

Royel Johnson:

So before we jump into today's episode, it's important that we acknowledge that this conversation was recorded on the land of the Tongva in Chumash peoples. Panelists joined us from colonized lands throughout North America. We recognized the Tongva, Chumash and all indigenous nations, tribes and peoples for being historical and continual caretakers of these lands.

Felecia Commodore:

Okay. And three, two, one.

Royel Johnson:

Good morning, afternoon or evening, depending on where you're joining us from today. And welcome back to another episode of the ASHE Presidential Podcast focused on humanizing higher education. I am your co-host Dr. Royel Johnson, associate professor of higher ed.

Felecia Commodore:

With tenure.

Royel Johnson:

With tenure, very much so tenured in social work at the University of Southern California and director of student engagement at the USC Race and Equity Center. Shout out to my colleagues at the USC Race and Equity Center and Shaun Harper, who co-sponsored this. And I have a very distinct honor and privilege of working with my dear friend, Dr. Felecia Commodore.

Felecia Commodore:

Thank you to my academic life partner here, Dr. Royel Johnson. I'm your other cots, Dr. Felecia Commodore. I'm associate professor at Old Dominion University in the higher education and-

Royel Johnson:

Tenured associate professor, very much so tenured.

Felecia Commodore:

Don't forget the tenure. We are excited to keep our conversation going about humanizing higher education. And so, today we're back at it. We have some dynamic scholars and thinkers visiting with us today regarding not just what we do, but how we do it. That's right. We're talking methods and humanizing research design. And so we're going to have a chit chat about what we can learn about how we do our work and ways we can rethink how we do our work when we're doing research in higher education.

Royel Johnson:

So join us in welcoming our special guest, Dr. Jason Garvey, who is the Friedman Hips Green and Gold professor of education at the University of Vermont. We also have Dr. Jessica DeCuir Gunby, my new colleague at the University of Southern California who's a professor of educational psychology in the Rossier School of Education. And Dr. Chayla Haynes-Davison, assistant professor of higher education, Texas A&M University.

Felecia Commodore:

So, before we jump into our round table conversation, we want to have a little fun. We're going to do a little activity that we're doing with all our guests and we call it this or that. So basically, we're going to give you two options to choose from. You're going to pick this or that.

Royel Johnson:

Just one.

Felecia Commodore:

Just one. And so you're going to pick the thing that you most prefer. So I'm going to start with you, Jay, as a fellow musical enthusiast.

Jay Garvey:

Yes.

Felecia Commodore:

Yes. Rent or wicked?

Jay Garvey:

Rent.

Felecia Commodore:

Oh, that was quick!

Royel Johnson:

Very confident.

Jay Garvey:

I'm a nineties queer. All day any day, I'm here for it. Rent.

Felecia Commodore:

We love it.

Jay Garvey:

Without question. Of course, the connector is Nadel Dezim or whatever.

Felecia Commodore:

That's it. See? This is your kindred spirits. He knew where we were going.

Jay Garvey:

The one and only Idina Menzel.

Felecia Commodore:

Idina Menzel.

Royel Johnson:

Idina Menzel. All right Jessica, this one's for you. Folks may have saw the Verzuz battles that were happening on Instagram and so forth. There was one that included two legends, Patty LaBelle versus Gladys Knight.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

My husband and I went back and forth on that one. My husband is from Georgia, so there's no way he would-

Royel Johnson:

He's going back to Georgia, okay. The midnight train.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

There's no way he would go against a fellow Georgian. So I have to go with Gladys Knight.

Royel Johnson:

Okay. Yeah, we love Patty.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

But they're both divas. I mean, I love a good singer. They just don't make them like Patty and Gladys.

Felecia Commodore:

That's right.

Royel Johnson:

Yes. They do not make it like that anymore.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

And we got to love Patty's pies too, right?

Royel Johnson:

I love a Patty pie. Felecia does not like Patty's pies.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah, see you about to get me in trouble with miss Patty.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

But I like cooking. Gladys had her restaurant.

Felecia Commodore:

I just feel like Patty's actual pie probably tastes different than the one at Walmart, and that's all I'm saying.

Royel Johnson:

Okay, all right.

Felecia Commodore:

So, Chayla, we have a question for you.

Chayla Davison:

I cannot wait for my question now. Okay.

Felecia Commodore:

You have a question for you Chayla. Now, this-

Royel Johnson:

This is a fun one.

Felecia Commodore:

Really think about this because you could cause a firestorm on the social media. Do you prefer ways in which or how?

Chayla Davison:

Ways in which.

Felecia Commodore:

Oh. I'm a ways in which person too. Don't tell me.

Chayla Davison:

I'm sorry. But can I get in on this page?

Royel Johnson:

Yes, go ahead.

Chayla Davison:

Okay. First, can I tell you how many Patty LaBelle concerts my mother carried me to?

Royel Johnson:

Really?

Chayla Davison:

In my youth. Do you hear me? I know every Patty LaBelle song.

Royel Johnson:

Yes. Somewhere over the rainbow.

Chayla Davison:

And I keep the rent CD in my car, okay?

Felecia Commodore:

Yes.

Chayla Davison:

The audience can't see me fluttering my wing like Patty.

Felecia Commodore:

Now, I do like Patty LaBelle now. You gave me a forced choice.

Chayla Davison:

The fashion, the hair. I mean-

Felecia Commodore:

We know where Chayla lands.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

I'm a southern girl. So-

Chayla Davison:

It's almost like Beyonce in any category. You can't put can't compare the two.

