

OR-DRPD-ARJ2020: We Are UF Too: Exploring the Experiences of Black Graduate Students

We propose a two-fold approach to address the challenges of dealing with racism as Black graduate students. We will establish an action research collective centered on racial healing, scholar identity development, and critical research. We will employ critical participatory action research (CPAR) (McTaggart, 1997), radical healing (French et al., 2020), photovoice (Wang, 1999), and photo elicitation (Boucher, 2018) as psychological and methodological frameworks to explore and attempt to dismantle systems of oppression faced by Black graduate students at UF. We seek to build community within the collective using CPAR which dismantles the research participant dichotomy and considers both parties equal participants in systemic change (McTaggart, 1997). CPAR will be used to assist the collective with understanding inequitable practices within institution. This allows for Black graduate students to highlight and advocate for change with racial inequalities within UF. Racial healing must occur given the current climate of our society. We will use the psychological framework of radical healing which is designed to assist marginalized groups with coping with racial trauma that negatively impact their well-being (French et al., 2020). We will use this framework to resist oppression and move towards liberation with our Black graduate students through five key components: critical consciousness, strength and resilience, emotional and social support, radical hope, and cultural authenticity. We must be healthy and whole in order to engage in such heavy work. Thus, this approach is best suited for this project because it allows the participants to engage in racial reconciliation.

With the use of critical participatory action research and radical healing as psychological frameworks, we found it fitting to employ photovoice and photo-elicitation as innovative data collection tools that move beyond traditional norms of research. The goals of photovoice are to record and reflect on personal and community strengths and concerns, promote critical dialogue within a group dynamic, and to reach policy makers in order to create more equitable policies and practices. Coupled with photo-elicitation interviews (PEI) (Boucher, 2018), this study will allow participants to use imagery as an alternative method to amplify their experiences. We will employ photovoice and PEI as tools of counter-storytelling to expose, analyze, and challenge majoritarian stories of race for Black graduate students (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002). These personal narratives situated around images will recount individuals' experiences with racism at UF while providing guidance and recommendations to faculty, staff, and stakeholders. Together CPAR, radical healing, photovoice, and photo-elicitation will allow the participants to take a deep dive in exploring issues of power and oppression within the university context.

We will monitor our progress by tracking the stages of the research project (recruitment, interviews, data coding) using CPAR as a research lab to promote scholarly identity development, collaborative ethnography to promote sense of belonging, and workshops as an expertise of the Co-PIs to expand beyond qualitative research. Lastly, we will assess the productivity of the team by reviewing conference proposals, publications, research briefs, and other scholarly events.