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Qualities of Safer and Unsafe Spaces at an Emerging HSI: Community-Based Participatory Research to Center Latina/o/x Undergraduates' Voices in Addressing Campus Issues

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ABSTRACT

“Safe spaces” denote areas where students show up as they are and express themselves without fear of being made uncomfortable because of their sex, cultural background, or other status. Many dismiss the importance of safe spaces for students by accusing the institution of becoming a “therapeutic institution” concerned with their well-being, and/or viewing them as victims. We recognize the value of safe spaces to promote inclusion, and a sense of belonging for students. Utilizing photovoice with a LatCrit framework, we demonstrate the power of community-based participatory research to help Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students 1) explore and articulate which spaces at an emerging HSI support their sense of safety; 2) illuminate unsafe spaces and how they navigate them; and 3) center student voices in safer spaces issues. We also identify factors that make university spaces feel safer and unsafe so as to provide guidance to those interested in being supportive of this student population. The findings provide insight into the factors that impact Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students' sense of safety and offer greater understanding of communal approaches that might support navigation of unsafe spaces and the increased creation of safer spaces.

KEYWORDS

community-based participatory research; photovoice; safer spaces; sense of belonging; LatCrit; Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI)

Introduction

The term “safe spaces” has been used to denote areas where students can show up as they are and express themselves without fear of being made uncomfortable or unsafe because of their sex, gender, cultural background, or other minority status that face discrimination (Lanou et al., 2021). Many dismiss the importance of safe spaces for students, particularly for racially minoritized students, by accusing the institution of becoming a “therapeutic institution” concerned with their well-being, infantilizing them, being overprotective or paternalistic, and/or viewing them as fragile or victims (Hayes, 2004). These students have been mocked as “snowflakes” or criticized for demanding racial preference policies to be “alone together,” when they denounce campus climate issues, safety concerns, and unjust universities (Baer, 2019; Nieli, 2016; Taylor, 2015). But as Michael S. Roth (2019), the president of Wesleyan University, noted in *The New York Times*.¹

Acknowledging that campuses need “safe enough” spaces is not saying that students need protection from argument or the discovery that they should change their minds. It is saying that students should be able to participate in argument and inquiry without the threat of harassment or intimidation. Calling for such spaces is to call for schools to promote a basic sense of inclusion and respect that enables all students to thrive—to be open to ideas and

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¹<https://www.nytimes.com/2019/08/29/opinion/safe-spaces-campus.html>

perspectives so that the differences they encounter are educative and not destructive. The basic sense is feeling “safe enough” to explore differences without fear and work toward positive outcomes with courage.

In agreement with Roth’s stance, we recognize the potential value of safe spaces to promote inclusion, engagement, and a sense of belonging for racially minoritized students. By utilizing photovoice with a LatCrit theoretical frame, this paper demonstrates the power of community-based participatory research (CBPR) to help Latina/o/x/ and Chicana/o/x students 1) explore and articulate which spaces at an emerging HSI support their sense of safety; 2) illuminate unsafe spaces on their university campus and how they navigate them; and 3) center student voices in safer spaces issues. The findings from this effort provide insight into the structural, communal, and experiential factors that impact Latina/o/x/ and Chicana/o/x students’ sense of safety in university spaces and offer greater understanding of communal approaches that might support navigation of unsafe space and the increased creation of safer spaces on campuses for racially minoritized students.

This student-driven CBPR project was initiated at a research-intensive university that is also an emerging Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI). The need for such an effort at this institution was clear, as its aspirations for becoming an HSI were contradicted by the hostile climate,² safety concerns, and racism that had become commonplace on campus. For example, during the 2011 University of California at Davis (UC Davis) Student of Color Conference, a ribbon displayed on campus was altered with the words “use me as a noose,” targeting the African American community. In 2014, the ASUCD Coffee House, one of the most popular dining facilities on campus, hosted a “Cinco de Drinko Sloshball” party for the Coffee House (a.k.a. “CoHo”) employees, with racially charged depictions of Mexicans. In 2017, the campus visit of the controversial speaker Milo Yiannopoulos led to mass protest. Author 1 wrote in her diary:

At around six o’clock in the afternoon, on January 13, 2017, a crowd of hundreds of undergraduate and graduate students, faculty and community members gathered at the University of California, Davis to protest the controversial ultra-conservative speaker, Milo Yiannopoulos. He was invited to speak by the Davis College Republican (DCR) registered student organization. (Vandenberg, 2017) Protesters held signs suggesting that Yiannopoulos and his fans were fascist and promoting hate speech. The protesters also chanted: “No Milo, no KKK, no fascist USA,” “Say it loud, say it clear, racists are not welcome here” and “This is what democracy looks like.” The event was canceled 30 minutes prior to Yiannopoulos taking the stage due to mass non-violent protests outside of the Sciences Lecture Hall venue.

That same year, in November 2017, fliers appeared outside the Student Community Center with an anonymous message that read, “It’s okay to be white,” conveying a sense of “white victimhood” – the belief that white people are under attack on campus and in the U.S (Bloch et al., 2020; Kolber, 2017). The placement of the fliers was not coincidental either: the Student Community Center is home to diverse student-life spaces, such as the AB540 and Undocumented Student Center,³ the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex, Asexual Resource Center (LGBTQIA+ Resource Center), the Cross Cultural Center (CCC) and others, all of which seek to empower students from diverse ethnic and racial groups. Other signs were taped to a banner advertising the 2017 Empowerment Conference hosted by the UC Davis Women’s Resource and Research Center. These racially biased incidents, as Garcia and Johnston-Guerrero note (Garcia & Johnston-Guerrero, 2015, p. 50), are “harmful, racist, and have the potential to negatively alter the experiences of students of Color on campus.”

Against this backdrop, Author 1 approached her undergraduate students during her winter 2017 CBPR course and asked them what issues were important to them that they would like to examine. CBPR is a collaborative research process at the core of a partnership that equitably involves scholars and community members (Deeb-Sossa, 2019). The purpose of CBPR is threefold: 1) to build and increase community capacity to conduct research and organize to change their community; 2) to

²On the website of the UC Office of the President, campus climate is defined as “the current attitudes, behaviors and standards of faculty, staff, administrators and students concerning the level of respect for individual needs, abilities and potential.”

³AB540 is the name of the bill passed on October 2001 by the California State Assembly that enables undocumented students who have attended high school in California and received a high school diploma or its equivalent to pay in-state tuition at universities and colleges.

promote social change through the adoption of sustainable evidence-based practices that enhance programs and partnerships over time (Alexander et al., 2003; Bracht et al., 1994; Schwartz et al., 1993; Shediach-Rizkallah & Bone, 1998); and 3) to influence outcomes at multiple levels – the individual, organizational, and/or community level (Pluye et al., 2004; Rappaport et al., 2008). After several class sessions, the students identified safety on campus as one of the issues to be explored.⁴ They decided to use the concept “safer spaces” rather than “safe spaces,” arguing that completely safe spaces were not realistic.

