[00:00:00] [jingle] It's time for meaningful insights, every researcher's delight, it's Data Night! [jingle]

[Kasha Ely] Hello, and welcome to Data Night with the Odum Institute. I'm your host, Kasha Ely, and we have three very exciting guests joining us today for this special episode focusing on the 18th Annual Qualitative Research Summer Intensive, coming up this summer. Our guests today are three scholars, who will be teaching courses at this year's intensive: Dr. Kelly Jackson, associate professor in the School of Social Work at Arizona State University; Dr. Keon Gilbert in the Department of Behavioral Science and Health Education at St. Louis University's College for Public Health and Social Justice; and Dr. Rashawn Ray, David M. Rubenstein fellow at the Brookings Institutions, Associate Professor of Sociology and Executive Director of the Laboratory of Applied Social Science Research at the University of Maryland, College Park.

So today, I'd like to start off by talking about the courses [00:01:00] you will all be teaching at QRSI 2021. Dr. Jackson, you will be teaching Qualitative Research With Historically Oppressed Populations Using Cultural Attunement Across the Research Lifecycle. Can you tell us a little about that?

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] Sure to put it simply, cultural attunement is working in relationship with another. So, typically, in my field of social work, we see that on an individual level with clients, with families, with groups. But what I think I'm proposing in this new, dynamic class is to culturally attune ourselves to research as well. So, the research participants, the communities that we go in and we serve. To ourselves looking kind of reflexively at our relationships, to the research, and to the participants, and to the field in general. So, that's it.

[Kasha Ely] Great, thank you. Dr. Gilbert, your [00:02:00] first course is Photovoice: Powerful Images That Communicate Current Realities to Direct Social Change. What will you be focusing on in this course?

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] So in the course, we'll be talking about the method of Photovoice, which is a really unique way of doing focus groups with - sorry, I have to start over. Dr. Ray distracted me.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] See, this is what happens when you do stuff with your friends. Sorry, sorry, we're gonna get it together in like two minutes, sorry, all right.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] And we haven't seen each other in a while, so, I'm gonna start messing with folks in the chat, so get ready, get ready.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] We're going to be serious, all right.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] We'll have to turn the chat off and block them out, block them out. I'll try my best to start over. So, in the Photovoice course, it's a really exciting course that allows us to [00:03:00] bring focus group methodology with images. And it's a great way to engage communities, to hear their voices, and to see the images that they bring around certain topics and issues, as well as for them to help visualize and articulate different solutions. For many of the problems that focus, that you use in Photovoice to try to understand both the problem and the issues and challenges as well as assets and also thinking about solutions. So I'm excited that we'll have an opportunity to talk to others about how Photovoice can become a powerful tool for social change.

[Kasha Ely] Awesome. Thank you. And Dr. Ray, your first course is Using Qualitative Inquiry to Contribute to Social Justice. Can you tell us a little bit about that one?

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Sure. So part of what I aim to do in this course is to walk, walk students through and participants through a process of thinking about social justice from the [00:04:00] outset and the various ways that they might be able to contribute to social justice, whether that be on the community level, whether that be on the policy level, whether that be thinking about some of the various ways that people might go about doing some of their work. And so part of it is thinking about the various ways that qualitative research can be used and instead of just taking a Grounded Theory approach, is saying, do we have a question and if we get a particular answer to that question, how might that answer be able to contribute to social justice efforts, at the individual level, at the community level, at the policy level? And then it's walking them through the various ways, not only to collect data, but to think about how to distribute their data and the various ways they might think about who they talk to and be deliberate as they go through that process.

[Kasha Ely] Great, thank you. And finally, Drs. Gilbert and Ray, you guys have a joint course this year, Learning from Marginalized Voices via Community-based [00:05:00] Participatory Research. Can you tell me a little bit about that?

