

Title of Project: A Study on Nonprofit Organizations' Support for (Anti-)Racism — A Critical Race Theory (CRT) Perspective on the Nonprofit Sector and Racial Equity

Application for 2021 Graduate Research and Creative Activities (GRACA) Grant

Doctoral Student: Seo Eun (Grace) Jung
Faculty Mentor: Dr. Angela Eikenberry
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I. Project Description

1. Project Background and Rationale

This project aims to explore the way nonprofit organizations responded to the killing of George Floyd and subsequent Black Lives Matter (BLM) protests using a critical race theory perspective. BLM is a social movement which denounces all brutality and violence based on racism against Black people. The BLM movement first emerged in 2013 as a form of the hashtag #BlackLivesMatter via social media, responding to the death of Trayvon Martin. More recently, in Minneapolis on May 25, 2020, George Floyd was killed by White police officer Derek Chauvin as a result of police brutality, which sparked nationwide BLM protests against police brutality.

As BLM protests grew to the largest in U.S. history (Buchanan, Bui, & Patel, 2020), nonprofit organizations became active in the movement for advancing racial justice. For instance, Salvation Army, as one of many nonprofit organizations, announced a statement which emphasized the sorrow and anger following the killing of George Floyd and supported the BLM protests. Literature on the nonprofit sector and racial equity indicates different results regarding the relationship between the two. Kim and Mason (2018) examined the varying levels of advocacy among nonprofits in relation to ethnic or racial diversity of a nonprofit organizations' constituents, community, and leaders. They found that a nonprofit organization that serves more ethnically and racially diverse constituents and communities is associated with a higher level of advocacy activity. On the other hand, "Whiteness" is pervasively embedded in nonprofit organizations and helps Whites to maintain their supremacy as the predominant beneficiaries within organizations (Heckler, 2019). Nonprofits tend to perform in line with Whiteness so as to secure resources from Whites, dominating the organizations' environment (Heckler, 2019), which benefits White employees and reinforces racial inequity in the sector.

Though the nonprofit sector has invested many resources and efforts to promote social equity, it is still not free from the criticism that nonprofit organizations have not done enough to advocate for anti-racist social movements driving social change and institutional improvement. Here, anti-racism supports anti-racist ideas and policies— treating all racial groups as equal through one's actions or expressions (Kendi, 2019). Acting against racist practices and norms, anti-racism criticizes the socially constructed and institutionalized racism and demands fundamental changes beyond just not being racist. On the other hand, racism is "a marriage of racist policies and racist ideas that produces and normalizes racial inequities" (Kendi, 2019, p. 17), which involves non-racism and assimilationism. Non-racists seek to dissociate themselves from racism even though their action and practice are, in fact, racist (Brown, 1986). Assimilationists believe that certain racial groups are inferior and they need to be developed through cultural or behavioral programs.

Critical race theory, particularly, offers an alternative approach to examine racism and anti-racism within the nonprofit sector. Critical race theory underscores race and racism are embedded across our dominant institutions such as law and culture. This approach is social-constructivist, which assumes that “the reality of race and racism is not created by an ‘essential’ nature of persons or ‘organic’ groups, but by (institutionalized) social practices that implicitly or explicitly have the effect of making ‘groups’ and ‘identities’ appear as something essential or given” (Elliker, Coetzee, & Kotze, 2013, p. 10).

Though some literature addresses how nonprofits contribute to racial equity, few take a critical approach to understand structural racism or anti-racism which still seem to exist within the nonprofit sector. Also, the killing of George Floyd seems to have sparked a national conversation around racism (Gelles, 2020). Hence, additional research needs to explore how nonprofits support racism or anti-racism, critically revisiting a general assumption that the nonprofit sector enhances racial equity.

2. Research Questions and Contributions

To better understand how nonprofits are committed to anti-racism (or not) after George Floyd’s death and subsequent BLM protests, this research addresses the following main research question and sub-questions: How did nonprofit organizations respond to George Floyd’s death and subsequent BLM protests?

- What messages did they convey about racism and anti-racism?
- What commitments did they make to address racial inequality?

This research contributes to the current literature by offering a recent description of how nonprofits address racial inequity by responding to the death of George Floyd and BLM protests. It also employs critical race theory to apply the concept of anti-racism to the nonprofit field. In general, nonprofits are often presumed to be anti-racist, advocating for racial equity. Yet, a critical race theory framework offers an alternative approach to examine if the practice of nonprofits is truly anti-racist. Also, this study gives in-depth knowledge about how nonprofits communicate anti-racist or racist messages.

The research will be shared at the UNO Research and Creative Activity Fair in March of 2022. The literature, findings, and implications discussed in the research will also be a foundation for my dissertation research. Moreover, the research is expected to produce a qualified paper that can be published through journals such as *International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing* and *Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly*.

