A 100-Year Review of Research on Black Families

Volume I: 1920 to 1969

Chrishana M. Lloyd, Mavis Sanders, Sara Shaw, Hannah Wodrich, and Abigail Wulah, with support from Kristen Harper and Zabryna Balén

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Introduction

This volume (Volume I of II) highlights five decades (1920s through 1960s) of select social science research on one of the most highly politicized family types in the United States—the Black family. Our 50-year exploration uses a historical perspective that presents insights and nuances that are not always identified in research reviews, making it a valuable resource for researchers—both old and new—to the study of Black families. For instance, this volume does not simply name researchers, count sources, and present findings. Instead, we delve into issues such as demographic, disciplinary, and philosophical characteristics of researchers; relationships between researchers and their institutions; and relationships between researchers themselves, funders of research, and policymakers.

We also shed light on seminal research activities that set the stage for the future of the field, both for Black families and for the social study of families more generally, as well as certain nuances and complexities of the research itself. In this way, our review adds to the social science and family studies field by offering a distinctly layered and nuanced understanding of the individuals and institutions involved in researching Black families, and by presenting methodological, theoretical, and empirical findings related to Black families. We also highlight understandings about the ways in which research informs public discourse, policy, and programs—critical forces that can serve as barriers and/or facilitators of Black family functioning.

Black Families in the United States

We define "Black families" as a group of at least one self-identified Black adult related by birth, marriage, adoption, or choice to one or more children (infancy through adolescence).

When referencing Black people, we are referring to individuals who may identify as African American—those who were primarily born in the United States and are descended from enslaved Africans who survived the trans-Atlantic slave trade—as well as the smaller populations of people living in the United States who may identify as Black African or Afro-Caribbean.

Black also includes individuals who reported being Black alone or in combination with one or more races or ethnicities in their responses to the U.S. Census—for instance, an individual who identifies as Black only, as well as someone who identifies as Black and White combined or Afro-Latino.

Although resources for this undertaking did not allow for a full accounting of all social science research relevant to Black families from 1920 to 1969, the research and supplemental literature used in this review were carefully curated to shed light on and stimulate thinking about who conducts research related to Black families, the way research on Black families is funded, the theories and methods used for this research, and what we know and do not know about Black families. We are excited to engage with those interested in this work, and sincerely hope this volume proves to be a valuable resource for those working in the family studies, social science, and public policy spheres for years to come.

Brief Overview of the Early History of Research on Black Families

The formal study of Black families harkens to the beginning of the 20th century and has close ties to government and policy. Some of the first writings on Black Americans were commissioned by the Department of Labor, the precursor to the Bureau of Labor Statistics. Occurring from the late 1800s through the early 1900s, these studies documented the lives and experiences of Black people in the United States[a, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9] and were considered pioneering because of their scientific approach.

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[a] All of the referenced studies were published in Bulletins of the U.S. Department of Labor.

Dr. W. E. B. Du Bois, an accomplished Black American scholar, was a key contributor the nation's early understandings of Black family life. With the assistance of Isabel Eaton, a White sociologist,[b] Dr. DuBois penned *The Philadelphia Negro*, a seminal piece of literature published in 1899.[10] This work was completed before his tenure at Atlanta University (1897-1910) and was commissioned by the University of Pennsylvania to highlight the experiences—migration, education, health, religion, crime, and family life—of Black Americans in the Seventh Ward of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania.[11] Important to this work was the framing of the "ask"—or the driving motivation for the work—which was a request to shed light on the "societal problem" of the Negro. At its core, this charge assumed an inherent pathology of Black people.[12] The *Philadelphia Negro* findings were based on a combination of ethnography, descriptive statistics and social history. In fact, over 5,000 interviews— guided by a structured questionnaire—set the foundation for not just understanding Black individuals, families, and communities but also the field of survey research.[13]

Battey, C.M. (1919). *W.E.B. (William Edward Burghardt) Du Bois, 1868-1963* [photograph]. Library of Congress. https://www.loc.gov/pictures/item/2003681451/

While at Atlanta University, Dr. Du Bois led a research agenda on Black American life through his establishment of a department of sociology. His commitment to documenting and understanding Black people was operationalized, in part, through annual conferences and writings that mandated scientific study of Black Americans. The result, a compilation of 23 studies conducted primarily by his students, is collectively referred to as the Atlanta University Publications. These writings include Publication 13, *The Negro American Family*, a report published in 1908. This report highlights the results of a student survey of Georgia families that sheds light on the experiences of Black people in Africa, through enslavement, and as free citizens in the United States. Topics such as marriage and family were also explored.[14]