Using the CBPR approach in a partnership with undergraduate students, the class explored the qualities and locations of safer and unsafe spaces on campus. Research into these constructs has traditionally been designed, implemented, and interpreted by faculty, whose demographics and life experience may not be representative of diverse student populations. Students identified a variety of campus spaces as “safer and unsafe,” and highlighted several safety concerns that in their view had been overlooked, unarticulated, or ignored by the institution.

In the following section we briefly review the literature on the concept of sense of belonging and discuss how “safe spaces” are a common institutional approach to try to build a strong community among diverse peers within an educational institution. We will then describe Latino/a critical race theory (LatCrit), the framework we are using for understanding the needs of Chicana/o and Latino/a students in higher education, and the realities of race and racism in the context of Chicana/o and Latino/a student’s educational experience at UC Davis. The section that follows will briefly examine the authors’ positionality and the methodology we followed in this case study. Finally, the findings of this project center student voices as they articulate the qualities of safer spaces, attributes of unsafe spaces on their university campus and how they navigate them; and what changes they would like to see on campus to increase their sense of safety in university spaces.

Literature review

Research has shown that students’ safety and sense of belonging are critical factors for developing supportive learning environments (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yeager & Walton, 2011). Sense of belonging is defined as whether or not students feel respected, valued, accepted, cared for, and included, as well as whether they feel that they matter in the classroom, on campus, or in their chosen career path (Strayhorn, 2019). Sense of belonging captures a student’s view of whether they feel included and connected to the campus community (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Additionally, a sense of belonging is illustrated by the mutual responsibility between the institution and the student (Johnson et al., 2007; Rendón et al., 2000). Latina/o/x students felt an increased sense of belonging when they perceived a supportive racial climate on campus (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Culturally engaging environments are salient predictors of belonging for Latina/o/x students (Museus et al., 2017). Hurtado and Carter (1997) measured Latina/o/xs’ sense of belonging by their attachment to the university and their level of participation in campus activities and found that commitment to social-community organizations was the most significant factor related to sense of belonging. Other researchers, such as Johnson et al. (2007), found that students that felt socially supported in the residence halls felt a greater sense of belonging. A strong community is also important for Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students. Latina/o/xs experience a greater sense of belonging when they are able to build a strong community among

⁴Every year the CBPR course has helped develop three community-led projects and one student-led project. Students can decide which project they want to participate in. For example, in 2018 students interviewed local community members and local Woodland Community College (WCC) Alumni for the 50 Years of Ethnic Studies Struggle and Resilience Exhibit. That same year another group of students developed a wage theft survey for WSWA and helped the nonprofit conduct the survey around Sacramento. In 2019 a project was a result of a partnership between UC Davis’ Strategic Diversity Recruitment Initiatives and Transfer Programs and faculty from the School of Education and the Chicana/o Studies Department. Through this partnership, students examined the effectiveness of strategic efforts to increase Latina/o/x enrollment and achieve HSI designation. Preliminary results from students’ evaluation indicate that this intentional recruitment effort created a sense of community for students. About 44% of admitted Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students identified UC Davis’ sense of community as an important determining factor in their decision to enroll at UC Davis.

diverse peers within their educational institution (Dayton et al., 2004; Garcia, 2019; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Hussain & Jones, 2019; Maestas et al., 2007). In addition, Dayton et al. (2004) found that students felt a greater sense of belonging when they had strong relationships with faculty and staff. Students reported that interacting with Latina/o/x faculty and staff strongly impacted their motivation to succeed in college and experience a greater sense of belonging.

Similarly, Critical Race Theorists highlight the importance of understanding campus racial climates and the role racism plays when students experience stereotype threat in learning environments (Solórzano et al., 2000). Both theoretical perspectives highlight that belonging supports a student's learning cycle:

As students study and learn and build academic skills and knowledge, they are better prepared to learn and perform well in the future. As students feel more secure in their belonging in school and form better relationships with peers and teachers, these become sources of support that promote feelings of belonging and academic success later. (Yeager & Walton, 2011, p. 283)

“Safe spaces” are a common institutional approach to try to minimize the impact of these stereotype threats on university campuses. In general, the concept of “safe space” is discussed in the context of creating “safe class” environments with some or all of the following characteristics: trust, respect, suspension of judgment and censorship, a willingness to share, and high-quality listening (Kisfalvi & Oliver, 2015). There is also a more general definition of a “safe space” – a space where harm cannot come to one – which extends beyond the classroom. Yet, these constructs usually refer to spaces that were specifically designed with the goal of becoming safe spaces for students. Many universities lack such safe havens and students are left to navigate the campus while trying to find spaces that don't feel unsafe.

For such institutions, identifying and implementing features that aid in making already existing university spaces safer for students could increase student sense of belonging and contribute to improving student retention (Raab, 2022). In addition, while there is a growing body of literature highlighting the positive contributions of safe spaces to students' college experience (O'Gorman et al., 2016), little is known about what different student populations need to feel safe in university spaces. In this case study, we explore the perceptions of Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x college students about safety in academic, recreational, and administrative spaces across a large university campus and the characteristics that differentiate safer and unsafe spaces on campus for this population.

Framework

Latino/a critical race theory (LatCrit) provides the framework for understanding the needs of Chicana/o and Latino/a students in higher education. This case study utilizes LatCrit as a theoretical framework to explore the realities of race and racism in the context of Chicana/o and Latino/a students' educational experience at UC Davis. LatCrit is derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT) in response to the inability of Critical Legal Studies (CLS) to fully address the issues of race and racism in United States law (Ladson-Billings, 2006). CRT in education is used to address the inequalities in schooling experienced by students of color (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). CRT allows for the examination of social and educational inequalities through the lens of race and equity. Daniel Solórzano (1998) states that CRT, “challenges the dominant discourse on race and racism as they relate to education by examining how educational theory, policy, and practice are used to subordinate certain racial and ethnic groups” (p. 122). Solórzano continues to explain the five tenets of CRT in education as (a) race is central in disparities and injustices, (b) there should be a challenge to dominant ideology, (c) commitment to social justice, (d) one's knowledge and experiences should be central, and (e) various interdisciplinary perspectives need to be acknowledged. LatCrit branches off from CRT to further explore the racial disparities of Chicana/o and Latino/a students in the education system by focusing on the experiences of these students specifically and their experiences of racism in institutional practices such as higher education (Zarate & Conchas, 2010).

