#NOFILTER: EXPLORING THE EXPERIENCES OF BIPOC STUDENTS AT AN HPWI

Danielle N. Aguilar, Rokaya Abdulameer, Andrea Torres, Nydia Salazar, Taia Hopkins and Algassimou Diallo

Abstract

Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) undergraduate students face many obstacles and barriers when navigating historically and predominantly white institutions (HPWI's). BIPOC students also possess and employ an array of community cultural wealth (Yosso, 2005) as they navigate a racially hostile climate (Samuelson & Litzler, 2016; Stanton et al., 2022). This study applies a participatory action research framework and employs photovoice (Wang & Burris, 1997) to explore BIPOC undergraduate students' community cultural wealth strategies as they navigate space at an HPWI. The Participatory Action Research (PAR) Team consists of four undergraduate women of color, one undergraduate man of color, and a woman of color PhD student. With the graduate student's facilitation and support, the team designed, analyzed, and shared the findings of our photovoice study. The study found that BIPOC undergraduate students leverage community cultural wealth during experiences of emotional and academic distress due to lack of support and isolation while (re)imagining Mountain State University. We argue that when grounded in a community cultural wealth framework, photovoice allows undergraduate researchers to document hostile campuses while affirming their dignity, agency, and expertise. The findings developed by the research team and participants are the basis for a call to action that details specific strategies for HPWIs to address systemic racial inequities.

Introduction: The PAR Origin Story

Four undergraduate women of color brought this study to life in a first-year leadership major class in the fall semester of 2021. Students were assigned a semester-long group project to study a campus issue that touched their lives. Even though these women had recently begun college, all experienced a lack of space where they felt comfortable as students of color. By interviewing former students and staff, they could document how the campus decreased physical spaces for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) students over time. As

the project developed, the professor asked the group if they wanted to continue this work beyond the class. He suggested participatory action research (PAR) to understand the issue better, to include other community members, and address the lack of spaces for BIPOC students. Three of the four wished to continue, and the professor introduced them to Author 1. With the support from small grants, a Participatory Action Research (PAR) project was formed. As a PAR project, the undergraduate student researchers became the study's drivers; they designed and participated as photovoicers, co-analyzed the data, designed a photo exhibit, and co-authored this article. Author 1, a PhD student, served as a mentor and guide for the group.

The following questions guide our inquiry: 1) How do BIPOC undergraduate students experience space at a historically and predominantly white institution (HPWI), such as Mountain State University? 2) How might BIPOC undergraduate students (re)imagine space to create a (temporary) sense of safety, belonging, and/or healing? 3) What forms of community cultural wealth do BIPOC students tap into to persist at an HPWI? 4) What resources, strategies, and practices would promote persistence, safety, and/or reassurance of belonging for BIPOC undergraduate students?

Overview of the Article

This article is organized into eight sections. The next section reviews the current literature regarding BIPOC undergraduate experience at HPWIs. The third section introduces our (PAR) framework. The fourth describes how we understand and conceptualize *space*. The fifth section discusses how we draw on community cultural wealth as our theoretical frame. The sixth section outlines research methods and processes, including our positionality as researchers. We then go into a discussion of our findings. We end with a Call to Action for those who wish to systematically change HPWIs, including administrators, staff, faculty, and students. This article seeks to expand upon the extant literature regarding BIPOC student experience at an HPWI using PAR inquiry.

Literature Review

Many scholars have explored the impact HPWI's have on Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC). We see this research as falling into three domains. The first body of research documents and analyzes the experiences of BIPOC undergraduates. There are consistent findings that BIPOC students experience HPWIs as hostile. This creates significant barriers to successfully navigating college (Stanton et al., 2022; Gardner, 2021; Harwood et al., 2018). An important consequence is that students of color often lack an academic and social sense of belonging in HPWIs (Stanton et al., 2022; Black & Bimper, 2020). Samura (2016) and Stanton and colleagues (2022) have found that students of color struggle with "fitting in." Prolonged experiences of cultural isolation, social isolation, and inferiority often lead to exhaustion (Boettcher et al., 2022; Black & Bimper, 2020). Exacerbating challenges of belonging are the experiences of hypervisibility and invisibility (Jackson et al., 2022; Rolón-Dow, 2022). Research demonstrates that HPWIs negatively impact BIPOC students' willingness to engage and succeed in higher education.

A second body of research examines how students develop strategies to be heard. Students of color leverage code-switching for academic and personal survival (Samura, 2016; Stanton et al., 2022). Both code-switching and negotiation skills are tools for students of color to persist in higher education (Garvey, 2019; Jackson et al., 2022; Rolón-Dow, 2022). However, code-switching and avoiding certain spaces to navigate harmful stereotypes has proven exhausting for students (Haynes, 2019). This can be very harmful to students and can impact their lived experience in HPWI's. While code-switching can be useful, some barriers can negatively impact student experiences.

A third body of research takes a different approach, focusing on interventions supporting BIPOC students. Asset-based approaches have proven effective in supporting BIPOC students' persistence (Nakajima et al., 2022; Samuelson & Litzler, 2016; Simmons, 2019). By recognizing the skills, knowledge, strengths, and cultural advantages, asset-based approaches foreground the strengths of undergraduate BIPOC students instead of framing them as victims of racial hostility. When noting how students use strategies to combat discomfort, Harwood and colleagues (2018) identified that BIPOC students create counterspaces to obtain a sense of safety. This creation of counter space allows students to engage with those around them in a way that acknowledges their culture, body, spirit, and mind which Gonzalez (1999) refer to as "cultural nourishment." Cultural nourishment provides validation through cultural familiarity and the creation of multicultural spaces (Boettcher et al., 2019; Museus et al., 2018). Effective practices that promote cultural nourishment include culturally based admitted students' day, orientation in family languages, residential living communities, university clubs, and campus-wide cultural events (Boettcher et al., 2019; Simmons, 2019). The creation of comfort spaces nourishes BIPOC students' authentic selves, fosters more positive experiences, and improves belonging. Additionally, university support systems often fail to foster campus spaces where students of color do not have to negotiate their identities (Levya et al., 2022).

This project builds on these three domains of research. Our guiding theoretical framework is community cultural wealth. It provides a sophisticated frame for understanding the assets that students possess and use to survive and thrive at HPWIs. Photovoice is an excellent method to understand how students navigate racially hostile university campuses (Samura, 2016). Photography, a common practice for many undergraduate students, can convey thoughts and ideas about one's surroundings that may be challenging to describe using only words. While photovoice effectively documents students' struggles, grounding it in community cultural wealth centers students as more than their struggles. Finally, our study centers students' agency in reflecting, documenting, and analyzing the strategies used to navigate hostile spaces, employing skills to thrive in an HPWI, and dream up new ways an HPWI can function to better support marginalized students.

Our study contributes to the literature on BIPOC student experience and PAR. The BIPOC student experience at HPWIs has been expanded to include asset-based frameworks (Cuellar, 2021), STEM fields (Jones, 2019; Nakajima et al., 2022; Stanton et al., 2022), African American women (Haynes, 2019), queer and trans experiences (Garvey et al., 2019; Leyva et al., 2022), first-generation college students (Jackson et al., 2022), rural experience (Lange et al., 2022), and emotional labor of women of color (Fernández et al., 2018; Kelly et al. 2021). However, exploring physical space is under-researched, and participatory frameworks such as PAR are

underutilized (Fernández et al., 2018; Watson et al., 2020). This study addresses gaps in the literature on BIPOC student experiences in HPWIs. Photovoice on the lived experiences of space is a promising way to think about and shift institutional practices because those most impacted use their expertise to provide recommendations and advance change.