Royel Johnson:

Yes. So last one-

Chayla Davison:

Can't there be enough space for black women? All of us.

Royel Johnson:

Last one for all of you. Citation manager or no citation manager?

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

No citation manager.

Chayla Davison:

Yeah, none. I did use one when I was a doctoral student, but I don't anymore.

Jay Garvey:

I'm embarrassed to say I'm a copy paste kind of guy.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Me too.

Royel Johnson:

I do that as well.

Jay Garvey:

I'm so sorry.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

So make you all laugh. When I was cleaning out my office, I came across all of my in note floppy discs with all my citations on it. So of course I had to chunk those, right. But yeah, I used to be an in note person, but then, some kind of way, I just ended up. I think once the technology changed, I didn't change my technology. And then I was like, cut and paste those.

Chayla Davison:

Doesn't it feel like just yesterday we were doing that stuff. Now, you realize, when you find your floppy disc, I've been in this thing-

Royel Johnson:

I haven't seen a floppy disc in so long. There has to be a museum somewhere for those.

Felecia Commodore:

I'm sure you dispose of those carefully.

Royel Johnson:

So I'm going to kick this conversation off because I know Felecia has a contentious relationship with method. She hates method-

Felecia Commodore:

I have a little method trauma.

Royel Johnson:

She's been traumatized by research methods. So we wanted to focus this conversation on what it means to design and conduct humanizing research. And obviously, we see all of you as folks who are engaged in working that way. And it's especially important in the moment now where we find that so many organizations, funders, journals are soliciting scholarship that offers insight into the pandemic, its impact on communities, the impact of racial strife and unrest and racism on marginalized communities. How should we as a field and as scholars be thinking about how we engage in network. What is our responsibility so as to avoid what Eve Tuck talked about as damage centered research? So our first question for each of you is first, just tell us a little bit about yourself, the work you've been engaged in and what humanizing higher education means to you.

Jay Garvey:

What's such a blessing about being in this field is that we enter this conversation with a lot of friendship and love and kinship. So it just feels natural to talk about emotions in this regard, what we produce and how we produce it. And Felecia knows this. I'm a queer, cancer, emotional person. Inherently it's who I am. So I just think it's how I show up in the world with all of the blemishes and blessings that come with that. So I proudly identify as a quantitative queer, where I try to use post-structural and critical frameworks for intersexual liberation for and trans people in particular. Quantum methods has a dark history steeped in white supremacy and CIS heteronormative violence.

And so I often find myself thinking about my emotions in the process of conducting research. And I have to be Frank with these, sometimes it's in small moments where I'm like doing analyses with deficit based comparisons and feeling really just crummy about how data are showing up in the world. And I have to reenter myself with a lot of grace and humility and say, I'm happy in this moment and I'm a queer person and I matter, and so that's enough in this small moment.

And then in larger moments, I think about the power of quantitative research and addressing certain audiences. As a queer scholar, I look at all these brilliant folks doing narrative and community centered qualitative research in particular. And for so long, I felt like an outsider looking in because I wanted to have my head string and my heart string connect and others were, and I couldn't find that mix as a quantitative scholar. Then I realized that I was just focusing on the wrong audiences, and I was trying to do scholarship with us for us in a way that wasn't working for me as a quantitative scholar, which was when I really started pivoting towards policy makers and legislators and people who have a lot in the educational sphere, whether it's with finance or with equity or aspirationally with liberation and intersectional justice.

And it really gave me a lot of purpose and a sense of home and grounding to redirect my humanizing stance for scholarship towards people who I think have enacted a lot of violence in queer and trans students, and currently are enacting a lot of violence, but also hold on to queer futurities and hope that there may be a different landscape.

Felecia Commodore:

Thank you.

Thank you. Anyone else want to share just their thoughts about humanizing higher education, their work?

Chayla Davison:

Come on sis.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

I think about humanizing higher education. It's about making aware of the experiences of marginalized groups, for me is for African Americans. It's about making sure their voices are heard or they get to tell their stories. I do a lot of work that is based using critical race theory. And so critical race theory is about counter storytelling and allowing African American students to talk about their experiences in education. A lot of times we don't get to tell our stories, our people discount our stories. And so for me, and humanizing higher education is about telling people that, hey, I hear you. Your story is legitimate. Hey, you're not the only one experiencing this, because a lot of times we're out there and we're thinking we're the only one. And unfortunately, sometimes we aren't the only one experiencing such trauma, particularly around racism.

And I think it's powerful for people to share those stories and it's powerful for others to hear those stories, particularly when a lot of people don't know those things are occurring, and we can't affect change if people don't know these things are happening. So I think it's really important for us as researchers in humanizing research, to get these stories out, whether you're telling stories quantitatively or qualitatively or in a mixed method fashion, we have to get those stories out.

Chayla Davison:

The only thing I would add is that one of my lines of inquiry is critical race theory and intersectionality scholarship and methodologies. And using those critical lenses has really allow me to think of the ways or think about the ways that I show up. Especially intersectionality. Intersectionality insists that black women in particular live intersectional lives. And so, in my research, I've been really thinking about who is this research for? So Royel's initial question was people are starting to, in the current context of the pandemic and racial unrest, agencies, research bodies, funding groups are really interested in our research. And so what intersectionality and critical race theory has helped me to do is this is research for us, by us, about us. And so, while I appreciate your interest, this is about our lived experiences. And so some of what intersectionality methodology and black liberation research methodology has helped me to do is think about how do I work in solidarity with the other black people, black women who are concerned about our interest?