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] So one of the things that's critically important and growing with a greater sense of urgency is the ways that we engage communities to identify solutions that help us to address racial and health equity. And what we'll talk about in the course are different strategies that have been used historically, as well as talk about current social movements, and how that becomes a form of both community organizing, community building and community engagement.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Yeah, I think part of what we wanted to do with this course, I mean, I know for me, was to really illuminate the work of scholars who are just doing amazing work in this area. And I mean, Dr. Gilbert is, I think, one of the best, hands down, at this. I mean the work that he's been doing in St. Louis with barbershops, is, I think, exemplary for what it means to include the community in that process because [00:06:00] we have to be clear that oftentimes people, particularly people of color, marginalized people, poor people, feel used up. They feel like guinea pigs. And I think researchers are becoming more conscious of that. And at times, people can feel like guinea pigs even when the researchers are not trying to do that. So, part of it is giving people skills, part of it is giving people a reflective lens and an approach by which to include the community. And I think Dr. Gilbert's barbershop study exemplifies that by including community members, from barbers, and hairstylists, and health care providers and people in the community. And then importantly, is doing follow up with, with people, to ensure that they know what you're doing to get their, to get their insights, to ensure that you're representing them in the way that they should be represented. So a lot of qualitative researchers take this to heart and want to make sure they get it right. They don't want to use up the people who they're working with as collaborators. Instead [00:07:00] they want to work with them and part of that is not just ensuring that we're doing that from a research standpoint, but ensuring transparency, ensuring even research accountability and ensuring that the people who we are working with and, to be blunt, studying, that they feel part of the process and that they're able to contribute. So what we're going to do in that course is to be able to share our experiences and also some top-line takeaways on how people can effectively implement that in their own research.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] If I could add just a couple of things, and I think Dr. Jackson and Dr. Ray would agree, we often have, historically, challenged quantitative research in many ways because it's often viewed as drive-by research. But qualitative researchers can be involved and engaged in what we might call drive-by research as well, where we go and we do interviews or focus groups and we don't [00:08:00] provide a structure to feedback or get engagement of interpretation of the results, as well as how to, how to present the results to communities, as well as to other audiences that we might want to disseminate our work to. And so, I think what's critically important is making sure that as a qualitative researcher, you also are involved and engaged in making sure that you create equitable structures for your research as well.

[Kasha Ely] Great, thank you. I want to keep going and focus on this recurring theme of involving participants in the research process, design, analysis in meaningful ways. What are the benefits of engaging participants in this way? Particularly when it comes to research involving historically oppressed and marginalized communities.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] Who's that for? Sorry.

[Kasha Ely] Anyone can jump in now, sorry.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Kelly, Kelly, you want to go first?

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] No, you go ahead, you go ahead. [00:09:00]

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Well, look, I think it's vital because for too long, people of color and marginalized groups have either been left out of the research process or they've been used up by the research process. And part of what we want to do in all of our courses is to recenter the people who we're working with, and I think the language that we use is really important. And I also think it's important, as the professorate and as the The Graduate School pipeline becomes more diverse, that we are in the community and that we're aiming to show that we come from the community. And that we are part of the community because trust is a big deal. And the distrust that people have of research, of science, of government is a rational distrust. It is a valid distrust. And the only way that we're going to deal with that is to be involved in those communities. And so one thing that I think all of us aim to highlight to the participants in our courses, [00:10:00] is that if you're going to study these communities, you need to be willing to be a part of these communities, and go into these communities. You can't simply take and leave. They've seen that, they can smell it from a mile away. And you're not gonna get far from them because they're savvy and smart. So, part of what has to happen is we have to realize their research is a two-way street and the various things that we're aiming to do with our course is, if people take them all, they go, they will go through a process of how to come out on the other end with just an, almost instinctively, centering the community when you go into it, based on the questions you ask, based on, based on how you think about snowballing, based on how you think about sample selection. I mean, all of this becomes being about, it comes down to being a part of the community rather than just, compared to just studying the community. And I think that distinction is really important.

[Kasha Ely] Definitely. [00:11:00] Anyone else want to jump in? I saw some unmuting. Okay.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] You go ahead, Kelly. I guess one of the things I'll add is I think part of, think what people will be able to learn or take away from each of our courses is an understanding of not just sort of the how-to's, but also different ways of listening to communities and different ways of engaging them. As was noted by both Dr. Ray and by, and Dr. Jackson earlier, communities are certainly feeling over researched and part of that is because we are asking questions that they answer in many different ways and overtime, and communities are demanding that the questions that we ask in our research move from just documenting and identifying problems, but, but getting us towards solutions and they want to be heavily [00:12:00] involved and, as they should be, in articulating what those solutions should be and also the implementation and evaluation of those, of those solutions and other decision-making processes.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] And I was just gonna add that, you know, traditionally academia and research and how it's conducted, it's very colonial, colonialistic, in the sense that we teach our researchers, our PhD students, to go into a community to exploit from that community, like Dr. Ray said, extract data and information from that community for our own personal benefit. So when you think about our, you know, our 10-year requirements, when you think about achieving a level of, I don't [00:13:00] know, prestige in academia, it's really about publication. And so, based on that system of exploitation in many ways, is where a lot, a lot of researchers are situated. So, I think what our courses are pushing back against is just the very notion of, you know, what is considered good research and what is considered important research. So, really trying to emphasize that we have a responsibility, not only to publish an article in a journal that maybe, you know, 10 people will read, but also to make change within these communities, to challenge policy, to develop new kind of laws to inform, to inform our, our leaders about what needs to happen. And how that we can help eliminate some of these extreme disparities that we continue [00:14:00] to see. So I just wanted to emphasize that, too, and I think that was my original concern was with your, was your question of this idea of well, why is it beneficial to involve participants at? And the problem is with the question in itself in that we, we don't even see that necessarily as an inherent strength, that we as researchers have a responsibility to. We see it almost as like, oh goodness, why would we want to do that, when we're really kind of more self-motivated. So that was just my, some of my thoughts.

