Enhancing Racial Allyship at a Predominately White Institution

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Enhancing Racial Allyship at a Predominately White Institution

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Abstract

This action research explores how undergraduate students involved in multicultural clubs and organizations at the University of San Diego, define and engage in racial allyship. The purpose of the study was to understand how these students identify allies of color or other racially minoritized groups; as a means to work in collaboration for resource acquisition, persistence, and to magnify student voice. This is important to the research as current social and racial justice rhetoric primarily focuses on white people as allies to communities of color. Thus, my research question was: how can I help students of color enhance their capacity for racial allyship at a predominately white institution? My findings indicate that students desire reliability, trust, and reciprocal participation from their allies.

Keywords: ally, allyship, coalition, solidarity, minoritized, racial, justice, cross-cultural, intercultural, engagement, sense of belonging
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Introduction

Prior to starting my studies at the University of San Diego, I worked in the non-profit sector for almost nine years. During this time, I was a site supervisor for a before and after-school program that primarily serviced Hispanic and Vietnamese families in the Linda Vista community. With my education and professional life in sync, it felt like I was in the right place at the right time. I had an affinity for working side by side with the families, community members, and the teachers who volunteered their in-kind each week. The best part of my experience was advocating with local leaders, engaging authentically, and connecting with people. Those values have led me to my current concern at the University of San Diego. There was a great deal of learning that I had experienced while helping others back then, and I now have that same opportunity on campus. With the various social issues that made their way to campus in the Fall of 2017, little action was taken by students of color.

Understandably, the collegiate experience is a time where students are engaged in exploring their identities, preparing for their futures, and more. On the other hand, it can also be a difficult experience for students to endure, while receiving the tools they need to develop holistically. Racially minoritized students have a vast set of challenges that they may endure once stepping foot onto college campuses. These challenges include underrepresentation, psychological distress, confronting cultural expectations, and isolation. Therefore, when students lack a supportive social network or community, persistence and retention rates begin to drop. Many students of color attribute their need to transfer out of universities, because there are not adequate resources to keep them there, heighten incidents regarding race, and so on. Higher education institutions have recognized the need for these students to have cross-campus support from administrators, campus initiatives furthering equity and inclusion, intercultural programs,
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and clearly designated advising teams. In sum, these support tools are dedicated to easing the transition to college and allow for students to begin finding their sense of belonging on campus. The most significant population central to student support is the peer to peer support, especially when working with students of color; whom are a minoritized population at many universities (Broido, 2000).

As a means to support students of color, college campuses are moving towards identity-based communities that focus on various social and cultural identities. While this is constructive for students who come from collectivist cultures and thrive on group collaboration, it is creating unintentional separatism from other ethnic groups on campuses (Patel, 2011). Within my current context, I am noticing the disconnect between students of color as it pertains to resources on campus. Because of this, I question how I can engage students from various ethnic groups with those different from their own, more frequently. In essence, I want to support students in dismantling the silo effect created by being in community with only those with a similar race/ethnic background. In order to enhance their capacity to seek comfort, a sense of belonging, and allyship with other underrepresented racial/ethnic groups on campus. After speaking with students and my colleagues, I have noticed that there is this assumption that communities of color cannot rely or depend on each other as a means for liberation or in this case, supporting the cause or movement because of a perceived lack of privilege. In my personal experience, I have also made this false judgement due to aversive experiences and a lack of knowledge on internalized oppression. This is partially due to the over exposure of literature focused on supporting white people in their journey to support racial justice issues. These assumptions are harmful and can perpetuate internalized oppression, racism, and halt progress to the empowerment of racially minoritized groups.
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Therefore, the purpose of my study was to understand how undergraduate students of color identify allies of color or other racially minoritized groups; as a means to work in collaboration for resource acquisition, persistence, and to magnify student voice. In essence, increase their engagement on events, movements, etc.; while exploring reciprocal allyship as communities of color at a predominately white institution. As a result of this research, I am optimistic that there will be an increase in the participation and sense of allyship among students of color at the University of San Diego.

Research Question

From this, I ask, how can I help minoritized students of color enhance their capacity for racial allyship at a predominately white institution?

Operational Definitions

In order to fully understand my research, it is important to note the definitions of racial allyship and other key terms. In addition, as I embarked my research, I explored various social justice definitions for allyship and ally, but they did not address the focus of my research questions. Therefore, I used current literature to create a working definition for racial allyship to frame how I see students of color collaborating and engaging together on various issues, social gathering, and other items at the University of San Diego.
### Table 1

**List of Definitions for Research Key Terms**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ally</td>
<td>Not an identity, but instead an ongoing lifelong process that involves learning and unlearning oppression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Allyship</td>
<td>Series of internal and external processes, where everyone has more to learn, there is a great deal of listening, and it is an ongoing and lifelong process. There are different types of allies or ally, however it is not an identity. One cannot label themselves, rather the individual or group will entrust or bestowed the individual with the label. Allies are not solely white but are a variety of people holding different racial identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coalition</td>
<td>Different groups coming together for a period of time to work towards a common goal or the understanding of shared struggles/experiences.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liberation</td>
<td>Freedom from internal and external structures, systems, or messages of oppression.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Multiculturalism/Interculturalism</td>
<td>The inclusion, affirmation of multiple identities, cultures, experiences, histories, and discourses beyond mainstream narratives.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>Established by of human perception and classification. Racial categories are socially significant because we use them to organize and interpret experiences, to form social relations, and to organize individual and collective action. Racial categories are historical products and often contested. People determine what the categories will be, fill them with human beings and attach new meaning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Racial Allyship</td>
<td>Comprised of allies that identify as one or multiple racial or ethnic identities who experience various forms of oppression. It primarily is minoritized racial and ethnic groups in the U.S. This term is used throughout the paper as a means to reclaim power from dominant groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: term definitions were inspired by Tri-College Libraries Research Guide on Allyship and Anti-Oppression.*

### Background

The topic of allyship has become highly discussed in today’s society because of the current political landscape, various social justice movements, and sociocultural environments that call for support from allies. While the term is not a novel concept, it has roots in social
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movements as early as the Harlem Renaissance, the early 1990’s LGBT political movement, and the Black Lives Matter movement; to name a few. In the last 25 years, ally and allyship have mostly been discussed within the context of ally activism from heterosexuals for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender issues in student affairs (Russell & Bohan, 2016; Broido, 2000). Through this work, heterosexuals have been able to unpack their privileges, power, and process their identity development, in order to become allies that support the creation of just and equitable societies (Evans & Washington, 2000; Broido, 2000). However, when looking at race and minority populations, there is not a great deal of research that examines allyship amongst these specific groups. For that reason, the focus of this action research was to understand, while also enhancing students’ capacity for racial allyship at a predominately white institution.

The concept of allyship is gaining momentum among race relations. Allyship is seen as an avenue for the dominant group in various contexts to be supportive of minoritized groups, become aware of identities, the privileges individuals hold (Evans & Washington, 2000) and aid in equity work that has the potential for positive change for the oppressed (Russell & Bohan, 2016). When discussing allyship, the dominant group that the responsibility falls upon, are typically those that identify as heterosexual, cisgender, white males; because of their privilege in dominant society (Broido, 2000). Reason, Millar, & Scales’ (2005), affirm that justice practices only come about when white racial justice allies take action against the dominant culture that maintains inequalities. While this awareness of power and privilege is imperative to the work, it is also important to recognize the systems of oppression that are maintained through this binary. According to Patel (2011), there is a perception of allyship as a binary of race where it is viewed as white versus non-white issues. Patel explains that this perpetuates systems of oppression because of the clumping of racial groups and the lack of recognizing ethnic identities as
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individuals. This is important to acknowledge in racial allyship so that groups can understand the importance of intergroup relations. If strong relations are fostered, this leads to the creation of equitable spaces and positive collaboration.

In order to become better allies, minoritized groups must build community “...with those who are like us for support and dialoguing with those who are different from us for gaining understanding and building coalitions” (Harro, 1996, p. 621). From birth, students of color have had to fight systems of oppression. Each minoritized racial/ethnic group has had to deal with some form of oppression – racism, bigotry, and other injustices. As a result of this, silos are created on college campuses and it becomes difficult for students to seek out friendships and relations with those outside of their ethnic background. Thus, the importance for all students to be exposed to allyship. While there is a growing body of literature on the topic of solidarity, there is a lack of discussion on allyship between people of color and the benefits for minoritized racial groups to engage. Chang, Denson, & Sáenz, & Misa (2005) discuss the benefits of cross-racial engagement through Allport’s Intergroup Contact theory, by stating, “Cross-racial engagement is more likely to result in positive relations when groups have equal status, cooperation, and pursue common goals” (p. 3). Given the appropriate conditions on college campuses, especially at a Predominately White Institution (PWI), students will thrive from positive race relations. Furthermore, Williams (2011) also writes for example, “... people of color have individual agency in a system that has sought to limit their access to rights and resources (p. 5).” This means that minoritized groups must take ownership in their liberation from oppression by not relying solely on white allies to aid in this cycle. Instead, it is important to join with the communities that have similar struggles in the larger system to coalesce and respond. It is essential to note that ally development is a complex process and does take time to build trust
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with respective communities. Individuals cannot simply self-assign themselves as allies, instead they must be conferred by the groups they seek to support. However, when groups join together, “allies are a positive, disruptive force in an overarching system of oppression that melds institutional discrimination and personal prejudice into a pervasive web of domination” (Munin & Speight, 2010, p. 251). At the core of allyship for these groups, it is important for them to understand that they are not alone and must commit to equity, success, and collaboration. In addition, in the case study by Jones, Castellanos, & Cole (2002), they found that the African American, Asian and Pacific Islander, Native American, and Latinx student groups had shared experiences with racism on campus and a lack of campus support that fostered diversity and inclusion. When brought together, groups realized that their struggles were similar, however, they were all engaged in separatism, rather than coming together as a larger community, engaging in allyship to discuss experiences on campus. This furthers the need for students to become aware of their capabilities in becoming allies and who they seek out to support their causes to liberate themselves from systems of oppression. It also sheds light on the need for professional allies in student affairs, from cross-racial groups as well. The reasoning for this is because, allyship is becoming painted as a white dominated space, that is unintentionally perpetuating systems of oppression, at the expense of those they are supporting.