How do we work together broadly? How do we orchestrate our efforts in research and use research in the quote unquote, resources of the academy that are not always at our disposal? How do we take up space and create our own resources to do the work that matters most to us? So yeah, that is a short way of getting to the conversation.

Felecia Commodore:

No, I think many of us who consider ourselves academics or scholars, our orientation towards methods and methodology comes from our graduate school training and socialization. And so a question I have for who wants to share is how has your methodological stance evolved over the years since your graduate training in socialization? Chayla already had her hands up.

Chayla Davison:

Y'all know I'm a hand waiver, it's Patty! I'm constantly waving my hands in affirmation and support. My heart is with you in this question because, I think, a recent piece my colleagues and I write, Dr. Patton, Dr. Nicole Joseph, Dr. Serana Stewart, Dr. Yvette Allen and myself write about intersectionality methodology and we have a chapter that just came out in our colleagues' black feminist epistemologies book.

Felecia Commodore:

I just saw that on Twitter, I'm so excited.

Chayla Davison:

Right, and Dr. Chrome. They do an excellent job of centering and creating space for the ways in which black women, researchers and black women educators and policy makers think about doing our work. And so in our piece, we write about how we made a decision to write ourselves into existence in this black feminist tradition. This is not something we created, this is linked to these black feminist traditions. And so, for myself, I didn't intend any graduate school class that taught me how to write black women into existence and in fact, I would arguably say they were teaching me initially at least up



until I got into my doctoral program. So even my training and just my formal learning experiences, I've written about myself and my own learning experiences in higher education classrooms. And so I say, it taught me how to leave race out, my education, taught me how to leave race out of the conversation, how to show up to make white people feel comfortable, how to be in these spaces and honestly, perform whiteness at an exceptional level.

So nothing taught me, no classroom until I had Dr. Patton Davis and Dr. Tuit introduced me to thinking about how is black women and black feminist ways of knowing and how to integrate that into my writing. But even still, it was that commitment, arguably, of black women, faculty like Dr. Patton and I'm certain, all of us have had our version Dr. Patton if not her, teach us about how to think about this work and how to do it, how to write it. And it took some work. When I look at my earlier, even my doctoral papers and some of my earlier writing, it is still taking work to think about it, and I'll stop here. In a paper that I did with friends and colleagues, Jasmine Haywood, Dr. Mobley and Dr. Leonard Taylor, we use intersectionality to talk about our experiences as black women, faculty and black men, queer faculty and critical pedagoals.

And one of the things we had to acknowledge that we're using intersectionality to do this, but black people are rarely encouraged to engage their own consciousness beyond race. So this idea of that the world sees us and treats us and expects us to think of ourself as not just black first but also black only. So it's not until most recently that I'm thinking about myself in this gendered body and what my understanding is of my sexuality and how all these things are integrated in my life as a mom, as a wife, as how I see myself as a whole person. And how does that show up and how do I create space for others to do the same? So we had to acknowledge that we're just coming into consciousness in this stage of life and it's constantly happening. So number one, give us space to do it, right? And number two, we're not concerned with your interest and our speed to do it. This is about us first and our consciousness, and we do this for us first.

Felecia Commodore:

And I think you bring up a really good point of actually having to, maybe for those of us and I think everyone here has a marginalized identity that they identify with. The shift from writing ourselves out of existence to learning how to write ourselves in existence and thinking about that. And I want to take some liberty here and talk to you, Jay, because it seems that that would be a little bit, for a lack of better words, easier to do with qualitative work than quantitative work, which steeps itself in this idea of objectivity. So how has that experience been for you? How have your methodological stance, particularly from a quantitative approach evolved over the years around that?

Jay Garvey:

It makes me think about our time together at Maryland. I mean, we spent a long time coming. And I remember my first piece that I wrote, a methodological commentary, was the exclusion of and trans people in federal and national data sets. And that was around 2013. And I don't know if you all remember at the time, the Hired Research Institute, the Department of Education, none of these data sets included sexuality or gender beyond the binary of man, woman. So here I was, this emerging quantitative queer, and I'd literally no data to tap into. I really thank Sue Rankin and Noah Dresner for a lot of blessings in their mentorship in helping me navigate really politicized conversations about data access and availability. And I think now I just, for years, was looking for permission or community or grace or help. And as I've emerged in my career, I've just started embracing queerness and deviance and anger more.

And rather than asking for access or permission, I'm much more likely now to call out the violence of policy makers, survey designers in how harmful they've been for queer and trans communities, sad and angry to look at a policy landscape and education right now for trans people, for non-binary people, for queer people. So I think it's been a huge emotional journey for me from, oh gosh, I remember my first ASHE conference. The first thing this senior scholar said to me was, "Oh, you are just too gay for me to handle." And I half-laughed and left the conversation and then just sat in it for a while and I was like, what the hell did I just experience?

Felecia Commodore:

Oh my goodness.

Jay Garvey:

It was just wild. And now I just love showing up to space, embracing my queerness, embracing my faggotry and saying unabashedly, screw you. I don't need your grace and permission anymore. I'm going to express my anger.

Royel Johnson:

That part.

Jay Garvey:

Well, that's a good 360 emotional. I'll just end it with that.

Chayla Davison:

Isn't that a humanizing method? That's the humanizing method too. Just to say I draw a boundary. I have made a researcher decision to use my anger. I mean, this is why I love intersectionality choir theory, right? CRT, because it creates a theory to methodological approach to method, to alignment, right?

Jay Garvey:

Yes.