[Kasha Ely] Amazing, thank you all. Does anyone else have anything to add before we move on? What skills would a researcher need to conduct qualitative research, in any communities, marginalized, marginalized communities perhaps in particular. Is it just proper education, communication, communication skills, or, is it experience within that community necessary as well?

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] [00:15:00] It's a great question and a difficult one to answer. You know, some of it has to do with your own orientation, as a, as a person, your connection to humanity, and the ways that you even interpret your own training. I think part of academic training, or professional organizations and disciplines, there are certain ways that we are trained and if you are, if you want to be a traditional academic then you adhere to, sort of, certain boundaries and rules. If you want to be a transformative academic and researcher and scholar activist, then you push the boundaries of the ways that you were trained and prepared by your respective disciplines. And I think qualitative methods certainly has its place, as well as quantitative [00:16:00] methods as well. I think Dr. Ray's work has helped to push some of the boundaries in terms of how we think about not only race class, gender and place, but the intersections across are really helpful and instructive in those ways, as well as documenting social movements as important ways, that we help to advance a sense of both racial and health equity. And so I think part of it is how can we gain the skills from a foundational perspective, but then also push the boundaries of, of those foundations?

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Yeah, yeah I mean, I think it comes down to empathy and understanding that we can have all the research skills necessary, but when you go into a community, particularly a new community, a community that you don't live in or that you have infrequent, you need to be willing to spend the time there. To gain trust, understanding [00:17:00] to learn the cultural and social norms of the place. You can't simply instantly go in and start collecting data. There is an incubator period and there is a process by which to gain, to gain access to entry. And, and I think that includes no matter who people are. Now, granted, there are a lot of communities that are unfortunately similar based on their socio-economic and racial profiles around the country, but they are distinctly different communities. So, a community in Washington, DC, or St. Louis, or a place on the West Coast, may be similar in terms of their typologies. But the people who live there that, the, the spaces where people frequent, yeah, it may be a church or a community center or a barbershop, but learning about the history of those places becomes important. Because part of what you want to do as a researcher when you go into a new community, is to not stand out like a sore thumb. And that, that just doesn't have to do with race, that, that has to do with your ability to be able to talk [00:18:00] about a space and be part of a space, and if we go back to some of the classic ethnographic and qualitative studies, the ethnographers talk about spending time in those places. And I think at times we've gotten away from that. Now, I think the other thing we'll aim to do in our courses is hopefully show people, because look, the, the clock is ticking and people think about publishing and people think about getting jobs and keeping jobs. So we, I think we'll share strategies by which you can collect data as you go along and still publish as you go along, but at the same time, you have to understand the importance of empathy and, and understanding, and how it's difficult to train that in someone. So taking a set of courses won't do that. That's something that you have to come to bear with yourself. And again, people will recognize that because people are tired of being studying without changes being made. So, what people are gonna want to hear, is what are you going to do, what are you going to do with the information, what are you going to do with what I tell [00:19:00] you? And you need to be able to answer those questions on the front end. You need to know what you're going to do, and who you're going to talk to. That would dictate the access you're gonna have. And, and the other thing, there are a series of gates keepers who are in these communities for very, very good reasons, and you're gonna have to gain access and acceptance from those gates keepers. And so you're gonna have to know the answers to these questions. Because while you've went back to whatever part of the town or city, wherever you're from, they're in that community sharing information about whether or not other people should work with you or not. And you want to make sure that you have addressed those questions up front, that leads to you gaining more access instead of less.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] One thing I would just add that I think is also important to keep in mind is power. So, and I want to direct this specifically to researchers who are from historically oppressed and marginalized communities, then going into their own community to do research, but maybe not recognizing [00:20:00] the power that they do have. Whether it be, you know, having their PhD or going towards a PhD and having access to a whole lot of education and resources that a lot of community members, you know, don't have access to. So I think something that we'll talk about in, in my course, and I think that we need to have more open conversations about, is this kind of insider or outsider relationship that happens when we engage in and do this work. So, one of that is recognizing, you know, power and your ability to control the narrative in terms of what gets done. You know. Dr. Ray mentioned, you know, how you even sample people, you have a lot of power in these situations so you have to kind of be aware of that and, you know, address that prior to be able to, you know, do the the work that is needed.

