



AAPI Belonging at MSU

SOCI 499 Capstone Final Project

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Intro and significance

- The purpose of our study was to examine and understand the belongingness among AAPI Montana State students
- The population of AAPI students at MSU is among the lowest
- We're hoping that this information can help find a way to help the AAPI student population have a better sense of belonging



Intro and significance (cont.)

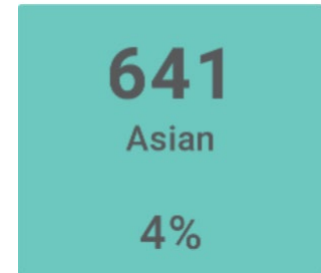
Aims

- Examine sense of belonging among AAPI students at MSU
- Understand heritage pride among AAPI students
- Explore experiences of discrimination and othering among AAPI students



Background and Other Research

- AAPI population increase on MSU campus



- Racial hostility (Museus & Park; 2015)

- Struggles with biracial identity and belonging (Chen & Ho, 2019)

- Strong connection with ethnic identity and well-being (Iwamoto & Liu, 2010; Holloway-Friesen, 2018)

Storytelling methodology

- Our study was reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board of MSU.
- Each participant signed a consent form and were given the option to end the interview at any point for any reason.
- Our study was conducted through semi structured interviews conducted in person and over zoom.
- We interviewed two males and one female who all self identify as AAPI individuals and are all students at MSU Bozeman.



Storytelling methodology

- Interviews were recorded using the voice memos app
- The audio recordings were then transcribed
- Transcriptions were coded across 11 codes
- Validity Concerns:
 - Intersectionality and a small sample size
- Reflexivity Concerns:
 - Racial identity of interviewers



Question Prompts

- Could you describe your ethnic identity?
- Tell me about a time you faced adversity on campus?
- Was there a time when a situation(s) made you feel not proud of your heritage?
- Can you share a time you were proud of your heritage?
- How do you feel about MSU's inclusion? Do you feel that it could be improved? If so, how do you think it could be improved?

Results

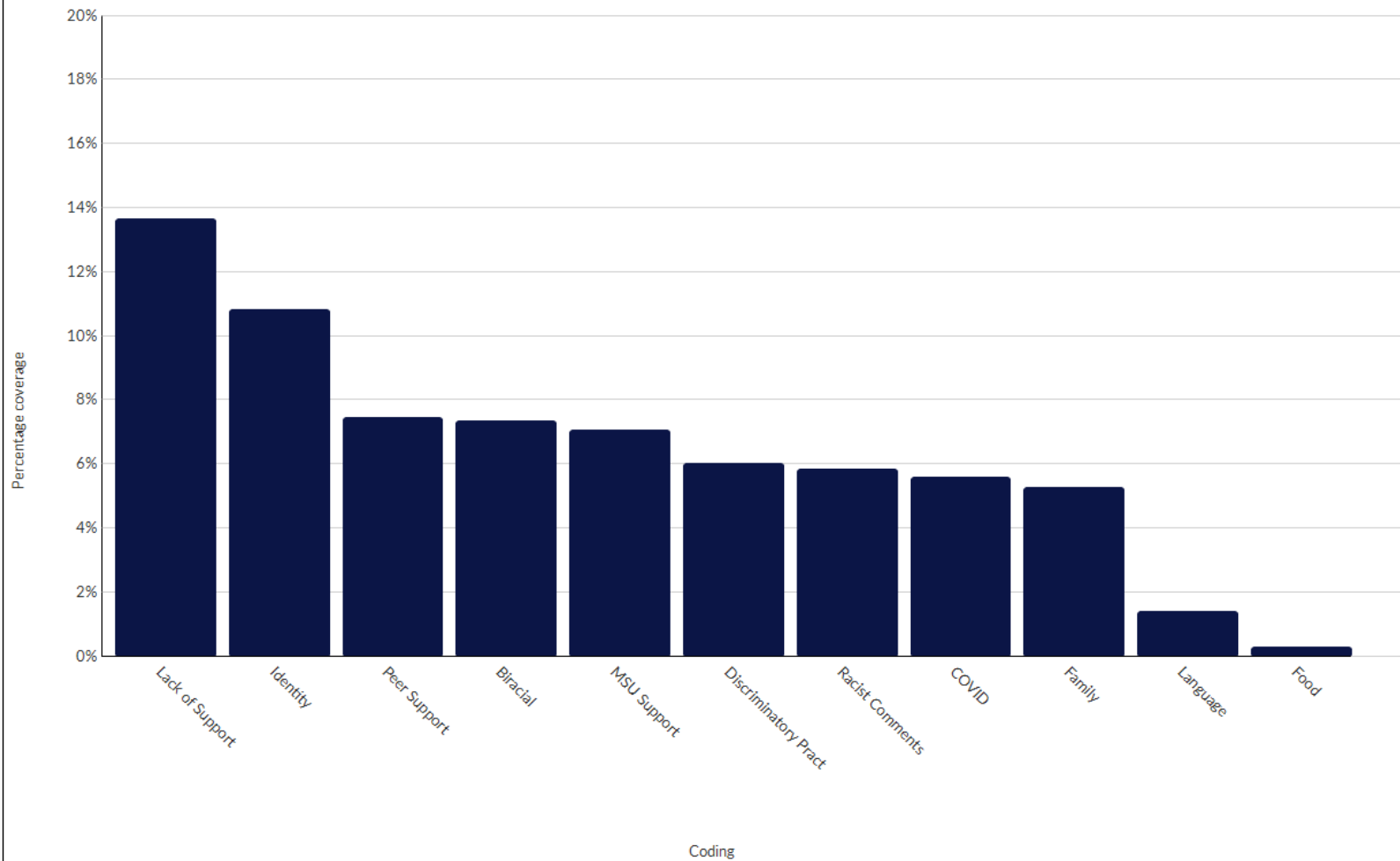
Themes

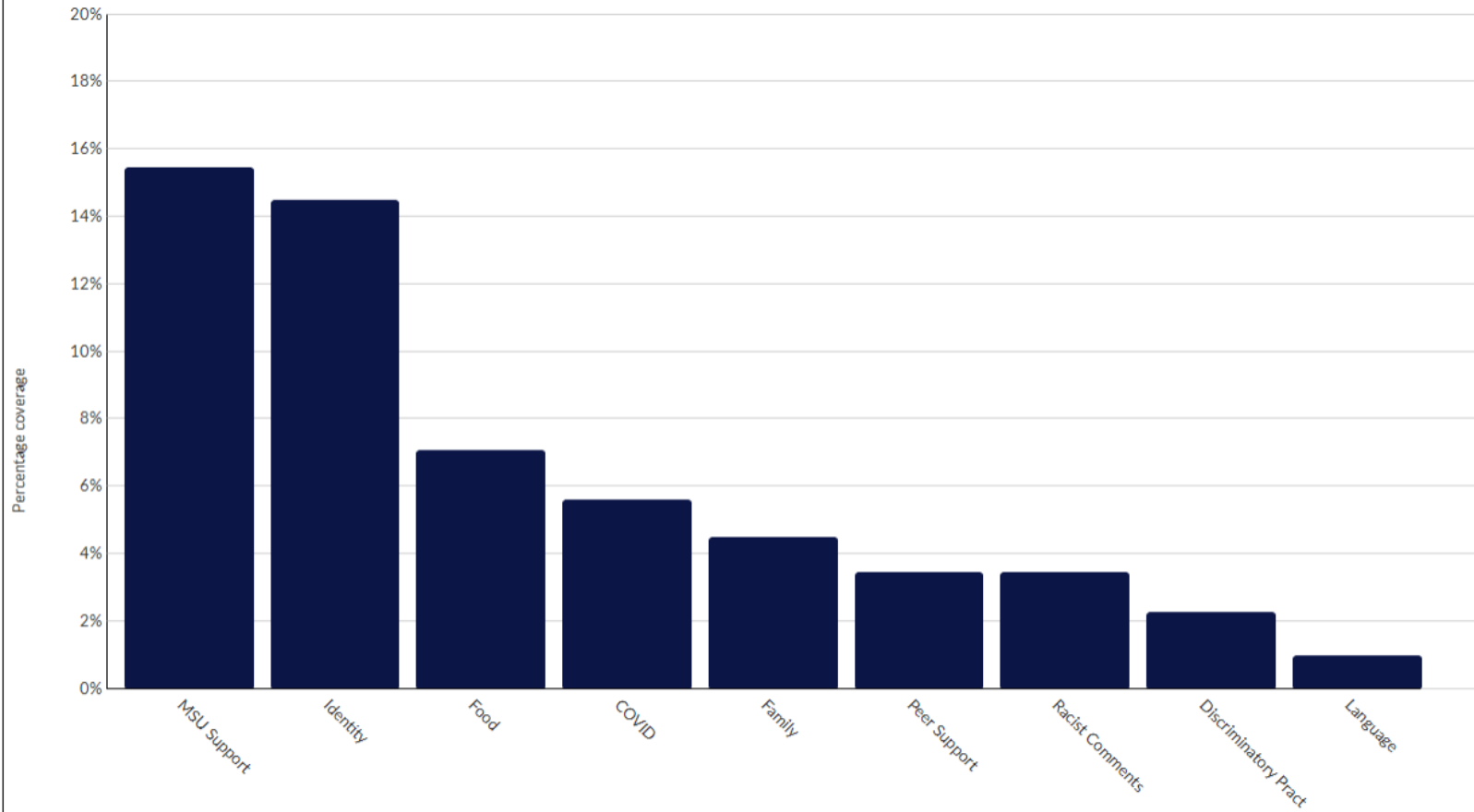
- Racism and discrimination
- Heritage and pride
- Belonging
- Institutional support