Representation and mentorship from student affairs professionals are central themes among minoritized students. In order to promote racial ally development in the students they serve, student affairs professionals must reflect on their own actions and racial justice attitudes (Reason, Scales, & Millar, 2005). In addition, they must be the representation of allyship, especially those that identify as people of color. Students seek mentorship from those that have a similar ethnic background and are more likely to seek support in finding community, which in
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return, reduces their minority status stress on campus (Jones, Castellanos, & Cole, 2002). These studies on minority students in higher education demonstrate the need for organizations and communities to become collaborative, especially when there is not representation that mirrors the student population. Similarly, Baumgartner (2012) furthers the argument that Reason et. al discuss regarding professional allies being prepared to support the needs of the students. This is because students of color have identified that advisors were integral to their educational success and social development, because of their guidance. Students were more likely to seek support from allies and be connected to a community when given the resources. For example, Jones et al. (2002), state that professionals are better able to promote cross-cultural communication, events, and locations for students to be in an environment that exposes them to the potential for cross racial allies. This means that because students see professionals as mentors, they pose a greater influence in students in creating modes of engagement through various networks of support and resources. This in return, guides students to populations that they may have overlooked when seeking social groups and fosters the environment for more frequent opportunities for collaboration and the possibility for quality engagement.

Context

Institution Background

The University of San Diego (USD) is a Roman Catholic Institution that is comprised of 5,855 undergraduate students as of fall 2018 (University of San Diego, 2018). The university is considered to be predominately white institution, with an undergraduate student body comprised of .3% American Indian or Alaska Native, 7% Asian, 4% Black, .3% Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander, 17% Hispanic/Latino students (University of San Diego, 2018). In essence, students of color make up just under 32% of the undergraduate student population. There was a need on
campus in the early 1990’s for a space that engaged in dialogue around inclusion and diversity, in order to combat the negative impacts of being an underrepresented race/ethnicity on campus. This continues to be the narrative on campus, however, many of the aforementioned student populations have resorted to finding community on campus through various clubs, organizations, and collaborative spaces. One space in particular that has served as a foundation or meeting place is the United Front Multicultural Commons (UFMC). The former center, was created in 1993 after a student coalition of five organizations and concerned faculty, submitted a joint request for a space to provide the micro-cultures on campus an opportunity to celebrate their diverse identities, while also providing an educational environment that promotes inclusivity (University of San Diego, 2018).

**Student Efforts**

Over the years, the center has transformed to a common space and has expanded their services for not only students hailing from underrepresented communities, but also their allies. Currently, the UFMC serves as a lounge space for events, meetings, homework study, etc... More importantly, it provides students leadership opportunities that fosters their abilities to be collaborative, promote cultural competence, and other services for underrepresented and marginalized student groups. The services that the commons provide, engages students to be reflective and enhance their capacity to be agents for social justice.

USD has many multicultural student organizations that are housed under the UFMC and make up the United Front Multicultural Leadership Council (UFLC). The UFLC consists of multicultural student organizations that meet once a month at the United Front Multicultural Commons (UFMC). According to their website:
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... the Leadership Council provides student-centered direction to the Center in implementing its mission, leadership opportunities for students to address issues on diversity and inclusion, and organizational development to adapt within the UFMC student organizations. (United Front Multicultural Commons, 2018, para 1)

This statement serves as the foundation for students to identify various student organizations as allies and improve cross-racial engagement because their values align with diversity and inclusion; which is synonymous with social justice work.

Currently, there are 37 undergraduate student multicultural organizations that are registered with ToreroOrgs – housed under the Student Leadership, Involvement and Changemaking (SLIC) umbrella. In tandem, many of these student organizations are housed and supported by the UFMC leadership team, which is also under the supervision of Student Affairs.

I currently do not work in this office; however, my office is located in the Center for Inclusion and Diversity, which is under Academic Affairs. I work for the Tribal Liaison on campus, who also serves as an advisor for American Indian Student Organization (AISO); a registered ToreroOrgs.

Both the Center for Inclusion and Diversity (CID) and the Office of the Tribal Liaison (OTL) were created out of a need for visibility and for the university to adhere to diversity, inclusion, and collaborative work at the University of San Diego (USD) and the greater San Diego community. The CID was established in the year 2010 and currently serves as a coordinating center where:

... issues surrounding inclusion and diversity can be conceptualized, explored, nurtured, cultivated, shared, and promoted. Through collaborative relationships, the CID helps
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ensure that the university is a stimulating, welcoming, and engaging place for all faculty, staff, students, and visitors. (Center for Inclusion and Diversity, 2019, para 2)

Similarly, the OTL was established in 2014 to provide a visible and supportive community for Native students, educate the USD campus on the sovereign identity of Native communities, and support co-curricular programming. The Tribal Liaison also connects the University and its resources to the 17+ federally recognized surrounding American Indian communities in San Diego.

For the context of this research, the creation stories of each office are important because of their founding stories. Each position, office, and common space were created from a combination of student alliance and coalition formation, faculty and staff advocacy; out of the need for the university to uphold its mission in creating a diverse and inclusive community. In addition, former student activism has impacted the campus as a whole because of the resources that have been made available to minoritized populations. There is a continued need for students to be activated on campus in order to make progress for the increasing numbers of racially diverse students that are entering the institution. Thus, the importance of examining racial allyship on campus, understanding intercultural group collaboration, and learning how to support students in becoming more aware of their strengths as they begin to unite.

Needs Assessment

Why Allyship?

I became aware of the need to discuss what allyship was on campus because of my work in the Office of the Tribal Liaison. My supervisor and I were chatting about an issue where I had shared a few action steps that I had taken to address a situation and advocate for a group missing from the dialogue. To my surprise, she had responded excitedly with “That’s what you do as an
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ally!” I was puzzled. I had never been told that I was an ally and it felt quite strange. I believed to be well educated on social justice terminology and my role within societal issues; yet, I had never incorporated allyship into my schema or way of operating. This is because, somewhere along my socialization, I unconsciously made the assumption that it was a term used to describe solely white, cis-gender men and women, as allies to people of color. My own racial identity and socialization has shaped my assumptions about intergroup relations or power dynamics. For example,

...born into a specific set of social identities, related to the categories of difference...

these social identities predispose us to unequal roles in the dynamic system of oppression. We are then socialized by powerful sources in our worlds to play the roles prescribed by in an inequitable social system. (Harro, 2000, p.45)

This awakening led me to ask the students that I support, who they believed to be their allies on campus. A few of the students responded that their roommate(s) were, a white classmate or two, but it was never a person of color.

In addition, the students in the American Indian and Student Organization (AISO) had decided to address the memorialization of Saint Junipero Serra on campus in the Fall of 2017. The building known as Serra Hall, is a constant reminder of the genocide of over 150,000 California Native Americans due to the Mission system in California. Previous student organizations had voiced their concerns in 2009 about the building name and why it was a point of contention. I suggested to the student group that they reach out to other multicultural groups, in order to gain momentum and to magnify their voices. The students in the beginning stages of their planning were apprehensive in reaching out to various groups, such as the Black Student Union (BSU), Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano/a de Aztlan (MECHA), Filipino Ugnayan
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Student Organization (FUSO), and the over 30 other organizations. Soon after, as the AISO students began to raise awareness, there was an event on campus that had begun to mobilize student factions.

**Student Affairs Reorganization**

In the Spring semester of 2018, there were murmurs about a reorganization of space in the Student Life Pavilion (SLP). The space reorganization was going to impact the Black Student Resource Center (now commons), and the 3rd and 4th floor of the SLP. The space was originally going to be called the Diversity and Inclusion Student Commons, but students firmly stated that they were not in support of the name. Key student leaders raised concerns, as other leaders were invited to a dinner that explained the plans for the space. After the dinner, students quickly mobilized and organized meetings to design the 3rd and 4th floor according to their wants. During this meeting, students from every organization were in attendance, co-creating the layout of the soon to be commons space. While this was a great example of student alliance, it also displayed gaps in students understanding the importance of working together. This is because, during the small group portion of the meeting, students sat with members of their student organizations and focused on creating a space specifically for them. Once the group was in agreeance, they then moved on to organizing current identity spaces around their groups’ wants. When the brainstorming session ended and debriefing began, about seven organizations wanted the same spaces and were not wanting to concede on their plans. These events all culminated in my desire to inform students on allyship, while reshaping the way students think about allies on campus. This is especially critical because of the Envisioning 2024 strategic plan at the University of San Diego. One of the goals of the university is to strengthen diversity, inclusion, and social justice in
order to, “...transform the campus culture to ensure that all community members thrive” (Envisioning 2024, 2018, para 2).

Additional information that needs to be taken into consideration for this topic would be Critical Race Theory (1989) and its implications on allyship. This is pertinent to the topic because the theory centralizes race and challenges education, social systems, white supremacy, and more (Patton et. al, 2016). It also furthers the need for racially minoritized students to coalesce, in order to disrupt the dominant structure that maintains oppression, especially within the context of higher education. In order to obtain resources or make positive social change on campus, students must engage in dialogue and action with people or groups similar to them, with regard to oppression, for support (Harro, 1996). When the term ally is defined solely as a definitive character trait or action for a person that is from the dominant group, it is allowing the culture of racism to permeate spaces where they are to center racially minoritized peoples. This is because every day acts are not seen as racist because racism and oppression is so ingrained in our culture. Furthermore, this stresses the need for students to become each other’s support because they are recognizing themselves are the creators of knowledge (Delgado Bernal, 2002) and potentially enhance their engagement cross-culturally to create a more collaborative and racially just environment. In closing, “in order to enact diversity-and-inclusion, we must all be in this together” (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2014, p. 4). There is a need for communities of color to also engage in allyship within the LGBT community because there is a great deal of discrimination that they face within a marginalized community. For this research, I did not address this area of concern.

Participants
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The students that I engaged for this research were students of color, involved in multicultural organizations, and members of the United Front Multicultural Council (UFLC). I decided that these students would be the best population for this area of focus, because of their involvement in change, identity specific groups, and their leadership on campus. I used the United Front Multicultural Common’s website to email the 30 plus multicultural organizations for my cycle one of research. Students that participated in the individual interview of cycle two, were students that stated they would be interested in participating in the next cycle of research. In cycle three, students were all students from the UFLC for the focus group. In addition, the majority of my student participants identified as female with 85.7% in cycle one, 50% in cycle two, and 100% in cycle three of the research. In total, there were only two males that displayed interest in participating.