Youth Participatory Action Research

Youth participatory action research (YPAR) is a framework, set of values, and partnerships that center community experience and knowledge throughout the research inquiry, design, implementation, and dissemination process. According to Kirshner (2010), "it is inaccurate to describe YPAR as a method because YPAR participants choose the methods depending on their goals, questions, and skill sets, ranging from oral history ... to statistical analysis" (p. 239). YPAR challenges dominant notions of research by positioning those most impacted by the issue as knowledge creators and local experts (Cammarota & Fine, 2008). YPAR intentionally blurs the lines between researcher and researched. YPAR is committed to positioning youth as experts, providing a unique lens into the issue(s) youth care about most (Caraballo et al., 2017; Malorni et al., 2022). Community members are therefore researchers and participants, and academic researchers are learners and participants.

The PAR Team Purpose

Our PAR project has a three-fold purpose: First and foremost, we wanted to provide a collaborative research team in which undergraduate BIPOC students could leverage their academic and personal knowledges to enhance the research process. Second, the PAR project was a paid undergraduate research apprenticeship to develop research skills and expertise. Third, inspired by a PAR tradition of creating change (Fine et al., 2021; Torre, 2008), the PAR Team was committed to using this project to inform, (re)create, and (re)imagine transformational change within Mountain State University by influencing policy, practice, and climate through regaining space on campus for BIPOC students. They engaged 12 additional undergraduates in a photovoice project to do this.

Building a Team

The PAR Team has met weekly for two hours since February 2022. These meetings had four primary goals: establishing meaningful relationality across the team, enhancing our research capacity, contributing to creating campus change for BIPOC students, and creating a temporal refuge for BIPOC undergraduate researchers who battle racial hostility regularly. To establish relationality, we began each meeting with a check-in ranging from 10–40 minutes, depending on what the meeting called for. At various times throughout our project, we spent entire meetings debriefing current events due to the personal impact of, for example, the 2022 school shooting in Uvalde, TX, the reversal of Roe v. Wade, and the Palestinian genocide. We also had snacks because our meetings

were in the evenings. We encouraged the team to bring and eat dinner when/if desired as we sought to dismantle "professionalism" throughout the research process.

The content of the weekly meetings included exploring and understanding how positionality, axiology, ontology, and epistemology influenced our team dynamics and research. We explored issues of research design and how to operationalize participatory values. We believed meaningful relationality would take time and wanted to ensure our study did not perpetuate voyeuristic and exploitative processes by gathering stories of BIPOC students simply for research purposes.

One of the challenges of YPAR with undergraduates is the lack of continuity over time and the constraints of the academic year. Building a team was an ongoing process with shifts over the two-plus years. Two of the three undergraduates from the leadership studies class left the university after their first year due to a lack of support and isolation. One founding member, Author 4, and the PhD student, Author 1, have remained consistent since January 2022. Over this time, four additional undergraduate researchers have been hired and onboarded as part of the PAR Team, Authors 2–3 and 5–6. The undergraduate student researchers have been paid hourly wages, and the graduate student received a research assistantship to honor their expertise, labor, and commitment to the project.

Our Conceptualization and Contextualization of Space

Over time and throughout our meetings, we wanted to be clear regarding our meaning and exploration of *space*. Our following conceptualization and contextualization of our understanding of *space* unfolded and henceforth created after many conversations within our PAR team meetings as well as through informal conversations such as text messaging. Because of the state's unique history, we cannot study space without contextualizing the state and town in which Mountain State University resides. We reference the university where our study occurs as Mountain State University (MSU), for anonymity.

The notion of space can be understood beyond its physical manifestations. We create, personify, and inhabit spaces formed by our complex social histories, ensuring our material landscapes and environments mirror our social relations and beliefs. This concept of space delves into the multifaceted relationship between land and society. Examining the history of campus spaces is vital to understanding how past narratives continue to influence contemporary dynamics and social relations.

MSU is in a predominately white town in the Southwest. The state's history with race is uniquely complicated, considering the multiple colonization processes the state has gone through. The French and the Spanish colonized parts of the state before being consumed into the present-day United States via the Louisiana Purchase (1803) and the Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago (1848). The Treaty of Guadalupe Hildago complicated the notion of race by relegating Indigenous and Mexican people to second-class citizenship. Ignored treaties and federal laws that enabled the land theft of Mexican people created a racially homogenous state (Delgado & Stefancic, 1999).

The town where MSU is located followed suit via racially charged land conservation and anti-industrialization efforts to guarantee a predominately white town (89.5% white). The history and present-day context of the state and town undoubtedly influence the racial climate at MSU. News outlets and magazines have named the town among the happiest cities in the country. It is best known for its beautiful landscapes and nature-loving residents. The town lauds its 45,000 acres of "unspoiled" open space, which allows residents easy access to outdoor recreation.

MSU is a highly rated public university, drawing in thousands of students due to its academic reputation, campus life, and location. This institution has particularly gained popularity among many outdoorsy students. A backdrop view of mountains frames the entrance of grassy gathering spots for undergraduate students. This strategically placed entrance and view of the mountains represent MSU's use of the natural landscape to target a select audience. It underscores the intentional curation of the university's image. Although the appreciation for nature and the outdoors is not exclusive to wealthy white people, the outdoor participation demographic has been dramatically shaped by systemic barriers that exclude BIPOC communities historically and presently. These values are notably reflected in campus culture as the university has an affinity to white, nature-loving students with the financial capacity to attend MSU from across the country. At MSU, both wealth and outdoor recreation are forms of social capital. MSU benefits from accepting a particular demographic. Conversely, students who deviate from the homogenous demographic at MSU find themselves feeling marginalized and ostracized. Our social histories curate space at MSU and (d)evolves with dominant narratives.

Theoretical Framework: Community Cultural Wealth

As we explore the experiences of undergraduate BIPOC students, we must position ourselves and our analytical lenses within theoretical principles that interrogate historical injustices, honor narratives, and acknowledge the complexities of multiple marginalizations while simultaneously extending love and dignity to all persons throughout the process. Community cultural wealth centers BIPOC students' unique cultural strongholds despite structural and interpersonal injustices. Due to white supremacy, educational settings often fail to recognize the strengths and assets that students from racially marginalized backgrounds bring to the university. The PAR Team believes community cultural wealth helps BIPOC students navigate difficult and/or violent spaces and challenge dominant narratives that position BIPOC undergraduate students as victims.

Community cultural wealth is a theoretical framework that recognizes the various forms of knowledge, skills, and resources that individuals and communities of color possess and utilize in their daily lives, thereby challenging a deficit approach that positions BIPOC students as lacking the knowledge and skills necessary to navigate university (Yosso, 2005). Community cultural wealth identifies six forms of capital that communities of color and other historically disenfranchised groups develop, possess, and employ through their social positioning: aspirational, linguistic, familial, social, navigational, and resistant capital.

In this study, we draw on the select forms of capital Yosso (2005) identifies. Aspirational capital is defined as possibility dreaming despite the limited resources and knowledge to obtain said goal. Familial capital refers to

the commitment to community and the expansive definitions of family that instill meaningful connections to people and surroundings (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Social capital is the people and community networks that provide important support to maneuver institutions (Yosso, 2005, p. 79). Relatedly, navigational capital refers to cultural skills and intuition to move through institutions that were not made accessible to marginalized groups (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). Lastly, resistant capital is defined as the critical consciousness marginalized communities enact to challenge institutions (Yosso, 2005, p. 80). These guiding definitions that make up community cultural wealth influence how we frame our questions, research design, and dissemination.