[Kasha Ely] Thank you. And thinking about our listeners, who might not be active [00:21:00] researchers but are still interested in research and looking at research, is there anything that you all would consider to be indicators that research is contributing to social justice and, to borrow a term from Dr. Jackson, is culturally attuned?

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] I mean, I think research that centers the participants is always important. And, and part of thinking about research that gets his social justice is whether or not it's addressing the problems that the people in that community or the communities that you're working with - what do they say the problems are? I think that becomes really, really important. It's, it's, and it, but then it's also about your ability as a researcher to take what they're saying and layer up what they're saying to match it with some ongoing priorities that might be happening at the city, state, or, or even federal level, or even what's happening in the corporate [00:22:00] sphere and in the labor market. Can your research really speak to that and center them by highlighting their experiences, by illuminating their struggles and challenges, and then discussing what they think solutions might be? For example, oftentimes when people give funding to local communities, they're running the funding through organizations or banks. And when you ask people in those communities, what they think about that they say, oh, they don't, they don't think that we can be trusted with the money. As a researcher, you have to be able to interpret that to say, yeah, while that could mean direct payments. What that could also mean what they're really saying is that they're not at the table making those decisions to begin with, and a recommendation that you might come up with is an alternative to how the board is constructed around how these decisions are made. And so part of this is your ability as a researcher to be malleable, to, yes, you [00:23:00] have your interview guide, but you need to be able to be flexible, to add additional questions to reflect on your methodological notes, reflect on your theoretical notes after you come out in the field and adjust what you're doing when you go back in. And I think those are the types of things that make really, really good researchers is to center the people you're working with, hear what they're saying and interpret it in a way that's right in line with what they want, even if they can't fully, exactly articulate what they mean by that, it's your job to be able to help with that translation and get it right. And then say to them, hey you made a statement, or I've heard other people make this statement, this is how I interpret it, what do you think about this? Like that, that is getting their feedback for how you interpret. They'll tell you if you're right or wrong. Like you could be wrong and then it's like, okay, you need to go back and re-examine your data because you got something incorrect, or they may expound on it because you've been able to say it in a way that [00:24:00] their own life experiences kind of blocked them from being able to, to, to manifest.

[Kasha Ely] So, just from that answer, Dr. Ray, and other answers throughout this - clearly, there's a way, there are methods to do this at every stage of the life cycle. What do y'all see as the touch points of where you need to maybe re-evaluate and check in with your community members. How do you go about doing that throughout the process?

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] I can start on an answer. So, you know, I think the, the important piece is making sure that the community is involved at the very beginning and sometimes that means that you cannot move as fast as you hope to, because of the ways that you need to engage the community. And the community doesn't want to be rushed because you have a deadline for a grant or a deadline for a paper, because these are their lived [00:25:00] experiences. And part of what Dr. Ray was mentioning earlier was the, you know, the, the ways that you gain entree into communities and center yourself, which also means checking your biases, checking the ways that you are, feel constrained and confined to do your work because the communities don't care about, about that. Over time, I think after relationships have been built, you can sort of work in a, at a different pace after you've built those relationships, but that's very hard to do at the beginning of a, of a, of a partnership or collaboration. A lot of people have been working with the same community or same, you know, a number of communities for a long time and that gives them the, that gives them clear structures in terms of how they operate and work together. [00:26:00] And so I think part of that is, is being aware of what the, what the nature of the relationship is, what's the stage of your relationship and part of that is, again, even monitoring and assessing or reassessing that partnership and relationship over time to make sure that it is mutually beneficial, or finding other folks to partner with, to meet other, other needs to address partnership or collaboration, collaboration deficits or addressing particular issues. And I think that that becomes really important, in terms of building true collaboration.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] I actually was hoping to engage my colleagues in a conversation about that, because I think when you do research and especially coming from, you know, academia, you have deadlines, you know, you want to get your PhD in, you know, four or five years, you don't want to [00:27:00] get it in eight. You know, for tenure, you know, traditionally it's six years to, you know, publish a set amount of, you know, articles to be able to get, get tenure. So, I think, and what I had brought up earlier was, in many ways doing socially just work, engaging and being responsible and culturally attuned to our communities' challenges, the structure of how we study and research and what is valued in academia. So what do we, what do we tell our folks then, you know, who are wanting to do this work and are wanting to do it responsibly? I guess I want to hear from, from, from my colleagues, the experts on this. What do we do? What do, what do we tell folks? Come on Mr. Mic, I know you got a couple, couple mics coming down...

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] What do we tell people about, about how they should think about [00:28:00] the dissemination of their work, or the speed at which they go? You know...