Du Bois's research on Black families has been both lauded and contested.[15] It cannot be disputed, however, that he was an important early architect of scholarship on Black American family life. In addition to his students, Dr. Du Bois ushered others into the Black family studies field, including scholars like Dr. Ira De A. Reid, who is known for his extensive writing on Black immigrants in the United States.[16] Even after Dr. Du Bois' departure from academia, the tradition of Black family scholarship continued at Atlanta University with other notable scholars like Dr. Horace Mann Bond, a researcher of education and Black families.[17]

Morehouse College, also located in Atlanta, was similarly an important player in the early Black family studies movement. The Annual Institute on Successful Marriage and Family Living—founded in 1946 by sociologist and professor, Walter R. Chivers—was borne out of the Morehouse sociology department.[18] Morehouse partnered with the Planned Parenthood Federation of America to give this yearly conference. The Black Family Life Study Project, led by sociologist Dr. Anna Harvin Grant,[19] was also an important event for highlighting issues related to Black families. While different in scope, both initiatives sought to stimulate dialogue about and center study and scholarship on Black families, covering topics such as marital happiness, sexual adjustment, teen violence, interracial marriage, and family formation.[20]

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[b] Isabel Eaton is most known for a sub-study within the Philadelphia Negro, published in 1899 and titled *Special Report on Negro Domestic Service in the Seventh Ward, Philadelphia*; this work, published in 1899, chronicled the lives of Black domestic workers in Philadelphia.

An examination of the history of the Black family studies field must also acknowledge the contributions of Dr. E. Franklin Frazier. Dr. Frazier was a sociologist and prolific writer who, along with others, founded the Atlanta School of Social Work at Morehouse College, which later merged with Atlanta University. Dr. Frazier eventually left the South and pursued his doctorate at the University of Chicago. His PhD thesis, *The Negro Family in Chicago*,[21] was one of his first published works. He was also responsible for one of the first comprehensive studies of Black American families researched and authored by a Black sociologist, *The Negro Family in the United States*.[22]

Photographer unknown. (circa 1942). [Untitled photo shows: E. Franklin Frazier, famous scholar and Howard Professor]. Library of Congress.
https://www.loc.gov/item/20177 67784/

We are unable in this report to touch on all the influential early scholars of Black family life. However, these initial writings and teachings (1800s through the early 1900s)—originating in the South and Midwest, from intellectuals with similar sociological training and varied genders and geographical roots—have had an important role in shaping the way research conducted by Black scholars and about Black families has been undertaken and used in the United States. Their work occurred in various institutions across the country, but its inception—especially during the early years—had a firm grounding in Black academia and Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). This scholarship was most often descriptive and time-limited, and it often occurred in collaboration with government (federal, state, and local) and in the service of illuminating the varied and unique situations of Black people and families in America to advance their progress.

About the Lead Author

This work builds on the work of notable and influential Black scholars who began addressing issues related to Black families as early as the 1800s. The lead author for this volume, Dr. Chrishana M. Lloyd, is a Black female researcher with two primary areas of scholarly focus: family studies and early care and education. Born in Washington, DC and raised primarily in Virginia, Dr. Lloyd was educated at James Madison University (Bachelor of Science), the University of Delaware (Doctor of Philosophy)—both Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs)—and Howard University (Master of Social Work), a Historically Black College and University (HBCU). Dr. Lloyd has spent over 20 years partnering with communities and families in personal and professional capacities to examine and use research and data to understand and shift family and early care and education systems in the United States that negatively affect adults, children, and families—particularly those who have been minoritized and marginalized.

While employed at a social policy research think tank in New York City, Dr. Lloyd held key research and operations roles on family-focused studies. This work included leading a sub-study evaluation focused on Black and Hispanic families participating in the Supporting Healthy Marriages (SHM) demonstration project.[23] The larger SHM study was a mixed-methods effort led by MDRC that took place from 2003 to 2014. The SHM program model included marriage education and other support services for economically disadvantaged married couples with children in eight programs across the United States.[24, 25]

Dr. Lloyd also worked on the Building Strong Families (BSF) demonstration evaluation (2002-2013), led by Mathematica, a social policy research organization. Building Strong Families was also a multi-site, mixed methods demonstration project that provided marriage and relationship education and support services.

The focus population for the BSF demonstration was romantically involved, unwed, heterosexual couples at or near the birth of their child, or who had recently had a child together.[26]

Like many large-scale research efforts focused on families, both of these efforts were funded by the government—in these cases, by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Administration for Children and Families. The studies were led by think tanks and the research teams were led by and consisted of primarily White researchers. Academics and other consultants (also primarily White) were part of the teams as well. The impetus for both efforts was research showing that healthy marriages resulted in positive contributions to society and a concern that the number of babies being born to unmarried mothers (note that "mothers" is the language used, not "couples") was increasing.[27, 28] This number was particularly high among families with low incomes, an occurrence that led to children being at risk for living in poverty and other challenges.[29] As a result, stabilizing and promoting marriage—especially for heterosexual men and women with low incomes—became a key policy area of focus under the George W. Bush administration. The SHM and BSF projects were key in this approach.

