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"*Ubuntu* - I Am Because We Are": A Grounded Theory Study of Community (Un)Belonging

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Abstract

An expanding body of research focuses on racialized stress and its influence on the experiences of BIPOC populations. Less research addresses the influence of interracial rejection on the overall perceived sense of belonging of BIPOC individuals experience. Even less research centers on the combined influence of interracial and intraracial rejection. This grounded theory (GT) study explores the compounded experiential influence of these phenomena on the experiences of an intergenerational group of BIPOC individuals—specifically Black Americans-- as they conduct Participatory Action Research (PAR) within their community. This research brief concludes by offering solutions to address this phenomenon in different sectors.

Purpose

The purpose of this qualitative study is to provide an initial exploration into the effects of interracial rejection, stress, and trauma on a small, diverse, intergenerational group of Black American community stakeholders and community researchers conducting PAR. Using constructivist grounded theory, (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2020), this study seeks to establish a new conceptual lens through which to view this compounded influence of interracial and intraracial rejection on lived experiences.

Discussion

The *presence of a collective mindset* was an ongoing theme and speaks to the concept of belonging as an ongoing human need (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Collectivism is relevant within the context of the theory of belonging and the way it contributes to the overall experience of intergroup and intragroup rejection. All participants discussed a sense of shared responsibility. The interrelatedness could explain why intragroup discrimination was so impactful. Participants believed those who engaged in intergroup discrimination did not comprehend this concept. However, it was notable that those who engaged in intragroup discrimination were not described as not comprehending the concept of collectivism. This could warrant further exploration.

That participants revealed experiences of *intergroup and intragroup discrimination*, and the political and social implications of these phenomena. Participants discussed how the phenomenon operates from a macro-level and a micro-level. This is consistent with the concept of Critical Race Theory (CRT) as developed by Crenshaw (1990) and Bell (1995). This finding was highlighted the expertise held by community members, despite the fact the academy at times does not recognize the knowledge derived from lived experience (Yosso, 2005).

Conclusion

There are interdisciplinary implications that can be gleaned from this research. Researchers can seek out projects that center the experiences and voices of communities, particularly those who are minoritized. Participatory Action Research is a tool that can aid in this process. Policymakers can engage residents in the legislation process by holding town hall meetings and engaging in collaborative practices like participatory budgeting.

Educational entities can ensure that their culturally relevant teaching practices include an awareness of belonging and collectivism. Communities can engage residents through the

formation of civic associations and community gatherings. Further research must be done to gain insight into the ways these practices work in different communities. Building from these and similar studies can provide such insight.

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Author Biography

Turea M. Hutson (she/her), MEd is a second-year student in the Drexel University PhD program studying Education Leadership and Policy. She currently serves as the co-editor of the Emerging Voices in Education (EViE) Journal and the AERA Division G Graduate Student Executive Committee. She is a Cum Laude and Distinguished Dean's List graduate of Arcadia University, where she received her BA in Elementary Education and her MEd in Literacy Studies and TESOL. Social justice and equity were a primary focus of Hutson's undergraduate and graduate studies, and she spent much of her time researching ways to make schools a more equitable space for marginalized students to learn. Hutson's interest in education policy led her to run for the school board in her hometown. She served for seven years. She served as president of the board for three years. Hutson's research interests include equity, education policy, race, racism, racial trauma, intersectionality, autism spectrum disorder in diverse communities, and student identity.