In this case study we used photovoice, a participatory research approach developed by Wang and Burris (1994) and grounded in the work of Brazilian educator Freire (1973). Freire utilized photos and drawings to promote critical thought about concerns affecting an individual's community. Wang and Burris (1994) further developed this concept by allowing community members themselves the opportunity to take photos of their own environment. Photovoice – a grassroots approach to photography and social action – has been defined by Wang and Burris (1994) as:

A process by which people can identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique. It entrusts cameras to the hands of people to enable them to act as recorders, and potential catalysts for social action and change, in their own communities. It uses the immediacy of the visual image and accompanying stories to furnish evidence and to promote an effective, participatory means of sharing expertise to create healthful public policy. (p. 370)

In this study, photovoice was expected to produce insightful images, leading in turn to meaningful dialogue, more substantial impact on the campus community and, ultimately, influencing administration. Photovoice serves a valuable purpose in LatCrit because it encourages students to know, understand and interpret their world, and to recognize their knowledge as valid and valuable, especially in research. Students' engagement in photovoice leads them on a journey of self-discovery and empowerment through discussions and theorizing. Photovoice was used in this study to gather students' voices to explore qualities of safer and unsafe spaces and identify locations of safer spaces and systemic changes needed for safer spaces to be in place. LatCrit both validates and centers the experiential knowledge of students, recognizes the power of collective memory and knowledge, and is guided by the larger goals of transformation and empowerment for racially minoritized students. LatCrit identifies photovoice as a form of giving voice to students' reality and as an important tool for achieving racial emancipation (Fernández, 2002).

Authors' positionality

The four Authors are part of the UC Davis community. In this case, it is important to discuss how authors balance both outsider and insider status (Aiello & Nero, 2019). Our partnerships with students; the collaborations for this project between administrators, staff and faculty from diverse disciplines; as well as our reputation as scholar-activists are part of our documentation of our subjectivity throughout the research process, along with our decisions about data analysis and writing. This included our decision not to include information about the students that would compromise their identity. We decided to explicitly name the institution in our efforts to hold the institution accountable to better support its students and fulfill its stated mandate of serving minority students and creating a welcoming campus.

Three of the four authors identify as women, all as feminists, and come from working-class backgrounds. Author 1 identifies as a brown skinned Latina originally from Colombia. Author 2 as a light skinned Latina originally from Argentina. Author 3 identifies as a multiracial and multiethnic male of Chinese, German and English descent. Author 4 is a brown skinned Latina that identifies as Mexican American. All of us are bilingual to varying degrees in English and Spanish and use both languages in our work. The paper reflects our scholarly conversations (Mazzei & Jackson, 2012) around how our university should cultivate a welcoming campus climate, a sense of belonging and sense of community for all students, but for Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students in particular. As a result, this paper reflects genuine discussions among the authors about how the LatCrit theoretical frame coupled with CBPR and photovoice offered greater understanding of how students perceive safety on campus and, perhaps more importantly, the communal approaches that might increase safer spaces on campus for Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students.

Methodology

During the winter quarters (January-March) of 2017, 2018 and 2019, Author 1 taught an undergraduate course on CBPR (Deeb-Sossa, 2019). This interdisciplinary course focuses on the ways in which researchers and community members collaborate to conduct research on issues that affect them. Such efforts often call for clarifications and/or re-definitions of scientists' roles and methods, the knowledge development roles of participating community members, and the varying meanings of "community." In this class, students discuss theories, principles, and strategies of CBPR, and analyze the advantages and limitations of this approach and the skills necessary for participating effectively in CBPR projects. In addition, the course provides the opportunity for students to come together to share perspectives, develop new skills and explore how they can apply this learning to their own CBPR projects.

Given the campus climate described above, the 32 students from the winter quarter of 2017 chose to promote dialogue about issues of campus safety. After several meetings the students decided to research the following:

- (1) What makes a certain space on campus safer?
- (2) What makes a certain space on campus not safe?
- (3) What do students need to be able to navigate the unsafe spaces?
- (4) How can students get more safer spaces?
- (5) What changes are needed to make spaces safer?

In this study, we focus on the students' responses to all five questions. Considering previous research on the benefits of CBPR (Breda, 1997; Deeb-Sossa, 2019; Israel et al., 2005, 2001; Stevens & Hall, 1998; Webb, 1990), students hoped the use of this approach would empower them and other students by considering them agents who could investigate their own situations. The students from subsequent quarters decided to continue the project and add their "voice" to it. A total of 92 students participated in the student-initiated CBPR (32, 28 and 32 students in winter 2017, 2018 and 2019, respectively).

In these courses, students learned about photovoice from Author 1 and participatory mapping from Author 3 and applied them to this CBPR project. Participatory mapping reveals and affirms local knowledge through community-generated maps or the addition of one's data to preexisting maps and can vary from no-tech or low-tech formats to online, geographic information system (GIS) platforms. It can add a critical spatial and visual layer to photovoice and other CBPR approaches, illuminating geographic patterns in data to reveal spatial disparities and allow for greater accessibility, engagement, and discussion of research results among a broader scope of stakeholders (Chambers, 2006; Cornwall & Jewkes, 1995; Erbstein et al., 2013). Intentional engagement with maps and geospatial data can help research participants cultivate "critical spatial thinking," defined by Gordon et al. (2016) as the ability "to discern how socio-spatial processes are central to both the production of oppression and inequality *and* to efforts to confront or resist them" (p. 559, emphasis in original). Additionally, "official" data often only tell part of the story and participatory mapping has been shown to be an effective tool in the process of "ground-truthing": comparing publicly available data to local knowledge and participants' lived experiences (Akom et al., 2016; Huang & London, 2016; Sadd et al., 2014).

Students used photovoice to collect and analyze the data for this project, in this case what spaces on campus they identified as safer and what spaces were not safe. This gave participants an opportunity to ask about safety concerns in the lives of these students. Photovoice emphasized community participation by having students identify and represent their community through documentary photography for the purpose of social action (Wang, 1999; Wang & Burris, 1997). A week in advance, students were given two prompts: 1) What makes a certain space on campus safer? and 2) What makes a certain space on campus not safe? Using these prompts, they were tasked with taking photographs of spaces on campus that most evoked for them safety and unsafety. They were then asked to explain how the chosen spaces were safer or unsafe by writing short personal narratives.

Once students completed the photovoice process and compiled their images and narratives, they utilized participatory mapping to create a visual representation of their collective data. As noted by Cornwall and Jewkes (1995), “The process of constructing a visual representation is in itself an analytic act, revealing issues and connections that local people themselves may not have previously thought about” (p. 1671). Author 1 collaborated with Author 3 to help facilitate participatory mapping workshops for students in all three winter quarter classes. Author 3 led the workshops with a reflection on the importance and prevalence of maps and geospatial data in participants’ everyday lives. Students learned and examined the key findings from the 2014 UC Davis Campus Climate Project Final Report and analyzed the results through the lens of their own experiences and photovoice data. With this context established, students were introduced to participatory mapping and developed key skills using an activity from the UC Davis Center for Regional Change’s *Making Youth Data Matter Curriculum*⁵ – a free, online resource that supports youth researchers and adult allies to develop critical geographic data literacy and access and use data, maps and analyses to complement their social change efforts.