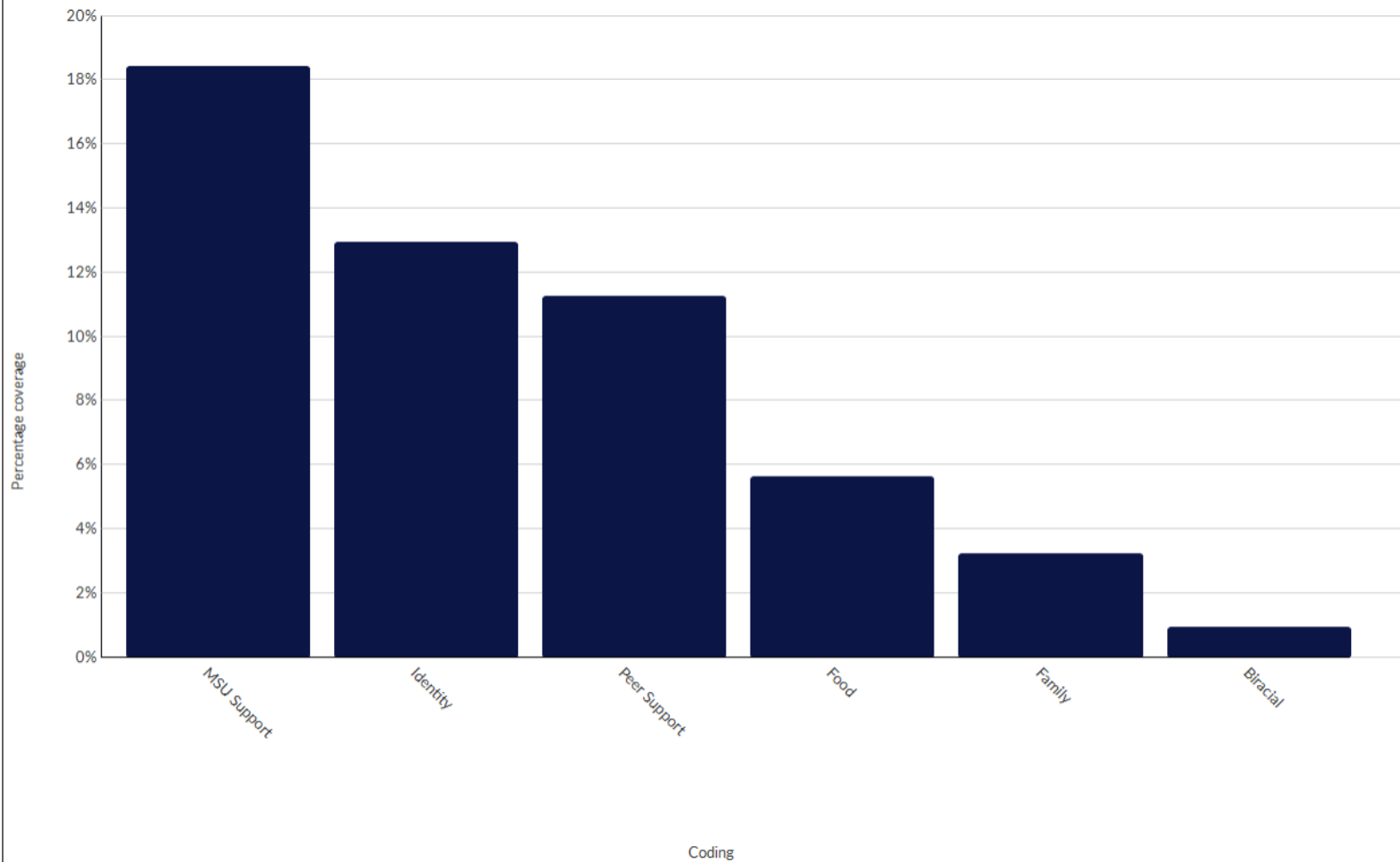
DIVERSITY
& INCLUSION
STUDENT
COMMONS







Coding



Implications

- This project helps to tell the stories of AAPI students at MSU and can share what is important to those students and what they struggle with at MSU
- This data can be used to better inform MSU staff and students on how to improve MSU's support system for AAPI students





Questions?

Belonging For AAPI Students

Sarah Ekberg, Jacob Harkins, Jakob Isleta, Jack Pemberton, Jaclynn Pruitt

Introduction and Significance

The purpose of this study is to examine the sense of belonging among students who identify as AAPI on the Montana State University campus. We hoped to understand if AAPI students at MSU felt a sense of belonging on campus and to what degree. Studies have shown that students who feel disconnected from their culture and heritage suffer from higher rates of depression and anxiety (2, 3). AAPI students represent only 4% of MSU's student body, leaving many AAPI students without sufficient networks of individuals familiar with their culture and heritage. Research indicates that college campuses that make strong efforts to give minority students a stronger sense of belonging through diverse faculty, cultural organizations, and student networks give minority students a stronger sense of belonging and improve the mental well being of those students (4, 5). We drew inspiration for our storytelling project from pre-existing storytelling projects focused on the AAPI experience such as PBS's (7) "Asian Pacific American Heritage Month" project. By exploring AAPI students' sense of belonging and giving our participants an opportunity to tell their story we hope to discover ways that we as students and MSU as an institution can better support and understand the experiences of our AAPI classmates.

Storytelling Methodology

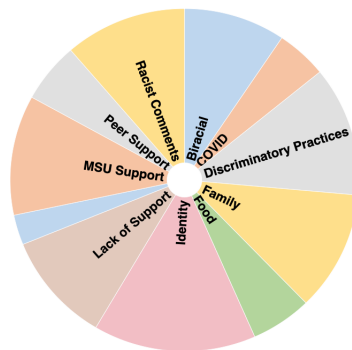
It was most efficient to use a convenience and snowball sampling design. We contacted the A.S.I.A club via email and requested anyone willing to participate in a capstone storytelling interview. We informed them of the purpose of the project and that a \$25 Amazon gift card would be given to anyone who participated. We were able to get two participants through the A.S.I.A. club and the third was by word of mouth. Our participants consisted of two males and one female, all students at Montana State, who self-identify as AAPI individuals. Participant one was a half Filipina half white female undergraduate. Participant two was a Vietnamese male graduate student. And finally, participant three was a half Filipino half white male undergraduate student.

We had a standardized set of questions that we asked each participant. The study was reviewed and approved by the Internal Review Board of MSU. Each participant signed a consent form and was given the option to end the interview at any point for any reason. Our study was conducted through semi structured interviews conducted in person. We recorded the interviews via the voice memos app on one of our iPhones. There were only one to three interviewers present for each interview. The questions we asked were: Could you describe your ethnic identity? Tell me about a time you faced adversity on campus? Was there a time when a situation(s) made you feel not proud of your heritage? Can you share a time you were proud of your heritage? How do you feel about MSU's inclusion? Do you feel that it could be improved? If so, how do you think it could be improved? After we conducted the interviews the next step was to transcribe. We broke down who transcribed the interviews and then had at least one person act as a second transcriber to check accuracy. After transcribing the interviews we uploaded the transcriptions to NVIVO and each group member coded the transcriptions on their own. We then reconciled our codes and came up with eleven different codes: food, family, racist comments, MSU support, peer support, biracial, discriminatory practices, COVID, identity, lack of support, and language.

Results

We asked our interviewees about their ethnic identity and heritage, which allowed us to learn more about their backgrounds. We learned about their ethnic identity roots, where their parents are from, and what languages they speak. This provided a better understanding of our participants and their influential backgrounds that help explain their current attitudes and experiences towards inclusivity.

The themes that prevailed were racism and discrimination, heritage and pride, belonging, and institutional support. Two of our interviewees experienced racism or discrimination from peers or friends. These interviewees also experienced a lack of pride in their ethnicity and heritage due to racism or discrimination. Participant One explained that “It’s more like little things, like small little microaggressions, that I don’t think people realize hurt. The analogy I always use is mosquito bites. You won’t notice one mosquito bite, but 200 mosquito bites. Yeah, you’ll start to notice”. Belonging and institutional support were both supported and not supported. Although two of our interviewees felt included and supported at MSU, one of our interviewees struggled. Participants Two and Three touched on MSU’s support and inclusivity. Participant Two stated “Our science department, they’re doing a great job of including me and giving me opportunities”. Participant Three claims “I feel like faculty and students are pretty inclusive. Like, I’ve never felt like I don’t belong”. This shows support from aspects of MSU towards our AAPI population.



These areas allowed us to identify what was important to our interviewees within their feelings towards belonging.

Implications

When compared to the broader literature, there does appear to be some similarities from this storytelling project. As discussed by Chen & Ho (1), we did observe some racial tensions between those that identify as full Asian and those that are half. Participant one discussed how she has experienced some of this bias from other Asians that only viewed her as white. There was also concurrent evidence from the study from Samura (8,9) where participants one and two expressed people looking at them as Asian and feeling the need to change their appearance. Although we did find that participants experienced an amount of racial hostility, there was no evidence that it caused a decline in their feelings of safety. Therefore, our findings did not fully coincide with those from Museus & Park (6).

For this storytelling project, many things can be taken away that could help expose communities such as Montana State University or Bozeman to the AAPI community. This project’s main focus is exploring the stories of those that identify as AAPI and exploring another person’s story. Recognizing the fact that this small minority is still composed of human beings that have their own individual stories is important. The AAPI community is growing in both MSU

and Bozeman and these types of projects can help them belong through the recognition of their experiences.

Further research could account for intersectional identities since this project did not incorporate whether or not the participants identified with other communities. It would also best serve to collect more stories from a broader variety of individuals. This project lacked anyone that identified as Pacific Islander or anyone that identified anything other than Southeast Asian. Our project did not address the indifference felt by Asians towards other social racial movements, such as Black Lives Matter, which was found by Yellow Horse et al (10). Other research could address some of these attitudes and whether or not they are prevalent for the AAPI community in Bozeman or MSU.

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What it Means to Belong: International Students at Montana State University

Samantha Barker, Taylor Freedman, Sam Hale, Maddie Keown, and Riley Morgan

Introduction and Significance



Significance

Discrimination
and Exclusion

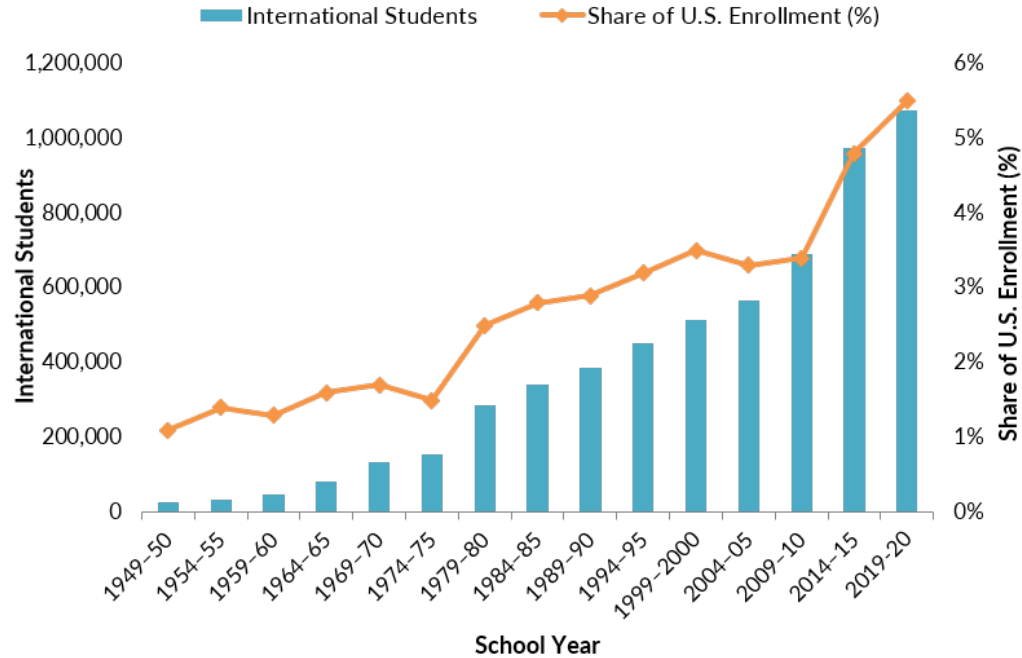
Academic
Stress

Social and
Cultural
Integration

Unique Needs

Culture Shock

Population of Interest





Population of Interest (cont.)