3. Research Methodology

This proposed research builds on previous research conducted in the PA 9960 Qualitative Methods class taken last fall, which examined philanthropic foundations’ response to BLM movements after the killing of George Floyd. Extending the scope of research, this project aims to explore the relationship between the nonprofit sector and racial equity. Based on the earlier study, this research will use a directed qualitative content analysis to answer the research questions. To examine responses from nonprofit organizations to the killing of George Floyd and BLM movements, the study will gather official online statements published by a sample of nonprofit organizations. These online statements will be sought for the top 60 nonprofit organizations based on their budget size using the Top 100 list from *The Nonprofit Times* (Hrywna, 2019). Total revenue, based on the year of 2019, will be indicative of nonprofits’ budget size. The sample size of the study is 60 because my previous research done in the

Qualitative Methods course examined 60 foundations. Balancing the sample size would allow me to extend the previous research and compare it with this proposed study. Top nonprofit organizations are the target of this research because resources are not only the key to organizational survival (Carroll & Stater, 2009) but also a foundation for better fulfilling organizational mission and goal (Wicker & Breuer, 2013). Bigger nonprofits, in general, may have greater impact on our society with their resources addressing racial inequity, whereas smaller nonprofits with fewer resources would be more likely to face challenges (Levine, 2020).

After developing the sample of nonprofits, the researcher will search for online statements—press releases, news releases, public statements, CEO statements or letters, blog posts, or other documents by searching the official websites of each nonprofit organization. The search involves looking for any statements published between May 25, 2020 to August 17, 2020 and searching for key words including Black Lives Matter (or BLM), All Lives Matter, George Floyd, people of color, Black, racial equity, racism, or anti-racism. The time range reflects this research’s attempt to examine nonprofits’ response after the event that George Floyd was killed, which was also applied to the previous research done last semester.

Directed content analysis, which will be utilized in this research, leverages analytic categories generated from existing theories and explanations related to the research focus but also stays open to other themes that might emerge (Lune & Berg, 2016). Drawing upon the literature on critical race theory, particularly Kendi’s (2019) work, racism (including non-racism and assimilationism) and anti-racism will be typical codes of determining racial inequity or equity.

4. Project Timeline

Year	Month	Main Research Activities
2021	May 1-31	Review relevant literature; collect data on nonprofits’ online statements
	June 1-30	Continue collecting data; analyze data
	July 1-31	Continue analyzing data; write up research paper
	August 1-20	Review and finalize draft research paper
	Fall	Prepare for the presentation at the UNO Research and Creative Activity Fair and submitting the paper for research journals

5. Project Roles

Doctoral student: Seo Eun Jung, School of Public Administration, will take a leading role for the following research activities: developing a research design with theoretical framework, collecting data, analyzing data, and writing up research paper(s).

Faculty Mentor: Dr. Angela Eikenberry, School of Public Administration, my supervisory committee chair and faculty mentor, will provide feedback and advice over the course of conducting and writing up the research, which includes developing the research design, collecting and analyzing data, and reviewing the paper(s).

6. Funding

I haven’t received any other funding for this research.

II. Budget Justification

The request is for a \$4,800 stipend, plus \$200 for supplies and expenses. I expect to spend 40 hours per week on this project over the summer months. I have no other funding support during this time. This funding will allow me to devote all of my time to the project. The specific budget items and amounts are the following:

Budget Item	Activities		Justification and Amount
Personnel	May 2021	Review relevant literature; collect data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipend for living expenses • Work 40 hours/week • The wage is \$10 per hour • 40 hrs x \$10 x 2 weeks = \$800
	June 2021	Collect data; analyze data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipend for living expenses • Work 40 hours/week • The wage is \$10 per hour • 40 hrs x \$10 x 4 weeks = \$1,600
	July 2021	Analyze data; write up research paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipend for living expenses • Work 40 hours/week • The wage is \$10 per hour • 40 hrs x \$10 x 4 weeks = \$1,600
	August 2021	Review and finalize draft research paper	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stipend for living expenses • Work 40 hours/week • The wage is \$10 per hour • 40 hrs x \$10 x 2 weeks = \$800
Supplies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Qualitative data analysis (QDA) software • Printing and photocopying research articles, reports, and materials 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • MAXQDA (software for qualitative analysis is essential for conducting the research project): \$47 for 6-month student license • \$153 for paper, printing, photocopying, or other supplies
Total Budget	Amount Requested: \$5,000		

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January 18, 2021

RE: GRACA Proposal for Seo Eun (Grace) Jung

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to write this letter of support for **Seo Eun (Grace) Jung's** proposal, "A Study on Nonprofit Organizations' Support for (Anti-)Racism — A Critical Race Theory (CRT) Perspective on the Nonprofit Sector and Racial Equity." I have served as Grace's supervisory committee chair for the past year and a half and as an instructor for one of her courses, *Qualitative Research Methods*. Based on my interactions with Grace in these capacities, I am confident she will be able to successfully complete this project, which is entirely her own work.

I will be serving as supervisor and mentor for the project. I have reviewed and provided feedback on this proposal, including reviewing the budget needs and costs. I will continue to work closely with Grace to provide direction and feedback throughout the entire project. We plan to meet every 2-3 weeks while the project is in progress.

The proposed work builds on research being conducted this fall in my doctoral-level Qualitative Research Methods course. For that course, Grace had to submit a full research design proposal that had to be approved before data collection could begin. The class has provided her with an opportunity to conduct exploratory primary research before embarking on this GRACA project. Thus, Grace has the background, experience, and training necessary to complete the project.

Grace will use a qualitative approach, primarily drawing on content analysis of organizational documents, which is appropriate for this project examining a subject with little previous research. I anticipate her research will make an important contribution to the literature and to policy and practice.

Thank you for your consideration!

Sincerely,



Angela M. Eikenberry
D. B. and Paula Varner Professor