Within the participatory mapping workshop, students were guided through the process of creating their own digital map online using Google My Maps. Students from the three quarters worked on the same shared, editable base map centered on the UC Davis campus, where they were tasked with labeling their safer and unsafe spaces. Students could mark as many sites as they wanted and were also asked to add the pictures from their photovoice effort as well as their narratives explaining why they found each space to be safer or unsafe. Students had access to the site throughout the quarter with the communal URL. To assist with data organization, analysis and presentation, different map layers were established at the outset so each quarter’s cohort could present its own separate geospatial data sets for safer and unsafe spaces. This feature allows for the ability to analyze and share all the data at once or isolate specific layers, and it also supports adding and tracking data over multiple years and placing multiple CBPR cohorts in conversation with one another.

Sample

A total of 92 students aged between 18 and 27 participated in this project across three offerings of the course. The majority of the students identified as Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x across the three winter quarters (85%, 93% and 94% respectively). The majority identified as female (82%), first generation (96%) and had been at the university for more than one year (94%). Most, if not all, students received financial aid and the majority (78%) were employed, working 10–30 hours per week. While most of the student participants selected female in their self-identification, they were asked: “What is your current gender identity?” and could respond with either female, male, trans male/trans man, trans female/trans woman, genderqueer/ gender non-conforming or other, as we are aware that gender identity spans a broad spectrum.

According to West (2017) food insecurity (11%), housing instability (17%), and homelessness (6%) were determined to be issues impacting Chicana/o Studies students’ success and well-being. Institutional barriers, along with the lack of resources or awareness of resources (both on and off campus), likely contribute to poorer academic and health outcomes (West, 2017).

Qualitative analysis

Authors 1 and 2 analyzed the photovoice exercise conducted by 92 students across the 3 winter quarters where they answered the 6 questions listed above. Qualitative analysis was conducted using a grounded theory approach (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) to identify common themes around which

⁵<https://interact.regionalchange.ucdavis.edu/youth/resources.html#learn>

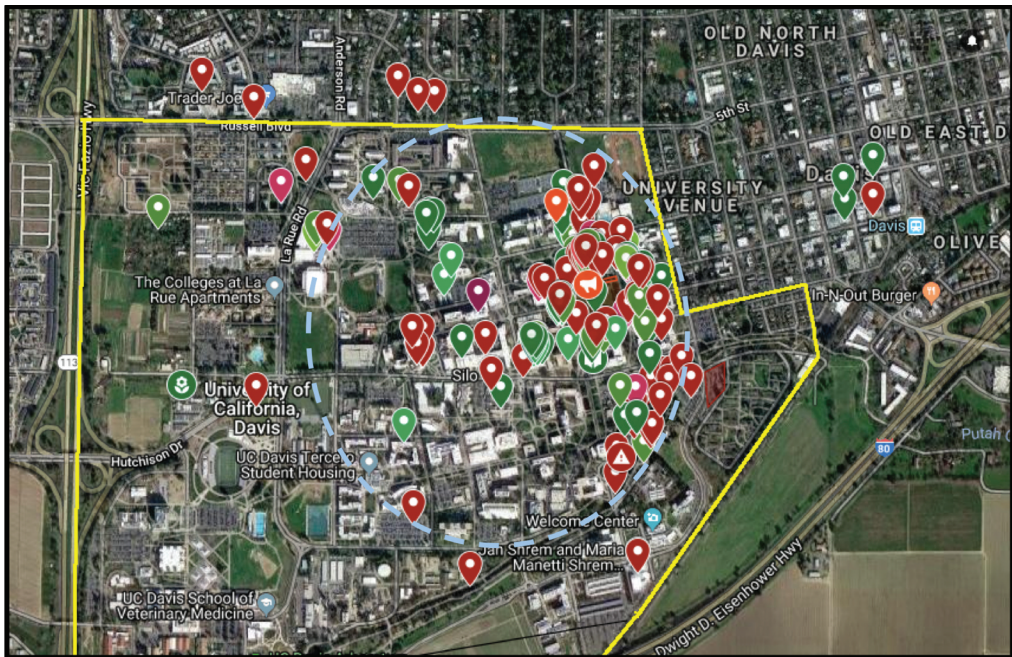


Figure 1. Image showing the location of safer (green icons) and unsafe (red icons) spaces within the UC Davis campus area. The yellow lines show the approximate boundaries of the university itself. The dashed light-blue line shows the location of most classrooms and student centers.

locations students felt were safer or unsafe and what qualities made them safer or unsafe for the students.

Identification and quantification of safer and unsafe spaces on google maps

Author 4 quantified this section. Students made a total of 271 entries to the Google map corresponding to 76 spaces/safety combinations (42 safer & 34 unsafe, Figure 1). Of these, 66 were solely identified with one category while 10 were labeled as safer by some students and unsafe by others. In addition, 45.23% (19/42) of all safer spaces were labeled as safer by more than one student and 64.7% (22/34) of all unsafe spaces were identified/labeled as unsafe by more than one student, suggesting more consensus for unsafe spaces across students.

The 5 locations most frequently labeled as safer spaces (comprising ~ 45% of all “safer” entries) in the Google map were: Hart Hall (13.82% of all “safer spaces” entries; home to ethnic studies departments, as well as to American studies, and Gender, Sexuality and Women’s Studies), the Student Community Center (9.21%, home to the CCC, LGBTQIA+ Resource Center, AB540 & Undocumented Center, among other student centers), Center for Chicana and Latinx Academic Student Success also known as “El Centro” (8.55%), Shield’s Library (7.24%) and the Women’s Resource and Research Center (5.92%).

The 5 locations most frequently labeled as unsafe spaces (comprising ~ 46% of all “unsafe” entries) in the Google map were: the Arboretum (14.29% of all “unsafe spaces” entries), the Quad (10.93%; extensive green lawn at the center of campus), Memorial Union (7.56%; hosts the ASUCD government offices, Campus Store, Amazon Store, food services and more), parking garages across campus (7.56%), and the fifth place is shared between the Dark Walkways/Bikeways (5.88%) and the Science Lecture Hall (5.88%; Table 1). These results are consistent with the findings of the qualitative analysis of student’s photovoice assignment discussed in the next section.

Table 1. Locations in the UC Davis campus that students labeled as safer or unsafe in the google map in the 2017-2019 period. Table indicates the relative combined frequency and total times each location was selected. Students could identify one or more places as safer or unsafe as they saw fit. Locations off campus, those that were only selected by one student (as safer or unsafe) and those that were a student’s own dorm, are not included in the table, but were included in the calculation of the shown frequencies. There were a total of n = 271 entries spanning 76 locations in total (10 repeated and 66 distinct). 42 spaces were identified as safer (n = 152 entries) and 34 as unsafe (119 entries).