Accountability

My critical friend group originally was comprised of Yuri, Mandy, and Cristian from my cohort. As my deadlines passed, I realized that I never once shared my timeline with the group, nor did I connect with them for accountability. I did however, reach out to Mandy once in the process to assist me in sending out my cycle one survey to students in her office. This group was formed with the intention that we would all provide support and critiques, but that never happened. I instead leaned on my validation group for support throughout my cycles and writing process. I relied heavily on Kalie and Donnalay, who both happened to be in another section of the research methods course and work off-campus. They were a source of encouragement, critical feedback, and a reminder for self-care. I also was constantly bouncing ideas off my supervisor, Perse Lewis, and a few alumni of the program.

Methods 1
The methodological approach that I used to frame my research was Appreciative Inquiry (AI). This method was most appropriate because it is “a strategy for purposeful change that identifies the best of “what is” to pursue dreams and possibilities of “what could be” (Ashford & Patkar, 2001, p. 4). Meanwhile, Cooperrider & Whitney (2005) describe the inquiry cycle in four key phases, that are centered around the affirmative topic choice. The key phases of the process include discovery, dream, design, and destiny; which become an agenda for learning, knowledge sharing, and action. Discovery involves mobilizing multiple stakeholders to inquire into the positive core, while the dream phase envisions the potential future and purpose of the group’s mobilization. Furthermore, the design phase constructs the possibilities of the dream and the destiny phase is the action of the stakeholder community in seeking positive change and relationship building. By using the AI model, I attempted to capitalize on what I believed to be the strengths of the students involved in multicultural organizations on campus. The purpose was to get students to shift from a deficit model, to viewing themselves as having power and the ability to work across racial lines. This furthers the importance of racially minoritized students in identifying other communities of color as allies. This is because, it assumes that groups have an untapped core of positivity and with that, groups can liberate the human spirit and construct a better future (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005). Rather than looking at conditions as being problem-based, the shift is directed toward success and using the strengths of stakeholders; while building relationships. Mather & Konkle (2013), furthers this point by explaining that the appreciative approach entails communities taking responsibility for change, rather than relinquishing power to outside parties. When students rest the power for change within their multicultural community, it is indicative of a belief in the strengths and assets of the racially minoritized communities on campus (Mather & Konkle, 2013). By focusing on the assets or
positive core possessed by the community, there is the possibility that students are able to avoid some of the complications that result from “overdependence” on their white allies or outside benefactors.

Figure 1. Depiction of research cycle based on Cooperrider & Whitney (2005).

Best practices of this approach are with large diverse groups that have high levels of engagement and collaboration. One of my epistemological assumptions is that, we are most effective in creating change when we are collaborating with others. Therefore, it is imperative that these groups are reflective and build upon their best strengths in the organization to create a positive future. In addition, to begin working together more often on intersectional events, movements, protests, and other resource acquisition needs. This is again relevant to this research because of the current and potential levels of engagement from students of color with one another. This begins to transform the image of an ally and becomes more cross-cultural work in theory, once students begin to broaden their perspectives on being allies or engaging in allyship.
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with other communities of color. This also relates to my epistemological assumption that racially minoritized groups can be engaged in social justice work as allies or in allyship.

Because of my personal connection to the topic of allyship and wanting students to increase their engagement regarding the topic, it was integral to include Whitehead and McNiff’s Model (2006) of action research, as the model places the individual at the center of the process. Their model consists of four steps in a research cycle, known as action-reflection. This model is important to the research because it provided me with the option to modify my actions in order to move in a new direction, but also because of the personal reflection piece that is incorporated. It is my intention to enhance students’ capacity for racially allyship, but it is also my intention to understand best practices to support students in their collaboration efforts. McNiff and Whitehead (2011) explained that, in action research the practitioner is able to offer their own account for what they are doing. In essence, I had some leeway during my final cycle of research. This model has provided me the opportunity to assess the information gathered, and to see what worked in the cycles and what did not work through my interventions. Within the AI model, I felt very constricted in my research methods, therefore, the pairing of the two models has given me the opportunity to incorporate personal reflections on the process.

Methods II

Pre-Cycle: Discovery

Discovery

The first stage of Appreciative Inquiry is the Discovery phase. This phase consists of activating the community to inquire into the positive core and engage in high levels of communication. Additionally, this phase imagines the potential future and purpose of the group’s mobilization. The pre-cycle phase was focused primarily on making meaning from the student’s
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ways of being, how they engaged with multicultural groups, and understanding their shared stories for action on campus. In addition, this also awakened my personal connection to the work of social justice and community collaboration. The pre-cycle consisted of an observation of the American Indian Student Organization beginning their efforts to educate their peers, staff, and administrators about the relationship between California Native Americans and the Catholic Church. In addition, watching various student organizations become emotionally charged due to the Student Affairs reorganization or university employees and identity spaces.

Observe

The observation of this pre-cycle occurred during the Fall 2017 semester. The main event that served as my foundation for exploring students’ capacity for racial allyship was the American Indian Student Organization (AISO) effort to rename Serra Hall. The students were brainstorming ways to share their cultural and political identity on campus, as well as the complex history of California Native Americans and the mission system. During this time, the AISO students were also creating structure for their organization in order to have group cohesion, community development, and social events because of an increase in Native American students attending the university; and seeking involvement. In parallel, I was also getting acclimated to my new role, working with a population that I was unfamiliar with and figuring out the office dynamics. For example, I was seeking opportunities to obtain more information for best practices for working with this specific student population, building trust with the students, and what the office was lacking.

In wanting to respect the organizations agency, I had suggested that they reach out to other student organizations to begin building relationships and educating partners on campus. I wanted to be a support system but thought that reaching out to their peers would be a better resource.
Throughout their organizing stage, I witnessed their hesitation in reaching out to the other multicultural student organizations and using the United Front Multicultural Common (UFMC) space for additional resources. In addition, the organization had not yet registered with ToreroOrgs or taken time to get to know each other. After realizing this, I was able to see that there were a few foundational items that needed to happen, prior to the group mobilizing for the renaming of Serra Hall on-campus.

Reflect

These observations led me to question why the students initially decided to take on a large project and their apprehension in reaching out to other students of color? Moreover, why were the students not wanting to share their goal in order to receive more support, identifying allies for the cause, or informing others how they could educate themselves on Native American issues in higher education? A few of my speculations were that this may have been attributed to the underrepresentation of Native American students, but also faculty and staff, new students that joined the organization during their restructure, and also the leaders of the group being mostly males. Additionally, I felt there was a sense of wanting to be self-sufficient or exercise self-governance, therefore they may have believed that they were capable in doing the work themselves. As a Black student at a predominately white institution, I would have quickly connected with other students of color in the community, especially those that I believed to have an understanding of oppression and a shared experience with systemic injustices. In the same breath, I understand that some movements or issues are best handled within the group because of the time needed to build trust with allies, sharing space with others that may not be like minded, or those that question the integrity of the issue.

Act
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The act portion of this pre-cycle was to attend all of AISO’s weekly meetings to support their efforts and build trust with the students. I thought that this would help me to identify their interests and connect them with students that I had met at different events hosted by the UFMC. In addition, I contacted a fellow Graduate Assistant working in the UFMC to discuss collaborating on an event that highlights the Native American student experience at the university. The graduate student had shared that she needed to speak with her supervisor before planning an event and would let me know if it was possible. I never received an answer back from this student. This was an important step for me, because I believed that modeling the behavior would be beneficial for the students to witness, but also garner more support in a space that is dedicated to celebrating diverse identities.

Evaluate

As a graduate assistant in the Office of the Tribal Liaison, I work regularly with the students who are involved in AISO. This has provided me the opportunity to form relationships with the students and to serve in an advisory role. The goal of the organization is to create community and an environment dedicated to the needs of Native American college students, increase belonging, and foster a culturally aware campus. This is because, students encounter a multitude of cultural conflicts that can be disempowering and debilitating to their success (Shotton, Lowe, & Waterman, 2013). During this cycle there was an intentional focus on experiential knowledge. I did not seek to gain any data or record information. Instead, I worked closely with my supervisor to brainstorm and create events or programs that supported the students’ Native American identity development, as it pertains to self-determination, and community. This is because, “…offering culturally relevant spaces and programs becomes an essential component of Native American student success and can make a world of difference in
how these students navigate their daily existence” (Shotton et al., 2013, p. 55). Therefore, it was important that students had a space that they could share stories, cope, talk, and laugh at their experiences with institutional erasure. I hypothesized that this was the initial reason why the students were apprehensive to working with other student organizations. Students were more focused on intragroup nation building and creating an internal sense of belonging. This was shown through planned social gatherings off-campus, a planned visit to a students’ Tribal Nation, and the creation of a calendar of events created by the group. Students often stopped by our office to check on other students or to run ideas by myself and my supervisor for programmatic aspects of their student organization. In addition to creating community, I attributed their actions to self-determination. Self-determination is described as the “push for Indian nations to control their own affairs and to be free of, particularly, state government authorities” (Cornell & Kalt, 2010). In the context of higher education, this is applicable because it is a strategy that has “improved the well-being of historically, the most oppressed and disempowered people” (Cornell & Kalt, 2010, p. 12). Therefore, the focus on in-group relations and resources is understandable because of the correlation it has to strengthening tribal governments, political identities, and communities. Thus, this was their opportunity to do the same on campus. This is because, Native American students place more importance on their ethnic identity and connection to their ethnic group, over dominant society or those seen as others (Evans et al., 2016). This is affirmed by the implicit and explicit messaging that the dominant U.S. society transmits to American Indians to assimilate and practice dominant ways of doing.

Throughout the process, I had to be conscious of pressuring students into working in Western ways, especially when suggesting that they needed to work with other student groups.
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Instead, I needed to reframe how to encourage them in engaging with other multicultural groups. This was done with respect to Tribal Critical Race Theory (TribalCrit). TribalCrit is rooted in the “multiple, nuanced, and historically- and geographically-located epistemologies and ontologies found in indigenous communities” (Brayboy, 2006 p. 427). The commonalities are essentially the recognized differences within and between communities and individuals. With this mind, it was important that students understood the different forms of knowledge that could be integrated with one another, in order to achieve successful resistance (Brayboy, 2006), or campus efforts. In this case, using their Tribal knowledge, experience within the higher education system, and community; could help them in mobilizing the various racially minoritized student groups to support the renaming of the Serra Hall building. This strategic use of multiple forms of knowledge generates power that is dynamic and influencing. Deloria (1970) argues, “Few members of racial minority groups have realized that inherent in their peculiar experience on this continent is hidden the basic recognition of power and sovereignty” (p.115). Ultimately, there is a need for cultures to work together to solve the myriad of oppressions felt by groups. Furthermore, it is important to support students as they begin to understand that working in coalition is a best practice in relation to power, vision, and understanding their roles as allies. This correlates to Yosso’s (2005) Community Wealth Model. Specifically, Navigational Capital, as it refers to the skills and abilities that students possess in order to maneuver in environments.