International student population at MSU

Nationwide international student population

2020-2021 international student enrollment

Fall 2021 Demographics

Sex	Undergrad	Graduate	Total	%
Male	7,786	909	8,695	51%
Female	6,790	1,246	8,306	48%
Other/No Response	92	18	110	1%
Race/Ethnicity	Undergrad	Graduate	Total	%
Hispanic/Latino	755	94	849	5%
American Indian/Alaska Native	216	48	264	1.5%
Asian	155	28	183	1%
Black/African American	73	7	80	0.5%
Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander	13	0	13	0.1%
White	12,360	1,688	14,048	83.5%
Two or more races	774	90	864	5%
International	193	194	387	2%
Unknown	129	24	153	1%
Total	14,668	2,173	16,841	100%
Age	Undergrad	Graduate	Total	%
Average	21	31	N/A	N/A
Residence Status	Undergrad	Graduate	Total	%
Resident	7,790	1,112	8,902	53%
WUE	1,781	N/A	1,781	10.5%
Nonresident	5,907	1,061	6,158	36.5%
Pell Recipients	Undergrad	Graduate	Total	%
Fall 2021	2,546	0	2,546	N/A



Purpose of our Storytelling Project

Improve inclusivity at Montana State University and within Bozeman

Improve resources available for international students

Provide a platform for international students to share their experiences

Capture attitudes and ideals of international students

Storytelling Methodology

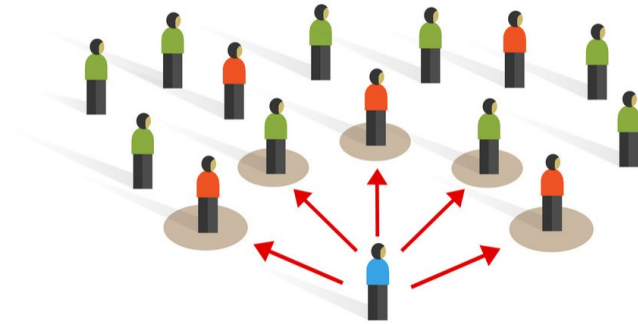
Participant Recruitment

Recruitment tactics

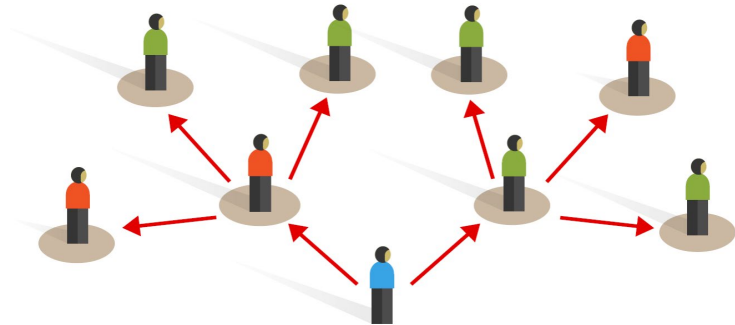
IRB submission

Sampling methods

Convenience sampling



Snowball sampling



Participant Characteristics





Participant Characteristics (cont.)

Participant #1

Participant #2

Participant #3

Participant #4



Interview Protocol

Interview process

Sample questions

Capturing and recording interviews





Coding and Analysis

NVivo

Codes and Code Descriptions

Examples





Results



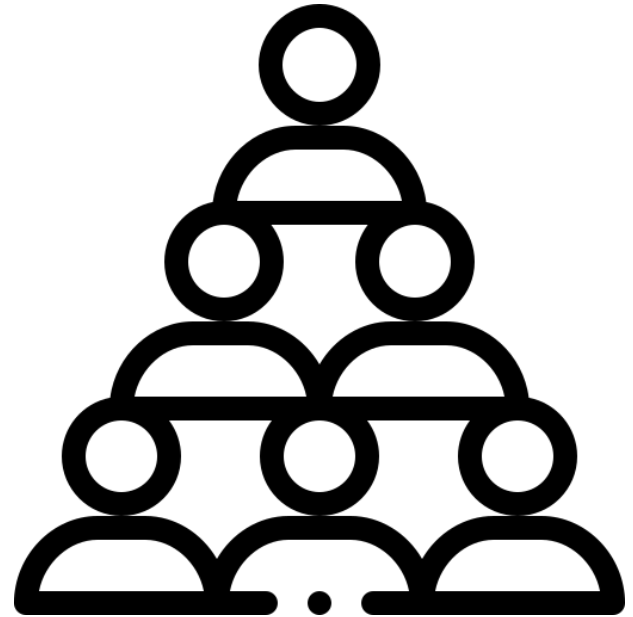
Context/Participant Information

Participant #1

Participant #2

Participant #3

Participant #4

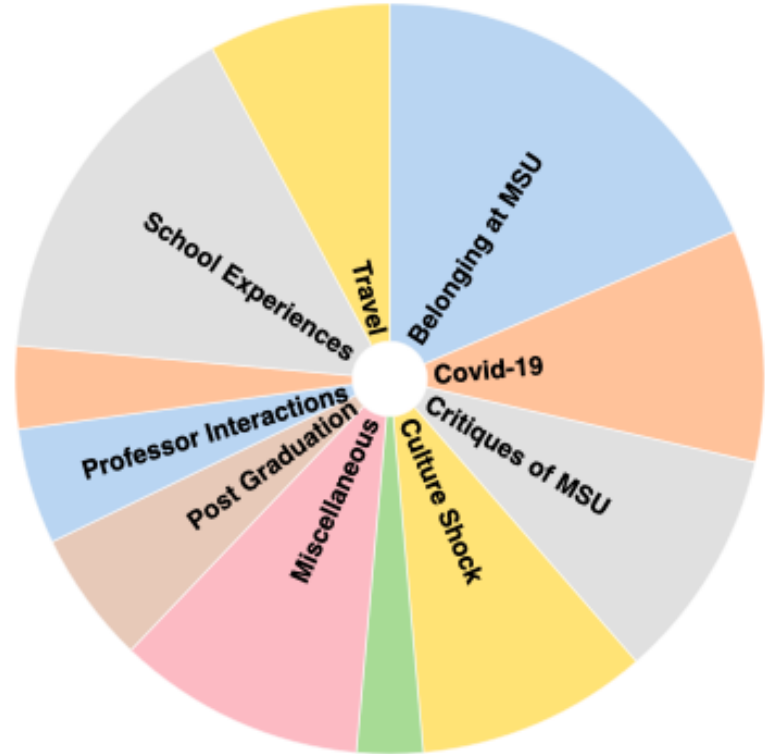


Findings

Codes most frequently used

How many times these codes were used

Similar ideas between participants





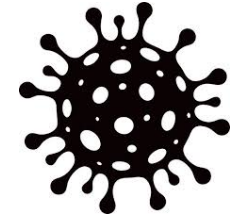
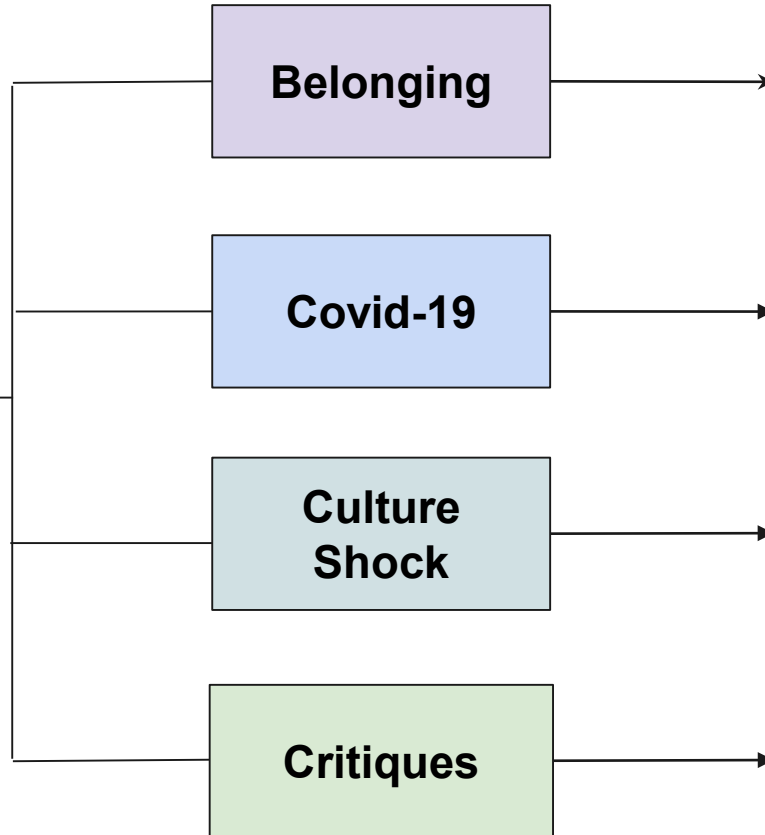
Findings (cont.)

Codes	Number of coding references	Aggregate number of coding references	Number of items coded	Aggregate number of items coded
Codes\\Belonging at MSU	26	26	4	4
Codes\\School Experiences	22	22	4	4
Codes\\Miscellaneous	15	15	4	4
Codes\\Covid-19	14	14	4	4
Codes\\Critiques of MSU	14	14	4	4
Codes\\Culture Shock	14	14	4	4
Codes\\Travel	11	11	4	4
Codes\\Post Graduation	8	8	4	4
Codes\\Professor Interactions	7	7	4	4
Codes\\Scholarships	5	5	3	3
Codes\\Living Conditions	4	4	2	2



Themes

Themes



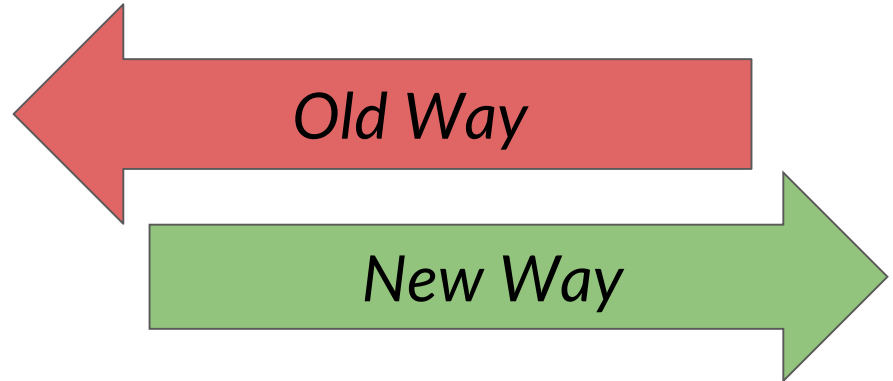
Implications



What are the implications?