Methods and Process

Before discussing our methods, it is important to articulate a positioning statement. Rather than articulating each author's individual positionality, we decided to engage in a process of thinking collectively. As a collective, we each hold unique proximity to our research questions. Although we broadly identify as BIPOC, we do not navigate and experience MSU the same. Therefore, each of our positionalities has provided possibilities and limitations throughout this project. As collective authors, our racial and ethnic identities represent Chicana/ Latina, Middle Eastern, Black, Indigenous, and persons of the global majority. We hold intersecting identities of being first-generation and second-generation college students, queer, women, man, and Muslim. Guided by Kohl and McCutcheon's (2014) concept of kitchen table reflexivity, through "[our team's] informal conversations, [we] critically and reflexively engage[d] with the fluidity of [our] positionalities throughout the research process" (p. 748). Through our evolving identities, we spent multiple meetings discussing the complexities of our study. Our unique and interconnected identities invite us to pause and reflect on who we were accountable to throughout this study while being true to the harm, pain, and isolation shared throughout the photovoice process. As a team, we have not established a definitive answer to many of the questions and concerns that arose throughout the reflexivity process, and we continue to have discussions regarding how our identities influence our onto-epistemological leanings and aspirations. Inspired by Boveda and Annamma (2023), we present our *positioning statement* not to "claim authority" (p. 7) through proximity to participants but rather to acknowledge the intricate ways we engage with, navigate through, and evolve, in part, because of our participation as researchers in this project. This statement is ever-changing and, at best, represents and reflects a moment in time in which it was written.

Photovoice

The PAR Team met for six months before choosing a method: photovoice. We began by discussing our experiences on campus and building relationships. We explored different methodologies: qualitative, quantitative, and mixed methods. We then began to brainstorm a list of methods we had read about in classes and thought about what type of method would be most engaging for the undergraduates who would be involved. We chose photovoice because it included both an artistic and narrative component. It is a way to access the multidimensionality

of experiences navigating white spaces. It was important to include some sort of art as a creative means of thinking about and reliving hostilities and triumphs on an HPWI. In addition, the research team wanted to include a diversity of BIPOC students as co-researchers. We thought photovoice was a vehicle to catalyze productive conversations among BIPOC students about their different experiences. When grounded in community cultural wealth, photovoice invites undergraduate co-researchers to document hostile campuses while affirming their dignity, agency, and expertise.

Photovoice is a visual and narrative-based method that aligns with the commitments and values of participatory action research because it prioritizes both individual and collective voices as well as experiences of participants (Jurkowski, 2008; Latz, 2017; Wang & Burris, 1997). Photovoice invites students to creatively represent their experience navigating an HPWI, which can otherwise be emotionally draining and/or challenging to represent solely with words. Additionally, while taking photos of space, participants were invited to pause and intentionally reflect on experiences and feelings to understand their university experience anew. Lastly, we felt that photovoice would be a method that undergraduate BIPOC students would be interested in engaging with because taking pictures to represent experiences is a commonly used artistic medium and offers an opportunity for creativity.

Recruitment and Selection

Leading up to the recruitment phase, we had in-depth conversations on racial and ethnic categories. BIPOC seemed most relevant to The PAR Team and is widely used among the undergraduate community. Over multiple sessions, we discussed the complexity of Latinx identity. Some of the PAR researchers shared their experiences with colorism in the Latinx community and were not assured that all Latinx undergraduate students experience MSU the same way. Another participant shared their experience as a transracial adoptee, which problematized what it means to identify as BIPOC. As a team, we decided to extend racial/ethnic options within our selection survey to include Person of Color/BIPOC; Unknown; Other with a fill-in box and a list of seven racial and ethnic categories used at MSU. We also had an open-ended question to invite potential photovoicers to "list out all the ways you describe your identity that has influenced your experience at MSU (e.g. race, ethnicity, gender identity, socioeconomic status, religion, sexual orientation, year in school, first-generation college student, etc.)." Although these recruitment questions are imperfect, our selection process was intentional to incorporate the complexity of identity. We received 43 unique responses and selected 12 additional undergraduate BIPOC students, plus the four PAR research team students, for a total of 16 photovoicers.

Photovoicers

Sixteen undergraduate BIPOC students participated in the photovoice process, documenting their experiences navigating MSU, identifying institutional barriers, and, through group sensemaking, processing and proposing strategies to transform the university. Table 1 provides an overview of each participant.

The undergraduate researchers within The PAR Team were also photovoicers who took photos, named their photos and created a blurb. They acted as facilitators and participants (meaning they also discussed their photos) in the collective sensemaking sessions. For anonymity purposes, The PAR Team undergraduate students who were involved in these sessions also created a pseudonym for analysis purposes.

Table 1.
Participant Self-Reported Profile

Pseudonym	Major/Minor	Year	Self-Reported Identities that Influence College Experience
A	Life science-related major	Senior	I'm Muslim, First-generation college student, Afghan, and Pakistani
James	Engineering and technology-related major	Senior	Male, Hispanic/Latino, First-generation college student
Amadis Carda	Design-related major	Sophomore	Latino, Chicano, First-generation college student, Male, Straight, 2nd Year, Citizen of united states
America	Biochemistry	Sophomore	Low income, teen mom, Latina, Women, first-generation
F	Business-related major	Junior	African American, Female, Democrat, Christian, Heterosexual, First-generation college student
Ka ju	Engineering-related major	First-year	Chinese, First-generation college student, first year student
Matthew	Computer Science	First-year	African American, Muslim
Jordan	Engineering-related major	Junior	Heterosexual, Mixed race (Black or African American, White), Female
Malee	Communication-related major	Junior	Race(Thai American), Disability(Cerebral Palsy)
Silver	Anthropology	First-year	Socioeconomic status, Ethnicity (Latin* or Hispanic)
Izabelle	Business-related major	Junior	First Generation Latina, Single parent household, Transfer student (started off at community college)
Abel	Business	First-year	African American, Hispanic, White, Male, Low income, No specific religion, Straight, First year, First-generation college student, Single parent
Cybil	Women Studies/Ethnic Studies	Junior	I'm brown but I don't know why, when writing about me please use the following description for racial/ethnic identity "due to being trans racially adopted, Cybil identifies her race/ethnicity as unknown"
Kari	Psychology-related major	Senior	First generation, Muslim, Female
Daniella	Biology-related major	Senior	Woman of color, low-income, first-generation
Alex	Education-related major/ Ethnic Studies	Sophomore	Chicana and Indigenous

Our Photovoice Process

Our photovoice process consisted of three phases over three weeks. The first phase was a full group orientation with 16 undergraduate students, five of which are Authors 2–6. Because we focused on undergraduate BIPOC experiences, Author 1 only partook in the photovoice process as a facilitator. The undergraduate PAR Team,

Authors 2–5, participated fully in the photovoice process as facilitators and participants. Author 6 was also a photovoicer who joined the research team the following year, 2023–2024. We began our process with a 90-minute photovoice orientation facilitated by Authors 1–5. The orientation included a welcome and ice breaker, consent forms, PAR origin story, and an introduction to PAR and photovoice method. We also were transparent about the research questions that were guiding our time together and opened space for questions and feedback. Next, we did a short reflection inviting participants to think about their experience at MSU. We also included an ethics of photovoicing discussion to ensure the pictures were taken of space *primarily* and how to ethically navigate pictures that included identifiable people. We also reviewed the photovoice timeline. Additionally, we provided information to campus and community resources such as university counseling and local and national crisis lines as we knew photovoicers would be reliving, documenting, and talking about sensitive information. Lastly, we broke into our four sensemaking groups so participants could begin building relationships with each other.

The documentation and initial analysis phase consisted of two rounds of taking photos and sensemaking sessions. After spending a week taking photos to document their experiences, the four sensemaking groups met for 90 minutes. Sensemaking sessions followed the VOICE framework – voicing our individual and collective experiences (Wang & Burris, 1997). Our facilitation guide was inspired by the SHOWeD model (Wang, 1999). Each photovoicer talked about two of their photos. This first session focused on individual photos but also generated important discussions about collective experiences. From this first sensemaking session, photovoicers were attuned in their next round to take photos reflecting their individual experiences and what they had learned from others. In the final sensemaking session, photovoicers again talked about their new photos and considered possibilities for (re)imagining MSU. In both sense-making sessions, photovoicers were collectively involved in the initial data analysis.