Dr. Lloyd connected to these family-focused research projects because of her place of employment, her academic training, and her interests. However, her commitment to Black families stems from her personal history and experiences. Familial research shows she is the descendant of enslaved Black men, a White female indentured servant, and Black men and women who have been directly impacted by Jim Crow—a collection of state and local legislation that legalized racial segregation to support the maintenance of a racial caste system that held Black people at the bottom and White people on top, and which limited Black people's growth potential. Dr. Lloyd has interfaced personally and professionally with early care and education (i.e., Head Start), economic (i.e., welfare), health (i.e., early intervention), education (i.e., special education), criminal justice (i.e., federal and state prisons and jails), and other U.S. systems that have provided her an intimate and on-the-ground understanding of the ways in which Black families (including her own) are affected by research and its linkages to social policies and programming. Her family is also one of the first to receive reparations from the Virginia Theological Seminary, an acknowledgement of the physical, psychological, and economic harm that slavery and Jim Crow laws have perpetuated on Black families for generations.[30, 31] It is with this background, understanding of history, and commitment to Black families that Dr. Lloyd approached the writing for this volume.

Time Period

This volume begins in 1920 and concludes at the end of the 1960s. During this approximately 50-year timeframe, several key events occurred in the United States, including the Great Migration of Black people from Southern parts of the country to the North, Midwest, and West; several wars in which the United States was involved (World War I, World War II, and the Korean and Vietnam wars); an economic depression followed by a period of prosperity; and advances in civil rights. These events not only informed the ways in which Black families lived, but also the ways in which research occurred and public policies and programming were conceptualized and implemented.

Methods for Volume I

This volume focuses primarily on research specific to Black families but, when necessary, also draws on a broader base of family-focused scholarship. For example, to understand general familial and societal trends, we examined and included learnings from research summaries, meta-analyses, and other works conducted in family studies, demography, sociology, social work, and related fields.

We used academic search engines—including Academia.edu, Google Scholar, JSTOR, ProQuest, Research Gate, and Science Direct, in addition to HathiTrust—to identify dissertations, theses, books, articles, conference papers, and family-focused meeting and policy proceedings, all highlighting Black families. We

also reviewed the websites of think tanks and academic institutions such as the Pew Charitable Trusts, the Brookings Institution, Urban Institute, and the University of Michigan's Program for Research on Black Americans (PRBA) at the Institute for Social Research to unearth research with a Black family focus or that was relevant to Black families. Lastly, we examined newspapers, gray literature, and other media such as YouTube to inform this review.

In terms of yield and process, the databases and HathiTrust provided the majority of the content for this review. Within the databases, we first used keyword searches that included our population of interest—the Black family—as well as researchers, reports, books, and contextual and family/social policy issues important to the decade. For example, searches for the 1960s began with "Negro Family" (Negro was the Census terminology for Black people at the time), which was coupled with terms such as Andrew Billingsley, The Moynihan Report, Talley's Corner, civil rights, Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), etc. We then used "snowball sampling," meaning we used the bibliographies/references in primary documents identified in the databases to find other relevant literature. Finally, we also consulted book reviews, bibliographies, research summaries, and meta-analyses of family-focused research (inclusive of all races and ethnicities in the United States).

After identifying the select resources for this review, we undertook content analysis. Content analysis included examining abstracts, keywords, and introductions to determine research topics. We then examined the methodology, data collection, data analysis, and conclusions portions of documents to understand their findings, draw conclusions, and develop implications for the work.

All materials available online were inserted into Zotero for categorizing and referencing. Over 300 resources were reviewed, which were categorized by type: quantitative, qualitative, mixed methods, or non-empirical.

Organization and Content

This volume includes five chapters, organized by decade. Each decade's chapter begins with the title of a song from a Black artist that the lead author feels best captures developments in that decade for Black families.

Each chapter includes three sections:

- Context
- Overview of Select Research Topics, Methods, and Approaches
- Research, Policy, and Practice Connections

Context: This section briefly describes the national political, social, and economic trends of each decade, with a particular focus on the events and policies affecting families broadly and, when possible, Black families specifically. This section also includes demographic data on Black families. Drawing on the U.S. Census data available for the first year of each decade, we describe population growth and diversity, marriage rates, fertility rates, and economic outlooks for Black families.[c]

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[c] Data on the demographic characteristics of Black people and families were pulled primarily from the U.S. Census Bureau and from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) National Vital Statistics System. All data come from publicly available tables or documents. While the U.S. Census Bureau publishes data tables at data.census.gov, data are not available in these searchable tables prior to 2000. For data prior to 2000, information was pulled from summary reports or research briefs as part of the Census Bureau Library. As noted in each chapter, the definitions of measures shift slightly over time for some metrics. For example, in 1970, marriage rates were calculated for all individuals over age 14, but calculated for all individuals over age 15 in other decades. The availability and definition of measures for the focal metrics also differ across decades. Accordingly, readers should use caution when interpreting changes in these metrics across time. For more information about the demographic data used in this volume, see Appendix A.

