



University of Phoenix
**School of Advanced
Studies**

Exploring Intersections of Race, Gender, Culture, and Power: Collaborative Critical Autoethnography and Model for Reform

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“Race is a chimera - both a grotesque monster and a figment of our individual and collective imaginations. ... (It) is deeply woven into the nation's fabric in ways that make it nearly impossible to unravel without tearing the whole society asunder” (Ladson-Billings, 2020, pp. 225, 227).

Background

Over the past decade, the fabric of American culture has become more frayed.

Police killings of people of color have seemed escalated, represented by the tragic deaths of Trayvon Martin, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and George Floyd.

Background

A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center (Shuster, 2018) revealed major gaps in U.S. schools in the instruction of the history of slavery.

That was followed by the release of *The 1619 Project* (2019), launched by the *New York Times* to educate students about the impact of slavery on American institutions.

Background

White rage is not about visible violence, but rather it works its way through the courts, the legislatures, and a range of government bureaucracies. It wreaks havoc subtly, almost imperceptibly. ... Working the halls of power, it can achieve its ends far more effectively, far more destructively (Anderson, 2017, p. 3).

Background

State legislatures and school boards across the country began using dystopian rhetoric to errantly apply the banner of Critical Race Theory (CRT) to any curriculum designed to educate students about the impact of slavery (Sawchuk, 2021; Waxman, 2021).

Problem

Historically, there has not been a model to address systemic racism. This study explores the use of collaborative critical autoethnography as an approach to this issue.

Purpose

Our purpose is to interrogate our individual experiences of racial inequity across race, gender, age, culture, and power.

Research Questions

RQ1: How have racial microaggressions shaped our individual experiences and perceptions of embedded racism?

RQ2: How have the intersections of race, gender, culture, and power shaped our perceptions of embedded racism?

Conceptual Framework: Critical Race Theory, Microaggressions, and Intersectionality

Critical Race Theory, purposed “to remind its readers how deeply issues of racial ideology and power continue to matter in American life” (Crenshaw, et al., 1995, pp. xi-xii).

Conceptual Framework: Critical Race Theory, Microaggressions, and Intersectionality

We identify experiences as *microaggressions*, defined by Solórzano as “one form of systemic everyday racism that serves to keep those at the racial margins in their place ... layered assaults based on the race, gender, class ... of a person of color” (2020, p. 178).

Conceptual Framework: Critical Race Theory, Microaggressions, and Intersectionality

Crenshaw posits the use of *intersectionality* to “account for multiple grounds of identity when considering how the social world is constructed” (1995, p. 358).

Stovall (2020) observes, “As engaged researchers, because our lives are intersectional, our research should reflect said intersections (p. 198).

Methodology and Data Collection

Autoethnography provides the power to interrogate personal experiences and apply insights to cultural epiphanies (Bochner & Ellis, 2016; Denzin, 2014; Ellis, et al., 2011).

Boylorn and Orbe define autoethnography as “cultural analysis through personal narrative” (2014, p. 17), highlighting the method as “a means to enhance existing understandings of lived experiences enacted within social locations situated within larger systems of power, oppression, and social privilege” (2014, p. 19).

Methodology and Data Collection

Critical co-constructed autoethnography is informed by “critical pedagogy and critical race theory ... (intended) as a way for collaborating activist researchers to reflect on the tempo, uncertainty, and complexity of research relationships that cross boundaries into more personal spaces such as friendships” (Cann and DeMeulenaere, 2012, p. 176 in Hughes & Pennington, 2017, p. 18).

Methodology and Data Collection

- As collaborative critical autoethnographers, we are both participants and researchers (Ellis, 2009; Chang, 2008; Boylorn & Orbe, 2014).
- Shaquanah, a Black woman in her late thirties, is a middle school curriculum specialist and teacher trainer.
- Alyncia, a Black woman in her early-fifties, is a college dean.
- Jim, a white male in his late sixties, is a retired principal and current doctoral instructor.

Methodology and Data Collection

Our work together spans projects and years.

Our data include written narratives and transcribed and remembered conversations.

As we have shared our experiences, we have come to understand more about each other and ourselves.

Shaquanah's Reflections and Reactions

- Just get home ALIVE!
- Should I start recording?
- Supervisory position

Alyncia's Reflections and Reactions

- High school English teacher
- Driving while Black
- The 'first' but not celebrated

Jim's Reflections and Reactions

- Deep South heritage
- Winn Dixie
- University of Florida

Discussion and Implications



Deo Vindice: Motto of the Confederacy

"With God, our Defender" or

"Under God as our Vindicator"

"Where God is the Avenger"

"Because God is the Champion"

"With God as [our] Avenger"

"God the origin of [our] Defender"

Discussion and Implications

RESTRICTIONS:

1 Until January 1, 1975, this property shall be used for single family residential use only, and only one residence shall be erected on each lot, and shall not be sold, occupied by, or leased to anyone not a member of the Caucasian race. Each dwelling shall face the same way the lot faces, and shall cost not less than Three Thousand (\$3,000.00) Dollars, and the ground floor area of any dwelling, exclusive of open porches, terraces, and garages, shall not be less than 800 square feet in the case of a one-story house; nor less than 600 square feet in the case of a two-story house. No dwelling shall be constructed on a plot having an area of less than 5,000 square feet, nor a frontage of less than 50 feet. No dwelling shall be erected nearer than 25 feet to the front lot line, or nearer than $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet to any side street line, or nearer than $7\frac{1}{2}$ feet to any interior lot line

2 No temporary trailer, tent, garage or other outbuilding shall be erected or used as a residence. Servant's quarters may be erected and used on the

AVENUE

Significance

We believe collaborative critical conversations, while at first uncomfortable, can serve as models to generate deeper understanding of individual and collective histories.

Closing

Toni Morrison asks, “How does one become a racist? Since no one is born a racist, one learns othering, not by lecture or instruction, but by example” (2017, p. 6).

Only when cloth is worn bare is its essence most clear. It can then be rewoven, new threads built on old, creating a stronger, more vibrant weave. That is our hope for our schools and our country.

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Questions?

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