The PAR Team built on these sessions in the next data analysis phase. Drawing on the photos, blurbs, and transcripts of the sensemaking session, we engaged in deep discussion to vocalize our initial themes using exploratory coding methods (Saldana, 2016). The following questions guided our discussion: 1) Reflecting on the photos, blurbs, and sensemaking sessions, what stood out to us? 2) What photos, blurbs, and stories provide insight into the complexity of navigating MSU as a BIPOC undergraduate student? 3) How can the photos, blurbs, and stories contribute to recommendations that influence structural change at MSU? Using a provisional coding method (Saldana, 2016), the team identified three provisional themes to organize the exhibit: a) leveraging community cultural wealth, b) emotional and academic distress due to lack of support and isolation, and c) (re)imagining MSU.

Action: Developing the #NoFilter Photo Exhibit

The action component of this project is multifold. Our goal is to reclaim space on campus for BIPOC students, such as cultural centers, which have been removed and/or consolidated over the years. However, we see that as a long-term goal that will take years to accomplish. Our short-term goals include raising awareness of the history of

space at MSU, raising awareness regarding how BIPOC undergraduates experience space at MSU, and using The PAR Team as a research counterspace until our long-term goal is accomplished. The short-term goals we focus on are the former two through developing and implementing a photo exhibit.

The photovoice study yielded 47 photos, and The PAR Team chose to display 16 at the photo exhibit, one from each participant. We discussed displaying participant photos respectfully and humanely after completing nine photovoice sensemaking sessions. Our process of deciding which pictures to display was twofold. First, we revisited the commitments and values that have guided our project, particularly regarding a refusal to sensationalize BIPOC student trauma. Second, we enacted PAR principles to ensure our process continued to center the experiential knowledge of the participants. We engaged in constant refusal to sensationalize BIPOC students as being in perpetual harm for the sake of eliciting an emotional reaction from administration and staff (Tuck & Yang, 2014). As people with multiply marginalized identities, we knew better than to assume sharing traumatic experiences would prompt administration and university leaders to act on behalf of BIPOC students at MSU.

In April 2023, The PAR Team hosted a photo exhibit event in a centralized large room at MSU, *#NoFilter: Exploring the Experiences of BIPOC Students at an HPWI*, to share some of the experiences of photovoice participants. In preparation for the photo exhibit, Author 1 sent multiple emails to all BIPOC photovoicers to get input on the event title and feedback regarding the photos that The PAR Team selected for display. Photovoicers were invited to the exhibit and encouraged to bring friends and/or family members. Approximately 35 people, including administrators, staff, undergraduate students, and photovoicers, attended the exhibit. While many staff and faculty who work primarily with BIPOC students attended, upper-level DEI administrators did not. This was a missed opportunity to engage directly with policymakers.

Findings

Our findings are based on a holistic textual analysis of all sensemaking sessions (285 pages) and the 47 pictures discussed within the sensemaking sessions. After carefully reading, coding, and checking the validity of our codes, the team developed three themes: leveraging community cultural wealth, emotional and academic distress due to lack of support and isolation, and (re)imagining Mountain State University. The findings in our study echo extant literature regarding the experiences of BIPOC students at HPWIs.

Theme 1: Leveraging Community Cultural Wealth

In this theme, we highlight ways BIPOC undergraduate students use various aspects of community cultural wealth to navigate the hostility of a HPWI. We identified three primary experiences that participants shared throughout the photovoice process: 1) BIPOC students identify the importance of networks (e.g., emotional, academic, and technical), 2) family, community history and memory, advice, and cultural sensibilities contribute to academic and emotional success, and 3) BIPOC undergraduates (re)connect to the natural world.

The Importance of Networks

Our participants shared narratives highlighting the significance of social capital in their journey through the university. They spoke on cultivating supportive networks and emotional bonds within the university community. As echoed in previous literature, BIPOC undergraduates commonly cited the impact of peers, faculty, and staff (Cuellar, 2021; Gutzwa, 2022; Simmons, 2019) and/or programs in building a supportive network (Boettcher et al., 2019; Museus, 2018; Samuelson & Lizler, 2016).

For example, in Figure 1, Daniella shared a story about her experience as a Latina in the biology department. "This is a greenhouse on campus. I took this picture because this was the first lab where I found community [which] contrasts with [my experience] in the greater campus where I couldn't find as much community. The reason why this lab was super meaningful to me is because the principal investigator of the lab [is] Latino. I felt like he made me feel like I belong in science." Other participants reiterated the experience of belonging that came with seeing people who share a similar identity. Kari stated, "I also [rarely] see Muslims around campus. I don't know a lot of Muslims around campus. Coming to the prayer room throughout the day and seeing it filled with people who come together to pray makes me happy. It makes me feel safe and comfortable." Leyva et al. (2022) argue that identity-affirming experiences, such as meaningful experiences with faculty and peers of the same or similar identity, in predominately white spaces are critical to the success of historically marginalized students.

Figure 1 Finding My Niche.

Other students identified the power of pre-college programs, academic communities geared toward racially marginalized students, and student organizations as integral to navigating their undergraduate experience. Ka Ju discussed his involvement in a pre-collegiate program and its impact on his college transition. "I was in the pre-collegiate development program ever since seventh grade. They've helped me navigate or settle into [the university]. I met a bunch of other people of color, and I was able to befriend them." Throughout the photovoice process, pre-collegiate programs were the most cited point of support by students from various backgrounds and majors. We posit that pre-college programs were repeatedly emphasized because of their cultural relevance, defined by Museus et al. (2018) as "the degree to which learning environments are relevant to their cultural backgrounds and identities" (p. 469).

In addition, participants highlighted their involvement in academic communities and student organizations, which provided students with support and comfort. A talked about the importance of being a part of a university's multicultural academic community, shown in Figure 2. "I took this picture because this is where I can walk in and feel comfortable." A's experience demonstrates the staff's impact on creating an affable environment, especially for BIPOC students. These programs provide a safer and more welcoming place where BIPOC students can get the help they need and cultivate the relationships needed to succeed in their studies and personal lives (Boettcher et al., 2019; Samuelson & Lizler, 2016). Amadis Carda and Silver echoed similar positive experiences with other multicultural academic communities.

Figure 2 Family.

Although many of the BIPOC undergraduate students found social, cultural, and academic networks of support meaningful, Alex profoundly stated the pushback regarding safer spaces for BIPOC and other marginalized communities: "People look down on [safe spaces] and say, 'Oh, what does it mean? Why do you need a safe space?' But a lot of the people who are critical of these new ideas are [the] ones that have identities in which they aren't scared. They aren't in fear of harm because of their differing identities. I think a lot of the time it's racially oriented. But religion is a whole other aspect [that also needs] to feel safe in spaces." Even though a university may be actively creating safer spaces for historically marginalized communities, these endeavors are diminished when the broader university population mocks these efforts. This is what Harwood and colleagues (2018) refer to as a contradictory space in which students of color experience covert racism and are made to feel uncomfortable.

Family Bonds and Community Wisdom

Familial and community support networks were important in strengthening participants' academic and emotional well-being. America recollects her mother's empowering advice, "que no te importe lo que la otra gente piense," which translates to, *don't care about what others think*. America highlights the significance of family wisdom and draws upon her mother's guidance as a source of internal motivation, especially as a teen mom. Values like these empower students to overcome the unique challenges faced in an HPWI environment and contribute to their academic, social, and personal success.