Chayla Davison:

And so I also, all the time. There's nothing easy about using critical yet intersectional frameworks in your research. It is cumbersome but it adds a level of sophistication to your analysis. But you got to be willing to do it. There's no snaps back in.

Royel Johnson:

We have all the sound effects for you.

Felecia Commodore:

Whatever you need. That's what we're here for.

Chayla Davison:

All of that. I hope people caught that because that is the humanizing method. You have created alignment from theory to methodological approach to design, to method. There it was. If you're going to walk alongside me, you walk alongside my anger.

Felecia Commodore:

That's good.

Chayla Davison:

I mean, I saw it. I heard it.

Royel Johnson:

Jessica. As someone who I see has really pioneered critical race mixed methods as an approach that I use in my own work, I'm wondering how your methodological advanced and evolved over time to be able to really even offer that to the field, having been socialized and probably traditional approaches to doing mixed methods work.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Oh, that's the story. Remember, I'm a trained psychologist. My area is educational psychology. I do want to go back a little before graduate school. I got my undergraduate degree from Louisiana State University, LSU. And LSU is one of the few, well at the time, I don't know what they are now, but at the time, on of a few behaviorist psychology program. So everything was anesthesia behavior consequences, schenarian. So that's how they wanted to explain everything. And as a student, I just remember, there has to be more to explanations than that. And so then I went to graduate school at the University of Georgia and their college of education was constructivist. So I went from behaviorism to constructivism, two ends of the spectrum. And then this then went to this whole, oh, you construct your learning and it is multiple views. So I'm sitting, okay, now that's twofold of the end for me.

And psych itself is very positive, it's very post-positiveness, psychology in general. So I was trying to find my way, we have been trained at a very strong quantitative approach and I started taking these qualitative approach classes trying to understand, you got to understand your conceptual framework and understanding your worldview. I'm like, my worldview? In psychology, you don't talk about that. And then they say, "Well, there's all these things. There's constructivism, there's all this." I mean, I had no clue, right? Because we never talk about that in psychology. In psychology, you just do the study. You just have a hypothesis and you test it. You reject it or you fail to reject it. That's it. And so it was a complete shift in just thinking. But I realized, even as a student and an undergrad, that there was more to understanding people's experiences than a P-value.

And so I knew that was more out there. So when I started taking qualitative classes, I was like, okay, this is it. Okay, this is me capturing people's experiences. But I still don't understand this worldview. I still have to figure this out. Because it takes a minute for you to figure out what really captures you're understanding. My advisor, he actually taught a mixed methods class, and it made sense for me to put it all together. Okay, yeah, put the quantitative with the qualitative. That makes sense, right? But meanwhile, I'm still taking all these methods, all this quantitative classes, I'm taking structured pleasure modeling, factor analysis because we are serious about psychometric, right? We're serious about that. So I'm taking all these classes and then I'm taking all these qualitative. I mean, I took a ton of method classes in graduate school because I'm taking all this stuff because I need to understand it. But it wasn't until I came across the seminal lesson, Billings and Tate's CRT, a teacher's college record on piece, then I'm like-

Royel Johnson:

Shout out to GLB and Bill Tate.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

That was it. That was it and that was what I wanted to shape my study on. But you got to realize, and it's like, there was no studies on race. Maybe [inaudible 00:28:01] anything having to do about race and motivation. Maybe Cynthia Hubby, literally one or two people. And then, maybe picking a couple articles out of developmental psych or maybe one or two out of counseling psych. So there was nothing there in psychology about race and racial identity, what I was really interested in. So it was about pulling from other areas and trying to put all together, but it wasn't until I found that article then I took my job at North Carolina State University and I had a colleague there named Adrian Dixon who happened to be Gloria, Les and Dylan's student. And then we met and then I started working with Adrian, then I met her network of colleagues that were also Gloria's students and then I met all these other people, and then I really got more involved in CRT.

And then from there, I began to combine CRT with my traditional psych work and mixed methods. And then over time, I just created or developed the piece that Royel was referencing that I published in educational psychologists. But it was a long journey to combine all those different disciplines and then try to make sense of those very different worlds. And it takes time to think that way because, as a graduate student, they just give it to you and it's like, here. And then, you just have to figure it out. But you have like, what? I was in a fast track program and I had five years to do it. Okay, five years, figure it out. And I didn't quite figure it out until years after I had graduated, when I was a professor... really trying to really make sense of it. And each year, and everything I did kind of built off of the next thing. And it just took time.

Royel Johnson:

Your comments are quite congruent with what Chayla was talking about earlier. And in many ways, the academy plays a role in the production of docile scholars who are trained to be compliant with the traditions and approaches to how we understand and study various phenomenon versus pushing back and thinking interdisciplinary, we are and interdisciplinary field, about how do we bridge these various prospective theories to have more holistic approaches to studying what we're interested in.

Felecia Commodore:

This is one of my problems with the commonly used phrase of, the best dissertation is a done dissertation, because I think it socializes us into thinking that the goal is just production and not that the goal is producing something that is going to have impact and further knowledge which opens us up to the idea of exploring methods and approaches and understandings of our work in ways that maybe we haven't done or haven't been so common. And so, I cringe a little when I hear that because it's like, the best dissertation is one that's done with care.

Royel Johnson:

So what are some steps that folks can take, especially for graduate students and early career scholars who may be listening. What are some steps that they can take to begin unlearning and relearning so that they can avoid the oppressive colonial approaches that our graduate programs are often complicit in socializing them into to study research phenomenon?