SAFER SPACES		UNSAFE SPACES	
LOCATION	FREQUENCY (%) (NUMBER)	LOCATION	FREQUENCY (%) (NUMBER)
Hart Hall &	13.82 (21)	Arboretum #	14.29 (17)
SCC	9.21 (14)	Quad #	10.92 (13)
El Centro	8.55 (13)	Memorial Union #	7.56 (9)
Shields Library #	7.24 (11)	Parking Garage	7.56 (9)
Women’s Resource & Research Center	5.92 (9)	Dark Walkways/Bikeways	5.88 (7)
AB540 & Undocumented Center	3.95 (6)	Science Lecture Hall	5.88 (7)
LGBTQIA Center	3.95 (6)	Dutton Hall # (Financial Aid & Tutoring Building)	4.20 (5)
Memorial Union #	3.29 (5)	CoHo (Coffee House)	3.36 (4)
Arboretum #	2.63 (4)	Bike Circle	2.52 (3)
ARC #	2.63 (4)	Science Laboratory Building	2.52 (3)
Freeborn Hall	2.63 (4)	Wellman Hall	2.52 (3)
Vanderhoef Quad	2.63 (4)	Death Star	1.68 (2)
Dutton Hall# (Financial Aid & Tutoring Building)	1.97 (3)	ARC #	1.68 (2)
Olson Hall &	1.97 (3)	Shields Library #	1.68 (2)
Quad #	1.97 (3)	North Hall	1.68 (2)
EOP	1.32 (2)	Mrak Hall	1.68 (2)
CCC	1.90 (2)	Pavillion	1.68 (2)

Note: SCC = Student Community Center; ARC = Activities and Recreation Center; EOP = Educational Opportunity Program Building; CCC = Cross Cultural Center; Death Star = Social Sciences & Humanities Building

#: Indicates locations that have been classified as both safer and unsafe by students.

&: Indicates locations that have been classified mostly as either safer or unsafe, with only 1 student classifying them in the opposite category (as thus, this opposite category is not shown on the table).

Other locations classified as both safer and unsafe by 1 student were: Haring Hall and Jan Shrem and Maria Manetti Shrem Museum of Art.

Locations in the UC Davis campus that students labeled as safer or unsafe in the Google map in the 2017–2019 period. Table indicates the relative combined frequency and total times each location was selected. Students could identify one or more places as safer or unsafe as they saw fit. Locations off campus, those that were only selected by one student (as safer or unsafe) and those that were a student’s own residence hall, are not included in the table, but were included in the calculation of the shown frequencies. There were a total of n = 271 entries spanning 76 locations in total (10 repeated and 66 distinct). Forty-two spaces were identified as safer (n = 152 entries) and 34 as unsafe (119 entries). The relative homogeneity of the student sample in the context of gender, race/ethnicity and socio-economic status precluded a more detailed, disaggregated analysis of possible differences across disparate student groups.

It is important to note that several of the spaces whose focus is to advise and help students were either perceived as unsafe, or were identified as safer by only a small number of students. Examples include Dutton Hall, which hosts the tutoring center as well as the Financial Aid Office, and the Equal Opportunity Program (EOP) Office, whose role is to aid first-generation and low-income students – populations that comprised the majority of the roster of this course. The implications of this are further discussed in the next section. Additionally, the “safer spaces” identified by students were congregated or located very close to one another. The spatial configurations and concentrations of the safer and/or unsafe spaces on campus are beyond the scope of this paper.

Quality of safer spaces on campus

For all three winter quarters, most of the undergraduate students in their photovoice exercise defined a safer space on campus as one that made them feel welcome, made attempts to be inclusive, took conscious steps to nurture them as students, and respected and enabled them to learn and grow.

Consistent with the findings from the analysis of the Google map, most students for all three winter quarters identified Hart Hall (home to ethnic studies departments, as well as to American studies, and Gender, Sexuality and Women's Studies) as a safer space on campus. This is described by a student as follows:

These are spaces where I feel comfortable studying, hanging out with peers, or simply coming in to breathe in peace. They are the reason I have been able to get through my five undergraduate years at UC Davis. From the moment I walk into these spaces, I feel welcomed because I see a friendly face, I am greeted with a smile, and/or I see peers and faculty who look like me. (5th year Psychology and Chicana/o Studies Major, Winter 2017)

The approachability of faculty and staff created, for many, a safer space, as it was a setting where they could participate, speak their mind, and speak in their native language without fear of criticism, retaliation, or retribution, and/or without being attacked.

Most students also mentioned the art on the wall of Hart Hall. On the first floor and around the staircase hangs the UC Davis Race Project, created by Asian American Studies Professor Sunaina Maira and Author 1. The Race Project is a prominent feature of the building that showcases images and copies of the Third World Forum newsletter and a history of social struggles. It also documents the history of the UC Davis student movement from the 1960s and '70s that led to the creation of ethnic studies programs that are housed in Hart Hall today.

[Hart Hall] overall makes me feel safe because it has so many places to study. Each room makes me feel comfortable. Some rooms have art which I love because they make me feel that I can be creative . . . Sometimes these rooms have inspirational writing which make my day. Even as simple as having the word welcome on the board actually makes me feel welcomed. I took pictures of the stairs and hallway because even before getting to a room I already start to feel safe. (Chicana undergraduate student)

The art in Hart Hall created a feeling of safety and belonging and countered the cultural starvation they experienced on campus. Hart Hall acknowledged, valued and made visible through art the students' community and their multiple identities.

In the photovoice exercise, the Chicana/o Studies Department, located on the second floor of Hart Hall, was highlighted. This department of Chicana/o Studies has an ample series of courses on Chicana/o Art history and studio as part of its curriculum. Silkscreen posters created by former students decorate the second-floor hall, as well as the front and student offices. The posters reflect students' diverse commitment to community engagement, social justice, antiracism, and equity. As Carlos Jackson notes in "Serigrafia: A Reflection⁶," these students view them as "tool[s] for social purposes and an ever-changing and developing space for the expression of consciousness" (Jackson, 2014). A 5th year Psychology and Chicana/o Studies Major wrote in winter quarter 2017:

[A]ll these spaces are brightly painted and decorated with beautiful artwork that display my history and community in an empowered way. These details instantly put me into a good mood and in a state of ease. I feel supported and safer in these spaces. Further, by saying "safer", I want to acknowledge that prior to entering these spaces I do not feel safe as a Xicana walking around the UC Davis campus, an institution that wasn't built for people from my cultural and ethnic backgrounds. I also want to acknowledge that having entered these spaces does not magically shield me from danger because hate crimes are a very real problem at UC Davis that have occurred in both unsafe and safer spaces.