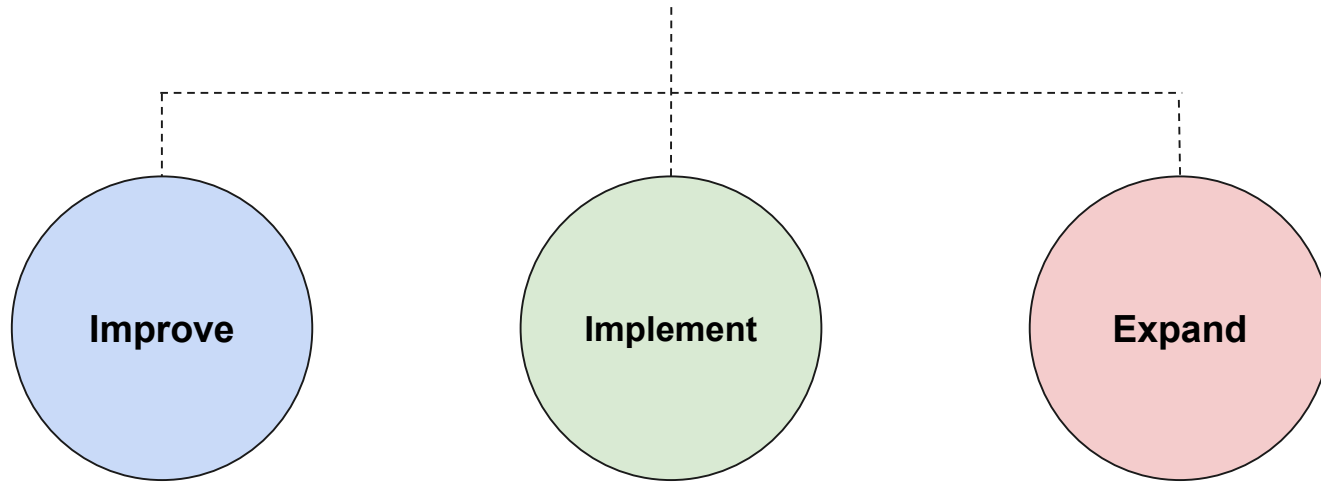
What can we do with this information?

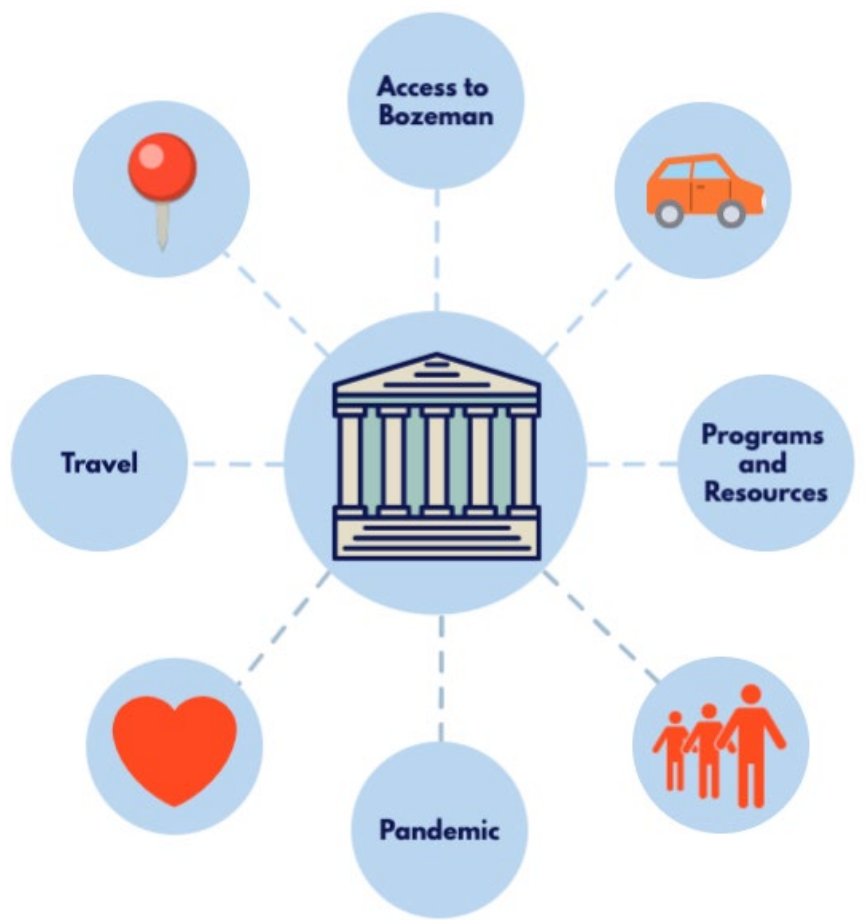
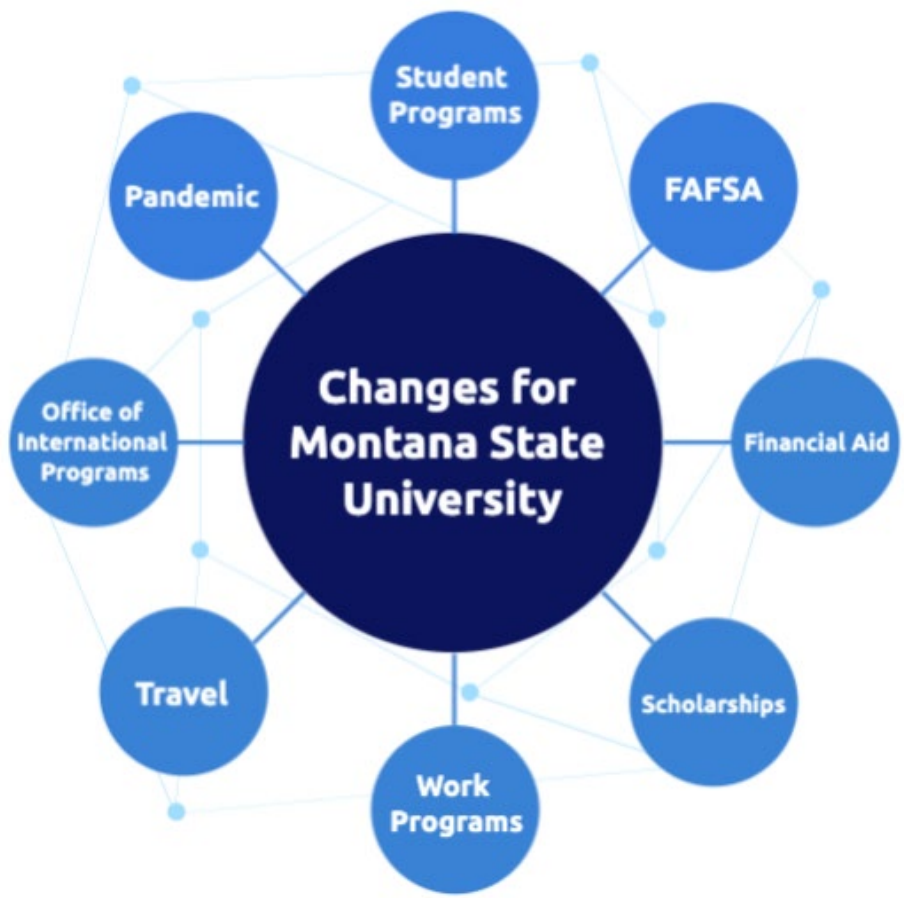
What does this mean for MSU and Bozeman?





Policy Change - MSU and Bozeman







Reliability, Validity, Reflexivity

Reliability

- Inter-rater reliability

Validity

- Generalizability
- Gender
- Improvements

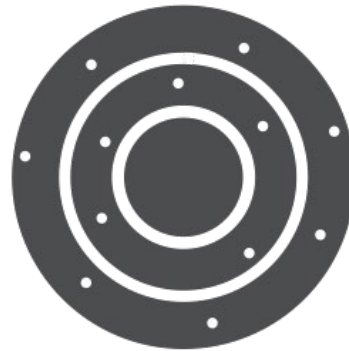
Reflexivity

- Biases/Conflicts
- Scope

RELIABLE BUT NOT VALID



VALID BUT NOT RELIABLE



RELIABLE AND VALID



Questions?



References

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Quick facts: 2021-2022. (n.d.). Montana State University | Montana State University. Retrieved April 19, 2022, from <https://www.montana.edu/opa/facts/quick.html#Demo>



Image References

[Graph]. <https://cuttingedgepr.com/find-mobilize-unofficial-opinion-leaders/>

[Image]. <https://images.google.com/clipart>

[Image]. <https://support.apple.com/guide/voice-memos/welcome/mac>

[Maps]. <https://www.britannica.com/place>

[Image]. https://www.flaticon.com/free-icon/participant_3712233

[Graph]. <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/article/international-students-united-states-2020>



Images (cont.)

[Table]. <https://www.montana.edu/opa/facts/quick.html#Demo>

[Graph]. <https://www.vectorstock.com/royalty-free-vector/convenience-sample-grab-accidental-sampling-or-vector-28835088>

[Image]. <https://www.hoganassessments.com/blog/quick-dirty-guide-validity-reliability/>

[Image}. NVivo Project

What it Means to Belong: International Students at Montana State University

Introduction and Significance

Population of Interest

The United States has one of the largest international student populations in college. From 1949 to 1950, 26,000 international students were enrolled in U.S. colleges, and this rose to 1.1 million from 2019 to 2021 [4]. From 2020 to 2021 the population fell to 1 million, a 15% decrease in online and in-person enrollment. International students create 4-5% of the U.S. college population [8]. Montana State University consists of 2% international students: 193 undergraduate students and 194 graduate students [5].

Importance

Discrimination against international students at U.S. universities is important to consider. Some international students report a lack of intercultural awareness and institution-led initiatives to integrate them with peers, and curriculums lack internationalization [11]. There are also discrepancies in beliefs about the roles of students and teachers across different cultures [12]. Culture shock and stressors come with studying abroad and include homesickness, language ability, and discrimination [6], however, social and academic integration increase feelings of belonging [2]. Covid-19 contributed to this stress by creating unconventional learning environments, and the inability to return home [4]. Social connectedness and support are important for students' success [7]. The success of studying abroad is also based on the universities ability to support, help, and enhance multiculturalism, and financial resources cannot be underestimated or neglected for these students [3]. International students' needs include future and career education, health, wellness, and international travel resources [9].

Purpose

It is necessary to recognize the unique background experiences, such as culture, that exist among international students attending U.S. colleges. Universities, such as MSU, must consider resources to supply, and the struggles these students may face. This study aims to (1) Find ways to improve inclusivity at MSU and within Bozeman (2) Improve resources available to international students (3) Provide a platform for international students to share their experiences, and (4) Capture the attitudes and ideals of international students.

Storytelling Methodology

Recruitment and Interviews

Convenience sampling and snowball sampling were used to recruit participants. The first three participants were friends of group members, and the fourth participant was recruited by participant #3. Before conducting the interviews, the interviewer asked the participant to read and sign a consent form. Participants were informed that they had the right to stop the interview at any time or decline to answer any questions. Three group members interviewed participants, asking the same questions each time. Recordings were completed on the voice memos app.