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Well, I am still somewhat of a traditionalist. I mean, still believe you have to take the classes to learn how to do the methods, but you have to approach it in a very critical way. I mean, you still have to learn how to do the statistical methods or all the different qualitative methods, but you also have to go in there with a critical eye saying, well, why aren't we doing this? Why aren't we asking these questions? And you have to be a voracious reader. I have a lot of students that, they want to do these types of dissertations but then you ask them, who have you read? They haven't read anybody. You have to read the original sources. So you either go back and whatever it is you want to read, you have to read. I mean, when I was studying racial identity, I literally read everything I could read on black racial identity.

I mean, I read all the way back to the baby doll studies, a man named Kenneth Clark. I mean, I read before that-

Felecia Commodore:

The foundation.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

I read the Horowitz studies in the thirties. I mean, the twenties, I mean, way back when, and I had to literally go to the library and make copies.

Felecia Commodore:

The stacks, go to the stacks.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

I had folders like binders and stuff. Exactly. And so they had no excuse, they can just get them on the PDF and order from the library. So I'm not understanding why they can't read these articles. So I mean, they have to read.

Royel Johnson:

Intellectual responsibility.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Ask critical questions, go beyond your discipline. I never could have done things that I'm doing if I just stayed in my lane at ed psych. I mean, I had to go beyond the borders of ed psych to study anything having to do with black people and do anything with race because it just was not there. So you have to be able to do that, and don't be afraid to ask questions. And then for me, if you want to ask complex questions, if you want to ask complex research questions, you can't be afraid to do those complex mythological, complex methods. And so I come across a lot of students that say, "Oh, I have to get a statistician. I'll get somebody to do that." No. If that's what you want to do, you need to know how to do it. So I think students have to be willing to become methodologists themselves. But that's the ed psychologist in me. We believe everybody to be a methodologist.

My colleagues may have different perspectives on that one, because I love research methods. I think they're really fun. So those would be the main things I would suggest.

Felecia Commodore:

So scholars before researchers, that's a piece that I assigned to students when I taught methods, is that you got to read before you start doing, right? You have to be a scholar before you're a researcher, that's really important.

Jay Garvey:

For an aspiring quantitative criticalist, it can feel like two communities that are diametrically opposed and I think that it can feel wicked isolating at times. And so, the first I would say is just find your people and I would love to be a part of that community with you if you are that person looking for your community. I have learned a lot from Dr. Nicole Garcia for example, how Dr. Dominique Baker connects quant research transformation in a very community and identity centered way. And so there are a lot of good scholars out there trying to do community centered impactful work using quantum methods. So be the beautiful vulnerable person that you are and reach out to folks because we would love to find friendships and relationships and love and solidarity with you. From a quantitative methods perspective, a lot of us have experienced harm from methods training in quant classes. Being essentialized, feeling harmed, this whole deficit based comparative analysis. Feeling completely unseen in data access and availability and even the huge dominance of straight white men teaching quant methods classes.

So my plea is to push past basic inferential statistics and learn more in the same way that you were talking about Jessica, learn structural equation modeling because it is a really gorgeous way to explore the nuances of latent relationships in a really complicated way. And since we're critical scholars aiming towards liberation, we are asking systems based questions and we require systems level data. The quant research data that we have is individual level. And so if we're using data from NESI or from the Higher Ed Research Institute, we're studying students and ascribing responsibilities slash blame to students.

We need more systems level data. How do we get that? We learn how to do factor analysis, how to create new constructs, to measure oppression in new and innovative ways quantitatively. So, I know it's really hard trying on the hard, but try to push through those methods classes, whether it's in a formal classroom learning experience or through all of these emerging fellowships for quantitative criticalism, especially for BIPOC scholars, there are really, really good opportunities out there to learn in a community that is affirming and wants you to learn in a way that centers your personhood.

Felecia Commodore:

We talked a little bit and you all have shared in your journeys of navigating norms in your field or your area and norming around methods. And one of the places I think we as scholars, those of us who write for academic journals, the challenges of doing new or more critical or rethinking quote unquote, traditional methods is how do we get them published? And so could you all talk to what barriers or challenges you've experienced or we might anticipate in trying to do more humanizing research?

Chayla Davison:

So even with, or especially with the doctoral research that I supervise, most students come to me when they want to use critical frameworks, and I'm excited by their research. And I often find myself saying, how does intersectionality support you to do this innovatively? Often, some of my students will present. This is a challenge because, so I have a student right now who's saying things like, "Well, I want to use case study meth methodology, but I'm concerned about my study design and my participants and what IRB might say in regard to choosing," because they're looking into Title IX and the experiences of women of color. And so I keep pushing back on, how might you address this challenge using intersectionality? How does intersectionality support you? And what I'm hoping that they arrive to on their own in our

mentoring and conversation is, be innovative about it. You can't answer an intersectionality question using the master's tools. You can't. You have to think differently. What are the possibilities? What are you bringing that's different, that's breaking the frame?

So I could do your research for you, but I'm going to help you. I keep pushing back, you want to use intersectionality. So how does intersectionality support you? And this is creating that alignment from research question to methodological approach to methods. You got to pull that theory all the way through, all the way through. It can't be something that you introduce. I'm using intersectionality just to talk about why students are different and have experienced campus differently. And then I dropped the intersectionality conversation. No. How do I see intersectionality in your research question? Now, how do I see, you're using intersectionality methodology. Great. Now how do I see it in your method? So how do you pull it through? Explain it to the IRB using intersectionality. You can do it. I see it. I taught you intersectionality, just keep thinking. Keep thinking, keep reading, keep thinking, keep reading, keep thinking. It's not an easy thing. You got to spend time doing it.