**Cycle 1: Dream – Survey**

**Dream**

The second step of Appreciative Inquiry is the Dream cycle. This cycle involves creating a “vision that brings to light the collective aspirations of stakeholders that emerges from the Discovery phase” (Sullivan, 2004, p. 224). This stage could be marked by challenging the status
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quo or building upon possibilities of the group. There were a few questions that I pondered during this cycle. I thought about “What can students accomplish together, can they share common goals, and what possibilities for connection are there?”

Observe

After emailing the survey to students in early November of 2018, I attended an event titled “Silence of Serra,” hosted by the AISO students in mid-November. The event was a tabling session, where students had painted over 300 rocks red to signify the genocide of California Native Americans, caused by Saint Junipero Serra. The students passed out flyers educating the campus community on the complex history of Catholicism and Indigenous peoples; and engaged in dialogue with those that stopped by their table. The attendees were a combination of students, staff, and faculty members that were walking by the Serra Hall building. During this time, students that had walked up to the table were asking the AISO students about how they could get involved, where to find more information, and thanked them for hosting an event informing the campus of the issues. Many of the students that had stopped by the table, were students of color that seemed to be very passionate about echoing the information they received from the event to their respective associations or organizations. Towards the end of the event, I witnessed the AISO students exchanging contact information with student organization members. This stood out to me, as I became interested in how the students would make sense of this interaction. If they would reach out to the students, would they now see groups of people as allies, or would they see this more as an act of solidarity?

Reflect

Before engaging in the next cycle of research, I reflected on the event from the pre-cycle. I had spoken with a student community member that shared that they wanted to collaborate on an
event with the AISO group. I encouraged the student to introduce themselves to the members of AISO and share the premise of the event. The student declined the advice and shared that they did not know how to approach the situation. They shared that their organization had never collaborated with another student organization before and they were unsure if other multicultural student organizations were willing to share space. As I entered the action portion of my cycle, this led me to question why students were involved in multicultural organizations, how they would define racial allyship and social justice, and how often do they engage in cross-racially or identity events.

Act

In this phase, I conducted an undergraduate student demographic survey with a total of seven student participants (Appendix B), which assisted in identifying what organizations and associations students of color were members of on campus. I anticipated that their involvement may contribute to their ability to collaborate with other groups and their capacity to be engaged as allies. The survey also asked students about their cross-racial interactions, the frequency of engagement, and their understanding of racial allyship. The survey was sent directly to all multicultural organizations that focused on racial and ethnic identities. Including, African Student Union (ASU), American Indian Student Organization (AISO), Filipino Ugnayan Student Organization (FUSO), Muslim Student Association (MSA), Movimiento Estudiantil Chicanx de Aztlan (MEChA), and more. Students had a total of three weeks to complete the survey created with Google Forms. Prior to emailing the students organizations directly, an email (Appendix A) was sent to the Director of the United Front Multicultural Commons (UFMC) and the Program Coordinator soliciting participation from the United Front Leadership Council (UFLC). Both responded that the email (Appendix A) needed to be sent directly to the students in order for their
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participation. To supplement, the graduate assistants working in the UFMC were asked to forward the email to student organizations they had contact with.

Evaluate

The survey included 15 questions that students self-elected to answer. The target respondents for this survey were students participating in organizations based on race, ethnicity, and multicultural. The total number of responses to the survey was seven. Participants included three students identifying as Black, African, or African American; three students who were Hispanic or Latinx, Native American or Alaska Native, Asian, and various Bi-racial identities including white and one or more minoritized identities (See figure 2).

Which of the following describes you? Choose all that apply.

![Bar chart showing student racial and ethnic group breakdown](image)

*Figure 2. Student racial and ethnic group breakdown from Undergraduate Demographic Survey.*

Furthermore, the survey included a mixed method of questions (Appendix B) including five questions based on the Likert-type scale; having ordered response categories that ranged from *five* being the highest to *one* being the lowest. For example, “I relate more to others that look like me” or “I am more accepting of people that do not look like me.” These questions provided insight about how students viewed themselves in comparison to their peers regarding
their engagement with students from different racial and ethnic identities. The survey also included five open-ended response questions in order to compare and contrast students’ explanations for membership in student organizations, self-identification of membership, and definition of terms. The survey responses provided minimal information about how students see themselves as allies and co-collaborators on campus. This was partially due to the questions created for the survey not using the AI framework. They failed to address the perspective of creating aspirations of goals or possibilities, and instead they were guided questions. For example, when asked to describe their engagement with social justice movements, one student responded:

I have minor actual engagement with social justice movements in the sense that I have not attended a protest or a rally of some sorts. That is because I lack faith in American society and feel that it is unlikely that change will be enacted.

The original question should have been reframed to guide students to bring their strengths forward. However, the other six students had shared that they all have participated in various protests, marches, and initiatives supporting women’s rights, climate change, the Black Lives Matter movement, homelessness, and other issues impacting various communities. In addition, the survey asked students to compare themselves to their peers and was from a deficit perspective. Of note, the students that were in the later of their collegiate years, were involved in two or more student organizations. In the next section, I discuss themes I discovered from the student’s responses. The themes include student involvement, community, and similar definitions for racial ally.

Involvement & Community
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Each of the seven students that responded to the survey were all involved in one more student organization based on race, gender, honor society, on-campus jobs, or special interests (i.e. Vegans United, Multicultural Night Dance Group, etc.). Astin (1999), describes student involvement as the physical and psychological energy that a student devotes to the academic experience. In addition to the students being active participants in multiple social circles, there was another underlying theme. The majority of the students that were involved in three or more student organizations, identified as fourth year students. This is important to note because in Tinto’s Model of Retention (1993), it outlines that students who are academically and socially integrated into the institution, are more likely to have greater commitment to the institution and graduate. These students had found spaces to foster community building, academic success, and a sense of belonging that may be contributed to their development and persistence. The sixth question of the survey asked, “Why did you decide to participate or not participate in student organizations, clubs, activities, and/or programs?” Responses are as listed:

“I participate because I wanted a community in a very white dominated school”

“To find community and like-minded peers; To build my resume; To give back to black students that come after me.”

“It's an amazing way to connect with peers outside of the classroom, particularly with those that share similar ideas, perspectives, and/or identities.”

“Since this is a PWI & there aren't many black people on this campus, this is the only way that I am able to see them especially since I’m an engineering student.”

“To be more inclusive in my new community, enhance my experience/ expand my knowledge”

“I chose to participate in this club to find a sense of belonging and community.”
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The apparent theme in each of the responses was the need for community, support, sense of belonging on campus, and finding their voice. This is pertinent to students’ ability to adjust to college, the quality of their experience at college, and their academic performance (Ostrove & Long, 2007). This is especially the case for students identifying as minoritized and low-income. This could account for the lack of explicit examples of collaboration on campus between multicultural students’ organizations, because each student is focused on creating intra-group communities, prior to engaging to intergroups. However, the most interesting data that I received from the survey was from a third year, female identified student, who is Native American, White, and Hispanic. This student noted that she was a member of the Black Student Organization and American Indian Student Organization. This shows that this student may be aware of their role as an ally to other racially minoritized student populations. In her response to the question, “How would you define the term, racial ally?” she responded with: “Someone who learns and listens to people outside of their own race and is there as a helping hand when things go down.” This is congruent to their response to the final question of the survey, that asks the student if they participate in frequent cross-racial interaction with other students of color. This response highlights the aspirational piece to the dream phase, but also an integral part of Yosso’s Community Cultural Wealth Model (2005). This is because, it shows that the individual’s capacity to be hopeful despite the various obstacles they face, especially as a Native student in higher education – resilience and the support of others.

Racial Ally

The term racial ally was a focus question in this cycle of research because of my curiosity for how others see themselves in relation to collaborative and advocacy work. In addition, I wanted to understand how my definition aligned with students. I defined racial ally as a person
that holds one or more minoritized racial or ethnic identities, that engages in equity, advocacy, and inclusion work for other minoritized groups. There is an understanding that persons possess some form of power and privilege and can use their resources to support the ongoing causes of other groups. I hypothesized that I would see responses that included being in solidarity, a reflection of themselves, healing, and advocacy. The specific question was: How would you define the term racial ally? Student responses included:

Participant one,

A racial ally is someone who supports a racial group other than their own through speaking up for that group when they are not given the chance to be heard, using their privilege to bring attention to issues that this group faces, and giving members of this group a chance to vocalize their needs.

The other students answered with similar responses. For example, all participants described the term similarly. It illustrated that students understood the social justice term and that they could identify characteristics of an ally. Student’s responses included, “I would say that this requires an active awareness of one's privilege and acting in ways that support and empower those that may not be privileged in the same ways, particularly within a racial framework (e.g., combatting racism)” and participant six shared, “someone who does not necessarily identify with a certain racial group but educates themselves on the issues that face the community, listens to the people and their experiences and speaks out when asked to [be] in solidarity.” Another theme I found in their responses was the concept of empathy. Participant five commented that an ally possesses empathy for another marginalized group. Meanwhile, participant three shared that a racial ally is an individual that participates fully and voices an option when talk about injustices surround said
group and participant four described the term as “one that understands and is willing to engage in promoting equality among all racial groups.”

In addition to the similar definitions, another theme I saw arise was the idea that racial allies support the voices of marginalized groups or they vocalize the needs of the group. I connected this to the reason why these students became involved on campus. Participants one and three both shared that their reason for becoming involved on campus, was due to them wanting to find community because they were one of a few black students within their major. This is of significance because both of their responses included voicing and vocalizing the needs of marginalized groups. I connected to this piece, because I too, feel as though there is a need to magnify voices that are often left unheard. As a Black woman, I find myself often speaking on behalf of groups, reinforcing the superwoman trope. Meaning, “society sees Black woman as such based on dominant ideologies about blackness and womaness” (Moorehead-Slaughter, 2018, p. 63). In closing, their responses provided a great deal of information and provided a foundation for the next step in the research.

**Cycle 2: Design – Interview**

**Design**

The third phase of Appreciative Inquiry (AI) is design. This phase is based on members of an organization co-constructing the plan of action and creating a path to reach the goal or the dream. During this time, members are reflecting on what actions and relationships will best support the dream and wishes of the organization (Stavros & Torres, 1995). For this cycle, I interviewed four undergraduate students from the undergraduate demographic survey, to better understand their current relationships with their peers, professional staff, and access to campus resources. In addition, I asked students about allyship on campus, their student involvement, and
allowed for the conversation to flow naturally. During this cycle, I sought to understand if the students saw themselves as having strength or the capability of leveraging their access to resources and power. In essence, I wanted to gather information about their self-awareness and relationships they had in the campus community.