Overview of Select Research Topics, Methods, and Approaches: This section summarizes key elements of studies published on Black families during the decade. It includes a discussion of:

- **Research content highlights** to promote understanding of common and divergent trends in the literature on Black families

- **Research methods and approaches** used in studies of Black families during each decade, including both salient and unique research designs and methods, as well as theoretical and conceptual frameworks

Research, Policy, and Practice Connections: The relationship between research, policy, and practice is not linear, and is often challenging to articulate. In the final section of each chapter, we reflect on individuals, organizations, and events that have informed public discourse, advocacy efforts, professional practice, and national and local policies—and which have affected or altered the lives of Black families in both positive and negative ways.

Decade: 1920-1929

"This Train is Bound for Glory" (1925) | Recorded by: Wood's
Famous Blind Jubilee Singers | Written by: Traditional gospel

Context

The 1920s were a period of social, political, and fiscal transition. During this decade, the country was led by three presidents: Warren Harding (1921-1923), Calvin Coolidge (1923-1929), and Herbert Hoover (1929-1933). All three (to varying degrees) subscribed to *laissez-faire* policies, believing in the power of big business expansion and minimal government interference to bolster the country's economic well-being.[32,33,34]

The beginning of the decade saw the last of the American troops returning home from World War I (WWI); the migration of significant numbers of immigrants, as well as rural and Southern White Americans, to cities in search of industrial jobs and a more financially stable life;[35,36] the rise of unions; advances in technology (e.g., cars, radios and radio broadcasts, washing machines, and refrigerators); debates about Darwinism;[37] and the passing of the 19th Amendment, which gave women the right to vote.[38]

For Black families in particular, the return of Black men from WWI brought an expectation of equality in the United States and a hope for a better future. This ideology, termed The New Negro Movement,[39] was supported by prominent Black scholars such as W.E.B. Du Bois and resulted in the expansive growth of Black literature, music, and arts, as well as Black people's influence on American culture.[40] The movement was facilitated in part by the rise of thousands of Black Southerners moving to Midwestern and Northern cities through migration, eventually resulting in a significant shift in the geographic location of Black families in the country.[41] The impetus of the migration was a move away from the racism, discrimination, segregation, lack of education and employment opportunities, racial violence, and legislated oppression

(such as Jim Crow laws) that typified the South.[42,43] The Midwest and North, however, were not utopias. While Black people had more diverse options in terms of employment, they continued to experience similar oppressive behaviors instigated by White people, as well as variations of the same institutionally racist practices of the South.[44] Also, although women were granted the right to vote during the 1920s (and the 15th Amendment had granted Black men the right to vote in 1870), it was not until the Civil Rights Movement (late 1950s-1960s) that both Black men and women would be able to exercise this right without discrimination[45] (this promise, however, still has not been fully recognized).[46] Throughout much of the decade, the country experienced considerable economic growth and prosperity, but at its end—in October 1929—the stock market crashed and the country suffered economically.[47] This occurrence negatively affected all Americans but had a particularly devastating impact on Black families.[48]

Data on Black families

In 1920, the United States Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census conducted its 14th decennial census. In the 1920s, the Census identified Black Americans solely on their "color or race." American people with more than one race were identified as "mixed blood" and classified on the Census by their "non-white racial strain" or, if the "non-white blood itself [was] mixed," by the "racial status as adjudged by the community."[49] This activity was solely based on the community's perception of a person's race.[50] As such, data on Black families from the 1920s Census may include Black Americans who identified as more than one race or ethnicity, or Americans who themselves may not have self-identified as Black, but whom their community deemed to be Black.