Participant Characteristics

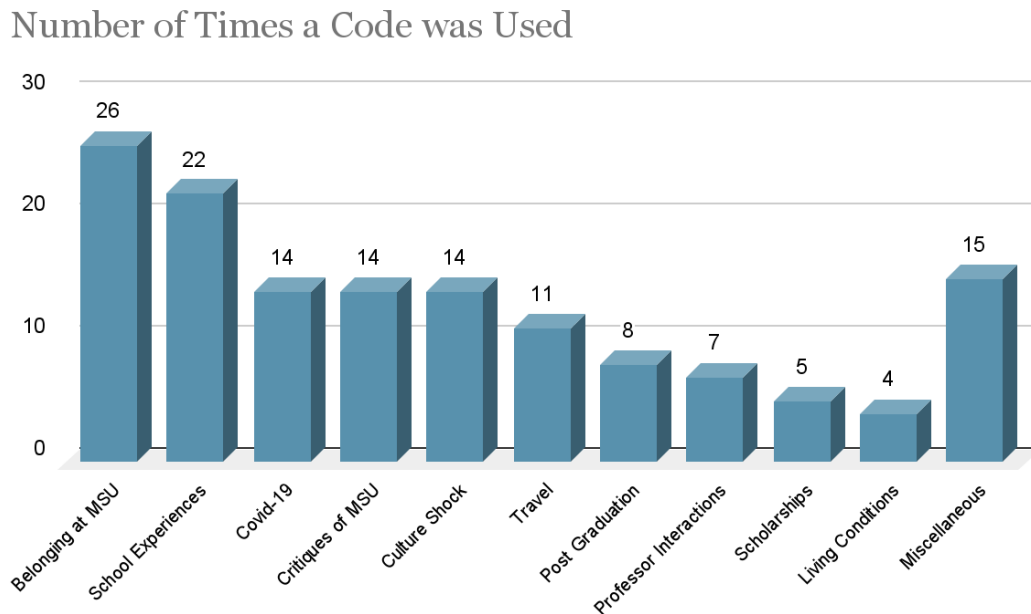
Four participants were included in the study. Participant #1 identified as female; she is a 21-year-old senior studying microbiology from American Samoa. Participant #2 identified as a male; he is a 25-year-old senior studying mechanical engineering and came from Sri Lanka. Participant #3 identified as male; he is a 21-year-old junior studying psychology from England. Participant #4 identified as male and is a 21-year-old junior studying psychology from Australia.

Coding and Analysis

The voice memos were transcribed and then checked by other group members. Eleven codes were agreed on and made into a final codebook. Each group member coded the interviews individually using the same codebook which was aggregated into one NVIVO document, and four themes were found. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1.

Graph Representing the Number of Times a Code was Used



Results

Participant Descriptions

Participant #1 chose MSU because the campus offers access to nature and mountains which she enjoys while allowing her to be close to friends and family from home who also attend the university. Participant #2 chose MSU due to its highly ranked mechanical engineering program, and for the opportunity to take part in snow sports while studying at MSU. Participants #3 and #4 separately came to the U.S. to play tennis for Tennessee University. They then decided to transfer to MSU prior to meeting the team and learning about MSU. Both felt the campus had more to offer for their personal interests and sense of belonging.

Themes and Supporting Evidence

Four themes were identified. The first was belonging, or how each participant found a sense of “home” at MSU. All the participants expressed a sense of belonging through clubs, their majors, or sports teams. The second theme was the participants' experiences with Covid-19. The pandemic was difficult for international students because they experienced isolation from their homes both physically and culturally while at MSU. The third theme was how participants experienced culture shock. The respondents expressed surprise at the weather, as well as professor and peer interactions. Some participants also were shocked by the lack of diversity on campus. The last theme was general critiques of their experience as international students.

Participants expressed issues with international and domestic transportation, financial aid, and the number of hours international students could work on campus each week. (See Figure 2.)

Figure 2.
Participant Quotes from Transcriptions Representing the Four Themes

Theme	Quote
<i>Belonging</i>	Participant #1: "...we had the international student orientation, so I made a lot of friends through that before class even started." Participant #1: "...all the friends that I made, they made me feel like I could possibly have a home here..." Participants #3 and #4: "If it wasn't for being on the tennis team, I think it would've been a real struggle to meet people" Participants #3 and #4: "...the guys on the tennis team introduced me to a lot of different people..."
<i>Covid-19</i>	Participant #1: "I didn't really meet up with any friends and I felt really really bad in that time like I was kind of I won't say depressed but I was really homesick, and I was feeling very lonely so I was just by myself, yeah and I couldn't go back home because flights were not operating I mean well yeah borders were closed so I couldn't even go back for winter break." Participant #3: "This last Christmas I went home for the first time." Participant #3: "...I definitely think that first semester was one of the most challenging few months I've had in my life." Participant #3: "I know speaking for a couple of friends on the tennis team couldn't go home either, they were here a lot of them don't have cars, so for pretty much a whole summer they were stuck here, not much to do, no one else around and couldn't really travel, even as simple as the grocery store, they didn't have a car they had to make small trips I know it was difficult for them."
<i>Critiques</i>	Participant #1: "...I do feel like there is a lack of resources in the sense that we don't get enough scholarships..." Participant #1: "...all the financial resources that they do offer are for everyone but most of the time it only applies to like citizens and permanent residents..." Participant #2: "...[work] is limited to 20 hours a week, and on-campus work only." Participant #4: "...yeah, the cars suck."
<i>Culture Shock</i>	Participant #: "Yeah and I was really surprised how- surprised by the lack of diversity you know, there were a lot of white people here but not - way more than I expected" Participant #1: "...coming from an island I hadn't experienced snow before so I thought Montana would be a nice place to do that even though I was kind of wrong because we get way too much snow and winters are way too long". Participant #2: "...first semester is kind of surprising to have rain, snow, sunshine, all of it at, almost in a week..."

Implications

Findings

Due to a lack of financial aid and work opportunities, international students struggle financially. The participants explained they are limited to 20 hours of on-campus work per week, which is

not enough for them to afford schooling and housing. Some international students arrive with unrealistic expectations about work opportunities [1]. MSU can manage students' job expectations by having conversations about work options before they arrive [1]. Additional financial aid programs and scholarships for international students would be helpful. Participants in this study, as well as participants in other studies, admitted to not using institutional services [7]. Instead, they relied on resources such as professors or their peers for support. Raising awareness of existing resources and providing region-specific programs to accommodate for regional differences can help [3]. Access to transportation is a problem for international students, and it is not uncommon for them to travel while in the U.S. [10]. Participants shared the struggles they had moving around Bozeman since the only option is the Streamline bus service which does not always run at the times or to the locations they need. It would be helpful to expand travel sources at MSU for all students, especially international ones.

Takeaway Message


The lack of institution and city-led initiatives causes some international students to struggle. Allowing these students to share their critiques on a platform such as a storytelling program, would be a great place to start. This would allow greater generalizability to recognize diverse voices at MSU and in Bozeman. Implementing international students' ideas would expand their sense of belonging within the community, help them to adjust, and succeed during college.

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MSU Students Raising Children: Barriers to Success and Possible Solutions

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Student Population Relevance

- Financial hardships and finding reliable childcare are cited barriers
- An estimated 15-30% of students in 2 and 4 year institutions are parents (NCES, 2012)
- And an estimated 26% of postsecondary institutions (National postsecondary aid survey, 2012)
- Balancing family, paid work, and college studies
 - Serious financial debt
 - Isolation/alienation



Methods and Procedures

- Advertised through Facebook directly to MSU Students Raising Children group
- Conducted three 20-50 minute interviews through Zoom
 - 2 graduate students, 1 undergraduate
 - 2 identify as female, 1 nonbinary
 - 2 attending in-person, 1 online student
- Interviews were transcribed verbatim, codes were established, and themes were identified

Conduct and
Transcribe
Interviews



Develop Code
Book



Data Immersion

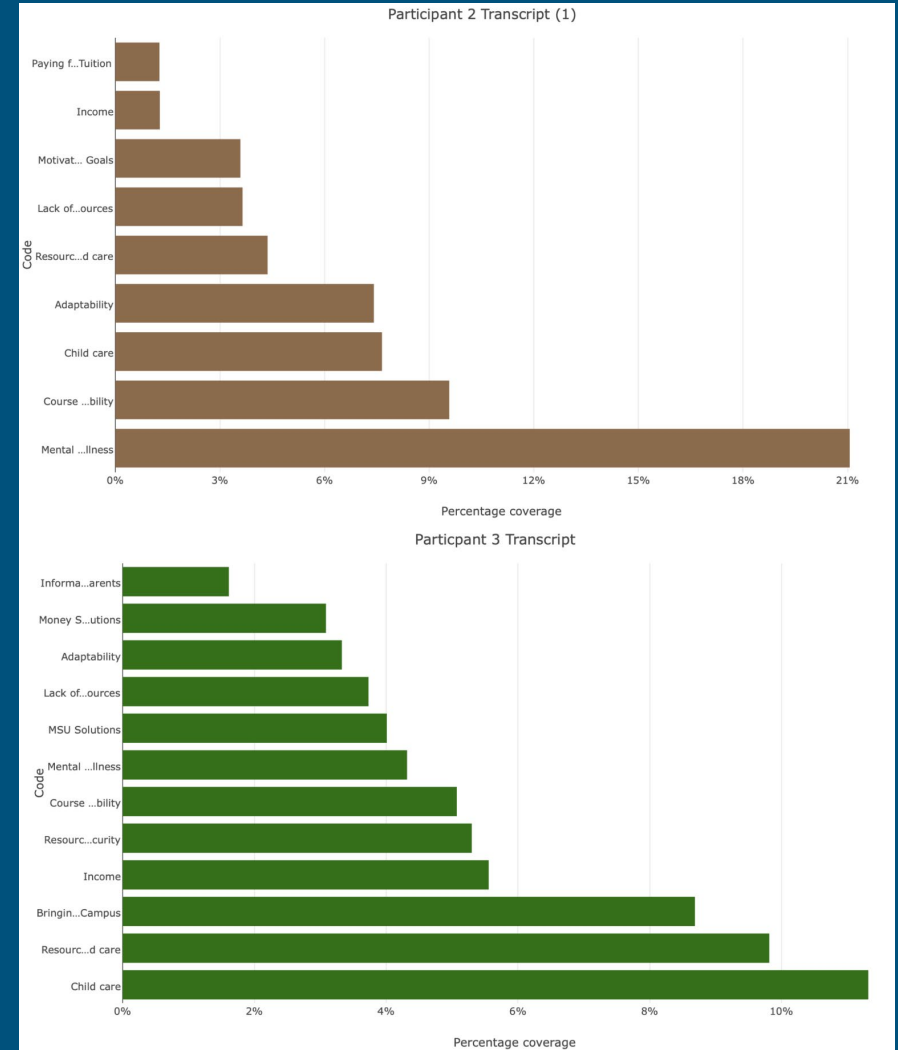
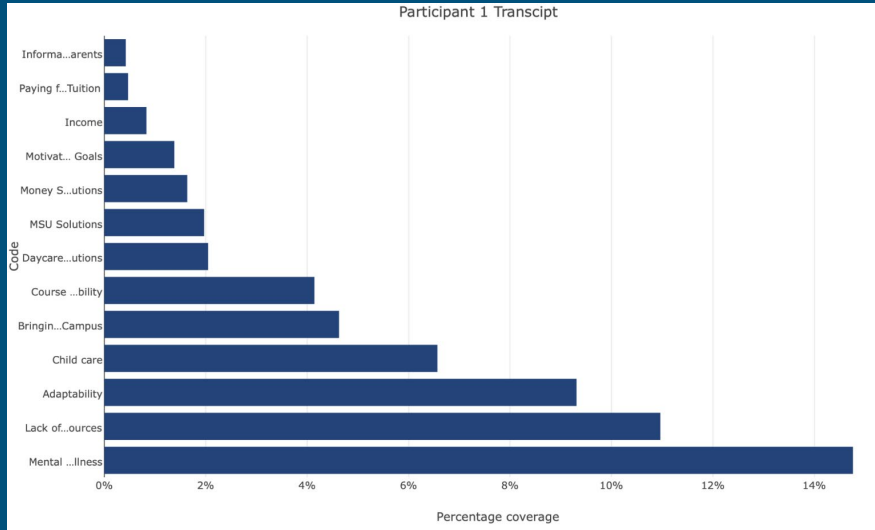