Familial wisdom came in various forms. For example, Izabelle described how her family's food wisdom provided her with lessons to succeed at an HPWI. Izabelle shared Figure 3 along with this narrative, "I was trying to make enchiladas for my roommates for Valentine's Day…I struggled to find the ingredients I would have had at home, where my mom and grandpa [kept] everything. It just made me sad. I'm shopping for these ingredients alone with the wisdom that family has given me to make enchiladas and it represents a lot more than just enchiladas. They taught me how to face the world, how to thrive and do well in school, and how to make happiness where I am." America and Izabelle echo Simmons (2019) and Boettcher et al. (2022), who found that family support, such as imparted wisdoms, boosts BIPOC student persistence at HPWIs.

Other participants described the importance of family advice and lessons when navigating predominantly white spaces. Abel expressed the roles his aunts played during his middle school and high school years to prepare him to navigate predominately white spaces. "Being able to navigate, maybe not navigate, but protect [my]self in [predominately white] spaces and make sure that no matter what, [I'm] perceived in the best way. I think I was well prepared for that when I came into [MSU]." Unlike Izabelle, who was guided to make happiness anywhere, Abel, an African American young man, was prepared to protect himself. As both students enter an HPWI, their families recognize the likelihood of them being outsiders; however, the advice and guidance do not exist in a vacuum but rather are influenced by differing sociohistorical realities of racialized and gendered violence. Izabelle's advice on finding happiness relates to both racialized and gendered realities for Latinas who, if pinned as fiery or feisty, are at risk of personal and economic violence in the form of lost opportunities. Abel, on the other hand,
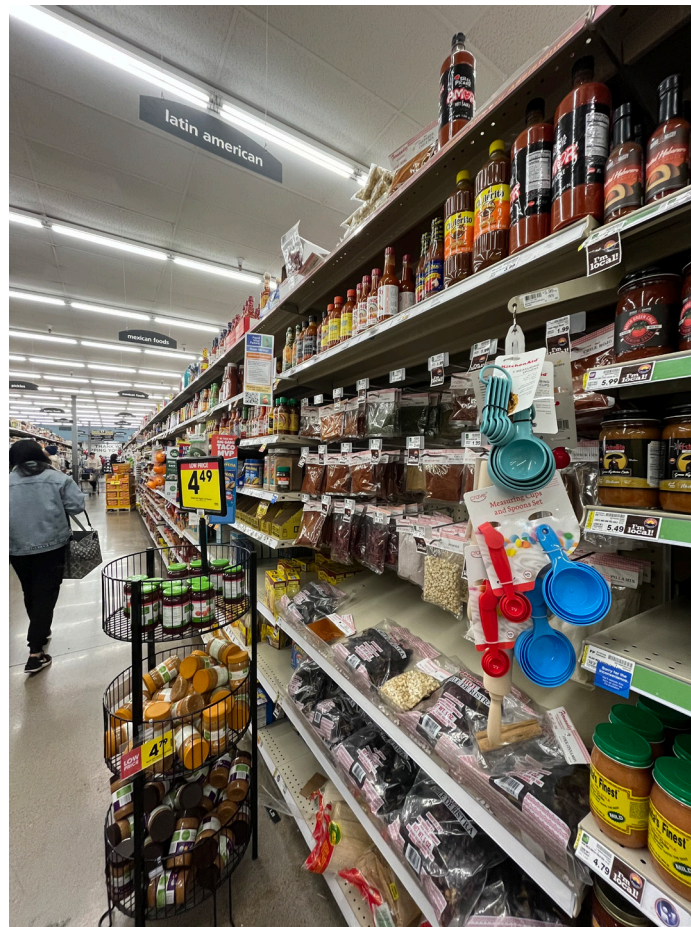
Figure 3 Sectioned Off and Isolated.

and his family, are aware of the necropolitical violence against Black and African Americans, particularly Black (young) men, which all too often results in murder.

The shared stories of our participants reveal the strong link between the challenges faced in predominantly white academic environments, the support gained from family, and the grave impact of racialized violence. The advice/guidance passed down within families are significant tools students use to navigate these issues. All these stories shared by our participants illustrate the need for familial assistance and how far it goes beyond doing well in school–it serves as a powerful force against historical and societal issues, providing empowerment to proceed in difficult academic settings despite the barriers mentioned.

(Re)connecting to the Natural World

We also noticed a pattern that the natural world provided a source of empowerment, dreaming beyond the confines of a historically and predominately white campus, and a means of (re)centering students' identity. Malee shared Figure 4, and the inspiration a specific tree on campus bestows on her when she passes it. "This is my favorite tree on campus. Every time I walk past it, it looks different. It reminds me of that tree you'd see in a

Figure 4 Branches.

fantasy book where you can go through the portal and be in a different place. That represents my dreams. And then there's also the other part of it that looks like it should be in Joshua Tree, but this is not Joshua Tree. It is cold here and not a desert. It reminds me that I can thrive in places where it seems impossible." We identify this whimsical and introspective connection to the natural world as a form of capital not explicitly named in Yosso's (2005) conceptualization of community cultural wealth. This capital provides inspiration and reassurance from the natural world to Malee, who is experiencing the complexities of a HPWI.

Similarly, Ka Ju shared, "I called [Figure 5] 'Peace of Mind.' Sometimes when I get too stressed [from] my home-work or am struggling with deadlines, I just end up taking a walk around the [engineering building] to try to clear my mind. I look up at the landscape and everything around... It puts me at peace of mind." As highlighted earlier, MSU is known for its lush trees and mountain views. However, the university and the city are predominantly white, but not by accident. Alex's narrative reflects on some of the hostile university history towards students of color that is connected to a larger history that has kept the area around the university and the university itself extremely white.

Figure 5 Peace of Mind.

Alex shared Figure 6, "This is a trail that's behind [a building]. [That building] has a long-standing history on campus because there was an occupation there in the seventies. [During the time of the student activism] two car bombings killed six different students, primarily Mexican American. My experience at [the university] is that people of color make space [whether] it is approved or not. We always will find space for us to be ourselves." The trailhead represented more than just an opportunity to engage in physical activity because of its proximity to a critical student of color activist history at the university; it became a sacred space for Alex and her friends.

Students' (re)connection to the natural world appears as a transformative force at this HPWI. This echoes a scoping review conducted by Meredith and colleagues (2020), who found that as little as 10–50 minutes in nature can positively impact psychological and physiological markers of mental health for college-aged persons. It inspires hope and serenity and reaffirms identity. The narratives reveal how the natural world can provide comfort, a sense of belonging, and empowerment to students struggling to find their place within MSU's academic environment.

Theme 2: Emotional and Academic Distress Due to Lack of Support and Isolation

The second theme we identified highlights the emotional and academic challenges that students of color traverse in the face of limited support and feelings of isolation within HPWIs despite their community and cultural wealth. For this theme, we spotlight the determination and ingenuity displayed by students to navigate and succeed in a predominantly white and complex academic environment.

Figure 6 Away.

Participants' Responses to Exclusion and Structural Inequality

Within the challenging landscape of an HPWI, students revealed experiences of emotional distress and isolation. Matthew's response exemplifies this, "I sat in the middle, and there was a ring of empty seats around me, and that's how I knew how hard this was going to be. You feel very alone here. The support systems, if any, are inadequate. It's exhausting having to speak about issues just because another Black guy was killed by the police, and then everyone looks right at you... And it hurts. It's isolating and alienating in every aspect, and it hurts." Matthew mentioned feeling alone in a classroom, burdened with the expectation of addressing anti-Blackness and racialized violence. Such experiences have been documented in other studies regarding student experience (Black & Bimper, 2020; Kelly et al., 2021; Leyva et al., 2022; Stanton et al., 2022).