Race, ethnicity, and the 1920 decennial Census

For the 1920 Census, data collectors—formally called enumerators—identified a person's "color or race" using the following categories: (1) white, (2) black,[d] (3) mulatto, (4) Indian, (5) Chinese, (6) Japanese, (7) Filipino, (8) Hindu, (9) Korean, or (10) other (with a write-in option). Directions to Census enumerators further clarified that "for Census purposes the term 'black' includes all Negroes of full blood, while the term 'mulatto' includes all Negroes having 'some proportion of white blood" (p. 28-29).[51]

Black family demographics

In 1920, there were a total of 105,710,620 people living in the United States, among whom 10,403,131 (9.9%) were identified as Negro. Approximately half of the Negro population identified as female[e] (50.2%).[52] The majority of Negro women (59.6%) were married in 1920, around one quarter (24.1%) were single, and the remaining were either widowed (14.8%) or divorced (1.3%). These numbers were similar for Negro men, most of whom were married (60.4%) or single (32.6%). Few men were widowed (5.9%) and even

A note on Census terminology

Data in this section draw primarily on the decennial United States Census with occasional references to other sources. For all sources, we present the data using the language (including capitalization standards) as reported either on official Census records or from the original data source. For example, in this decade, we refer to Black people as "Negroes" and capitalize the N in alignment with the original Census reports.

For each decade, we present information on Black families' demographics, geography, and economic outlook. Unless otherwise noted, all demographic information reported in this chapter is from 1920.

There is limited information on the geography and economic outlook of Black people and/or families from the 1920 Census. For example, the Census Bureau did not collect information on families' income until the 1940s, and national-level poverty data were not available before 1959.

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[d] While the Census used the term "black" for data collection purposes, the term "Negro" is used to describe Black people in the United States in all Census reports.
[e] In 1920, the U.S. Census did not ask questions about gender and limited responses to questions concerning "current sex" to male and female only.

fewer were divorced (0.8%).[53] Fertility rates for "Nonwhite"[f] women were 137.5 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44—higher than the overall rate for women, which was 117.9 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44.[54] The life expectancy for Negro men was 46.4 years in 1920, compared to 45.5 years for Negro women.[55]

Geography of Black families

1920s Census data show that the vast majority (85.2%) of Negroes still lived in the Southeastern states of the continental United States. However, as mentioned, the 1920s marked a time of migration for Black families in the South, with an increase (43.3%) in the number of Negroes moving to the Northern United States.[g,56] In 1920, the Census did not report the nativity status of Black families. Census reporting indicates that "nearly all Negroes and Indians are natives of native parentage" (p. 10),[57] an assumption that likely led to the nativity status of Black people in America not being asked about during the 1920 Census data collection process.

Black families' economic outlook

While many Black families moved to the North in hopes of economic opportunity, residential segregation, high rents, racism, and discrimination were common—Jim Crow laws, especially prevalent in the South, contributed to these issues.[58] For example, three out of four Negro families (74.0%) rented their homes in the United States in 1920 due to laws that inhibited their ability to purchase homes.[59]

The U.S. Census did not collect information on income until the 1940s, but it did collect information on individuals' employment status. The majority (59.9%) of Negro men and women were engaged in gainful employment in 1920, and men had much higher (81.1%) employment rates in comparison to women (38.9%). Among those who were employed, most working men were employed in either agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry (48.2%) or in manufacturing and mechanical industries (24.0%), while most working women were employed in either domestic or personal services (50.3%) or agriculture, forestry, and animal husbandry (39.0%).[60]

Although the majority of Negro men and women were gainfully employed in 1920, benefits from participating in the labor market were often elusive for Black Americans, many of whom did not have the opportunity to enjoy the economic prosperity of the decade. In rural parts of the country, issues such as pests decimating crops and a falling price of cotton were particularly challenging for Black farm workers.[61] In other industries, Black Americans continued to work in the lowest paying positions due to ongoing racism and discriminatory practices.[62, 63]

Overview of Select Research Topics, Methods, and Approaches Related to the Applied Study of Black Families in the 1920s

Research on Black families in the 1920s drew heavily on the fields of sociology and social work. Black scholars, in particular, were often engaged in research for multiple purposes, including to understand and interpret family life and behaviors and to produce scholarship that addressed issues relevant to Black people and families. These goals were not mutually exclusive. Like most Black people in America, Black scholars were influenced by the larger context of American society. In family science, this approach was

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[f] Statistics in this decade are reported as they appeared in their original source. Throughout the decade, we use the term "Nonwhite," which was used by authors of several documents from the 1920s Census. It is not our intention to use this term to draw comparisons between Black and White people, so we do not provide the data for White families for reference.
[g] The Northern United States included New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Center, and West North Central divisions. Source: Bureau of the Census, U.S. Department of Commerce (1922). *1920 Census: Volume III. Population 1920, composition and characteristics of the population by states.* https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/41084484v2ch01.pdf

characterized by the examination of families' current situations, family change, and the summarization of what was learned via essays[64]—referred to by prominent family sociologist Harold T. Christianson as "Emerging Science."[65] Research on Black families followed this trend, although there were exceptions. For example, Carter G. Woodson, a Black historian, conducted a retrospective examination of free Black heads of families to better understand a "neglected aspect of our history."[66]

Below, we highlight select recurring and/or particularly salient research topics from the 1920s, along with findings. When available, we also shed light on the methods and approaches used to better understand Black families during this decade.