Identify Themes

Examples of Questions

- Have you experienced barriers to finding childcare during your time as a student at MSU?
- What's your main source of financial stability?
- Do you have personal resources that have kept you from having childcare barriers?
- Are there any resources that would improve your experiences as a parent while enrolled at MSU?

Results



Results: Continued

Child care	Mental Health and Wellness	Course Work Flexibility	Bringing Children to ...		MSU Solut...
			Resources for Establishing Child care	Motivated ...	Money S...
Lack of Resources	Adaptability	Income	Resources for Food Se...		Informati...
			Paying for Tuition		

Identified Themes

1. **Childcare**
 - a. Barriers for establishing childcare
 - b. Bringing children to campus
2. **Financial Stability**
 - a. Relying on scholarships/stipends/loans
 - b. Income from employment/spouses/ and family
3. **Resources**
 - a. Family support
 - b. ASMSU Campus Daycare
4. **Mental Health and Wellness**
 - a. Feeling excluded on campus
5. **Ability to adapt**
 - a. Coursework flexibility
 - b. Doing homework while children are sleeping



Participant 1: Full-time Undergraduate Student

- Lack of child care and establishing child care
 - Family Support
- Adapting from being online to in-person
- Feelings of exclusion
- Scholarships and student loans
 - Does not have her own source of income, spouses income
- Leniency in course work



Participant 2: On line Masters Student

- **Family Support**
 - Mother-in-law main childcare provider
- **Wanted to continue working while going to school**
 - Concerned about financial instability
- **Feelings of isolation**
 - Desire for more friends who share a similar experience
 - Facebook group: Students Raising Children at MSU
- **Balancing different life roles**



Participant 3: Full-time PhD Student

- **Difficulty finding childcare due to lack of availability and high costs**
 - Worked at drop-in to help afford occasional care
 - Brought child to campus/office
- **Established childcare at ASMSU daycare for first child after long wait**
 - Second child given priority in infant room
- **\$1200 monthly childcare costs**
- **Childcare scholarship provided by MSU falls short**



Discussion and Implications

- Larger Child Care Scholarship
- More funding for ASMSU Daycare
 - Increase size and capacity
 - Rethink priority registration
- Make information regarding resources more accessible



“It needs to be somebody’s job to reach out to students regarding resources.”

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Thank you!

MSU Students Raising Children: Barriers to Success and Possible Solutions

Introduction and Significance

College students with dependent children experience many obstacles unique to their situations when seeking higher education (Moreau & Kerner, 2013; Isgro & Castañeda, 2015). A report published in 2016 by the University of Michigan estimated that 15-30% of students in two to four-year institutions were parents (NCES, 2012). In that same report, another survey estimated that 26% of postsecondary students were also raising children (NPAS, 2012). College campus demography reveals high volumes of students with children. However, many college campuses throughout the United States do not collect information on the number of incoming students with dependent children (Feild, 2017; Nelson et. all, 2013). At this time, Montana State University does not gather statistics on how much of its student body consists of parents. This lack of information creates an underrepresented population of students raising children at MSU who face a variety of challenges.

One study of students raising children found that just over 90% of their participants felt substantial financial pressures while attending college (Gerald & Roberts, 2006). According to the same research, most participants experienced feelings of isolation, alienation, guilt, and exhaustion. It's also been well documented that finding reliable childcare and financial hardships are among some of the most prevalent challenges for this student population (Mahaffey, 2015; Duquaine-Watson, 2007). The research conducted by this senior capstone group is a qualitative case study analysis meant to reveal barriers to success for students with children at Montana State University and shed light on resources that could support them as they pursue higher education.

Storytelling Methodology

Research methods, procedures, and interview questions were submitted to the Institutional Review Board and approved before research began. To understand the experiences of MSU students who have children, researchers recruited three participants through convenience and snowball sampling the Facebook group *Students Raising Children at MSU*. After obtaining informed consent, researchers conducted individual Zoom interviews spanning 20 - 45 minutes. Interviews were then transcribed verbatim, coded, and entered into NVivo for the purpose of establishing themes. Participants self-reported as two graduate students and one undergraduate student. Two participants identified as female, and one participant identified as nonbinary. Two participants attended classes in-person and one participant attended online. All participants had dependent children under the age of six.

Results:

After agreeability was met for the coding process, five themes were established and are as follows:

Childcare: Participants described establishing childcare as a barrier because of expenses or lack of available daycare. Two out of three participants reported having to bring their children to campus because of a lack of childcare. The online student reported a lack of daycare in their area.

Financial Stability: All participants discussed sources of income from work, spouses, or family. Two participants reported working and one relies on their spouses' income. Two out of the three participants relied on scholarships, stipends, and/or loans to pay for tuition and childcare. Two of the participants discussed concern over financial stability. Participant two

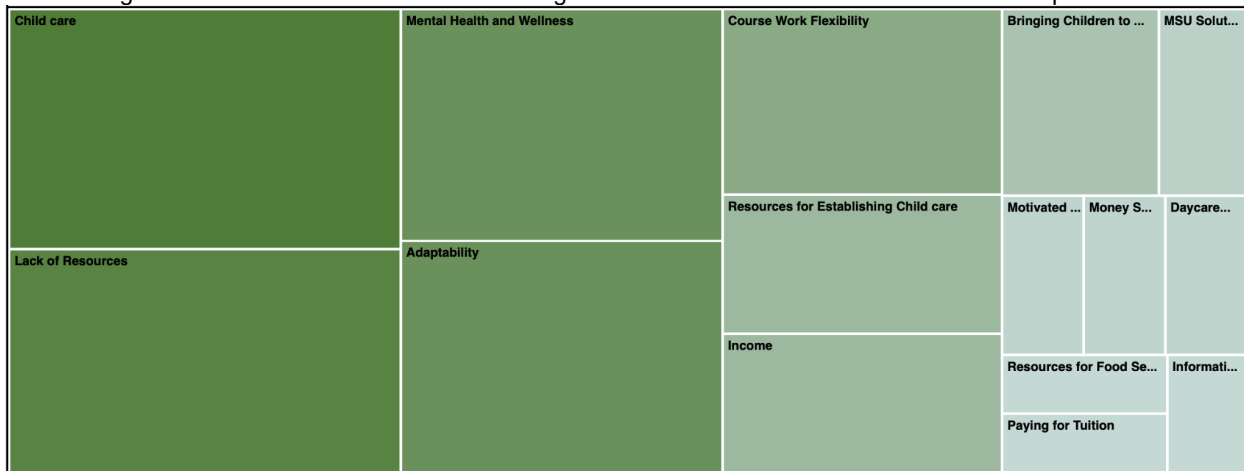
stated, “I also have been in those situations where we've been completely broke and I really didn't want to quit my job and feel that feeling again.”

Resources: Family members were often relied on to provide childcare due to difficulty in obtaining daycare. ASMSU daycare was a resource for one participant whose infant was given priority because they were able to establish childcare with their first child. One participant explained priority entrance was a barrier to establishing childcare for her son. Participant three stated, “the childcare scholarship they offer is nice, but it's \$400, and that doesn't even cover a third of my childcare costs in a month. And so, it's a nice effort, but it falls very, very short.”

Mental Health and Wellness: All participants discussed feelings of isolation and exclusion from campus. Participants identified the Facebook group *Students Raising Children at MSU* as a resource for connecting with individuals with similar experiences, which ultimately improved their sense of belonging. Participant one stated, “I think that the biggest thing for me is I feel invisible and I feel isolated.”

Coursework Flexibility: All participants expressed a need for coursework flexibility, whether it was online coursework or needing to ask professors for extensions on assignments. Two of them mentioned having to do homework while their kids were sleeping.

Fig. 1: Visualization of the number of coding references across the three interview transcripts.



Implications

MSU offers a \$400 childcare scholarship offered each semester to students with children. However, all participants acknowledged that this resource isn't widely advertised and does not sufficiently cover costs. Offering a larger childcare scholarship could help ease financial burdens for students with young children. Also, the ASMSU daycare center has a waitlist that can exceed years without priority registration. Funding to increase the size and capacity of the ASMSU daycare could ensure more childcare needs for students are met. Increased coursework flexibility, such as extensions on assignments and offering online courses, could increase success rates for this specific population. MSU could also provide night classes to accommodate student-parent schedules. In addition, a campus “resource officer” for students raising children could provide information regarding available resources, help to overcome disadvantages, and feel more supported by MSU. One of the interviewees put it very simply, “It needs to be somebody's job to reach out to students regarding resources.”

This research indicates graduate students may be subject to harsher treatment from faculty when needing to bring their children to campus due to a lack of childcare. Because students with children require more flexibility in their coursework, the more rigid expectations for graduate students could cause them increased hardships. Research on graduate students raising children should be conducted to reveal barriers and resources that could benefit this population specifically. Additionally, single parents raising children who choose to attend college face significant childcare deficiencies and financial distress compared to partnered students. While research focusing on single parents as students confirms the previous statement (Duquaine-Watson, 2007; Zhan & Pandey, 2004), Bozeman's housing rental costs increased by 11.1% between 2020 and 2021 (Gallatin Valley Housing Report, 2022) creating more significant disparities for low-income residents. Future research on MSU students raising children should explore whether financial and childcare barriers are causing single parents to abandon their pursuit of higher education.