Amadis Carda states, "I decided to take a photo [of Figure 7] because it resonated with the [place] I'm in, and the amount of space and emptiness that there is. Even though there are people in the background, I want to describe it as empty instead. I took a picture because this, for me, represents the space inside college classes. Whenever I sit in any arrangement of seats in college classes, people simply avoid sitting near me." Amadis Carda's perspective parallels the othering Matthew described as part of the college classroom experience. While Matthew discussed hypervisibility and isolation in the classroom, Amadis Carda spoke about ongoing exclusion and alienation. These examples showcase how othering is racialized (Rolón-Dow, 2022). Matthew is expected

Figure 7 Detachment from College.

to be a spokesperson on anti-Black violence, and students are apprehensive about meaningfully interacting with him. Amadis Carda is dismissed as a classmate worthy of collaboration. Both Matthew and Amadis Carda attributed their experience as connected to their racial/ethnic identity.

This theme underscores the emotional and academic distress faced by students of color, stemming from insufficient institutional commitment to diversity, limited support for BIPOC students, and universities' complacency in addressing anti-Blackness. Unfortunately, the isolation and alienation were not limited to the classroom but extended to riding the bus, being in the community, cultivating relationships with peers, and having experiences in the dorm, consistent with Boettcher et al. (2022). For example, Abel shared, "Should I wear this? Is this weird? Is my hair too much? There's just a lot of little stuff that you just think about...I never let it stop me from what I'm going to do, but it's always there. It's always something that's in the back of my mind. Yesterday the cops were at [my dorm] and I kind of felt all this attention. One guy started staring at me. No matter where you go, even [if] you have your own space, there's always just that feeling in the back of your head that maybe, you're not supposed to be here. You know? You're different, you know?" This mirrors Matthew's feelings of isolation in the classroom, where he becomes the immediate spokesperson on issues of racialized violence. Both Matthew and Abel's stories exemplify the distress of Black students and emphasize the need for HPWI's to address and counteract anti-Blackness from its root. This is critical to create an environment where students can thrive without constant feelings of discomfort and harm.

Some participants had already decided that undergraduate education was just something that needed to be completed. For example, Jordan shared, "I'm just here to get my education. [I am] not [going to] think about it for the rest of my life." Despite these experiences and feelings that garnered support from most participants, all participants expressed a strong commitment to completing their undergraduate degree. These stories and experiences emphasize the challenges of navigating predominantly white spaces rooted in anti-Blackness. The lack of support and diversity compounds feelings of isolation and hypervisibility in such environments. However, these experiences also demonstrate the intuition, perseverance, and determination BIPOC students enact as they confront and deal with everyday racialized hardships.

Theme 3: (Re)imagining Mountain State University

Inspired by Gutierrez and colleagues (1995), we operationalize a third space as the process of (re)constructing and (re)imagining both the explicit and implicit notions of university space. A third space, therefore, becomes an alternate way of existing, being, and knowing within the university. In this theme, we present 1) examples of participants challenging the dominant discourse and 2) opportunities to (re)structure the university.

Building and Nurturing Aspirations

Despite the challenges and barriers associated with attending an HPWI, like extant literature that used community cultural wealth (Boettcher et al., 2019; Boettcher et al., 2022; Samuelson & Lizler, 2016), our participants shared a huge sense of hope and motivation as they manifested their dreams to gain a bachelor's degree in a university whose complacency has contributed to a racially hostile and anti-Black environment. They aspire to obtain a university degree not only for themselves but also for their families and communities. F's response demonstrates this determination admirably: "I chose these flowers [in Figure 8] to represent my journey at [the university]. Each petal symbolizes an achievement, from applying to college to taking four classes this semester and joining a study group to improve my skills. It reflects the everyday decisions that contribute to success, not only at [MSU] but in completing college or any endeavor. It all aligns with the purpose I'm striving for." At the time of the sensemaking sessions, F was not only an undergraduate student but also worked a full-time job and was caring for three nieces and nephews. America, who graduated high school and matriculated into the university as a teen mom, shared she was cautious about bringing up her son in initial conversations, although his birth was a key motivating factor to pursue a bachelor's degree. F and America were the only two participants who shared experiences regarding parenting. As universities seek out racial diversity, there is a responsibility to holistically support all aspects of the student experience, including parenting.

As James demonstrates in his critique of the university, "It is like we are not supposed to thrive at [MSU]. The resilience to thrive shows that we're paving the way and following our goals. It does feel a lot of the time that we are not supposed to be here but we are here and we are going to make it through. It's going to be okay." Nakajima and colleagues (2022) refer to this as diversity intent, where universities use diversity efforts to signal a commitment without making structural changes. F, Daniella, James, and other participants saw their graduation from MSU as not only resisting the dominant discourse of MSU but also as an opportunity to reauthor who a traditional MSU graduate is. America shared, "I work at pre-collegiate because I want to help other students that look like me [enroll] here. This picture, [Figure 9], reminds me of why I want to advocate for this space. This campus. And college."

(Re)imagining a Predominately White Institution

The voices of our participants during this experience shed light on the importance of reimagining spaces within the institution to foster inclusivity and representation. In this section, we will delve deeper into barriers BIPOC

Figure 8 Nurturing My Blossoms.

Figure 9 Flatiron View.

students seek to change. For example, Alex emphasizes struggling to find her place in an institution not built for all students to succeed in. She mentions: "These systems aren't necessarily built for us. [However], you deserve to be here. You deserve that space." This truly emphasizes the much-needed acknowledgment and recognition of diverse backgrounds in institutions. In addition, Alex questions if institutional gestures, such as land acknowledgments, are sincere or if they merely serve as symbolic actions without genuine efforts to provide equal space and recognition. She says, "As someone who also comes from an Indigenous background, what does it mean for the institution to have land acknowledgments in their emails, and to use this on brochures, but to not really pay respect to us and the land in a way that gives us equal space?" Alex critically examines the disparity between symbolic acknowledgments and concrete actions that contribute to inclusivity and representation.

According to Nakajima and colleagues (2022), diversity ideology is the lip service paid to the appearance of diversity while dominant ideology and ways of being remain intact. Malee draws attention to improved administrative processes, suggesting that the institution should carefully consider admissions. She mentions that "MSU on the administrative side needs to be better in accepting who they admit." This raises questions about the university's responsibility in shaping a diverse and inclusive student body, highlighting the lack of support for BIPOC students and other marginalized students. The challenge does not lie in the admission of students to the university but rather in the insufficient support provided to them once accepted. Kari reflects on a photo she took of the prayer room on campus that she goes to. She describes Figure 10 as giving her "genuine comfort and safety." Kari explains the vital need for BIPOC students to feel represented in campus spaces, particularly during the overwhelming freshman and sophomore years. Kari's mention of feeling comfort and safety highlights the intersectionality of challenges faced by students navigating higher education while also seeking a sense of belonging.

Silver invites us to interrogate the needs of students and things that the institution can do to provide students with a much-needed sense of belonging. She advocates for "Adding more programs for students of color for community building," which can be a form of counterspace (Harwood et al., 2018). Her perspective is important in the call for reevaluating existing programs and creating new initiatives that cater to the diverse needs of BIPOC students. Additionally, Izabelle suggested "more opportunities for catering ethnic foods to encourage cultural exchange." It helps us to understand how small changes, such as offering diverse food options, can contribute to a more inclusive and culturally rich campus environment.

All these voices and experiences collectively help us to rethink and reimagine the spaces and structures within a HPWI. From symbolic gestures and nature to tangible changes in programs and amenities, the call for systematic change remains very important and needed. By actively understanding and addressing these concerns, the institution can transform itself into a university that disrupts white supremacist tradition and provides adequate space for all its current students.

The findings obtained throughout our study show us the diverse experiences of BIPOC undergraduate students at an HPWI. These themes provide us with a better understanding of the challenges and ingenuity BIPOC undergraduate students employ as they navigate an HPWI. Having a supportive and inclusive learning and social environment is essential for every student's success and well-being while pursuing higher education.

Figure 10 Safety.

