wiles, K., Hawkins, J., & Niccolini, N. (2015, October). The same sex marriage debate: How the Supreme Court ruling affects communication. Panel presentation at the *Organization for the Study of Communication, Language, and Gender Conference*, Bowling Green, KY.

Lambertz-Berndt, M., & Blight, M. (2015, November). "You don't have to like me, but you have to respect me": The impacts of assertiveness, cooperativeness, and group satisfaction in collaborative assignments. Paper presented at the *National Communication Association Conference*: Las Vegas, NV.

Baker, B., & Lambertz, M. (2015, May). Gay and lesbian sexual script initiation. Paper presented at *Equality Research to Action Conference*: Dearborn, MI.

Fonner, K. L., Blight, M., Fetherston, M., & Lambertz, M. (2015, May). Evaluating the inclusiveness of work-life practices from the perspective of single/childless employees. Paper to be presented at the *European Association of Work and Organizational Psychology*, Oslo, Norway.

Fonner, K., Blight, M., Lambertz, M., & Fetherston, M. (2015, April). 21st Century Workplace Issues: At the Convergence of Work and Life. Paper presented at a panel discussion at *Central States Communication Association*: Madison, WI.

Baker, B., Jagiello, K, & Lambertz, M. (2015, April). Dissolution of same-sex relationships. Top student paper award presented at *Central States Communication Association*: Madison, WI.

Lambertz, M. (2015, April). "Diversity, Inclusion, and Fairness": Affinity Group Topic and Satisfaction in a Non-profit Organization. Presented at *Central States Communication Association*: Madison, WI.

Lambertz, M. (2015, April). From the sidelines to panel discussions: A content analysis of an all-female and all-male sports panel. Paper presented at a panel discussion at *Central States Communication Association*: Madison, WI.

Allen, M., Blight, M., Gross, C., Fetherston, M., & Lambertz, M. (2014, November). Examining 100 Communication Programs: Mission Statements, Assessment Plans, and Assessment Evaluations. Paper presented at *National Communication Association Conference*: Chicago, IL.

Cole, A., Kim, S., Priddis, D., & Lambertz, M. (2014, November). Student attrition in online courses and instructor's base of power. Paper presented at *National Communication Association Conference*: Chicago, IL.

Lambertz, M. (2014, November). Liminalizing progressive efforts in Chicago: Moving forward and past violence. Paper presented at *National Communication Association Conference*: Chicago, IL.

Frei, S., Blight, M., Lambertz, M., & Phillips, K. (2014, March). Graduate student mentorship: Elevating undergrads' transition experience. Panel discussion presented at *Central States Communication Association*: Minneapolis, MN.

Lambertz, M. & Allen, M. (2014, March). The nature of conflict among college athletes. Paper presented at the sports communication division. Paper presented at a panel discussion at *Central States Communication Association*: Minneapolis, MN.

Lambertz, M., & Sahlstein, E. (2012, February). Imagined interactions as a link to political talk. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the *Western States Communication Association*: Albuquerque, NM.

Professional Association Membership

 • Member of PRSSA (2006-2009)
 • Member of NCA (2014-present)
 • Member of CSCA (2013-present)

Community

 • McNair Scholar Mentor (Summer 2015)
 • Camelback High School Pitching Coach (2012-2013)
 • Chandler Gilbert Community College Pitching Coach (2011-2012)
 •University of Nevada Las Vegas Softball Graduate Assistant (2010-2011)