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Out of State Minority Student Athletes

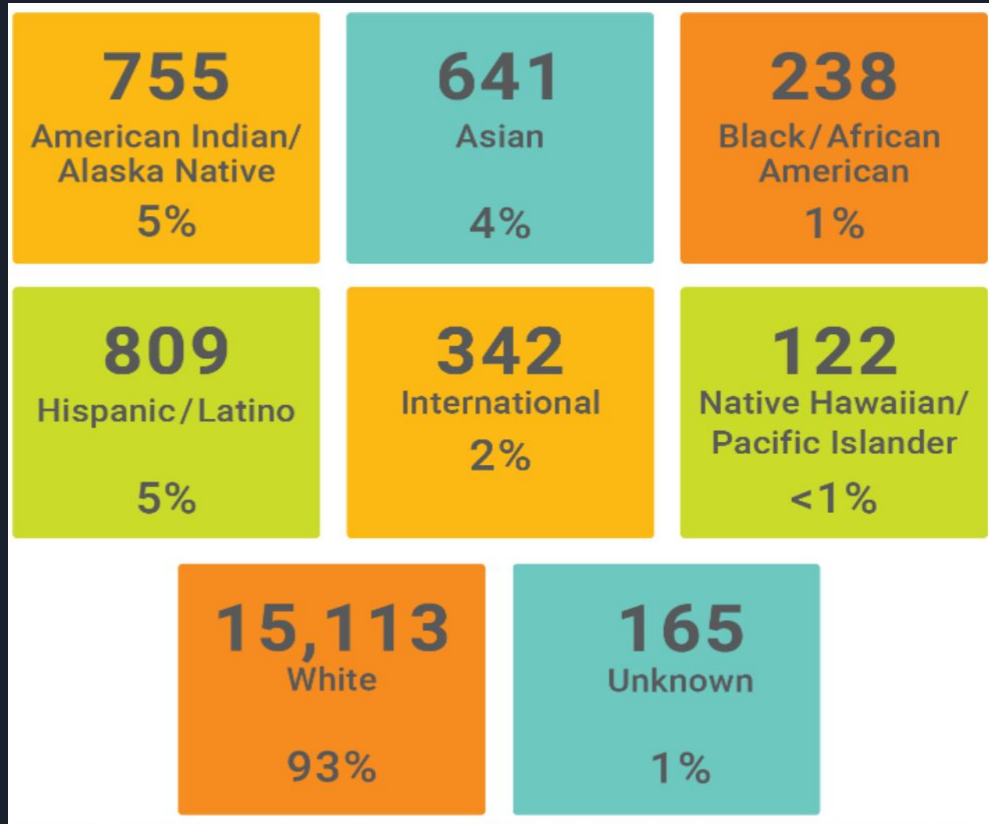
Hailey, Stephanie, Brianna, Gabe, Connor



Introduction

- Montana State University has a historically white population.
- Montana State University lacks diversity and we want to know more about how minority students create a sense of belonging.
- There is a very small percentage of minority students in attendance at Montana State University.
- We want to learn about what Montana State can do to make minority student experiences better.
- Due to the lack of minority students this topic is important to study because the feedback from the minority students could be useful.
- This topic is worthy because the happiness and sense of belonging of all students should be important to the university.

MSUs 2020 Diversity at a Glance:





Methods and Content

Recruitment process: We recruited through word of mouth and by using friends that we knew would be open to doing the interview

Capturing Stories: Recording using audio recording app through phone during in-person interview.

People Present: We had one researcher present during the interview and then the other members listened to the interview via recording

Validity: Did they hold back?

Reflexivity: How did my own experiences compare to their own? Does the experience change from male to female?

Generating Themes: we generated themes by finding out what topics stood out more than others and which ones produced the best conversation or were the most passionate about

Coding: For code words we chose them by what words appeared the most and what words caused the participant to circle back to a greater theme



Findings

Outlet

Music

Recommend

Family

Social Life

Food

Homesick

Different

Fashion/clothes

Team/teammate

Montana Nature

Montana Location

Theme 1: Culture Shock

Fort Worth, Texas



Portland, Oregon



Bozeman, Montana

Culture Shock continued



Country Jam



Many Hobbies



Big City Arena

Theme 2: Recommendations





Theme 3: Interacting with Greater Bozeman

- Isolation was one of the biggest factors
 - Being an athlete
 - Being a minority
 - Missing family
 - Not being accustomed to “Montana activities”
- Racism not as big of a factor as expected
 - Ignorance more than anything
 - People of Bozeman as accepting

Discussion and Implications



Introduction and Significance

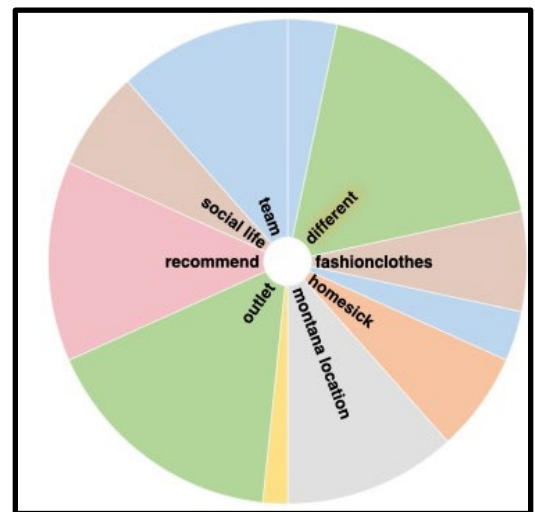
In our research, we found that minority out-of-state students struggle unanimously with feeling a lack of belonging on their campus. We care about Montana State University's minority out-of-state student-athlete population because we have a historically white population at MSU. We lack diversity and want to know more about how minority students create a sense of belonging at a predominantly white institution. We know that there is a very small percentage of minority students at Montana State University. From this population, we want to learn about how minority students feel about their sense of belonging on campus. We want to learn about anything the university can do to make their experience better here or if there is anything the university is doing well that makes them feel like they belong here on campus. This topic is important to study since Montana State has such a small minority student population the university should want to hear the feedback from the minority students. Hearing feedback could help the university in recruiting out-of-state students. Being able to make changes based on the information from the study can make Montana State more appealing to minority groups and will enhance their experience at Montana State. This is a worthy topic because the happiness and sense of belonging of all students should be important to the university.

Storytelling Methodology

To find participants for this study we recruited our participants through word of mouth and by asking friends to complete the interview. This way we got participants that we knew would be comfortable with the study, and would be okay with recording their answers. We recruited three out-of-state and minority student-athletes. All three individuals were male, African Americans, and sophomores on the football team. The participants were from Portland, Fort-Worth, and Vallejo. While we did do word of mouth we ultimately picked the three participants from our friend group as we felt it would allow for much more organic conversations, as everyone would be more comfortable with the whole process. When completing the interviews the participants sat down with one member of the team and the rest of the group listened to the recording after the interview was finished. After the recordings were distributed they were transcribed through a transcription app. All group members reviewed the transcriptions on their own multiple times to find and fix any errors that occurred during translation. For the coding process the transcription was uploaded to Nvivo where 12 words were coded those being; food, fashion, music, outlet, family, social life, different, team, Montana location, homesickness, and recommendations. Code words were chosen based on what words developed the deepest conversations. Once we coded the transcription we developed three greater themes; culture shock, recommendations, and interacting with greater Bozeman. After we generated our codes and themes the final steps were to look at the validity and reflexivity concerns. The validity was important because our biggest concern was that the participants were being truthful and that our information was as accurate as can be. The reflexivity was to take a step back and compare our lives and the lives of the men in our study and see how race, location, gender, and student status affect the experienced of a student at Montana State University.

Results

The details of our participants' lives were recorded at the beginning of every interview, like their original hometown, activities they may have done there, diversity of the hometown, and culture of it. Similar questions and descriptions from the participants were asked about Bozeman itself to ascertain the similarities and differences of life in Bozeman compared to their home cities. The day-to-day lives of participants in Bozeman can be considered mundane by some, with it consisting of going to



class, working out/ practicing for the football team, occasionally going out to eat with members of the football team, and going home to sleep or play video games. While activities at home cities were far more interesting with trips to go shopping, play paintball, and generally had more friends to hang out with and socialize with. Interaction with the greater Bozeman was limited to their previous experience in home cities, culture, and racial demographics of the areas. The shock of moving from far more diverse culture and population base resulted in some recommendations for the greater Bozeman area.

Participants explained the culture shocks and recommendations for MSU and the greater Bozeman area. From the interview responses, we established three themes that encompassed the participant's responses; Culture Shock, Recommendations for MSU, and experiences in the greater Bozeman community. As for culture shock, participants noted the difficulties of transitioning from a city to a more rural area. Participants said it is more difficult to find activities in Bozeman than it was in their larger hometowns. Participants also reiterated the difficulties of the different cultures in Bozeman and found it hard to relate to community members outside their athletic team. One respondent put the reasons for the culture shock very simply "so like it's for sure a culture shock because it's not that many people that look like me". All the interviewees had recommendations for MSU, the Bozeman community, and other out-of-state minority students. All the respondents stated they would not recommend MSU to out-of-state nonathlete minorities saying it would be too difficult of a transition without the solid communal atmosphere that their athletic team provides. The respondents then explained areas of MSU that could be improved outside of their athletic team. Respondents called for greater minority representation in staffing and student outreach programs. Respondents cited the lack of minority teachers and counselors attribute to the difficulties of feeling belonging. One respondent recommended, "if MSU made more of an initiative reaching out to minority students about resources available and also receive input from them, the atmosphere of MSU would feel more welcoming."

Implications

The big takeaway from these interviews was that the hardest challenge for out-of-state minority students was not having a community that shared their interests and experiences, other than their team. The implication this could have for the university in helping all students feel like they belong is by making an effort to recruit more out-of-state minority students and teachers. I reached out to admission counselor Sara Montrel to hear more about MSU's current recruitment efforts and stats. As of 2022, MSU reached out to 58% more minority students, but 56% more people in general. The increase in recruiting minority students may just be the result of more recruiting in general. MSU also lacks minority teachers and has a hard time attracting minority teachers because of the location. The students we interviewed mentioned they didn't think there were many more resources the university could provide to make them feel like they belonged. Without creating a diverse space, there is only so much MSU can do to make minority students feel like they belong.

Existing research about recruiting minority students provides some insight into how MSU can recruit and retain minority students better. One article called, *A Model for Recruitment and Retention of Minority Students*, has specific recommendations based on a survey of existing strategies. The article recommends focusing on the life experience of minority students the university is recruiting. This is the best way to make sure students are prepared for the experience ahead and understand the resources available to them before starting college. MSU has many different counseling departments available, but sometimes they can be hard to navigate or hear about. Emphasizing this in the recruitment process may be a good way to increase enrollment of minority students by seeing what resources match their specific needs. Tracking the progress of this initiative would also help see how MSU can recruit minority students better.

The implications this can have for the city of Bozeman is that hearing from minority residents about their barriers to belonging is the best way to address barriers. Part of the authenticity of our interviews came from having a black woman conducting the interviews. The city of Bozeman should consider the life experience and ethnicity of interviewees and how that may affect the stories they collect.