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] So how did you both? So how to navigate academia and get in the positions that will allow you to conduct and do more of this work? Because we, you know, we need more folks from racially marginalized communities to be doing this research.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Yeah.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] So how do we help folks balance those? And I know you know what I'm talking about Dr. Ray, because you talked about it in your social justice class, which I took, which was wonderful.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Yeah, I mean it continues to be, I think a struggle, particularly in moments like this where so much going on. And I think even before we get to the research, I mean people's minds are scattered personally, because of what they're experiencing. You know, I think it all goes back to the training we receive and how we think about our training. So for example, when it comes to gaining access and going in the field, I tell people the minute you know [00:29:00] that you want to go into a community, or particular communities, start going now. Like you're just going to be there, like, you don't have to have, have some huge purpose that you want to talk to someone. You're just going to get the lay of the land, you're going so that people see you. So that people hear you. So that you can hear from other people. And that takes time to build and, being blunt, it especially takes time to build when your identities don't always align. And even beyond race, that can be a class thing as well, you know, PhD can, it can exude off of us in ways that we don't always notice that creates barriers even between ourselves and other people of color. And we have to recognize those things because as we've been in institutions getting socialized to what we think these institutions want us to be, we are oftentimes being de-socialized from what we've become and what got us there. And I think that that's a difficult thing to grapple with is, is [00:30:00] many of us experience double consciousness. You know, I tend to think about it like this, that my main way I think about our work and our research is that if my grandmother can't read it, then what am I doing it for? Now, what that means is that doesn't mean that we still don't aim to publish in journal articles, we should do that. Like, that's how we move up in our profession, that's, I mean, the way I think about that, that's how we get paid to be honest. Like that's how, that's how we put food on the table. It's through the journal articles and grants. At the same time, we can think about getting multiple lines on our CV. My mentor from Indiana, another Dr. Jackson, Pamela Braboy Jackson, taught me that to get multiple lines in your CV, yes, you want to publish a journal article, but you also want to think of other ways to disseminate it. Whether that be an op-ed, whether that be presenting to city leaders, whether that even being going back to the community where you done your research at, what you should do on the front end and periodically throughout their process, as Dr. Gilbert was saying, and consult with them and say, hey, this is what I'm finding, [00:31:00] this is what I'm saying. Allow yourself to be vulnerable in that space, because one thing I know is if you can get past the communities that you study, all the other spaces you go to with your work is going to be chump change. But if you don't go through that process, then, if you're trying to hide something, that's where problems come up, and that's where it's gonna be difficult for you to go back to those spaces. The other way I think about it, particularly I think is junior scholars, meaning people who are in PhD programs, assistant professors, people before tenure. What I did was I knew that I wanted to be for the community and of the community. But that also didn't mean that my colleagues had to know everything I was doing. Or that it was any of their business. And so, part of the way I think about the community work I do is I can do that on my own time when I want to do it, and they can call that community service or whatever the heck they want to call it. I call it community-based participatory research, in line with the course that Dr. Gilbert and I are teaching. That I'm consciously thinking [00:32:00] of ways to help out. And I think oftentimes that means sharing your work and I think what people will get in all of our courses are various strategies by which to do that. To speak at local community events, to go to houses of worship, to go to barber shops and hair salons. Look, these are the pulses of these communities, and if you're uncomfortable there, honestly, you probably shouldn't even be studying those communities to begin with. So, part of what you have to do initially is to get over your discomfort, because it's not about you, but then the dissemination of it is thinking of multiple ways by which to disseminate, by which to disseminate the work. Because again, the journal article or a book is one way, particularly in an academic press, but there are a myriad of additional ways by which your work can be disseminated. Learn the various ways, figure out which ones you like, figure out which ones you don't like. One simple thing that I always think about is can you put together a one-pager of your work and email it or drop [00:33:00] it off to elected officials in a city at the state level, at the federal level? Even if you do that, your work is gonna make a huge difference. So I think there, I think we have to continue to scale up various ways to make a difference. And as long as we're publishing and getting grants, we shouldn't worry about the impact it's gonna have on our ability to, to move up in our, in our field.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] I'd like to add, that answer was beautiful and amazing in lots of ways. One of the things that has to happen is our institutions have to change their business model. And, you know, the idea that you become a leading expert in your field, your area of expertise, in five to six years is actually crazy and it then structures the type of work that you try to do. So you may then feel [00:34:00] you can only rely on collecting small samples or, you know, data groups, small projects, or relying on secondary data analysis. And there's nothing fine, there's nothing wrong with, excuse me, with them on their own. But if we are intending for our work to actually make change, then we have to change not only the business model of higher education, but we also have to change the business model of the ways that grants are funded because, you know, most institutions, you know, some grants are a year, two years, three years, four years, five years, and you're expected to, you know, solve some major problem in five years that took 30 years to create. So, you know, we have an imbalance in terms of expectations and structure and even within higher education institutions, [00:35:00] part, other things that have to change in terms of even our IRB, how our IRB processes or helps us to think about the ways, and IRBs are very important but they can also get in, not only their own way, but in the way of important work that needs to happen sometimes and sometimes work that needs to happen very quickly. And also that does speak to having very strong partnerships in communities because sometimes that means that you may have to rely on the community to engage in a project very quickly that you can't because of, as Dr. Jackson has mentioned, gatekeeping that happens in higher ed. And so we need institutional change, not, not just in academia, but across institutions that actually, really does support the type of change that we, that we, that we're looking for and one easy way to do this, and I say this to a lot of my students, [00:36:00] I can talk to you about trends in data. I don't want to because it's embarrassing, because the trends have not changed much. And as a result of that, I would rather you focus on, here's theories, here's models, here are the examples of where we are starting to actually make some change and find out where you fit in in some of these examples of processes or communities that will help to further promulgate and push forward the types of change, so that we can actually see change in trends.