Discussion

Our project asked four primary questions, outlined in the introduction. We used photos and transcript analysis to identify common themes among 16 undergraduate BIPOC students with diverse majors and years at the university. When grounded in a community cultural wealth framework, photovoice allows student researchers to document hostile campuses while affirming their dignity, agency, and expertise.

Leveraging Community Cultural Wealth

The importance of community cultural wealth quickly became a significant theme for this project, as it was seen in most interactions with our participants. We found that social connections and building supportive networks on campus played a significant role in the BIPOC student experience. Daniella's photo and narrative of her lab group show the influence of other students, faculty, and programs to support racially marginalized students. Daniella's sense of belonging was tied to the identity she shared with her Professor, showing the impact of representation and shared cultural backgrounds on fostering inclusivity and building comfort in institutions.

These different types of social connections offered emotional and academic support, contributing to the overall well-being of our participants. In addition, the impact of pre-college programs emerged as a significant point of support, aiding students like Ka Ju in navigating the transition to college life. Familial bonds and community wisdom were also brought up in conversation through America, Izabelle, and Abel's narratives, showing the different motivations that inspire and support persistence at MSU.

Emotional and Academic Distress

Despite BIPOC students' community cultural wealth, emotional and academic challenges are inevitably confronted by students of color within HPWIs. Our participants shared feelings of exclusion, isolation, and emotional distress in classrooms and around campus. For example, Matthew and Amadis Carda's narratives highlight these challenges of racialized otherness. This illustrates the impact of insufficient institutional commitment to diversity and limited support for BIPOC students, leading to feelings of hypervisibility and isolation. Despite hardships, participants show a steadfast commitment to getting their degrees, and the tenacity and determination of BIPOC students as exemplified by Jordan's narrative. BIPOC students see these challenges as inevitable, finding themselves compelled to overcome these challenges both emotionally and physically to get what they need and want: a degree.

(Re)imagining MSU

Participants also (re)imagine their campus by challenging the norms they deal with and by envisioning new possibilities. Participants expressed that the degree they are working toward is not just for themselves but for their families and the communities that are rooting for their success. However, it's unfortunate that MSU does not reciprocate this commitment. Students urged the university to recognize diverse student backgrounds and detach from white supremacist traditions and practices. Participants question why they must (re)imagine space to survive at MSU. Issues like support for parenting students, the need for representation in campus spaces, and the gap between symbolic gestures and real actions for inclusivity are highlighted. This shared experience illustrates the importance of reevaluating programs, creating new initiatives, and making changes to help create a more welcoming and supportive university for *all* students.

Implications and Limitations

The experience for the core research team and photovoicers was powerful. In the weekly research team meetings and the three sessions with all participants, students co-created spaces for belonging, presence, dignity, solidarity, and deep conversations about their experiences. In a very real sense, this YPAR project created counterspaces in a HPWI. Author 3 feels like this was the most powerful experience in her entire time in college. Some photovoicers expressed that they had never had opportunities for deep conversations like these. At the end of the final

session, America reflected that "diving deep into these conversations and seeing how we can change things and just resonating with all of our conversations feels good. Thank you guys for this opportunity." Here, we can see the transformational potential of YPAR for participants. Students saw possibilities for change and their role in it, what social scientists call internal efficacy. While our research confirmed extant literature on BIPOC student experiences in HPWIs, photovoice was a powerful medium for photovoicers and exhibit attendees to better understand BIPOC experiences and avenues for social change.

One of the major limitations of this project was time. Given the academic year, it was difficult for the team to shift towards direct action for institutional change. The research raised awareness for photovoicers and exhibit participants, and the call to action named possible steps. However, we were unable to do the organizing work towards making it happen. This is an undergraduate student-driven project. Guided by YPAR's ethical principles of centering community members as researchers, the process took time. It started with the intentional work of building relationships in the core research team and topic. While we had a clear focus, selecting and developing research methods took time. Our choice reflected a method that would engage fellow students as researchers.

Moreover, there was considerable turnover among the core research team, which further nuanced the process. This turnover is in some respects expected. The core research team members had competing responsibilities, including jobs, caring for family, and commuting (see Camino, 2000). Some of the core team withdrew from the research team, and others graduated. Because one-year grants funded our project, there were delays in moving forward until we heard if we got the next grant. Here, we can see how BIPOC student-driven YPAR projects are a challenge in a university setting.

These challenges can be addressed. First, effective undergraduate YPAR benefits from a stable structure and long-term funding that can create the time and space for the slow development of research projects and then facilitate the action turn. While the compensation was crucial, making this part of a credit-bearing course would open time in our already busy schedules. Finally, finding ways to bring in decision-makers earlier in the process, provided they respected student agency and welcomed findings, is important. But our larger mission is to change MSU and other universities; this leads to our call to action to the broader community of administrators, faculty, staff, and students who want to make HPWIs more inclusive and equitable.

A Call to Action

The findings in our project showcase significant considerations for MSU and HPWIs in general. As a PAR collective of BIPOC researchers who have experienced MSU in unique and parallel ways, we created A Call to Action that answers our fourth research question: What resources, strategies, and practices would promote persistence, safety, and/or reassurance of belonging for BIPOC undergraduate students? During our sensemaking sessions, we asked all photovoicers how their photo and experience could contribute to change at MSU. This Call to Action summarizes the answers and pleas we heard.

Additionally, we believed a Call to Action would mirror the goals of YPAR and invite more stakeholders into the continued structural change we are working towards. This Call to Action aims to influence structural change beyond the performativity of hackneyed buzzwords such as diversity, inclusion, and equity (Nakajima et al., 2022). Although these recommendations were localized to MSU, they can be transferred to other HPWIs in general with care and intentionality.

We call on MSU, and HPWIs in general, to: 1) Invest in resources that decenter western conceptualizations of mental health counseling and promote healing through political resistance, self-recovery from the harms of white supremacy, and agentic transformation, 2) Holistically support counterspaces that center collaboration, community, and collective uplift rather than white supremacist notions of competition, scarcity, and individualism, 3) Demonstrate structural micro-affirmations and material messages of belonging, 4) Actively disrupt and remediate socially and racially engineered poverty by adequately funding programs geared toward recruiting and supporting historically disenfranchised students, 5) Meaningfully support intersectional and intergenerational mentorship and coalition building, and 6) Provide race-conscious and justice-oriented academic/career counseling grounded in critical, intersectional, and culturally sustaining theories, pedagogies and practices by and for BIPOC. These are not only moral imperatives but also a strategic investment in fostering a vibrant and thriving academic community which benefits all students, staff, faculty, and MSU. Considering the parallel findings with the extant literature highlighted above, this Call to Action can be generally applied to any HPWI who is willing and ready to engage in a racial reckoning with long-held complicity and co-opting of social justice language for the purpose of financial gains and relevancy. We see this Call to Action as a collective responsibility for administrators, staff, faculty, and students alike.

References

Black, R., & Bimper Jr, A. Y. (2020). Successful undergraduate African American men's navigation and negotiation of academic and social counter-spaces as adaptation to racism at historically White institutions. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice, 22*(2), 326–350. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025117747209

Boettcher, M. L., Earnest, K., Eason, A., & Lewis, L. (2019). The cultivation of support networks by students of color in a residence hall setting at a predominantly white institution. *Journal of College & University Student Housing, 45*(2), 30–46.

Boettcher, M. L., Lange, A., Hanks, S., & Means, D. R. (2022). Rural Black and Latinx students: Engaging community cultural wealth in higher education. *Journal of Research in Rural Education (Online), 38*(1), 1–15. https://doi.org/10.26209/jrre3801

Boveda, M., & Annamma, S. A. (2023). Beyond making a statement: An intersectional framing of the power and possibilities of positioning. *Educational Researcher, 52*(5), 306–314. https://doi.org/10.3102/0013189X231167149

Camino, L. A. (2000). Youth-adult partnerships: Entering new territory in community work and research. *Applied Developmental Science, 4*(1), 11–20. https://doi.org/10.1207/S1532480XADS04Suppl_2

Cammarota, J., & Fine, M. (2008). *Revolutionizing education: Youth participatory action research in motion*. Routledge.