So I don't know if that answers your question, but I think that we can use these theories to support us to create that alignment. It's there and we ought not think we can use the same. We can't. We have to put it down. I mean, intersectionality gives us permission to say, I don't have to do it this way because it erases me, it creates intersectional erasers. It creates intersectional failures. I can't in order to address these with what Pat and the Juco call intersectional interventions. I have to think differently. I can't use this model, this set of methods don't work.

Royel Johnson:

For the quant folks, I'm wondering, what challenges or issues have you experienced in the publishing process, especially for making different decisions about how you categorize different social identities, make decisions about what comparisons you make or not make and the expectations from reviewers to do some of these things? What are some of the issues with that?

Jay Garvey:

So many. I think the biggest limitation that quant scholars are experiencing now is not naming intentions for the decisions that we're making. And I think that's, if I had to boil it down to one thing, what differentiates post positivism from quantitative criticalism is naming intentions and impact. Because how I run an analysis, how I classify sexual identities may not look decidedly different, but my intentions and my intended audience may have profound differences. So that's the difficulty of it and I think as paw scholars, we've been trained to embrace subjectivity and generalizability and productivity. And I just think all of those just feed into this white supremacist notion of academia as us as machines that are block and step for whatever we need to do to advance our selfish careers. And I think it's just exhausting sometimes because we are so conditioned as quant scholars to embrace that. It's kind of a paradox though because quantitative critical isn't one epistemological focus.

There are different approaches to this. For example, quant crit, which embraces quant methods with critical race theory would likely say incrementalism is a tool of white violence. And so we often have to live in these paradoxes of not really fulfilling or finding that threshold of criticality in ways that other methodologists do. So I think naming your intentions is one way of dispelling that secret nature of quant research. But in the publication process, it's really hard for the real estate space positionality statement or community impact statement. So I think writers are just as responsible as editorial leadership in not hoping that quant scholars will write them. But when quant scholars don't write them, requesting that they do.

Felecia Commodore:

Calling that out, yeah.

Jay Garvey:

Helps in their personhoods and their research.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

I just want to say that researching race is difficult. Researching race is political, and this is long before this whole anti CRP thing started. I've had a hard time researching race and publishing about race long before this whole stuff started. I've had trouble getting IRBs through because of perceptions of difficult questions. I've had trouble even with school districts were okay with doing my study. I haven't had a school district say, well, I like your study, but I don't like any of this stuff about race. I don't like any of this stuff about gender. But we're studying students of color and girls, experiences, their goals of going into science careers. So we take out the race and gender, you've just killed our study.

I mean, they even told us, "Oh, we want you to change these questions." So I've had a lot of issues with just even getting into schools. Even my dissertation years ago, schools didn't want me to come in there to study race because they were afraid I was going to find something and bring up something. So studying race can be difficult in itself, so just even getting your study off the ground can be had. I want to make sure we get that out there. But even publishing. I'm in ed psych. It's hard publishing about race in ed psych because people don't really study race in ed psych. Unless you're studying a demographic variable, you're studying this group versus this group on this particular construct. How much achievement, how do they score this achievement motivation thing? That's how they study race, but not as a construct like experiences with racial identity or racial discrimination. That's not the type of thing that they do in educational psychology.

So it's very hard to publish in those areas. So those of us who do that work are interested in those kind of studies. We have to publish in other journals. So that means that we have to be, have one foot in ed psych, but we have to have a foot in all these other different areas. And so you're reading all kind of other literature, you have to be where these other things. So you have to be abreast of various fields if you're going to do racial work. So don't think you just only have to publish in your only field. You have to be able to publish and be aware of other fields. And even then, you still have to be aware of how they want you to publish it. I know that's going to sound strange, but-

Felecia Commodore:

Sounds like a pragmatist to me, it makes my heart flutter.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Certain narratives you have to give, right? But that's the kind of publish. There's stories you want to tell, but there's stories that they want you to tell in order to get it published. And so you have to constantly ask yourself, what am I willing to compromise in order to get this piece published in this journal? And that's a question we always have to ask ourselves regardless of what we're going to publish, wherever we're going to publish it.

Chayla Davison:

I would agree with everything that's been said. And one of the things that I in my own work have struggled with. So methods, and this goes back to Dr. Commodore's initial thought, a good dissertation



is one done with care, and that's true about all research and that's the humanizing method, right? And so my thought is in trying to do research earlier in my work using even using intersectionality coupled with, I'm a grounded theorist by training in CRT. And my dissertation is CRT and grounded theory. I was able to engage in what I would consider humanizing research on behalf of racially and ethnically diverse college students and myself as a black woman researcher studying white racial consciousness. That's what I did in my dissertation.

But even as a grounded theorist by training, I had to figure out, how do I do that and care for me? Doing that type of research. I'm studying white supremacy, that's the root of my research question, how does it show up? So how do I experience that myself in the research? What I struggled with in my own methods is just thinking about these, I'm using critical theories, but I didn't always have methods that pulled the theory all the way through that allowed me to even engage in deeper humanization and deeper liberation, not just for my participants but also for me.

So what I like about intersectionality methodology and black liberation research methodology, I emerged and doing some of that research where those methodological approaches came out is what we discovered in doing it is, now our colleagues have a methodological approach that is connected to these frameworks. So what we would argue with those methodological approaches is that it allows you to engage in theoretically rich, sophisticated analysis. And so, you'll be hard pressed for any reviewer to say that this is not sound research. This is sound research. I mean, white supremacy is white supremacy. So what Dr. Patton did say is white supremacy resisting undoing of itself, so you will have naysayers. You have people saying, I'm not about it. But they can't question the research rigor. Because it has alignment. Theoretically, it's designed well, it's a sound study.