[Kasha Ely] Something, I talked to Ray Maietta about before our conversation today was the fact that QRSI, it's where you're teaching the theories and the basic building blocks and stuff like that, and going from there instead of just telling your students, this is how you're gonna do it, X, Y and Z is gonna get you into whatever you're trying to do. And just to [00:37:00] talk about a little bit about how that works with qualitative research and QRSI in particular.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] So I think the learning that really comes with doing qualitative research is that grappling that happens. So not coming in with the set ideas, and I'm talking more in-line with kind of constructivist qualitative research. So, coming into it with some general ideas, you know, connections with different theories and thinking through a particular phenomenon, but also being open to being able to add to that, extend what we already know. So, and I think that's the most challenging part for students that I see because often what they have learned when it comes to research is very positivistic, it's very you come in with a hypothesis, you ask specific questions, [00:38:00] you get those answered and then you go back to your hypothesis and show whether or not it's, you know, proven. Qualitative research is more organic than that and I think that's where students, if they haven't engaged in this work and why it's so important to take, you know, these courses and allow yourself to contemplate and to think through different phenomenon because, you know, especially the things that we research, like I research, you know, multiracial identity development. It's complex, so you can't go in with set hypotheses or questions that you think should be ans-, asked or answered. And usually when you do, they're based on your own kind of bias and misconceptions about what you know about multiracial stuff. So I think for students, when they first kind of engage in and get into qualitative research, they need to kind of think through some of the theories and theoretical lenses that come out. And one [00:39:00] aspect of cultural attunement is, you know, to apply critical theories and thinking through that. To be and to center intersectionality, and multidimensionality and recognizing that people's identities are complex and their relationships, then, to these flat phenomenon, it's not a give or take that, you know, these relationships are, you know, constantly changing and influenced by what's happening in their environment. So again, it's, you want them to see the complexity. Know, know it. And, and, you know, really try to better understand some of these things that, you know, can't easily be, you know, broken down into yes, no questions.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] If I could ask a follow-up to Dr. Jackson - how, how do you help, not only students but other researchers that you work with, they have some assumptions or some ideas. [00:40:00] How do you help them to bring that to the process and either challenge them or confirm them and, you know, sort of what ways do you help folks who have some a priori assumptions about questions and potential answers into, until the qualitative research process?

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] Love it. Love that question, Dr. Gilbert, because what I do is I incorporate critical reflexivity, which is one of those things. So, moving beyond, just a positionality statement of, you know, I'm, you know, some students will be like oh well, you know, I'm a white male, I have privilege blah blah blah, to actually thinking through where some of these ideas that you have about certain topics, even why you want to research certain topics, where that comes from. What beliefs and values does that [00:41:00] associate or attach themselves to you? What theoretical lenses do you use naturally? Maybe you don't even know what those theories are to be able to name them. But often we see the world certain ways and that's really been framed by, you know, how we've been raised what we've been, you know, exposed to, what we've been taught to believe. So really tuning in and recognizing those things from the jump, I think it's very, is extremely important. And it also then helps kind of mitigate or think through issues of power, issues of privilege, all of these things which will come into the fold when you're doing qualitative research and when you're doing any type of research, so. But I'm gonna turn it over to my brothers here. I know they got some thoughts on that, too.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] I mean you I mean you just nailed it. I mean I don't really think it's much to follow up with that. I mean, qualitative research and thinking about the strategies and practicalities of it, [00:42:00] is complex. But still, theory plays a role in that process and I think oftentimes when people go into studying certain communities, they oftentimes don't center the correct theories going into it. Nothing wrong with Grounded Theory, I think it could be an important approach. But, you know what? Most of the time when we're talking about marginalized communities, people have studied them and there's information readily available. You should go into it with some core tenants by which to think about your work, some core expectations about what you might find. And, and you should also center the voices of marginalized scholars who have done a lot of this work and who have been writing on it. And if you haven't done that, that's one of the first things you should do when you go into these communities.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] Don't be muting your mic, Dr. Gilbert, I know you got some stuff to add to.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] Nope, nothing. Not [00:43:00] a thing.