For this Xicana student, Hart Hall, and in particular the Chicana/o Studies Department, was a "bright" space that displayed her history and community through art. She felt represented within a campus

⁶<http://www.boomcalifornia.com/2014/04/serigrafia-a-reflection/>

where she felt at risk, worrying about physical threats, hate crimes, sexual harassment, microaggressions and/or bullying. The Chicana/o Studies Department was also recognized as a safer space because of the way faculty are versed in “the scholarship of teaching.” Students learn by doing, following Paulo Freire’s model of engaged learning (Freire, 1973). The faculty engage in multi-disciplinary, inter-institutional and community-based research, all areas valued by the students as many explicitly plan to use their interdisciplinary research and community partnerships to engage with and contribute to their communities’ pressing problems. A 3rd year engineering major noted how the department reminded him of home, “*At the Chicana/o Studies Department staff and faculty call you ‘mijo/a,’ making you as a student feel like you have a place you can call a home away from home.*”

The Student Community Center (SCC) was also defined by most students as a safer space. The SCC is home to several student life centers and academic centers at UC Davis, some of which were also mentioned by students – such as the Cross-Cultural Center; the AB540 & Undocumented Student Center; the LGBTQIA+ Resource Center; the Women’s Resource and Research Center; and the Student Recruitment and Retention Center. In his narrative, one student wrote why the SCC represents a safer space for him on campus:

I love that this single building holds so many different opportunities and identities, and there is always an open seat somewhere! I also love that this building houses a nap corner. The LGBTQIA room has one corner that is a designated nap space, and although I have not used it much this year (mostly because I now live on campus as an RA), I used to love that this cozy corner gave me a judgment-free opportunity to replenish my energy.

As echoed in this quote, students found “community” and “family” in this space and felt “welcome and appreciated.” A space that was highlighted within this location was the Student Recruitment and Retention Center (SRRC), which supports students academically and stands for educational equity. It is home to seven student-run and student-initiated community programs which “foster holistic, academic and personal development while raising political and cultural awareness for youth and college students.”⁷ Only in Winter quarter 2017, did students highlight the AB540 & Undocumented Student Center as a safer space. The fact that this location was not selected by students as a safer space during a period of leadership transition and reorganization in 2018 and 2019 suggests that these changes had a strong impact on students’ relationship with the center.

The Center for Chicana and Latina Academic Student Success (CCLASS), known by students as El Centro, was created in 2016 and was first located in the University House Annex before moving to its prime facility on the second floor of the Memorial Union in 2017. El Centro gives students a place to meet on-site with tutors and counselors, as well as academic and career advisers. In their narratives, students recognized it as calm, peaceful and welcoming, with a student stating the following, “*it’s been very welcoming as I have found myself finding a sense of community.*” As another student noted:

The Center for Chicana and Latina Academic Student Success is a safe space because it offers a friendly and caring place for those who identify with the Chicana and Latina community. The CCLASS is still a fairly new center on campus, but I can still recall how excited I was when it first opened up. This center is catered to my community and is committed to providing academic, social, and personal support in order for us to feel safe and achieve success on a campus that wasn’t made for us. This space also has cultural foods like Pan Dulce on Tuesdays and the space is decorated with murals and banners to make Chicana and Latina students feel comfortable and at home. However, the center is very inclusive of others who represent various cultural identities and is still very welcoming to a variety of communities. The staff are advocates and empower Chicana and Latina students and strive to foster familia and comunidad. (4th year Latina in Agriculture and Environmental Science and Chicana/o Studies major, 2018)

This student’s photovoice exercise noted the importance of feeling supported by the staff at El Centro. The space provided a loud reminder to students that they were not alone in going through their alienation and isolation on campus. The messages were also giving suggestions as to how to create community and *familia*.

⁷<https://srrc.ucdavis.edu>

One other safer space on the UC Davis campus highlighted by CBPR participants is the Women's Resource and Research Center (WRRC). Like other safer spaces, it was described by students as "welcoming," "non-judgmental," and "supportive." The following quote captures students' feelings about this space on campus:

The WRRC is a safe space because it is a welcoming and comforting environment that provides a place for people to be expressive of their thoughts and feelings, learn about gender equity, interact with friends, take a nap, study, and enjoy coffee and tea. I first learned about the WRRC when I was a first year and was looking for a space that didn't deny my presence and offered a place for me to relax, but also study. Now as a fourth year, I recognize that the WRRC has not only been that place for me, but for many others. The WRRC goes above and beyond establishing an environment where we are not judged for our cultural or gender identities. The WRRC also conducts events like "Our Stories" which is centered on survivors of sexual assault and raises awareness on the impact of gendered violence on communities. The staff is also very approachable and the variety of resources that the center offers are not only helpful, but demonstrates support for a variety of communities.

As seen in this last quote, the WRRC, as with the other spaces defined as safe, made it possible for students to feel that they belonged at UC Davis. These students' narratives highlight how safety means respect, equity, inclusivity, community, and diversity of ideas and/or perspectives. The spaces they felt safer in were those in which they could be themselves without fear of criticism or discrimination. Students are craving knowledge, but without the threat of harassment or intimidation.

The qualities of unsafe spaces on campus

For all three winter quarters, most of the undergraduate students in their photovoice exercise defined an unsafe space on campus as one that made them feel vulnerable, one in which they were harassed, uncomfortable, and unwelcomed and was not conducive to their academic achievement and growth. In the section below we will discuss unsafe spaces on campus, as defined by the students.

The photovoice exercises revealed that for most of these students – for students of color, women, and other marginalized students – UC Davis does not feel safe. Female students, for example, wrote how vulnerable to sexual assaults they felt at the arboretum and the parking structures due to how remote and poorly lit they are. As a 3rd year Latina wrote in 2017:

It's terrifying walking through campus late at night and navigating dark spaces where anyone could be hiding. As a female I fear being sexually assaulted or sexually harassed. At night I don't feel particularly safe on campus, especially in the arboretum, so I am very likely to call an escort service, walk with a friend, or just avoid being in those areas whatsoever after a certain time.

Women had difficulty recalling when they felt safe as they were worried about being a potential victim of sexual assault or sexual harassment when they were on campus. Such concerns are not unfounded, as in 2014 a Washington Post analysis of sex crimes on U.S. college campuses ranked UC Davis as having the fifth-highest number of forcible sex offenses compared to other college campuses between 2010 and 2012.⁸ Similarly, in the 2014 Campus Climate Report 4% of undergraduate students reported having experienced unwanted sexual contact in the past five years.⁹

Another space that racially minoritized students categorized as unsafe was the Memorial Union, in particular the area outside where diverse student organizations table, and people eat, meet and study. Many students noted feeling "harassed" and "uncomfortable" by the hate speech spewed by an elderly white man who daily preaches and reads passages from the Bible at this location. As a queer Chicano student wrote in 2019:

When the white old man yells or holds a sign that reads "God hates fags," and I have to walk by him, sometimes every day of the week that quarter, I feel he is shouting at me. He makes me feel unwelcome, unsafe, and a feeling of otherness . . .