Research content highlights

- **Economic profiles**. An influx of Black people and families from rural Southern areas into urban locations in the North, Midwest, and Western parts of the country occurred in tandem with the strengthening of a post-WWI industrial economy and the weakening of the Southern agricultural economy.[67] As such, chronicling the differences and changes in Black families as they moved from the South to the North
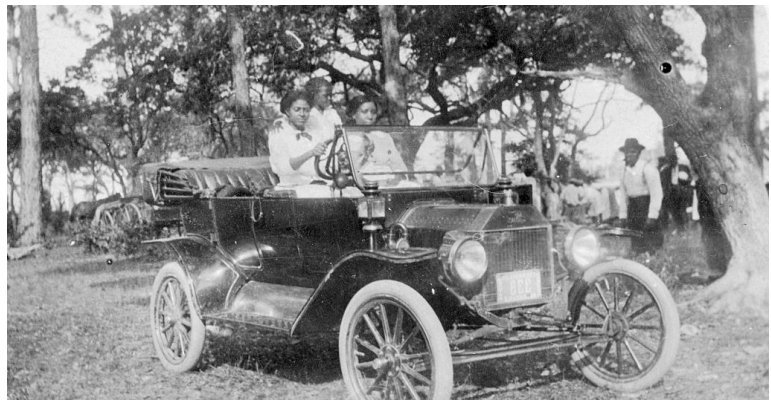
  was a key area of research interest,[68] as was the exploration of Black families' economic situations. Efforts to understand the finances of Black families occurred in Southern[69,70] and Northern[71, 72, 73 ,74] regions of the country, with results indicating that Black families in both areas struggled financially. These explorations were quite detailed and covered many areas, including the way in which—and the frequency by which—Black families spent monies; the type of food and meals they consumed; the kind and amount of clothing they purchased; the amenities, size, and quality of their living quarters; and other features.[75,76,77,78,79]

- **Social problems and casework**. Geographic movement, whether from rural to more urban areas or from the South to the North, was generally thought to "disorganize" or negatively affect family functioning.[80] Additionally, couples having children without being married (i.e., illegitimacy) and women's utilization of public programs to support children (i.e., dependency) were identified as issues of concern that warranted research to understand their prevalence, as well as women's reasons for requiring said services.[81,82] Urbanization—including the move of families from the rural South to Northern cities—and social class were also identified as contributing factors to families social challenges.[83, 84, 85] Within research that explored these issues, adaptation and acculturation to new environments—such as the city—were explored. This research included an examination of morals and principles (which were thought to shift from the positive to the negative when leaving the South) and the potential effects these changes had on children.[86] Undergirding this research was an assumption, by prominent and influential Black scholars like E. Franklin Frazier, that the standard of reference or baseline for "appropriate" or desirable individual and familial morals was Black rural communities and White America. That is, research of the era considered the lack of adherence to the traditional ways of Black Southern families and/or the prevailing cultural norms of White families to be deviant.[87] In later research, however, Black rural family behaviors and characteristics were also referenced as primitive and backwards.[88,89]

- **Intelligence and morality**. The development of measures such as intelligence quotient (IQ) testing to understand and quantify moral and other differences among people began to receive attention in the 1920s. IQ tests were created and used by White scholars to explain genetic dispositions to behaviors such as out-of-wedlock childbearing,[90] an issue thought to be related to loose morals. Generally, Black people scored lower on IQ tests and were subsequently labeled as intellectually inferior to White people.[91] This inferiority was then linked to ideologies that Black family and home influences negatively affected Black children's intellectual growth and future capabilities.

  These assumptions, however, were not causally valid. They lacked inclusion or acknowledgement of biases in questions and test administration, did not examine environmental factors such as the adequacy of housing or food, and did not give attention to factors such as access to education or employment. Black scholars such as Horace Mann Bond, Cecil Sumner, E. Franklin Frazier, and Charles Henry Thompson addressed these issues. Among many things, they questioned the motives of the IQ test creators and researchers. They also pushed back against the strategies for IQ test data collection, which they asserted were driven by racism and the promotion of White superiority.[92] Their grievances were accompanied by alternate explanations regarding family functioning in scholarly literature. For instance, Horace Mann Bond's 1927 case study examinations of children's IQ in relationship to family characteristics found that, regardless of socioeconomic status, supportive and educationally enriching environments for Black children facilitated their cognitive ability and resulted in higher IQ test results.[93] This work led Bond to conclude that the socioeconomic status of the family (families living in poverty, in particular, were thought to be immoral) was not as important a factor for children as living in a family that encouraged reading. Based on his findings, Bond concluded that Black children's futures were malleable, regardless of their race and socioeconomic status. Other IQ research focusing on Black individuals found that access to educational opportunity,[94,95] racial match and the level of rapport between the IQ tester and participant,[96] and differences in IQ test administrators and participants' dialect[97] all affected IQ scores, suggesting a complex interaction of factors that are relevant to cognitive test results.