[Kasha Ely] Alright, thank you all for this amazing discussion. We have about 10 minutes left, so first I want to ask, are there any threads that we haven't followed so far that you would like to go down before I jump into my last couple questions?

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] You know what? I actually love what Dr. Ray brought up about people's capacity right now to, you know, to do the work, to concentrate, you know, a lot of our universities and organizations are, you know, are trying to be woke, you know, they're trying to all of a sudden incorporate, you know, or look at structural racism within it. So we're all being extra tapped right now, you know, to, you know, even though we've been, you know, preaching and talking about these things for, you know, decades since the start of us, you know, entering academia or choosing this line of work. So I think that's a valid topic to talk about. I don't know if folks want to talk more about it. [00:44:01] I mean, this, this is, this, this is leading up to, and I know your schedule will be busy Dr. Ray. You know, this, this could be an even more difficult week, you know, depending on the results of this trial. So, you know, just thinking through that and then how it impacts, you know, folks who are, you know, Black and folks from racially marginalized communities. This work takes its toll. So I think in my courses, I always try to emphasize that with students, that, they got to take care of themselves. So, as important it is also to establish those relationships in the community, it's equally and even more so importantly to figure out what you need to sustain yourself. You know, how you can enhance your own well-being as you engage in this work because it's hard.

[Kasha Ely] I think that's a great topic to talk about if either of y'all would like to jump in as well. I see Dr. Ray just unmuted himself, so...

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] [00:45:01] Yeah, I mean it, I mean it's a very important topic for sure. You know, I, I think that's one of the powers, oftentimes, of community-based participatory research, is that as researchers, how a lot of us got to this point, not only have we got to this point because of our own personal biographies. But we have also gotten here because of the research that we do and part of how we think about it is how we, how we take care of ourselves. So I think about it two-fold, I always think first, are people, what are you putting in your body and how are you moving your body? As academics and scholars, as practitioners whether in the academy or outside, we're pretty, we're pretty dormant. I mean we, you know, we don't move around a lot. And during the pandemic, I think it could be argued that we're moving around even less, at least not getting the non-exercise activity. And I also think we have to think about, [00:46:01] you know, what we're putting into our bodies - food. And I think we have to think about our coping mechanisms. But one thing I know is doing social justice work and being of the community and for the community helps you to see the impact you're having. I think it dilutes the continuous blows. Because oftentimes you see it coming. So, when you're involved in local communities - yeah, the, the incidents in Minneapolis or St. Louis or Baltimore, LA, might, you know, pop up on national headlines. But when you're involved in local communities, these same things are happening. And at the local level, they are very traumatic, locally. But when you're doing that community change work, oftentimes you're gonna have conversations with city council people, you're gonna have conversations with state legislatures. You're gonna have conversations with, you know, organizers and activists, and people who are running organizations, who want your insight on what they should do, because they know that you have been not just studying [00:47:01] the community, but you have been collaborating with the community. And that's one of the big things that, that I think has been so vital, is when someone comes to me, a journalist, a news anchor and they say, hey, who should, you know, who should we talk to? I instantly know who they should talk to, I instantly connect them with those people. I'm like, if you want to hear from people in the community what's really going on, contact one of these three people. And that type of depth by which you're in local communities is so, so important. And people, people will do you that way in reverse because the community people will say you need to talk to this person because we know they're gonna represent us well, they're gonna be able to speak to existing policies that are happening and changes that need to be made. So I think part of doing social justice work is to realize it's taxing. Realize you have to take care of yourself, self-care is really, really important. Laugh every single day. I talk to some of the funniest people I know every single day, and I think that's important to do. And, and so [00:48:01] you have to do things to help you cope, but also realize that feeling as if your head is going to explode when these incidents happen is normal. But then the question is, what do you do with all that energy? And I think what you do is, is you, you, you then put into the communities that have given so much for you, for your work.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] So it's a great question, a great set of answers, and actually something I've learned from Dr. Ray over the years, and from others, is scheduling your self-care and making that part of your routine, whether it's something daily or something weekly. It becomes really important. And, you know, I hate, I hate to say this, but people who study health sometimes are also very unhealthy themselves and, you know, that sort of just [00:49:01] crosses, you know, the, the spectrum of professions and disciplines and areas and it's because we are very comfortable telling other people what to do, how to do it, how to change their lives, and we don't, sort of take those same lessons, you know, you know, and apply them to our, to our own lives in a number of different ways. And so, sometimes that means that you also have to become the model for what good health looks like, not only in behaviors and things like that, but the ways that you approach the work. And that allows you to become a better partner, I think, as well, in terms of the type of work that we're talking about, because even though we, you know, folks are on the streets, protesting, challenging a range of systems and institutions and advocating for policy change, [00:50:01] we also have to encourage them to find the ways to engage in self-care as well, because it is, it's taxing and stressful work. And we all have to be mindful of the ways that we do that, and part of that even is, you know, one of the things that I hope comes out of this COVID-19 pandemic are better policies that structure or create opportunities for everyone to be able to take care of themselves. That's paid sick leave, increasing the minimum wage, making sure people have the time to take off - not just for voting but for, you know, appointments for, for themselves and for their families and for their communities to take care of their health.

