

Diverse Family Structures Focus Group
NCFR 2020 Meeting Minutes
11/11/2020

Focus Group Co-Chairs: Caroline Sanner, Todd Jensen

Minutes:

- The meeting began with welcoming remarks, followed by brief attendee ($N = 17$) introductions.
- To preface a group discussion on “Race and Racism in the Study of Family Structure,” a brief overview of key terms (e.g., racist, antiracist) was highlighted in reference to the work of Dr. Ibram Kendi. The notion that science or scientists can truly be neutral was challenged, and the stage was set for dialogue around how family structure research can be approached in ways that are antiracist and confront systemic catalysts of racial inequities.
- Focus group members were encouraged to review the following resources prior to the meeting:
 - Williams, D. (2017). How the emphasis on family structure masks racial stratification in family research. Retrieved from <https://deadricwilliams.wordpress.com/2017/04/14/how-the-emphasis-on-family-structure-masks-racial-stratification-in-family-research/>
 - Walsdorf, A. A., Jordan, L. S., McGeorge, C. R., & Caughy, M. O. (2020). White supremacy and the web of family science: Implications of the missing spider. *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, 12(1), 64-79.
- Key points raised by attendees:
 - We need to place family structure in historical context and interrogate how it serves to perpetuate hierarchy.
 - We need to move beyond the view that "race is socially constructed" and clarify for whom and for what purpose it is socially constructed.
 - Researchers should be careful about their choice of language (e.g., lone mother, intact family, non-intact family); certain language can perpetuate harmful images or stereotypes that do not accurately reflect family realities.
 - We need to move beyond using race as a control variable in our analytic models; we need to be explicit about what we mean by race and justify why and how we incorporate race into our analyses.
 - We should be cognizant of scientific racism and gauge our own complicity; consider the role of research funding priorities (e.g., healthy marriage initiative) that can offer a “just get married” approach to addressing socioeconomic inequality but fail to acknowledge racial disparities within specific family structures and their upstream systemic causes.
 - Those who want to maintain power often target families as a way to do so; marriage has historically been used to reproduce notions of racial/gendered/socioeconomic power. It can be problematic to separate our study of families from these factors, and our work could benefit from assessing them together.
 - Family science should continue to assess how it has been captured and its work used to perpetuate white supremacy; we need to be careful that our work does not contribute to the reproduction of inequality.
- Focus group members were encouraged to continue sharing resources on the NCFR discussion board, where a summary of this meeting and ideas for next steps will be shared.