Methods and approaches

Much of the applied research on Black families in the 1920s was conducted by Black scholars. Many were trained and received degrees from Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) of higher education. Racism, however, curtailed opportunities to work at PWIs, resulting in Black scholars typically working at Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs). HBCUs had limited funding, making it challenging to advance large scale and well-funded research agendas.[98,99] As a result, federal, state, and city governments—along with public social service agencies—played a key role in determining the focus of research and scholarship related to Black families, including at HBCUs.

Given the norms and conditions of Black families during this decade, this research was most often problem-centered. That is, governments and agencies sought to understand Black families in order to address their challenges.

In terms of methods, much of the research conducted during this decade was qualitative in nature and included research and data collection strategies such as participant observations, case studies, and reviews of social service agency records. Occasionally, these activities were coupled with quantitative data such as self-administered or face-to-face surveys created specifically for the topic being explored.[100] Research during this time also utilized already existing data and Census records.[101,102]

Although not used extensively in Black family-focused research during the 1920s, concerns about accuracy of Census data became a point of contention in this decade. Drawing on prior writings from Black Census workers,[103] Howard University mathematician Kelly Miller argued that Black people were undercounted in

the 1920 Census, an issue that he posited had the potential to further disadvantage Black people given the "political and sociological conclusions" that were made based on Census numbers.[104]

Research, Policy, and Practice Connections

As mentioned, local, state, and federal governments played a key role in determining the focus of research, along with—to a lesser extent—social service agencies. For instance, a Philadelphia-based social service committee that included social workers as well as church and business leaders used research to understand and advocate for employment and better housing conditions for Black people who migrated to the city.[105] Other governmental agencies and jurisdictions wanted to better prepare themselves to assimilate Black families into the fabric of their communities, which included determining the allocation of monies that might be necessary to support their needs.[106] The federal government also had an interest in problem-solving. For instance, the Children's Bureau of the United States Department of Labor held regional conferences designed to develop standards for legally protecting the rights of children born out of wedlock.[107]

Black organizations also worked alongside federal, city, and local entities. For example, the National Urban League, a civil rights organization focused on economic and social justice for Black people in the United States, sponsored several studies of Black populations and families in urban areas around the country.[108,109] Data and findings from the studies—which included topics such as a family's migration history, household composition, employment, income, health status, home ownership, and housing conditions (including quality and access to modern sanitation)—were used to design programs that provided support to Black families and communities. In Richmond, Virginia, an interracial committee conducted research under the auspices of the Negro Welfare Survey Committee. The research included surveys and interviews and its recommendations were carried out and published by the Richmond Council of Social Agencies.[110]

Research on Black families also had racialized undertones and was used to explore the genetic characteristics of Black parents (generally mothers) and their ability to facilitate their children's and societal advancement.[111] For social work in particular, there was an interest in exploring these differences to develop strategies for working with Black mothers from the North versus the South, and to better inform the practices that social workers might engage in with Black and White unmarried mothers with children.[112]

Decade: 1930-1939

"Last Dollar" (1931) | Recorded by: Blanche Calloway |
Written by: Red Nichols

Context

At the onset of the 1930s, the country was led by President Herbert Hoover (1929-1933). Franklin D. Roosevelt began his tenure as president in 1933 (1933-1945), serving four terms—the longest ever for a sitting U.S. president.[113] The beginning of the 1930s was also defined by the Great Depression, a period of economic uncertainty punctuated with high levels of unemployment and experiences of poverty for many Americans.[114] By 1933, President Roosevelt's administration had instituted a series of economic support programs to lessen the impact of the Depression on American citizens. Referred to as the New Deal, the programs included financial assistance to states that could then be passed on to those who were unemployed; paid public sector jobs for those in need of work; labor protections such as fair wages and the right to unionization;[115] and the 1935 Social Security Act, which provided guaranteed pensions, unemployment insurance for those out of work, and financial protection for disabled individuals and dependent children.[116,117]

Although not a panacea for the Depression, the New Deal programs were a first step in expanding the role of government to address social and economic challenges for American people and families. Federal administrators who informed the creation of the New Deal—Harry Hopkins, Frances Perkins, and others—were White people who opposed the animosity displayed toward Black people in the country.[118] First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, an influencer of her husband's politics, was also a proponent of social justice and racial equality.[119] Most White people, however, thought negatively about and were hostile to Black Americans.[120,121] As such, Black families did not always benefit from many of these programs.[122] For example, farm and domestic workers (employment typically held by Black men, women, and older children)

were excluded from the Social Security and National Labor Relations Acts in 1935—a compromise made by President Roosevelt to appease Southern Democrats to get the legislation passed.[123]