Royel Johnson:

Yeah, you're giving us the methodological tools to harness the full capacity of the theory.

Chayla Davison:

That's what I think that, and the truth in the matter is that even in our study of scholars who study black women and are using what we would argue is these features of intersectionality and methodology, when we went back to look at where these, out of 600 or so studies over a 30 year period, 23 researchers were actually published doing intersectionality methodology in these ways that brought visibility to black women. Those 23 studies were all published in either what we would consider second tier or highly impactful because they were race or gender journals, but rarely were they in what the academy would say, are they premiere or highly selected? So we talked about it as a politics of publishing and where black women show up in the literature, if at all. And so we contacted those authors and scholars to say, "Hey, tell us about your publication experience to get this research out." And they acknowledge it's a struggle.

And so what I think, like I said, those methodological approaches help us do that. It can get, perhaps if you want it, you don't have to publish it in those places. You publish it where you want it to go.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah. I think that brings us to really great thinking about because, I mean, we talked about the challenges and barriers and I think what we can say is the existence of you three scholars does give us hope that there is an opportunity in space for new ways of approaching our research and engaging in more humanizing research methods. And so I just wonder if you could give me one maybe promising or

underutilized approach to research that you would hope our listeners would be aware of. What would that be?

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

I don't know if this is underutilized, but I think you should really try to make your research study as parsimonious as possible. Try to keep it as simple as you can methodologically. Because I have a lot of students, they have their grand methods and I'm going to do this, that and the other. But I realize that, you can have a simple design and still come out with amazing results and all this stuff. But once you start writing, you write that long lush, lit review and then these finest, it's still going to be a lot. And so it is one study that you build and you continue to build off this study, that's how you have your career. And so when I tell students, I love mixed methods. I teach mixed methods, I have a mixed methods textbook. But maybe this study, maybe the questions you want to answer are best answered from just a quantitative approach or just a positive approach.

You don't have to necessarily put them both together. So I think let's keep the design as simple as you can. And then spend the time creating the best, getting the best instruments you can or getting the best interview questions you can and getting the best data collection you can. And then, really focus on doing the best study that you can do. Just keeping it as simple because we all know, no matter how much you design a study, things go wrong. The timeline gets thrown off. I mean, all kind of things happen. And that way, if you can take that little level of stress out your plate, I think it just kind of gets better. So that's just the advice I give my students. Let's keep it simple you all. Let's just keep it simple.

Royel Johnson:

I always ask my students, what methods are appropriate for answering the questions that you want to answer. Sometimes they come in like, "I want to do photo voice. I want to do." I'm like, but your research questions don't align with that. What are the methods that are appropriate for that?

Felecia Commodore:

Question leads the method.

Royel Johnson:

How about others?

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Yeah, the good old question. And sometimes they have too many questions and we might even scale those questions back. Just save those questions. Those are great questions, let's save them for study number two. But I did like those questions and keeping it simple, and I think even we all are all guilty of that too. We all want to do this grand study, but then, when you start really think about how much time and resources and all that, we can't do all that. So let's just kind of keep it narrow and do the best we can with that and then roll with it.

Felecia Commodore:

I remember Carrie say, "I'm going to do the best with what I got."

Chayla Davison:

I think one of the methods that intersectionality has really helped me think about has to do with working with participants. So one of the features of intersectionality methodology is centering black women as a subject. Namely, as thinking about black women as knowledge producers and knowledge holders or sources of knowledge. How does that methodological approach translate in methods? So if, for example, looking at the experiences of black women who are learning from a black woman teacher, black women doctoral students who are learning from a black woman teacher but also together learning about black women. So I'm engaged in a study where that is the aim or that is the subject matter. And so, I wanted to do a focus group with some of the black women who took two courses on black women with me.

And so in my doctoral student collaborator, we generated a protocol, but we shared the protocol with the focus group participants and said, as a way of centering black women as a subject, as knowledge producers and knowledge sources, here's our protocol. How would you change it? What's not being asked that ought to be? Let's think about it. We are already engaged in the learning together. We're centering black women as a subject, ourself as a participant knowledge holder, knowledge producer. Let's figure out together what the interview protocol should look like and gave them an opportunity, not just as we do the focus group, but also in building of the protocol. What are the questions that ought to be asked? How would you change this? So that's just one way of pulling the intersectionality framework through the methodological approach through to the method.

Jay Garvey:

I think I just have two brief things. One's an attitude adjustment and one's more of an analytic insight. I'm feeling very inspired in this group and just thinking a lot about community and kinship. Especially in quantitative communities, I feel like there's this intellectual competition or this scarcity mindset of methods expertise, and it serves people's egos and their individual advancement of, not of communities. So I guess the mindset change that I'd like to emphasize is that building community and coalitions is time well spent. An auxiliary activity related to the research, it is the work. The process of how we do quantitative research is just as if not more important than the products of our quantitative research method. So that's the attitude change that I'm thinking about. And that also relates to, I feel like quant scholars want to flex their methods expertise, and it's like-

Royel Johnson:

Chill.

Jay Garvey:

Demonstrate the sexiness of their different methods. But I think there is a great power in descriptive stats and data visualizations. Though underutilized in education research, particularly in the policy landscape, and you are trying to shift policy reform or research allocation. Ain't nothing wrong with some powerful descriptive stats and illustrative data visualizations.

