

Participatory action research (PAR) tools provide opportunities to examine the efficacy of LGBTQ+ mentoring and student engagement programs at ASU from the perspective of the student. One such tool, PhotoVoice, is particularly well suited toward problem-posing education, and has been increasingly adopted in studies of youth, health care, minorities, and in university program assessment (Catalani & Minkler, 2010; Strack, Magill & McDonagh, 2004). PhotoVoice empowers individuals (especially those in underrepresented or marginalized communities) to “identify, represent, and enhance their community through a specific photographic technique” (Wang & Burris; 1997, p. 369).

Based on documentary photographic principles, PhotoVoice allows members of a community to capture the central narratives of their lives, and, in interweaving their narratives, construct a metanarrative that captures shared experiences and challenges. By allowing groups to represent themselves and tell their stories through a process of collective selection, contextualization, and codification of photos into a visual metanarrative, this form of group autoethnography allows traditionally underheard communities to self-advocate and catalyze change (Wang & Burris; 1997; PhotoVoice Mission Statement, <https://photovoice.org/vision-and-mission/>). In the case of ASU’s sexual and gender minority students, PhotoVoice also offers a powerful lens through which to examine and make sense of their own identities and the spaces within a larger LGBTQ+ community they inhabit.

Because photographs provide a powerful way to narrate our everyday lives, the HUES community identity blog offers members of the HUES mentoring program with a place to share individual experiences and perceptions of what it means to have an LGBTQ+ identity and to collectively create a STORY of what it means to be part of an LGBTQ+ community following PhotoVoice methodologies. This project allows HUES participants to chronicle their evolving LGBTQ+ identities and the identity-related challenges they face, creating and reflecting upon individual and communal identity as part of a participatory action research process.

Weekly photo submissions. Participants will upload at least one submission per week. Submissions may be either photos or other images; Participants should accompany the image with a brief caption explaining how/why the image selected represents their experience, feelings, or thoughts pertaining to their LGBTQ+ identity or their interactions with the LGBTQ+ community.

Submission guidelines. Image uploads may be either participants’ own photography or images uploaded from the internet; if images submitted are not participants’ own photography or work, the source of image must be indicated. Images should not be sexually explicit in nature.

Image comments or discussion threads. Comment threads are visible to all participants in the community blog. Participants are encouraged to post reflective, appropriate responses to their peers' images. For example, a participant may reply to a peer's post by sharing their own perspective on what the image means to them. Comments should never disparage or include disparaging language toward another participant.

Confidentiality and disclosure. Upon entry to the HUES study, all participants will be issued a unique USERID with which to access and post to the community blog, thus allowing anonymity from other participants if desired. Participants may upload photographs or images of themselves with the understanding that doing so constitutes potential and voluntary identity disclosure.

Participants should demonstrate sensitivity when uploading photographs or images that include other ASU students, faculty or staff. Photographs or images should never personally identify other ASU students, faculty or staff. By typing name on Primary Consent and submitting mentoring application, participants indicate agreement to terms of confidentiality.

Semester-end focus group. All research study participants will be asked to participate in a focus group at the end of the semester. During this focus group, participants will identify common themes and issues from images gathered over the semester, reflecting on their experiences and growth in terms of identity development, personal realizations, or community affinity.