**Observe**

To gather more information about the educational opportunities that students had access to on campus, I attended a United Front Leadership Council (UFLC) meeting in February of 2019. I serve as a co-advisor to the American Indian Student Organization and was interested in learning more about their experience and attendance at the meetings. In addition, I was asked to attend by the undergraduate Associated President because of our working relationship, her collaboration with AISO, and my position as the Graduate Student Council Chair.

The UFLC consists mainly of about 14 undergraduate student organizations. Once a month, representatives from the Muslim Student Association, PRIDE, Black Student Union, and others, come together to engage in cultural competence, community building, and leadership development. The United Front Multicultural Commons (UFMC) provides a space for various underrepresented and marginalized student populations to connect (United Front Multicultural Commons, 2018, para 1) and receive the aforementioned services. Therefore, I wanted to get a better understanding of how students were engaged in cultural competence during these meetings and what the average attendance was for these meetings. In addition, to learn more about the dialogues that students were having with each other, the conversations about programming, and the level of support provided to them. Prior to the meeting, I was able to briefly connect with a UFMC graduate assistant. She shared that it was often a task to encourage consistent student attendance at the monthly meetings. Similarly, due to the student affairs reorganization and the
exit of a staff member, students had voiced that they were no longer feeling supported by the space, there was a lack of communication, and a need to address student issues campus wide. I was aware of these sentiments but wanted to observe the collaborative process between professional staff and the students.

While attending this meeting, I was also hoping to recruit student participants for the next cycle of my research. It was difficult to obtain responses for my cycle one survey and I was worried about students canceling their sessions with me. I thought that it would be beneficial to announce in person my intentions and provide a space for students to opt-in by emailing me at the closing of the UFLC meeting. However, this meeting allowed me to get a better understanding of how organizations engage on issues regarding diversity, inclusion, and student organization development. During this meeting, the focus was on changing the direction of the group. At a previous meeting in fall 2018, it was discussed that the council was no longer functioning in a manner that was supportive of student issues and because of the exit of a key staff member, there was an opportunity to create a new direction for the council. During this time, students produced a list of ideas and topics of focus that they wanted address. The focus areas included, allyship, community collaboration and communication, financial resources, space, education, and more. There were posters placed on the walls around the room and students were asked to join a group to discuss the particular topic of interest. I decided to participate in a group that was comprised of two students. We chatted about the students wanting a workshop on how to advocate for themselves and marginalized student populations on campus. The purpose of our group was to create SMART goals for the topic of allyship. We never really discussed the subject matter, instead, students were venting about their frustrations with different group members and systems on campus.
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Reflect

After attending this meeting, I began to question a variety of issues I noticed. For example, why were graduate students not engaged in the council as advertised online, did students communicate outside of the UFLC meetings, and what exercises were facilitated in order to provide students’ the opportunity to do inner cultural awareness work? I was fortunate enough to have a conversation with one of the students from the UFLC group. She was one of the students I was grouped with during the brainstorming session. We began to chat about her student organization, frustration with the lack of funding they had received for multiple events and that staff were not quick to address issues concerning the student body. I thought this was interesting because these students had access to solutions and resources but were not communicating their needs from what I had gathered. I asked her what steps her organization took in order to address the funding and issues her group faced? She stated that they had an organizational meeting and the conversation ended there. This was alarming to hear, as we were in a space that had multiple avenues of resources for her group to use. For example, she had access to her peers, the UFMC leadership team, and her organization members. This was especially interesting to reflect on, because of the lack of community that the student described. A core value of the university is community and the student did not recognize that she and her group were among those who they could lean on for support. To illustrate,

...the University values students, faculty and staff from different backgrounds and faith traditions and is committed to creating an atmosphere of trust, safety and respect in a community characterized by a rich diversity of people and ideas. (University of San Diego, 2018, para 6).
This also brought me to question how students were building trust with each other and viewing themselves as change agents. From this conversation, I realized that the questions I formulated for my one on one interviews were not addressing specific resources on campus nor were they explicitly addressing the strengths of the students.

After completing my cycle one survey, I was prepared to engage face to face with students to understand more about their experience in cross-cultural engagement. I realized that I needed to connect with students in person to gain a better understanding of their involvement and learn about the students that they view as allies. The survey method may not have been a best practice when working with minoritized populations.

**Act**

This cycle consisted of four one on one interviews with undergraduate students. Each individual interview consisted of a student that had previously participated in the undergraduate demographic survey. Each student identified as being involved in racial and ethnic student organizations. Students were asked if they would be interested in participating in future cycles of the research and these students opted-in. The interviews took place December 2018 and February 2019. Each student was involved in two or more organizations that focused on awareness, advocacy, and social justice. During the individual interviews, students were asked a total of seven questions (Appendix C) about their experience with allies, the characteristics of an ally, if they had been identified as such, and what resources and power they had access to. Each response was recorded as audio and then later transcribed. To organize the interviews, each participant was sent a calendar invite and assigned a pseudonym for anonymity.

**Evaluate**
As the interviews came to an end, there was a great deal of information that student leaders had provided. Again, there were a total of four students that participated in this cycle. For confidentiality purposes, they were given the following pseudonyms – Lee, Marlene, Tanya, and David. Of these participants, Marlene and Tanya both identified as Latinas, seniors, and members of multiple student organizations on campus. While Lee identified as a multi-racial male and a third-year student. The youngest of the group was David – who also is a member of multiple organizations on campus. Unfortunately, due to a scheduling conflict, David was not able to complete the full interview, however, the responses captured from him were still vital pieces of information. I asked him to describe racial allyship, his current level of involvement, and what students or student group has he identified as allies on campus. I also attempted to reach out to David to complete the interview by email or text but received no response.

There were multiple themes that surfaced throughout the interviews. Each student shared personal stories about how they experience the campus, their peers, and professional staff on campus (administrators, faculty, etc...). In order to make sense of the data I collected, I categorized the themes within the Cycle of Liberation (1996) framework, as they naturally aligned to this theory. This framework was beneficial as it also connects to the Appreciate Inquiry model, with the focus being on a positive core, unlearning oppressive behaviors, and moving towards positive transformations. The model describes a cyclical process for social change or liberation from oppressive forces; that is the culmination of theory, analysis, and practical experiences (Harro, 1996). Because the work is never done, individuals can enter at any point and will engage repeatedly in the model. This was imperative to the research because the college experience is a time where students are constantly undergoing intrapersonal change and making meaning from their relationships and experiences. This notion is applicable to the
students in this research as they displayed key characteristics of students coming into their adulthood and the former unknowns of the mind. I connected this to Critical Race Theory (1970), because Tanya, Marlene, and David identified as student activists, and within the theory, there is an activist dimension (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). In addition, the student’s storytelling, counterstorytelling, voice, etc... incorporates valid forms of knowledge that are often dismissed as “students of color are angry, hyperemotional, and irrational” from my personal experience. In the next section, I make connections to the cycle of liberation and critical race theory.

**Reaching Out & Building Community**

The reaching out phase of the Cycle of Liberation is explained as the movement out from the self and toward others (Harro, 1996). In essence, it is moving from intrapersonal to interpersonal connections with people or groups. During this time, individuals expose themselves to differing ideas, call out injustices, and broaden their circle to include others. To explore how students were engaged in this phase, students were asked, “How does allyship show up within your student organization or where does it show up, if at all?” Lee responded with,

It’s just coming out to support our events that we have or spreading the word about what’s going on, or what we’re trying to do. So, for example, the Serra Hall event. Lots of students from MEChA, BSU, like they brought it up in class or are talking it with their friends, or you know people in general are talking about it, like their differences. Marlene shared,

I guess... I would say the constant process of conversations with communities. Things are so polarizing in initial conversations. Something I’ve learned is doing my part to educate others, trying to get others to understand their experiences, you may not understand.
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This question naturally led to each student describing their engagement with communities on campus. Students discussed that in the beginning of their undergraduate years, they did not connect with individuals with different social identities. For example, Tanya stated that, “I didn’t find community until my third year. I just didn’t see too many people like me or who shared my values.” Lee also shared a similar sentiment. He described what seemed to be impostor phenomena as well. For example, he shared that in his first year, he was planning to transfer out of the school because he did not see anyone that looked like him, he did not feel safe, he was unaware of the community that existed on campus, and he questioned, “why did I get accepted here [USD].” Clance and Imes (1978) define impostor phenomenon as an individual experience of self-perceived intellectual phoniness – or being found out to be a fraud. However, he then shared that he found community.

The building community phase of the model consists of two steps; dialoguing with people who possess similar social identities and dialoging with those who are different from us. In doing this, people are able to listen, share values, and begin to build coalitions. Students were asked, “How do you think your understanding of allyship has changed since becoming involved? Lee shared,

BSU has a lot of similarities to my group with confederacy memorialization, they get it.

V & C bring up Serra Hall and how wrong it is. I feel cared about. Its more than just allyship, its friendship and sense of belonging. You are wanted here, you have purpose. If you don’t connect with other student groups, you’ll have a harder time. Because you’re showing an interest, we’re showing we all belong.

Tanya also shared her thoughts about this,
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I identify as Latina and I have always felt welcomed in different places of color on campus, in different areas that usually may not be as geared towards me. I have seen allyship in the sense of purposefully reaching out and asking there are these issues at the greater national level and global climate that we can collaborate on.

On the opposite end, David shared that he did not see allyship or communities engaging with one another. He shared,

I see it within our events that other student of color groups won’t come to our events. Why should we come to theirs? They don’t show up for us. They only are seen when events pertain to their groups. I’m not sure if it’s because they don’t want to take up space, over stepping boundaries, because of space.

Hearing about the different experiences these students had within community helped me understand that students need to feel supported before reaching out to other student groups. David highlighted an important link that Lee had also mentioned. Students want to engage in reciprocity or an exchange in mutually beneficial resources. This could be attributed, for example, to funding for their student organizations and how that breaks down. In addition, students should be exposed to conversations around those with power or are seen as having power, to better understand their proximity to privilege and power.