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Veterans Storytelling Project

Maggie Smiedala, Patrick Paraiso, Michele Smith, Mikal Mihelish



1

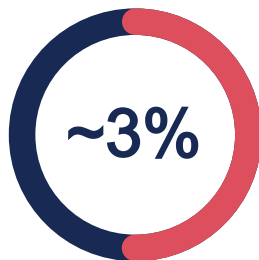
Introduction and Purpose

Significance

- This topic is significant because, “research suggests that classes and programs pertaining to Veterans’ unique experiences and challenges provide valuable opportunities for military and civilian students to learn from each other’s perspectives and to establish positive social connections” (Klaw et al., 2021)
- Potential exposure to traumatic experiences have been found to be linked to poorer outcomes in health, fitting in, emotional adjustment, productivity, perceived career support, and social engagement for SSM/V and civilians (Smith et al., 2015), so it is essential to help veterans adjust to the MSU community.



Statistics



Veteran Students



Using GI Bill

- ~16,703 Students at MSU
- ~526 are Veterans
- ~626 are using GI Bill

AIMS

1

Understand the challenges that veterans face as students at Montana State University

2

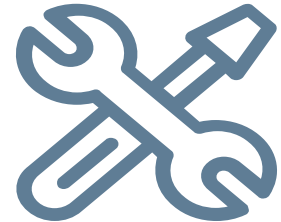
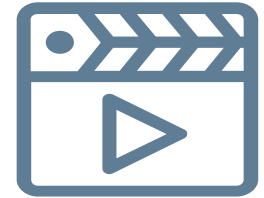
Understand how Montana State University can further support veteran students



2

Methodology

Demographics



Interview Questions

Background:

“Please tell me about your career. What branch were you a part of, what was your rank, did you deploy? If so, where and how many tours?”

Belongingness:

“To you, what does it feel like to ‘belong’ to the MSU community/campus”

“How does the University specifically support veterans?”

Resources and Support:

“Are there accessible resources for veterans on the MSU campus?”

3

Results



THEMES

1

Support from
Veterans Center

2

Age Gap

3

Non-traditional
Student

4

MSU Support

5

Military Friendly
school

“They get you all the information you need.. A great symposium for everybody who's coming in and then from there, they're really good about working with the VA like they have to, but they're also really good at keeping in touch and up to date with the vets and keeping their doors open to work out any issues.”



1

Support from Veteran's Center

“There are 17/18 year olds that have no idea what's going on in life. I'm sitting there like, this is all I'm supposed to do like I just show up, take notes and like learn. And yeah, that was a weird experience for me. Like being thrown back into high school.”



2

AGE GAP

“I'm a non-traditional student. I'm there to get what I need to do for my future and you know, I come with that goal kind of mentality that a general student probably doesn't have, because you know the college experience.”



3

Non - Traditional Students

“All those credits from the military, the school generally takes but they don't actually like apply to anything, like your basic core classes.”



4

MSU Support

“Yeah, I think the university does a good job of letting the veterans service office figure out what we need and then help us figure it out. Like MSU this year was rank 3 out of 1,800 schools for military friendliness, and all that. And that was because the Dean.”



5

Military Friendly School



4

Discussion

Comparison to Peer Reviewed Sources

“Non-Traditional Students”

“Lacking in Responsibility and work ethic”

“Top-Ten Military Friendly School”

“No sense of belonging”

“Life Experiences”

5

Implications



What can MSU improve?

1

Awareness of
Resources in
Gallatin Valley/MSU

2

Transcript Transfers

3

Ride Share Programs

4

Veteran
Events/Fundraising

5

Awareness of
Veterans Center



The image features a background of soldiers in silhouette, holding rifles, standing against a sunset sky. An American flag is overlaid on the left side, and a red wavy shape is in the top right corner. The word "Questions?" is written in a large, dark blue font across the center.

Questions?

Executive Summary- Veteran's Storytelling Project

Purpose:

The veteran's storytelling project aims to share stories of student veterans at Montana State University. Veterans have a unique experience of adjustment to student life after serving (Barry et al., 2019). Our goal was to understand Montana State's commitment to making veterans feel like they belong to the community. Additionally, we strived to discover the inside perspective of veterans for support within the MSU campus with mental health and physical wellness. This topic is significant because "research suggests that classes and programs pertaining to Veterans' unique experiences and challenges provide valuable opportunities for military and civilian students to learn from each other's perspectives and establish positive social connections" (Klaw et al., 2021). Additionally, potential exposure to traumatic experiences is linked to poorer health outcomes, fitting in, emotional adjustment, productivity, perceived career support, and social engagement for SSM/V and civilians (Smith et al., 2015), so it is essential to help veterans adjust to the MSU community. Veterans with all time and component experience deserve to adjust to college with just as many resources as normal students. Telling Veteran's stories from MSU help the community provide resources for them to adjust to student life.

Methodology:

We contacted the Montana State University Veterans Center to ask for three eligible veterans on the MSU campus who would be interested in participating in an interview. Our group incentivized the interviewees by offering a \$25 gift card for Amazon for their time. Three caucasian male participants, veterans of the US Navy and US Coastguard, were asked a series of questions about their experiences during their service and their time at Montana State University as a student. The interviews were recorded and transcribed through zoom. Additionally, a codebook was created through NVivo, highlighting five different themes.

Results:

The participants went into depth about their life experiences through their military service and life as MSU students. All three participants were males; the first participant was in the Navy as a diesel mechanic, the second participant was in the Navy as an aviation mechanic, and the last was in the Coast Guard, holding many different roles over his time serving. Through the interviews, we were able to find five major themes. The themes are support received from the Veteran Center, the age gap between veterans and other students, what it means to be a nontraditional student, what MSU can do to support veterans on campus further, and MSU's national ranking for military friendliness. The first theme was a sense of community through the Veteran office. Through the veteran center, participants were able to make connections with others who 'understand' them. The veteran center provided our participants a place where they could feel safe and experience the same type of culture, they had in the military with others like them. The second theme was the age gap between veterans and other students. Most students enroll in college right after high school, but most enroll at least four years after high school or even longer for our veterans on campus. Late enrollment can impact their sense of belonging and academic studies. For instance, many felt as if being older than their student peers caused the biggest problem in adjusting to life on campus. The third theme was "nontraditional student." Our participants have different life experiences than the "regular" student. The majority feel they do not have the same priorities as traditional students. A traditional student, as mentioned, has different priorities than our veterans; this would entail the fact that many of our interviewees felt they wanted to get in and get out rather than prioritizing a social life or going to parties. Instead, finishing their degree was their most important goal. The fourth theme is 'MSU Support.' Interviewees stressed the ideas of transferring credits to fulfill basic core classes, more

involvement in the school and community, and more awareness or help with ride programs. Community involvement is important for veterans to feel like they belong, especially when it comes to campus events or the Streamline routes to help them get to campus. Lastly, the fifth theme regarded MSU being recently named a Top Ten Military Friendly School by the website MilitaryFriendly.com, ranking third in the nation among peer institutions. Each veteran spoke thoroughly of the contribution made by Joe Schumacher, the head of the veteran's office, and how much support he provides.

Implications:

Research shows that the broader veteran population also finds difficulty connecting socially with traditional students. DeCoster discusses how today's student veterans are non-traditional, such as being older, married, having kids, and having different life experiences (2018). In our findings and broader literature, veterans tend to view other "traditional" students as immature or teeny boppers (Yeager & Rennie, 2020). Additionally, Social connectedness and a sense of belonging are "central to understanding the relationships between military identity and veteran wellbeing following the transition from military to civilian life" (Flack & Kite, 2021). People just want to belong. Like the storytelling project, research participants would like to see better coordination between veterans and university staff (Rattray et al., 2019). Our findings fit with what other researchers have found and relate to the bigger population. Findings are important because they illustrate Montana state veterans' sense of belongingness here at MSU. Having a sense of belonging is important for students to work towards their goals and be successful later in life (Umucu et al., 2022). Through our study, we found that veterans were pleased with the resources and services offered by MSU. Regarding institutional and local policy change, there are other areas where the community of Bozeman and MSU can help Veterans. Some veterans assume the only resources for veterans are in Helena, but that is not the case. Also, it would be helpful for MSU to work with credits awarded through the service to fulfill core credits. Faculty and staff must work together to help veteran students succeed. They should be made aware of the unique barriers and personal strengths these students possess because most staff at universities currently lack these (Borsari et al., 2017). Ride programs and buses specifically for veteran students could benefit individuals who do not live near campus. A few more changes that could be beneficial could be community boards for veteran events and bringing more funding to the veteran's center to help students with counseling, tutoring, events, and social connections. Social and community-based activities may reflect the veteran's sense of belonging (Adam et al., 2012).

The takeaway message is made clear to the city of Bozeman. In our study, we found that veterans were pleased with the resources and services offered by MSU. There are other areas that the community of Bozeman and MSU can do to help this group feel as if they were able to belong. The age gap was the biggest concern, along with worrying about the transfer of credits earned in the military not transferring over to fulfill core classes at MSU. Also, more awareness of the resources in Gallatin Valley for veterans; some veterans assume most of their resources are located in Helena. Another area the city of Bozeman could help veterans with is transportation. Some students and veterans must commute from Livingston or other areas. A rideshare program or a public transportation bus could help many people out. This topic should be continued to be researched to see how their experiences are changing. A follow-up study is critical. Some of the veterans we interviewed were only in their first or second years of college and only male. An interview after they graduate would be beneficial. Asking some of the same questions and adding some new ones would give us a better understanding of what it is like to be in university after serving.

Annex A.- Themes and Quotes

THEMES	QUOTES
Veteran's Center	"It's awesome it keeps our own little community together and you know we all support each other there, all the people that work at the Vet office are also veterans." Another example is, "I voluntarily went there before I started working just to have a little bit of the same kind of culture."
Age Gap	There are 17/18-year old's that have no idea what's going on in life. I'm sitting there like, I just show up, take notes and like learning. It was like I was being thrown back into high school." And finally, "I think a lot of time, too, just what separates a lot of veterans from you know relating with other students is just that age gap.
Nontraditional Student	"I'm a non-traditional student. I'm there to get what I need to do for my future, and I come with that goal, the kind of mentality that a general student probably doesn't have, because they focus more on college experience." Also mentioned was, "I come from graduating high school in 2007. So, to jump in right now, I don't have that student experience that most of my peers do- so I think in an older way I guess."

MSU Support	“I think having military credits apply would help a lot with trying to avoid basic core classes and help start getting into your little higher-level classes.” Veterans also would like to see more awareness of resources in Bozeman. One veteran comment, “Informing veterans that they can stay in Bozeman, or Belgrade, to go to the (VA) instead of traveling to Helena”. Lastly, there was frustration at the lack of ride services to campus, as one mentioned to us, “Maybe there's a program I don't know like a Rideshare program, or like a bus program shuttle kind of deal from Livingston.”
Military Friendly School	“I think the university does a good job of letting the veterans service office figure out what we need and then help us figure things out.”

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