Royel Johnson:

Thank you. In the spirit of the theme of the conference in this podcast, we have a final set of questions before we wrap up. I'm wondering how are you finding and creating joy for yourselves these days? And what's something most ASHE members may not know about you?

Chayla Davison:

For me, it is a life or death type thing. It is something about being present and drawing boundaries and creating space for myself that is so super important, particularly at this time in my own life. There's so much going on in the world that just frustrates me. And so, yes, the joy part is one of those, yes, I'm all about it, by any means necessary. And so, the ways in which I try to find joy is really just being present in the moment and creating space. Throughout my day, I spend more time these days around family as much as I can so that it just keeps me present minded that I'm a whole person. I'm not just my work or I'm not what the world says I am. And that there are a means to this, you work to live, you don't live to work kind of thing, so that's me. Something that many ASHE members may not know. I don't know. I would say, I'm from. No, I think ASHE members know that.

I was going to say I'm from the Washington DC area. And so that is that home that has my heart. Eight or nine generations of my family are born and raised there and I'm the lone one out here in Texas. They're all like, one day we may come visit you. So yeah, those are my roots.

Jay Garvey:

I feel really blessed that I'm surrounded by a lot of community and love with my colleagues, Dr. Tracy [inaudible 01:00:46] and Dr. Tiffany Spencer and Dr. Brett Williams and all of the fabulous students at the University of Vermont. And I think we've built this community to recognize that our worth is inherent as people, as loved people and that it's not tied to our work. And it gave me a long time to unlearn this, but my faculty career and my scholarship are not the center pillar of my life. And so, related to that, things that ASHE members may not know about me as that my partner and I just bought a beautiful new house in the-

Felecia Commodore:

It's gorgeous.

Royel Johnson:

I saw it on Twitter.

Jay Garvey:

And we just got engaged too. So it's a season of love and just really embracing this beautiful, loving my work. I love my work so much, but Dan is the center of my universe and that brings me a lot of joy.

Royel Johnson:

That was beautiful.

Felecia Commodore:

Yeah, I know. You might make me believe in love, I don't know. Might, I'm a learning some things.

Jay Garvey:

Just start singing what about love, but I'm just.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

What brings me joy? My joy now is my family. It's me and my husband and my son and my son, he's a teenager. So just spending that time with him. He'll be out the house before you know it, so just spending that time. We do a lot of TV watching. So all the Netflix, Paramount plus, and now watching all

of the shows that we like to watch and just spending time watching TV. Also, we watch a lot of news programs. So we sit there watching the news. We literally put it on pause and then have our commentary and talk about our perspectives and opinions. We're political commentators. And then we press play again. But that's our family time and that brings us a lot of joy that we get to spend that time together. Because my mom passed away when I was in high school. My husband's father died when he was young as well. So we know how it feels to not have a parent.

So we definitely want to make sure our son knows that he's loved, knows he's supported and spend all the time that he has with both his parents. And it's a great time for us, it brings me a lot of joy. One thing that a lot of people don't know about me and I just asked, I am a huge Barbara Streisand fan.

Royel Johnson:

Really?

Felecia Commodore:

I have a number of Babs records.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

I love Babs. I mean, one time we flew out from North Carolina all the way to San Jose to go hear Babs at the Babs concert. But I like all the big singers. I love, Whitney Houston was my favorite. And I love Celine Dion, Adele.

Royel Johnson:

You like the big voices.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Oh, Mariah Carey.

Felecia Commodore:

She said she does vocalist.

Jessica DeCuir Gunby:

Vocalists. Good annunciation. Those are the people I like. You got to have that good annunciation, big singers. That's what I like. But Barbara Streisand, she is just one of my favorites.

Royel Johnson:

Love it.

Felecia Commodore:

I love it. Well, we just want to thank you all for this great conversation. I think, if we take anything away, it's the importance of community in doing this work and continuing to learn and reinvent and reframe and recreate. And so, like I said before, the three of you here I think give us hope for future scholars, existing scholars of what we can do and how we can push our work to be more humanizing in the way we approach it. And so again, I want to thank you Dr. Jay Garvey, Dr. Jessica DeCuir Gunby and Dr. Chayla Haynes Davison for your time and for sharing with us. And thank you so much.

Thank you to our guests, Dr. Jay Garvey, Dr. Jessica DeCuir Gunby and Dr. Chayla Haynes Davison for joining us today and getting into the nitty gritty with us regarding humanizing methods in higher education research. And I personally appreciate their pro bono work helping me through my own methodological issues. It takes a village y'all. Those of you who have been along for the ride with us so far know that at the end of each conversation, we like to engage in a segment called scholar soundtrack as we reflect on what musical selections ring in our minds as we think about the day's conversation. Today, the song that came to mind was Lose Myself by Lauren Hill.

Because it seems that at the heart of it, all our scholars came to do work that they could love by facing their fears and the methodological boundary set for them by losing themselves in a deep love for not only themselves, but the populations they did work with, in order to figure out how they could do work and engage in more humanizing methods. Well, that was today's song for our scholar soundtrack. You'll be able to find a playlist of these songs along with the syllabus for today's episode and all of the episodes in the Ash Presidential Podcast series. These conversations continue to inspire us and make us think.

Royel Johnson:

Get ready y'all. We have more exciting conversations to come, you don't want to miss this. Join us next week as we continue to discuss humanizing higher education. Till then, I'm Royel.

Felecia Commodore:

I'm Felicia.

Royel Johnson:

Until next time, keep it human.

Felecia Commodore:

Keep it human.