**Power and Privilege**

When engaging with communities, this interpersonal step involves dialoguing about how we see the “other.” Students were asked about their access to resources, people, and power. When they were asked, each had a visceral response. Tanya became very stoic as she described the connections she had to administrators in various offices on campus. When Lee was asked the question, he took a few moments to think about faculty and staff on campus. He immediately
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mentioned his advisor and the graduate assistant that worked in a space that he frequents. Marlene immediately provided an answer, as if it had been something she was confronted with in the past. When discussing power and privilege with individuals that identify as racially minoritized groups, it becomes a complicated conversation. Collins (1990) writes that power and privilege are relative, because individuals hold multiple cross-cutting social identities that present relative privilege or disadvantage differently within different contexts. I believed this was my opportunity to witness students in sharing that they themselves have power to create change on campus. Marlene and Tanya both acknowledged that they hold power and have access to various offices on campus. For example, Marlene stated,

Like I said I am aware of my privilege, as a light skin Latina, more middle class, I’m in college, at a private institution, far from home, I don’t worry about my finances, even the positions I have now. Being on [redacted], I have access to upper administrators, who most students would never have interactions with. Its uncomfortable sometimes, but that’s where my allyship shows up. Asking those hard questions, questioning the things I hear, keeping in mind the communities that I interact with and tried learning about. I feel like, I do have access to those people who make important decisions on campus.

Tanya shared,

With the different positions I have on campus, I have both the blessing and the curse to be able to engage in conversation with people who have power on this campus and at this university. The curse is that there isn’t too much of the development in the allyship that sometimes exist with these resources, they’re there, they have power, but no take no
action for me or people of color, because there isn’t this connection between understanding experience, wanting to learn from that, wanting to be an ally, vs hearing about it, talking about it, engaging surface level.

Tanya pointed out a critical piece that I did not think about. The role of staff, faculty, and administrators is very important in students’ development. Professional staff serve as models, mentors, and educators when it comes to supporting systemic change. While students have agency, they need allies in other spaces to aid them as they move into action. Tanya shared while she is confident that she can mobilize groups, she still wants to feel supported by professional staff throughout the process. This struck me as a call to action by Tanya toward staff. There is a need for us to be more aware of our own role in this situation. Stavros & Torres, (2005) note that,

self-reflective awareness means being self-aware, other aware, and socially aware of the dynamics of the relationships in a community. It means understanding your part in dynamic relationships, recognizing there are options for your actions that will influence the relationships and that at any given time there are many possible outcomes for any given situation depending upon your actions. (p. 79)

**Cycle 3: Destiny – Focus Group**

**Destiny**

The destiny phase is the final stage of the Appreciative Inquiry model. This stage is focused on the path forward and the promise of individuals and the group in order to achieve the goal (Trosten-Bloom & Whitney, 1999). This phase allows space for creativity to flourish in order to reach the new future or possibilities. For this cycle, I facilitated a focus group because it encourages storytelling, potential high levels of communication, and both intrapersonal and
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interpersonal relationship building with individuals. In addition, students were provided the space to construct art and build relationships with others throughout the process. The desired outcome of this cycle was for students to realize that their differences unite them, but this also makes them powerful in creating change on campus. Additionally, my intentions for organizing the focus group was to bring together student leaders that would create a plan about how they could begin to work together after the group ended.

Observe

After completing the one on one interviews, I noticed that students needed space to chat leisurely with one another. There was a need for students to be in a space that is open and inviting and fosters connection. This was confirmed in the focus group, as students had come to the space needing to vent about a meeting that happened the day before our session. I recognized that as I was completing my research cycles, the American Indian Student Organization had become more visible on campus. The students were activated in various campus spaces and had identified both student and staff allies to help with their efforts to rename the building. I had become so consumed with the research that I failed to keep up with their actions on campus. I was informed of their progress by a student in the focus group. She shared that she would be advocating on behalf of one of the members at a later scheduled meeting. I was able to see first-hand that students were supporting their goal by magnifying their voice, sharing platforms, and using their resources to their advantage.

Act

The action portion of this cycle took place in mid-March after I attended a United Front Leadership Council meeting. I attended in order to solicit participation by making an announcement to the students in attendance. If students were interested, I asked them to send me
an email. I also left my email on a sheet of paper and placed it on one of the tables in the commons. Moreover, I emailed students that participated in the second cycle of research asking for their participation as well, however, none were in attendance for the focus group. The focus group consisted of dialogue and art that lasted approximately an hour and a half. Student participants were asked a total of four questions regarding their values in relation to the identities they hold and the student organizations they hold membership. Furthermore, they were asked for examples of collaboration, community, and cooperation with diverse individuals, and key identifiers of an ally. As they were responding to my questions, they were also creating an art piece that represented how they viewed allyship throughout the dialogue. Each student was given a personal canvas to work with as they responded to my questions. After I read aloud my introduction, expectations, and directions, students were very quiet and reserved from what I observed. I was worried that the questions were too loaded (Appendix D) and I would be suppressing their voices during this time. To illustrate, one question read “describe a time when individuals came together to display high levels of collaboration, community, and cooperation in your student organization and what caused this to happen?” My first question read, “What are things you value deeply, specifically related to the identities you claim and the student organizations you are a part of?” the students were hesitant in answering. I thought that if I participated in the art activity, that would create a more comfortable environment. As I had hypothesized, once I started to create my personal art piece, the students begun to share their responses and become more comfortable with the process. During this time, we were all seated around a table in a u-shape in order for me to capture their voices on my recorder. While the students were now answering the questions, there was still a heavy energy lingering. I stopped asking them research questions and did a round of check-ins. This led to a fruitful conversation
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about their awareness of difference and a want to collaborate. Students were aware of the actions they needed to take in order to collaborate on events, educate themselves on marginalized communities’ issues, and why supporting each other was important. For this reason, I thought it was best to take a step back from asking students questions during the focus group. This was because, the students began to share stories and engage in dialogue about the different ways they wanted to be involved in community or student activism on campus, and discuss what allyship did not look like, using current students as examples.

Evaluate

The focus of this cycle of research was to bring students together in order for them to share their artistic visions of allyship. During this cycle, I anticipated students would create self-portraits rather than abstract art. However, the meanings behind their art pieces were very powerful and self-reflective. Unfortunately, there was a looming energy that would not fade away. I stopped asking research questions and asked the students to do a quick check in with me. One by one, students had shared that they were feeling down, angry, and confused. One of the students shared that she could not stop thinking about a meeting from the day prior. Soon after, three more students had shared that they also attended the same meeting. The conversation then centered on what allyship does not look like. One student stated,

It’s the whole well, you can’t stop being friends with someone because of something they said... but you can. I believe that, I think that’s a great decision one can make. Sorry... anyways, one of her best friends happens to be a senator who must not be named... That’s where the problems started.

Another student joined in and stated,
Those are the kind of people who can say I’ll never fully understand where you’re coming from and they think that’s enough to say. Um, ok cool, that’s fine to acknowledge. But then they use that as an excuse to not get upset on behalf of marginalized groups! Like, that’s not enough. They use the fact they won’t understand as a pass to not take action.

It was evident that students needed a space to vent about the incident that had occurred. This was alarming to witness but it was the perfect time to decompress and be in community with them. This was an example of *survivance*, which is the combination of survival and resistance, that calls for the adaptation and strategic accommodation in order to survive and develop a process that will contribute to community growth (Deloria, 1970). This was the best time to engage the students, especially given that they were in the process of creating art. This is because, art therapy has been proven to improve the mental, emotional, and physical well-being of those that engage in this process. In addition, the sharing of stories fostered a space where students quickly built trust with one another and working through some much-needed healing. Due to the change in direction, the focus group lasted nearly two hours.

**Allyship**

Students from the focus group understood the value of collaborating, showing empathy, and the need to support the causes of various multicultural organizations. When asked to define allyship or an ally, all of the students shared very different points of view about this. For example, Sarah said: “People confuse being in support of something with allyship. Like, I support it, I have nothing against it, but to be an ally you have to actively bring your voice to make things better or get closer to equity.” This was interesting, as I connected her comment to the idea of taking action and speaking with behavior. Similar to this response, participant Sarah
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mentioned voice and Denise focused on the importance of listening. Denise shared that she understood allyship to be “understanding the things that affect people and um, or hearing, listening. Listening is a huge aspect of allyship to me and participating. There’s steps to be an ally.” Students raised the issue of race when considering allyship. Participant four added, “I don’t associate ally with anything other than white people. In solidarity makes more sense for me. You understand the struggle. Doesn’t replace ally, its more inclusive and is appropriate for me to use.” And in contrast, participant three sees a distinction between allies and solidarity, she told us, “Allies are not people of color. Solidarity equals people of color.” This brought me back to the purpose of my research. People of color disassociating with the term ally because it has been painted to be a white dominated space. This was an opportunity to ask the student why they believed this to be true.

Before painting began, each student had shared their definitions’ of allyship. They were very explicit in it not being the capacity of marginalized communities, but instead only a possibility for “someone with privileges” as mentioned by Mavis. I was hopeful that by the end of our dialogue that the possibilities of shifting this definition to include communities of color. Majority of the focus group consisted of deficit thinking and a reasonable amount of frustration with not only student groups on campus, but also professional staff. For example, participants two and four coalesced on the actions taken by leaders on campus. They discussed their disappointment with a career fair that invited the Department of Homeland Security on campus. Denise shared,

They [professional staff] say we want to talk about how to support you, but don’t come
to spaces to talk. It’s all a repetition of dumb actions. I’m disappointed with campus allyship and the failure to collaborate or communicate when issues like these arise. The first-year undocumented students are left questioning if this is a safe space.

After the 45 minutes of dialoguing about participants experiences with oppression on campus, the room lifted. I asked the students to describe their paintings. Their descriptions of their art are below:

Sarah,

“I made a tree with all the colors representing marginalized communities in solidarity. At the bottom are the roots that ground us in a shared goal or intentional relations, and at the top we are coming together.”

![Sarah's allyship art.](image)

Denise,
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“I actively tried to cover the entire canvas, acknowledge that there are some good white allies out there, but wanted to center folks of color every line is a road, the way that people interact and show solidarity for others, interesting these two, doesn’t have just be just you or showing up, there are multiple, no intersections in the white areas, because for a lot of them there’s a big issues we have with allies and showing up for one group is enough, but it’s not.’’