⁸<http://apps.washingtonpost.com/g/page/local/sex-offenses-on-us-college-campuses/1077/>

⁹https://campusclimate.ucop.edu/_common/files/pdf-climate/ucd-full-report.pdf

This student's description of a hostile campus climate highlights how these interactions make marginalized students feel personally targeted. Unless UC Davis intentionally co-creates spaces on campus that affirms the identities and values students bring with them, they will continue to feel invisible and unwelcomed on a campus which might perpetuate their feelings of unsafety.

A female student in 2019 noted how "uncomfortable" and "awkward" she felt at the Memorial Union because of the attempts of being "recruited" by religious clubs: *"I totally believe in free speech and being able to express one's views but sometimes I feel unsafe when random individuals are coming up to me and sometimes start to follow me to recruit."* This female student of color writes how uncomfortable and awkward she is made to feel on campus when solicited by religious clubs yet worries about the preservation of free speech at the university. As a student of color, she understands the need to perpetuate environments that are respectful, equitable and inclusive.

The students also categorized as "unsafe," "offensive," "unwelcoming," and "distressing" spaces on campus where administrative and advising activities take place such as Mrak Hall (the primary location of the UC Davis administration), Dutton Hall (which houses the Financial Aid Office), and the Laboratory Science Building. A fourth year Chicana Agriculture and Environmental Science major in the 2019 winter quarter session noted:

Mrak Hall is not a safe or brave space for me because it represents a hierarchy and isn't a welcoming or comforting area for most students. I've been to Mrak Hall on very few occasions for advising with the College of Agriculture and Environmental Sciences and each time I entered the building I felt uncomfortable and this sense of not belonging . . . The last time I was at Mrak Hall, I was curious to explore the building because I had never felt welcomed or comfortable doing so. As soon as I started walking up the stairs to the second floor, I saw a group of adults wearing professional clothing and talking amongst themselves. Some of them looked at me with puzzling gazes that signaled to me that I shouldn't be there. It was very uncomfortable, and I quickly left recognizing that this building hosts a certain group of people that are very important to the university and that the building obtains more power and makes more decisions than I and other students know.

Similarly, Dutton Hall and the Financial Aid Office it houses were spaces that several students categorized as not welcoming. The Financial Aid Office was described as "unsafe," "unpleasant," "horrible," "shocking," and "awful." For STEM Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students, the Laboratory Science Building – in which advising, and some lab courses took place – was described as "unwelcoming," "uncomfortable," or a space in which they were "belittled and questioned constantly." As one student noted:

There are a very few places in which I have not felt welcomed on campus, but I can definitely say the Laboratory Science Building was one of them. I remember going in a few times for my advising appointments and feeling out of place. Everytime I would walk in the office, it seemed that all advisors were just too busy to even pay attention to my questions regarding my major. They also made it seem as if I was supposed to already know all the answers to them which made me even more uncomfortable. I think that the lack in representation in faculty of color in STEM majors makes a great impact in student's academics. Especially as a first generation student and a woman of color I felt like I needed that extra guidance from peer advisors in order to continue with my science major, a guidance that I never received from them. (3rd year Latina, 2019)

It is noteworthy that the places on campus that are typically thought of as places where students seek "advice and help" were typically viewed by the students as unsafe. As a result, these students highlight the importance of having culturally competent and bilingual advisors and counselors on campus who can support the educational trajectories of low-income students and serve as cultural brokers among students, their families, and school staff (Amatea & West-Olatunji, 2007).

Navigating the campus amidst unsafe spaces

For all three winter quarters, undergraduate students were asked, once they identified an unsafe space, to reflect on how they navigated that space on campus that made them feel vulnerable, one in which they were harassed, uncomfortable, and unwelcomed and was not conducive to their academic

achievement and growth. In the section below we briefly discuss the main ways students noted navigating unsafe spaces on campus.

There were two main ways students responded to this question. At least half responded by noting that when possible, they would avoid the unsafe spaces on campus. This quote was echoed by most students:

I'm unsure of how to navigate unsafe spaces. All I know is that I avoid the space unless I need to. I coordinate with my friends to see how we can avoid the space or how we plan to enter the space together as a group. I try my best not to be in the space alone. (Xicana, 2nd year, Psychology and Chicana/o Studies)

Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students should not have to avoid the multiple spaces that feel unsafe, unwelcoming, or uncomfortable for them on campus. Likewise, these students should not have to make special accommodations and arrangements with their friends to avoid spaces or to enter these spaces when there is no other choice.

The second way most students responded to the question “how they navigated an unsafe space on campus,” was by being adamant that “the UC Davis’ Principles of Communities are not aspirational” but “actually enforced.” As one Xicana student elaborated further,

One way to navigate the spaces is to not allow white supremacists, transphobes, homophobes, or other bigoted people to run the spaces or even enter the spaces. I think one way to get more safe spaces is to have a set of guidelines (such as the Principles of Community 2.0) which everyone upholds to, making sure the space is inclusive for everyone and share the same values. If someone does not follow those rules, then they can be kicked out so that the rest of the people in the space feel safe again. To me, a space should be free of all discrimination. The space should remind folks of the guidelines and have resources available for its community.

Similarly other students echoed, “*who is the university for?*,” “*who is the campus built for?*,” “*who do the principle of community protect?*” The students raised important concerns as they felt that the Principles of Community, as written and as enforced, didn’t ensure that Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students are made to feel safe, welcome and that they belong on campus. In the section below we discuss students’ recommendations to get more safer spaces and for changes needed to make spaces safer on campus.

Centering students’ voices in safer spaces issues

For all three winter quarters, undergraduate students were asked “How can students get more safer spaces?” and “What changes are needed to make spaces safer?” Regarding the recommendations given by students to increase the number of safer spaces on campus, most students for all three winter quarters identified the need for the administration to acknowledge the need for safer spaces on campus. This is described by a student as follows:

I think a big step that administration can make in making these places feel less unsafe is by taking accountability and taking immediate action. I think for the most part places on campus that people might feel unsafe are shared by more than a single person. This should be a red flag to campus administration that action has to be done. One of the worst things that campus could do is nothing at all. Doing nothing gives the sign to students and faculty that their voices are not of high importance to them. Once people step up and voice their discomfort and fear it’s in the hand of campus administration to take action and make a change. (Mexicana, 3rd year)

Similarly, students noted the importance of identifying unsafe spaces on campus through CBPR and sharing the findings. For example, a student reflected:

By classifying unsafe spaces on campus and pushing to make them public, this will add more pressure on the administration to do something about the issue. There are a number of issues that we can bring up that need to be addressed. (Mexicano, 5th year)

Another student wrote,

If the lack of safe places on campus is an issue then how can we fix the problem and create more safe places? First we have to address the problem to the institution and show them that there is a lack of unsafe spaces on campus, especially in this political climate, then demand that there be more safe spaces be made available to the student

population as it is their responsibility to their students, all the money they receive from our tuition should be used to accommodate our needs. (Chicano, 3rd year)

The significance of students sharing their experiences was also highlighted by white peers who recognized the potential impact the CBPR project could have on transforming the campus. As a white male student reflected,

