



# Faculty Center for Teaching and Learning

## Becoming an Ally

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### Rationale:

I have been teaching the Psychology of Diversity for a number of years and have been thinking about implementing an outreach activity for a while, but have never quite come up with the most effective way to implement it. Psychology research has shown that the best way to change an attitude is through direct experience. We know that when White students were finally forced to have Black students sitting next to them in the classroom, it was only then that real attitude change towards Blacks developed in the community. With everything that happened this summer, I have decided that each student in my diversity class should experience a group that does not fit their comfort zone. Becoming an Ally is an assignment where students will have to become an ally with a minority group they are NOT a part of and document their experiences.

### Description:

1. The first step of the assignment will be to identify a minority group to ally with. Students must choose a group that they are not a part of themselves.
2. Students will then participate in at least 2 activities with that group throughout the semester, and document their experiences.
3. For each experience, students will describe the activity they took part in, take pictures to document their experience and keep a portfolio of their experiences.
4. For each experience, students will also submit a 1 page description of their experience, describing how they felt going outside their comfort zone to engage in an activity with people outside their circle. They will also describe how people from that group reacted to them during that experience.
5. Finally, students will submit a two-part reflection: a) on how the experiences changed their mind about some preconceived notion about that minority group, and b) on how the experiences shaped their broader views of others who are different from themselves.

### Appraisal:

This assignment was first a simple discussion in my previous Diversity courses. There is currently no formal assignment, but it will be incorporated for the first time as a formal assignment in Spring 2021. In previous semesters, students were asked about the minority groups they are already allied with and write briefly about their alliance. Students really enjoyed discussing their alliance with minority groups, but many students never ventured outside their comfort zone. They allied with groups they themselves were a part of or closely related to (e.g., having a gay roommate led to an default alliance with gays, but not a concerted effort to form alliances outside of their comfort zone).

### References:

Pettigrew, T. F. & Tropp, L. R. (2008) How does intergroup contact reduce prejudice? Meta-analytic tests of three mediators. *European Journal of Social Psychology*.

**Link or explanation:** This assignment has not yet been implemented.