![Denise’s allyship art.](image)

Sandy,

“I incorporated both browns, just to symbolize how this all connects, in terms of the people of color all supporting each other, to me nature is always beautiful. Racial allyship is a beautiful thing that hopefully will find its way on to this campus.”
Tina,

“This is how I view it people of color in society. There are two sides that look the same to white people, but in reality, there are two different communities. On one side there’s more purple and this has more green, so there’s nuances there, that you maybe don’t see at first glance. It’s like this desire to converge and work together but then the white man is in-between them, separating, but almost touching. This is how I view allyship.”
Connie,  

“I decided to create a piece that reflects my family, and this impacts the work I do on campus. The yellow and red meet at the middle of the canvas, creating me. I see myself wanting to support all people of color, so I seep into the ocean where I see myself making waves, impacting people, and supporting their causes.”
By the end of the session, students had altered their beliefs on who can be allies. These reflections closely aligned with my own feelings. I was hoping to engage students in creating a plan of action, as the destiny phase is the action of the stakeholder community in seeking positive change and relationship building. They did display an awareness to celebrate the small wins that minoritized students have on campus and see those as wins for themselves. However, after witnessing students essentially co-opt the final cycle of research to make sense of an incident that occurred. I realized that this would not have been a possibility. This reaffirms my thoughts around students needing to do personal work before engaging in communities seeking change and ally support.

**Limitations**

Over the course of this research, I faced numerous limitations. One for example, was the lack of representation of male identifying students. Throughout my cycles I had a total of one male student participate. This may be due to the fact that there are more female identifying undergraduate students at the university. I believe that my positionality may have impacted participants responses. The students that were involved in multiple cycles established a working
relationship with me throughout the course of the research. I was in many of the student-centered spaces connecting with my peers, attending events, supporting my students, and fulfilling my position as Graduate Student Council Chair. Therefore, there may have been students who opted to participate because of their familiarity of me. A third limitation that I recognized throughout this process, were my personal biases. As I attempted to use the Appreciative Inquiry model, my questions for each cycle were formulated in a deficit way of thinking. I also had made assumptions for why students became involved on campus, within the survey options. Furthermore, I was so focused on using racial allyship that I missed the opportunity to explore coalition building as it speaks to the heart of what I was attempting to uncover through my research. This is because, in asking students about allyship, I unintentionally made the process feel like it was an identity that individuals could claim; which is false.

**Recommendations**

I have several recommendations listed here:

1. **Additional funding for cultural immersion and collaborative events:**

   My first recommendation is aimed at creating more opportunities for students to engage in meaningful cross-cultural interactions, is to provide funding for cultural immersion, activities, and collaborative events. Associated Students currently provides academic grants to all undergraduate students to fund research projects and travel expenses. To keep funding request under the purview of students, this responsibility would fall under the Diversity and Social Justice (DISJ) Student Org Committee. Under a similar funding model for academic grants, a cultural collaboration grant could be created and used to encourage students to partner for events that are innovating, addressing intersections of identities, and breaking down the silo effect. This would be beneficial for multicultural student organizations because, they tend to organize large
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scale events that draw large crowds. For example, Fiesta Night hosted by MEChA had an attendance of over 50 students and during Bollywood Night, hosted by the Muslim Student Association, they had over 45 students in attendance. In addition, at the Student Organization Conference during the Spring semester, organization expectations can be amended to include the recommendation for at least one to two collaborative events per semester. This would support student’s engagement drastically, as it becomes an expectation. It was clear that students of color feel like their causes are under resourced, undervalued, and powerless at times. These feelings are representative of what many students face outside of the institution; in the larger societal context. A continual need to fight for resources.

II. Increase collaboration between SLIC and Commons staff

The second recommendation is the visible unison of the Student Leadership Involvement and Changemaking (SLIC) team with the United Front Multicultural Commons’ leadership team. All student organizations register through ToreroOrgs, but the multicultural student organizations make-up the United Front Leadership Council (UFLC). It would be best practices if professional staff were in both spaces. What this means is, when I attended the UFLC meeting, there was no representation from the SLIC. Furthermore, there is an opportunity for both teams to host a full day retreat that provides the technical aspects of students’ organizations, but also explores the student’s inner identity work, working through differences and social justice foundations as it connects to the university’s mission statement. Lastly, creating an employee intercultural committee that

III. Update student organization conference and materials

In addition, the materials online that inform students how to be collaborative need amending to reflect the importance of working with groups that may not have a similar mission
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statement or the importance of working with diverse populations. Students of color have voiced that they feel there is a divide between the third and fourth floors, therefore, this is an opportunity to close the gap and work together as a means to model behavior we expect students to perform.

Final Reflections

After completing my action research, I feel that I now understand how I can be a better ally to the various marginalized communities. While the focus of the research was to enhance students’ capacity for racial allyship, I learned throughout the process that relationships are of significance to students. There is a need for professionals to be intentional in how they share space with students as a tool to build trust, advocate often as it is needed to support students, and bring others to decision making tables. These are all vital to the forward movement of minoritized groups. Once I completed my data collection, students that were participants in my cycles started to reach out to me. This has been the most rewarding part of the research journey. As a Student Affairs professional, the opportunity to mentor students is a gratifying feeling. They have become invested in learning about my educational journey, the results of my research, and ask for advice in handling conflict. In addition, this has shown me the importance of taking time to build community, support student causes, and be intentional about co-creating programs with students. The one on one interviews provided me with an opportunity to learn more about the students at USD and their experiences navigating solidarity work, allyship, all while upholding multiple minoritized identities. This has been eye opening for me as I learn more about social and racial justice, activism, and my activist identity. It also reminded me that it is ok for people of color not to unite. The critical piece here is that space is created for everyone to share their storytelling, belonging, and communities of coalitions. We cannot expect students to work
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collaboratively unless we model the behavior, co-create an environment that is conducive for multiculturalism, and work through our own cultural awareness issues. Furthermore, if there is no collaboration from students, then we must work with students to engage, even when they feel like there is no institutional support.
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Email to Supervisors

Email Solicitation for Undergraduate Student Demographic Survey

Subject line: Searching for Action Research Participants

Body:

Greetings,

I wanted to reach out to you all in order to receive support in gathering responses for my undergraduate student demographic survey for my action research. The purpose of my research is to examine the extent to which minoritized racial groups collaborate, engage in community, and participate in allyship on campus.

The first cycle of my research is conducting a demographic survey. I would appreciate it if you could email the following blurb out with the survey link to the participants of the United Front Leadership Council and the multicultural student organization participants students you work with.

[Good afternoon Student(s),

My name is Breana, and I am a second-year graduate student in the Higher Education Leadership program. I am looking for undergraduate students that are participants in various multicultural student organizations on campus. The purpose of my research is to enhance racial allyship among minoritized racial groups on campus that interact with each other through the United Front Leadership Council. The first cycle of my research is an undergraduate student demographic survey. If you would like to help my research, please click the link below to begin.

Your responses are anonymous and will not affect your student standing. Please complete the survey by November 16th, 11:59pm and forward to your organization members.

https://tinyurl.com/ybygzeym]
Appendix B

**Demographic Survey**

By completing this survey, you are helping me identify areas of focus for direction of the action research. This survey will take no more than 10 minutes to complete and will give me a basis on which to move the study towards. Your participation would be greatly appreciated! You will find that the first page of the survey is your consent. If you wish to participate in the survey, please fill out the first page of the form before continuing. A copy of this survey will remain open for your records upon completion of the survey.

If you have any questions, please feel free to email me at bclark@sandiego.edu or text me.

Kind Regards,
Breana Clark
(619)964-9969
bclark@sandiego.edu

1. What is your class standing (ie. First year, second year, etc.?)
2. What is your age?
3. What are your preferred pronouns (ie. He/him/his, she/her/hers, they/theirs)?
4. Which of the following best describes you? *Choose all those that apply.*
   a. White (German, Irish, English, Italian, etc)
   b. Black, African American, or African (Jamaican, Haitian, Nigerian, Ethiopian, Somali, etc.)
   c. Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish Origin (Mexican, Mex. American, Puerto Rican, Cuban, Dominican, etc.)
   d. Asian (Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Vietnamese, Korean, etc.)
   e. American Indian or Alaska Native (Navajo Nation, Mayan, Aztec, Barona Band of Mission Indians, etc.)
   f. Middle Eastern or North African (Lebanese, Egyptian, Moroccan, etc)
   g. Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (Samoan, Fijian, Chamorro, etc.)
   h. Prefer not to say, some other race, ethnicity, or origin
5. What extracurricular organizations, clubs, activities, and/or programs are you a participant of?
6. Why did you decide to participate or not participate in student organizations, clubs, activities, and/or programs?
7. If you are a current participant in student orgs, which of the following was a factor in deciding to become engaged or involved?
   a. Connection to ethnic identity, wanting to explore your identities
   b. Wanting to find community
   c. To become more social
   d. Gain professional development or acquire skills
   e. None of the above
   f. Write-in
8. Describe your engagement with social justice movements? If you have no experience, please briefly explain why not.
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9. How would you define the term, *racial ally*?
10. Are you willing to participate in a follow-up activity related to this research? The activity will consist of a one on one interview to better understand your experiences on campus as an ally.
   a. Check yes:
      i. If yes
   b. Check no:

**Likert Scale (1-5, strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, strongly disagree)**

11. Compared to those that share the same race and ethnicity as me, I am more open to diversity...
12. I am more accepting of people that do not look like me,
13. I relate more to others that look like me...
14. I have nothing in common with others who do not look like me...
15. I engage in frequent cross-racial interaction with students of color in my classes...

I consent to...
7 responses

[Circle chart showing 100% Yes]

What is your class standing (is. First year, second year, etc...)?
7 responses

[Pie chart showing:
- First Year: 57.1%
- Second Year: 28.6%
- Third Year: 14.3%]
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What is your age?
7 responses

- 19: 1 (14.3%)
- 20: 3 (42.9%)
- 21: 3 (42.9%)

What are your preferred pronouns (ie. he/him/his, she/her, they/them)?
7 responses

- Him: 1 (14.3%)
- She: 1 (14.3%)
- She/Her: 1 (14.3%)
- She/her: 1 (14.3%)
- She, her, hers: 1 (14.3%)
- She/her: 2 (28.6%)

She
Count: 1
Which of the following describes you? Choose all that apply.

- White (German, Irish, English, Italian, ...)
- Black, African American, or African (Jamaican, Nigerian, Ghanian, etc.)
- Hispanic, Latinx, or Spanish Origin (Mexican, Puerto Rican, Cuban, etc.)
- Asian (Chinese, Filipino, Asian Indian, Thai, etc.)
- American Indian or Alaska Native (Navajo, Lakota, etc.)
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (Samoa, Tongan, etc.)

What extracurricular organizations, clubs, activities, and/or programs are you a participant of?