[Kasha Ely] That's amazing. Thank you all for being open about all this. We've got about three minutes left and I know y'all are busy people, so I don't want to keep you, even though I'd like to talk to you all day. [00:51:01] So for just a final wrap-up - I know that while for Dr. Jackson and Dr. Gilbert, I believe it is your first year, as instructors at QRSI? You have been, you've spent time there as students and student ambassadors, all of you. So you've been, you've been around for a while and you're familiar with it...

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] Yes, we're old, we're old.

[Kasha Ely] That's not what I meant!

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] You can just say it, I'm okay with it, I've embraced it now, I'm old.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] [inaudible] y'all old.

[Kasha Ely] That was not, not my intention! You're just...

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] Well actually, actually what is really interesting about this is, I think given the history or the chronological order, I think Dr. Ray did it first. And then maybe a summer or two later Dr. Jackson and I were the, were the student ambassadors and, you know, I think we all had, it was a great experience in a lot of ways. [00:52:01] It was fun, we learned a lot, we got to interact with, you know, the leading folks in qualitative research. And it's quite interesting and a wonderful, I guess, history of the work of QRSI, that, you know, we were once the students and now we are, you know, being part of the teach, the teachers. And that's a really great sort of, trajectory and progression.

[Kasha Ely] Absolutely. And it seems like it's somewhat unusual for these types of events. It seems like, a lot of people that go to QRSI, keep going back over and over. What would you tell people who are on the fence about going for the first time this year?

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] Just go, just go! I think, I always tell my students who inquire about it that it was one of the best things that I've ever done for my career and my scholarship, and it's really, continues to kind of sustain [00:53:01] my, my work. Yeah. So just go. That's my, that's my advice.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Yeah, I mean, look, don't miss out on the opportunity to shoot your career and your research prowess out of a rocket. Like that's, I think, what ResearchTalk does. I mean, the speed at which you're able to take a series of courses in such a short period of time, and with the people who you're able to take them with? I mean, oh my goodness. I mean, some of the other instructors who teach these courses, I mean, you read their books in your methods class, but there is nothing like hearing them off the cuff when someone asks them a question, and they're responding about it, and hearing them respond directly about your work. Additionally, you're gonna form networks and collaborations with other participants at ResearchTalk that, that's gonna last for a very, very long time, as we're hearing here. I mean, all of us have came through the pipeline for ResearchTalk kind of from beginning to this point for [00:54:01] a reason. And I think it's because of just how well the program is put together and how much you learn. And I remember my first year of ResearchTalk, which is, been a long time ago now - I think over 15 years at this point, like more like 16, 17, 18, but somewhere up through there - but I remember coming back from that and literally I knocked out two papers quite quickly, both of which ended up getting published. And I think that is the type of thing that you're gonna get from ResearchTalk. And I mean, look, as Dr. Jackson was saying, I mean, just, just go. Like, I mean, you're, it's hard to describe until you actually participate in it. That's just how good it is.

[Kasha Ely] That's awesome. I think I don't know if we could get a more ringing endorsement than that. So, I just want to say thank you all for taking the time to join us today on Data Night and we are so excited to see your courses in the summer.

[Dr. Keon Gilbert] Great, thank you.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] Thank you so much and you got, you even endured our chat [00:55:01]

[Kasha Ely] It was amazing. The chat was the best part.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Thank you guys.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] I love it. All right, it was great seeing you Keon, bye you guys, take care.

[Dr. Rashawn Ray] Bye, great seeing you all.

[Kasha Ely] Thanks y'all.

[Dr. Kelly Jackson] Great to meet you, bye bye.

[Kasha Ely] Doctors Gilbert, Jackson and Ray are part of our scholar instructor team teaching at the 18th Annual Qualitative Research Summer Intensive. Learn more about how to take advantage of a unique opportunity to gain both theoretical and practical understanding of qualitative inquiry at our event website www.researchtalk.com/qrsi-2021. The link is also available on our episode page. Until next time, stay safe and well.