



Racialized physical spaces: The
importance of understanding
buses as sites of belonging

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Belonging

Belonging is the perception of being part of something larger than yourself, where a person does not need to assimilate a different identity (Ahn & Davis, 2020).

Belonging has been observed in the formation of a community (Slaten et al., 2018). Most typically these communities take place within the classroom, friends, sports, etc, but what about an environment that forms part of students' everyday life, the bus?

Why the bus?

“...space is racialized, which fosters an understanding of both race and the psychology of racism as inherently structural, even when examining individual-level thought processes and social interactions.”(Bonam et al., 2017)

What is the reach of this space?

The bus can cause a lot of stress for many students as it can be unreliable and affect students' schedules (Hany & Thigpen, 2019).

For racially- and ethnically- minority (REM) students being surrounded by privileged students, typically White, can cause the perception of being an outsider (Weinstein et al., 2022).

Research Question

- How do transportation spaces (i.e., buses) serve as locations that communicate messages of belonging to racially and ethnically minoritized (REM) students?
 - What messages do these locations communicate to REM students?
 - How do these messages affect the well-being of REM students (i.e., physically and psychologically)?

Intersectionality

To be able to answer these questions implies adding an intersectional view of pre-existing literature looking into the important of the bus and how this forms part of students' lives.

Intersectionality is the integration of the multiple identities that influence everyday life and social relations (Phoenix & Pattynama, 2006).

By being able to ask students about their identities (i.e race/ethnicity, first-generation, socio-economic status, etc.) we are able to understand how all parts of identity come together to form students' experiences on the bus.

Methods (participants; pilot data)

N=28

58.6% are first generation students

Most of the students were Latinx or Asian American

18 students were of lower-middle socioeconomic status

10 students were of higher-middle socioeconomic status

On average the students were 19.7 years old ($SD=1$)

The average GPA was 3.43 ($SD=0.47$)

Methods (procedures; pilot data)

- Completed an online survey through SONA (
 - SONA→ an undergraduate research participant pool
 - About 30 minutes to complete
 - Students received course credit for participating
 - Quantitative and qualitative data
- Used qualitative data to be able to express their experiences:
 - 1) How do students describe the experience of taking the bus?
 - 2) What messages do these experiences communicate to the students about their place at UCSC?
- Data Analysis Plan
 - Inductive coding
 - Code creation led by the dataset

How do students describe the experience of taking the bus?

There have been four major themes that have appeared throughout the qualitative responses.

Preliminary Results: How do students describe the experience of taking the bus?

Themes	Percentages
Feeling Unsafe and Uncomfortable	64.3%
Feeling Confused, Crowded, and Lacking	64.3%
Experiencing Rude	39.3%
Having a pleasant and respectful experience if bus etiquette is followed	67.86%

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Feeling Confused, Crowded, and Lacking

“...The helplessness when you've been waiting for 20+ minutes and finally a bus comes then it skips you and now you're even later to class....”

-First-generation WOC, working class background

Feeling of Unsafe and Uncomfortable

“...Students constantly crowd the bus and will push and shove when trying to exit the bus. On many occasions, I have been hit by other people...” - First-generation WOC, lower-middle class background

Having a pleasant and respectful experience if bus etiquette is followed

“My experiences on the bus have always been pleasant. **I enjoy quiet spaces, especially when it comes to public transportation, and the buses exceed my expectations. Buses are never [too] loud and the riders always follow the rules that the bus driver has set in place.** Even if I were to have a conversation, I know that no one would be listening in or be distracted/disturbed by me.” PID 14

Experienced Rudeness

“...I have met students which were really rude to the bus drivers and doing behaviors they should not have done, however, there is some that are really nice. Most people tend to say thank you to the bus driver when leaving.” PID 1

What messages do these experiences communicate to the students about their place at UCSC?

Students say there is no impact on belonging	44%
Students say they feel as if they belong	32%
Students say they feel as if they do not belong	24%

Discussion

The current study serves to provide support to the already existing literature regarding the impact of the bus on the overall student well-being. We add to literature by examining how the bus serves as a racialized physical space.

Moving forward future scholars can take these results and view how previous experience with the bus, before arriving at a college campus, can impact their views on the bus while in college.

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