- AISO, B8U
- Black Student Union, Lambda Pi Eta (Communication honor society), BSRC Peer Mentorship program
- Women of Color Circle, Women's Commons, UFM, Women's and Gender Studies minor, Leadership minor, SLIC student worker, Psi Chi, Be Blue Go Green, Student Vegans United
- National Society of Black Engineers, Black Student Union, Students of Color in STEM/M, African Student Union, Black Student Resource Center Events
- Student Support Services, Black Student Resource Commons, Multicultural Night Dance Group
- American Indian Student Organization (AISO)
- Associated Students, USD Border Angels, MEChA, FAMA, Mulvaney Center
### 6. Why did you decide to participate or not participate in student organizations, clubs, activities, and/or programs?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I participate because I wanted a community in a very white dominated school</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To find community and like-minded peers; To build my resume; To give back to black students that come after me</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>It's an amazing way to connect with peers outside of the classroom, particularly with those that share similar ideas, perspectives, and/or identities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Since this is a PWI &amp; there aren't many black people on this campus, this is the only way that I am able to see them especially since I'm an engineering student.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To be more inclusive in my new community, enhance my experience/ expand my knowledge</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I chose to participate in this club to find a sense of belonging and community.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I decided to participate in these organizations because they fostered a community that I didn't really see on campus or in class and they also gave me the opportunity to get involved with the SD community.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Which of the following was a factor in deciding to become engaged or involved?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Factor</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Connection to ethnic identity, wanting</td>
<td>6 (85.7%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wanting to find community</td>
<td>7 (100%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To become more social</td>
<td>4 (57.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gain professional development or acquire</td>
<td>2 (28.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>None of the above</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
How do you define social justice?

7 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Bringing ears to voices that are marginalized and listening enough to enact decisions with their advice and thoughts equitably reasoned through</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Justice is the equitable distribution of resources, privilege, and opportunity amongst individuals in a society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social justice is a way of living in which one is continuously educating oneself and others of societal inequalities and consistently acting in ways to combat these injustices.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Equality amongst all groups in society.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>equity among all privileges, resources, and opportunities for all ethnicities.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Seeking justice for marginalized groups of people through social activism.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I would define it as promoting equitable opportunity and resources for all, regardless of identity, to be able to live a life with dignity. Social justice is where all members of society benefit from the systems and institutions in place.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

How would you define the term, racial ally?

7 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Someone who learns and listens to people outside of their own race and is there as a helping hand when things go down.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A racial ally is someone who supports a racial group other than their own through speaking up for that group when they are not given the chance to be heard, using their privilege to bring attention to issues that this group faces, and giving members of this group a chance to vocalize their needs.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I’ve never heard this term before. If I were to make sense of it, I would say that this requires an active awareness of one’s privilege and acting in ways that support and empower those that may not be privileged in the same ways, particularly within a racial framework (e.g., combating racism).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An individual that actually participates fully and voices an option when talking about the injustices surrounding said group. These people don’t do things solely to seem “less racist”. For example, white people who wear Black Lives Matter shirts.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>one that understands and willing to engage in promoting equality among all racial groups</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>An ally to another marginalized group of people who possesses empathy for said marginalized group.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Someone, who does not necessarily identify with a certain racial group but educates themselves on the issues that face the community, listens to the people and their experiences and speaks out when asked to in solidarity.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Describe your engagement with social justice movements? If you have no experience, please briefly explain why not.

7 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I've gone to some matches and hosted a few events</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I have minor actual engagement with social justice movements in the sense that I have not attended a protest or a rally of some sorts. That is because I lack faith in American society and feel that it is unlikely that change will be enacted.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I support numerous initiatives, both on and off-campus, that address and combat social injustices including women's rights, climate change, and Black Lives Matter.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Majority of my engagement in social justice movement is in politics with people who are so closed minded.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Volunteered at Clara White Mission Center for 3 years, in hopes of lessening starvation among the homeless in Jacksonville, Florida.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I have participated in multiple protests before and have been there for support.</td>
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<tr>
<td>I am very involved in the social justice movement that is MEChA and fighting for &quot;La Causa&quot; or the cause. I am also very involved in advocating for migrants' rights. I act as an ally and activate in spaces when it comes to movements such as Black Lives Matter and issues that affect other marginalized individuals</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Compared to those that share the same race and ethnicity as me, I am more open to diversity (5 being the highest and 1 the lowest)

7 responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Rating</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
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<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>0 (0%)</td>
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<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>2 (28.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>2 (28.6%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>1 (14.3%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>4 (57.1%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I am more accepting of people that do not look like me (5 being the highest and 1 the lowest)
7 responses

I relate more to others that look like me (5 being the highest and 1 the lowest)
7 responses
I have nothing in common with others who do not look like me (5 being the highest and 1 the lowest)
7 responses

I engage in frequent cross-racial interaction with students of color in my classes (5 being the highest and 1 the lowest)
7 responses
Appendix C

One on One Interview Questions

1. What comes to mind when you hear the word ally?

2. What is the value of allyship with others differing from your racial background?

3. In your current student involvement, how does allyship show up or where does it show up, if at all?

4. Have you been impacted by this?

5. How do you think your understanding of allyship has changed since becoming involved?

6. How would you explain your understanding of racial allyship to others who do not know the term?

7. What resources, people, and power do you have access to?

8. How can you work with different communities affected by various social issues?
ENHANCING RACIAL ALLYSHIP

Appendix D

Moderator Introduction and Purpose of Group (2 minutes)

Hello. My name is Breana I’d like to start off by thanking each of you for taking time to participate today. For your consideration, today’s meeting will take about one hour of your time.

The reason we are here today is to gather your opinions and attitudes about issues related to your experiences with racial allyship at the University of San Diego.

I’m going to lead our discussion today and I will be asking you a few questions. I encourage you to participate, ask questions, and provide feedback at the end of the group. As we discuss your experiences, you will all have the opportunity to engage in an art activity, creating an image of what you see when hearing the term racial allyship.

I also would like you to know this focus group will be voice recorded. The identities of all participants will remain confidential when the data is reported. The recording allows us to revisit our discussion for the purpose of developing research papers and presentations.

Group Expectations (2 minutes)

To allow our conversation to flow more freely, I’d like to go over some ground rules.

1. Only one person speaks at a time. This is important because my goal is to create a written transcript of our conversation today and we want everyone to feel heard.

2. Everyone doesn’t have to answer every single question, but I’d like to hear from each of you today as the discussion progresses.

3. This is a confidential discussion in that I will not report your names or who said what to your classmates, colleagues, or supervisors. Names of participants will not be included in the final report about this meeting. What is said in this room stays in this room.

4. I want all of you to feel free to comment on each other’s comments without fear your comments will be repeated later and possibly taken out of context.

5. There are no “wrong answers,” just different opinions. Say what is true for you, even if you’re the only one who feels that way. Don’t let the group sway you. But if you do change your mind, let me know.

6. Let me know if you need a break, as we can stop as we need. Are there any questions?

Introduction of participants (5 minutes)

Before we start, I’d like to get to know a few things about each of you. Please tell me:

1) Your name (omit)

2) What [student organization] you are a participant of
   a) your role within [organization]
Focus Group Questions (50 minutes)

1. What are things you value deeply, specifically related to the identities you claim and the student organizations you are a part of?

2. Describe a time when diverse individuals came together to display high levels of collaboration, community, and cooperation in your student organization.
   a. What caused this to happen?

3. What are three-character values that makes an individual an ‘ally’?

4. Do you consider yourself an ally? Please describe why or why not?

Closing (2 minutes)

Thanks for coming today, if you have any feedback on how today’s session went, please let me know by writing on a sticky note and leaving it behind when you leave.
University of San Diego

Institutional Review Board
Research Participant Consent Form

For the research study titled:
Enhancing Racial Allyship Among Minoritized Students

I. Purpose of the research study
Breana Clark is a graduate student in the Higher Education Leadership Master’s program at the University of San Diego. You are invited to participate in a research study she is conducting. The purpose of this research study is: to enhance racially minoritized student engagement through allyship at the University of San Diego. The anticipated outcome is that undergraduate students of color, view each other as allies and engage in community more frequently as a means of support when dealing with issues relating to campus climate, events organized by student groups, and other avenues of student activism.

II. What you will be asked to do
If you decide to be in this study, you will be asked to:
- Complete a survey that asks you about your demographics, ethnic background, self-identification as an ally.
- Participate in a focus group discussion and art activity about the physical appearance and attributes of allies, discuss what it means to be in community with others.
- Participate in a private interview about your experience of being a student of color and how you build community on campus and describe allyship work.
- You will be voice recorded during the interview, focus group, and one on one sessions.

Your participation in this study will take a total of 4 hours

III. Foreseeable risks or discomforts
Sometimes when people are asked to think about their feelings, they feel sad or anxious. If you would like to talk to someone about your feelings at any time, you can call toll-free, 24 hours a day: San Diego Mental Health Hotline at 1-800-479-3339 or to talk to someone on campus, you can call the University of San Diego Center for Health and Wellness: 619-260-4618.

IV. Benefits
While there may be direct benefits to you from participating in this study and the indirect benefit of participating will be knowing that you helped researchers better understand how undergraduates engage in community, beyond their racial and ethnic makeup.

V. Confidentiality
Any information provided and/or identifying records will remain confidential and kept in a locked file and/or password-protected computer file in the researcher’s office for a minimum of five years. All data collected from you will be coded with a number or pseudonym (fake name). Your real name will not be used. The results of this research project may be made public and information quoted in professional journals and meetings, but information from this study will only be reported as a group, and not individually.

VI. Compensation
You will not receive compensation if you decide to complete the interview session, focus group, or survey. Also, you will not be penalized for withdrawing
VII. Voluntary Nature of this Research
Participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You do not have to do this, and you can refuse to answer any question or quit at any time. Deciding not to participate or not answering any of the questions will have no effect on any benefits you’re entitled to, like your health care, or your employment or grades. You can withdraw from this study at any time without penalty.

VIII. Contact Information
If you have any questions about this research, you may contact either:

1) Breana Clark
   Email: bclark@sandiego.edu
   Phone: (619) 964-9969

2) Cheryl Getz
   Email: cgetz@sandiego.edu
   Phone: (619) 260-4289

I have read and understand this form, and consent to the research it describes to me. I have received a copy of this consent form for my records.

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature of Participant                            Date

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Name of Participant (Printed)                        

__________________________________________  ____________________________
Signature of Investigator                           Date