Caraballo, L., Lozenski, B. D., Lyiscott, J., & Morrell, E. (2017). YPAR and critical epistemologies: Rethinking education research. *Review of Research in Education, 41*(1), 311–336. https://doi.org/10.3102/0091732X16686948

Cuellar, M. G. (2021). Latina/o students as agents of change: The influence of cultural assets and college experiences. *Race Ethnicity and Education, 24*(6), 789–809. https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2019.1579184

Delgado, R., & Stefancic, J. (1999). Home-grown racism: Colorado's historic embrace and denial of equal opportunity in higher education. *University of Colorado Law Review, 70*(3), 703–812.

Fine, M., Finesurrey, S., Rodriguez, A., Almonte, J., Contreras, A., & Lam, A. (2021). "People are demanding justice": Pandemics, protests, and remote learning through the eyes of immigrant youth of color. *Journal of Adolescent Research, 36*(5), 437–466. https://doi.org/10.1177/07435584211034873

Garvey, J. C., Mobley Jr, S. D., Summerville, K. S., & Moore, G. T. (2019). Queer and trans* students of color: Navigating identity disclosure and college contexts. *The Journal of Higher Education, 90*(1), 150–178. https://doi.org/10.1080/00221546.2018.1449081

Gonzalez, K. P. (1999). *Campus Culture and the Experiences of Chicano Students in Predominantly White Colleges and Universities*. ASHE Annual Meeting Paper.

Gutierrez, K., Rymes, B., & Larson, J. (1995). Script, counterscript, and underlife in the classroom: James Brown versus Brown v. Board of Education. *Harvard educational review, 65*(3), 445–472. https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.65.3.r16146n25h4mh384

Gutzwa, J. A. (2022). "It's survival mode": Exploring how an Indigenous trans* student of color (per)forms identity while transgressing space. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000410

Harwood, S. A., Mendenhall, R., Lee, S. S., Riopelle, C., & Huntt, M. B. (2018). Everyday racism in integrated spaces: Mapping the experiences of students of color at a diversifying predominantly White institution. *Annals of the American Association of Geographers, 108*(5), 1245–1259. https://doi.org/10.1080/24694452.2017.1419122

Haynes, C. S. (2019). A loophole of retreat? Predominately White institutions as paradoxical spaces for high achieving African American women. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *32*(8), 998–1018. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518398.2019.1635281

Jackson, A., Colson-Fearon, B., & Versey, H. S. (2022). Managing intersectional invisibility and hypervisibility during the transition to college among first-generation women of color. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, *46*(3), 354–371. https://doi.org/10.1177/03616843221106087

Jones, T. C. (2019). Creating a world for me: Students of color navigating STEM identity. *Journal of Negro Education*, *88*(3), 358–378. https://muse.jhu.edu/article/802589

Jurkowski, J. M. (2008). Photovoice as participatory action research tool for engaging people with intellectual disabilities in research and program development. *Intellectual and developmental disabilities*, *46*(1), 1–11. https://doi.org/10.1352/0047-6765(2008)46[1:PAPART]2.0.CO;2

Kelly, B. T., Gardner, P. J., Stone, J., Clarke, A. H., & Dissassa, D. T. (2021). Hidden in plain sight: Uncovering the emotional labor of Black women students at historically White colleges and universities. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *14*(2), 203.

Kirshner, B. (2010). Productive tensions in youth participatory action research. *Teachers College Record*, *112*(13), 238–251. https://doi.org/10.1177/016146811011201316

Meredith, G. R., Rakow, D. A., Eldermire, E. R., Madsen, C. G., Shelley, S. P., & Sachs, N. A. (2020). Minimum time dose in nature to positively impact the mental health of college-aged students, and how to measure it: A scoping review. *Frontiers in Psychology*, *10*, 1–16. https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2019.02942

Museus, S. D., Yi, V., & Saelua, N. (2018). How culturally engaging campus environments influence sense of belonging in college: An examination of differences between White students and students of color. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*, *11*(4), 467. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000069

Latz, A. O. (2017). *Photovoice research in education and beyond: A practical guide from theory to exhibition*. Routledge.

Leyva, L. A., McNeill, R. T., Balmer, B. R., Marshall, B. L., King, V. E., & Alley, Z. D. (2022). Black queer students' counter-stories of invisibility in undergraduate STEM as a White, cisheteropatriarchal space. *American Educational Research Journal*, *59*(5), 863–904. https://doi.org/10.3102/00028312221096455

Malorni, A., Lea III, C. H., Richards-Schuster, K., & Spencer, M. S. (2022). Facilitating youth participatory action research (YPAR): A scoping review of relational practice in US Youth development & out-of-school time projects. *Children and Youth Services Review*, *136*, 1–19. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.childyouth.2022.106399

Nakajima, T. M., Karpicz, J. R., & Gutzwa, J. A. (2022). "Why isn't this space more inclusive?": Marginalization of racial equity work in undergraduate computing departments. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000383

Rolón-Dow, R. (2022). At the root of their stories: Black and Latinx students' experiences with academic micro-aggressions. *Harvard Educational Review*, *92*(4), 508–532. https://doi.org/10.17763/1943-5045-92.4.508

Saldana, J. M. (2016). *The coding manual for qualitative researchers* (3rd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Samuelson, C. C., & Litzler, E. (2016). Community cultural wealth: An assets-based approach to persistence of engineering students of color. *Journal of Engineering Education*, *105*(1), 93–117. https://doi.org/10.1002/jee.20110

Samura, M. (2016). Remaking selves, repositioning selves, or remaking space: An examination of Asian American college students' processes of "belonging." *Journal of College Student Development*, *57*(2), 135–150. https://dx.doi.org/10.1353/csd.2016.0016

Simmons, L. D. (2019). Beyond matriculation: Examining factors that contribute to African American male persistence at a predominantly white institution. *Journal of College Student Retention: Research, Theory & Practice*, *21*(3), 358–383. https://doi.org/10.1177/1521025117714163

Stanton, J. D., Means, D. R., Babatola, O., Osondu, C., Oni, O., & Mekonnen, B. (2022). Drawing on internal strengths and creating spaces for growth: How Black science majors navigate the racial climate at a predominantly white institution to succeed. *CBE—Life Sciences Education*, *21*(1). https://doi.org/10.1187/cbe.21-02-0049

Tuck, E., & Yang, K. W. (2014). R-words: Refusing research. *Humanizing research: Decolonizing qualitative inquiry with youth and communities*, *223*, 248.

Wang, C., & Burris, M. A. (1997). Photovoice: Concept, methodology, and use for participatory needs assessment. *Health education & behavior*, *24*(3), 369–387. https://doi.org/10.1177/109019819702400309

Wang, C. C. (1999). Photovoice: A participatory action research strategy applied to women's health. *Journal of Women's Health*, *8*(2), 185–192. https://doi.org/10.1089/jwh.1999.8.185

Watson, V., Oviatt, R., Flennaugh, T., Byrd, C., Deloach, R., Jackson, S., & Pugh, J. (2020). "This Research that We are Doing is Just the Beginning of the Conversation": Undergraduate Researchers Enacting Literacies of Relationality. *Journal of College Orientation, Transition, and Retention*, *27*(2). https://doi.org/10.24926/jcotr.v27i2.3302

Yosso, T. J. (2005). Whose culture has capital? A critical race theory discussion of community cultural wealth. *Race Ethnicity and Education*, *8*(1), 69–91. https://doi.org/10.1080/1361332052000341006