I believe that in order to get more safe/brave spaces, the students need to rise up and let their voices be heard. A lot of the administrative/people who run the campus do not know what truly goes on around campus and WE as students need to voice our experiences and needs in order to create change for the better. (4th year, White Male)

The project helped white students recognized their privileges to access educational spaces and structural opportunities at UC Davis compared to those of racially minoritized students due to the persistent racial insensitivity, hate, harassment, discrimination, and ignorant acts Latinas/os/xs and Chicanas/os/xs students must endure. Yosso et al. (2009, p. 672) contend that students who have to endure a recurring hostile campus climate experience “feelings of self-doubt, alienation, and discouragement,” adversely affecting their academic performance, sense of comfort and value, and persistence (Smith, 2009). As one student commented:

I have been very fortunate and privileged to not feel any discrimination nor felt unsafe on campus. However, after taking this class, it has really opened my eyes to the way other students feel at this university. I feel anguish, sorrow, and empathy for the students, staff, and faculty who are facing discrimination and hate during this time of political discourse . . . By doing this CBPR project, we are able to document the places that are safe and unsafe. Once we have data, we can advocate for more safer places from the university administration.

(3rd year, White Female)

The project allowed the students to develop counternarratives that contested the myth that all Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students have an equal opportunity and access to education; and developed what Solórzano and Bernal (2001, p. 319) have termed “transformational resistance,” or critique of oppression and a desire for social justice. As a 4th year Chicana reflected,

In my experience, in order to navigate through the unsafe spaces, I would appreciate acknowledgment from the UC that the tragic event that not only caused great harm physically but mentally, is taken cared of accordingly. I am tired of seeing people of color students not given the respect that they do not deserve. As for their white student peers, they are treated as a priority. In order to change this cycle of unsafe spaces and make them more approachable, there should be a system in where the students are in charge of their resources instead of the institution thinks they need. For many years, the resources are provided through the perspectives of the higher staff. That needs to change with having more room for students’ voices to be heard and acknowledged. Students’ voices are key to welcoming more spaces to be safe. Lastly, there must be allies from people that have power because students cannot do it alone. This calls for white allies because if we leave it as an issue that only pertains for people of color students, then there would be no advancement. Folks need to know their privileges and advances in order to help out their fellow classmates. It not only an issue for a designated population, but for everyone.

Discussion & conclusion

The need for safer spaces on campuses arises from the permanence of racism and the manifestations of it in the institution, and in particular in the classes and spaces on campus where students are expected to seek support and counsel. The racial/ethnic harassment and violence on and off campuses make students feel “unwelcomed,” “unsafe,” “distressed” and/or “uncomfortable.” This reduces students’ sense of belonging, leading to higher attrition, particularly among often marginalized groups such as Latinx/Chicanx students (García & Garza, 2016; Hurtado & Carter, 1997).

By combining a CBPR approach led by students, using photovoice and testimonios, as well as geomapping in Google, we were able to identify safer and unsafe locations for Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students’ and the qualities that made them that way at a large, R1, land-grant, emerging HSI. LatCrit served as the theoretical framework we used to analyze the student descriptions of safer and

unsafe spaces and relate them to issues of sense of belonging, whiteness, power structures and ethnic/racial identity.

Several common elements arose across the students' descriptions of safer spaces: spaces where they felt welcomed, respected, included, provided with a sense of community, and where they felt that their perspectives mattered. In these spaces, students were greeted warmly by staff and/or faculty that shared their ethnic and racial background and spoke their native language, and the spaces were dedicated places for students, with the presence of welcoming signs and supportive language, culturally appropriate art and images that valued and celebrated students' background and ethnicity. Universities that lack student-dedicated safer spaces should view these students' insights as recommendations that they can follow to make any university space feel safer to their Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students. Furthermore, these strategies could be used to promote a sense of belonging in environments where these students usually feel marginalized, such as large science courses and research laboratories (Johnson, 2012).

When examining unsafe spaces on campus, students reported feeling unsafe in spaces on campus in which they were harassed, felt vulnerable, uncomfortable, and/or unwelcomed. Many factors contributed to making these spaces unsafe, including their remote location, poor illumination (e.g., the parking structures), lack of culturally appropriate art (e.g., most buildings on campus), the institutional events that have taken place before in those places (e.g., the Science Lecture Hall as a result of the invitation of Milo Yiannopoulos), symbols of power and authority on campus (e.g., Mrak Hall, the primary location of the UC Davis administration), the presence of hate speech and racist/hateful signs (e.g., in the Memorial Union) and past experiences with dismissive staff or faculty at the location (e.g., STEM faculty and advising in the Science Laboratory Building). Sometimes, a single racist/threatening experience in a location led students to feeling that a whole building was unsafe, which is particularly worrisome as it led to students finding the buildings that housed important academic and institutional resources, such as academic advising and financial aid, to be unsafe. These services are critical to the retention and outcomes of all students, but in particular, to students that are first generation and from marginalized backgrounds, such as the Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students in this study (Martinez & Elue, 2020). To combat these trends, universities need to help their staff and faculty develop a practice of cultural humility (Tervalon & Murray-Garcia, 1998), while also devoting resources to revamping spaces whose infrastructure makes them feel unsafe and even dangerous.

By using LatCrit together with photovoice, we aimed to produce knowledge through research done by student voices that have gone largely unheard. Through the photovoice exercise Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x students discussed the harmful impact isolation and the lack of representation had on their experiences on campus and on their sense of belonging. Students expressed the need for Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x faculty and staff that embraced and valued them and did not reproduce harmful stereotypes about the Latina/o/x and Chicana/o/x community. Students also expressed their desire to push back in their classrooms without fear of criticism or discrimination when challenging these harmful stereotypes. And in the face of this discrimination, they wanted spaces for community building.

Photovoice gave students an opportunity to voice safety concerns. Through their photographs and testimonios, students called for radical social transformation as they came together and co-created a politics of resistance, or what Muñoz (1999) calls "concrete utopias," within the academy. Through their valor to speak truth, share stories, and reveal critical histories, the students in the CBPR course promoted collective transformation and healing and imagined a more just and equitable university. Engaging students in CBPR is a powerful method to empower students to become active agents of change. We contend that CBPR offers what Muñoz (1999) describes as "hope as a critical methodology" that "can be best described as a backward glance that enacts a future vision" (p. 4). In many ways, this is what was created in these courses, which offered a sense of hope, community, and belonging. Furthermore, by providing agency and ownership, CBPR has the potential to improve student sense of belonging and thus retention in college (Deeb-Sossa & Boulware, 2018; Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

As we conceptualize next steps in this line of research, we ask, "How are the needs for safer spaces by racially minoritized students on campus regularly overlooked in research due to methodologies that

may unintentionally omit them?” In answering these questions, we identify the need to include the voices of racially minoritized students themselves as powerful counternarratives.

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