Title IV of the Social Security Act included Aid to Dependent Children (or ADC, the precursor to the Aid to Families with Dependent Children, and, later, the Temporary Assistance to Needy Families program). Under this policy, men were expected to be the primary financial providers in a household. If they were unable to adhere to this role (either because of death, absence, or the inability to work),[124] ADC provided a means-tested mechanism for assisting families—and specifically, women and children who were poor. The underpinnings and implementation of ADC were bound in the Protestant work ethic,[h] patriarchy, sexism, and racism. For instance, ADC made distinctions between the "deserving" and the "undeserving" poor, discouraged White women's work, and intentionally omitted "unworthy" Black families.[125] Similar exclusionary practices occurred in other economic realms. State administrators and contractors, for example, would avoid hiring Black people for jobs and, even when they did, paid them less than White people for the same work—a particularly prevalent occurrence in the South, where most Black families lived.[126]

Data on Black families

The 1930s decennial Census identified Black Americans solely on their "color or race." The Census took a crude approach to race "or color," dividing the population into "white," "Negro," and a smaller group of "other races."[i] As in the previous decade, data on Black families from the 1930 Census may include Black Americans who reported more than one race or ethnicity, or Americans who themselves may not have identified as Black, but whom their community deemed to be Black.

Race, ethnicity, and the 1930 decennial Census

For the 1930 Census, enumerators or data collectors identified a person's "color or race" using the following categories: (1) white, (2) Negro, (3) Mexican,[j] (4) Indian,[k] (5) Chinese, (6) Japanese, (7) Filipino, (8) Hindu, (9) Korean, and (10) any other race. Directions to Census enumerators further clarified that "a person of mixed white and Negro blood should be returned as a Negro, no matter how small the percentage of Negro blood. Both black and mulatto persons are to be returned as Negroes[l] without distinction. A person of mixed Indian and Negro blood should be returned a Negro, unless the

A note on Census terminology

Data in this section draw primarily on the decennial United States Census with occasional references to other sources. For all sources, we present the data using the language (including capitalization standards) as reported either on official Census records or from the original data source. For example, in this decade, we refer to Black people as "Negroes" and capitalize the N in alignment with the original Census reports.

For each decade, we present information on families' demographics, geography, and economic outlook. Unless otherwise noted, all demographic information reported here is from 1930.

There is limited information on the geography and economic outlook of Black people and/or families from the 1930 Census. For example, the Census Bureau did not collect information on families' income until the 1940s, and national-level poverty data were not available before 1959.

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[h] A Christian ideology based on the premise that hard work is virtuous and aligns individuals with God.
[i] On the 1930 Census, Mexican Americans were identified under the "other race" category. In prior Census years, Mexican Americans were identified as White. In 1940, Mexican Americans would again be identified as White.
[j] This was the first and only time the U.S. Census reported "Mexican" as a race.
[k] Per the U.S. Census, "a person with both white and American Indian lineage was to be recorded as an Indian, unless his American Indian lineage was very small and he was accepted as white within the community. In fact, in all situations in which a person had white and some other racial lineage, he was to be reported as that other race. Persons who had minority interracial lineages were to be reported as the race of their father." Source: U.S. Census Bureau. (2021). *Decennial Census of population and housing questionnaires & instructions.* https://www2.census.gov/prod2/decennial/documents/41084484v2ch01.pdf
[l] Throughout this section we use the spellings "Negroes" and "Negros." In each instance, we use the spelling of the original source of information.

Indian blood predominates and the status as an Indian is generally accepted by the community" (p. 26-27).[127]

Black family demographics

In 1930, there were 122,775,046 people living in the United States, of whom 11,891,143 (9.7%) were enumerated as Negro.[128] In 1930, about half (53.1%) of Negros were ages 25 and younger (median age being 23.4 years). On average, rural areas had higher concentrations of young males (ages 25 and younger) than urban[m] areas.[129] In 1930, approximately half of the Negro population identified as female (50.8%).[n] However, in rural areas, there were more Negro men than Negro women (101.7 men per 100 women).[130]

In the 1930s, however, Negros in the United States had a similar distribution of marriage statuses as in the decade prior (1920s). The majority of Negro men (59.8%) and women (58.5%) were married, and slightly more men (32.2%) than women (23.3%) were single. Similar to rates in the 1920s, the number of widowed Negro women (15.9%) in the 1930s was more than double that of widowed men (6.3%).[131] In the 1930s, divorce rates among Negro men (1.4%) and women (2.2%) were slightly higher (respectively) than in the 1920's.[o] Fertility rates of non-White women[p] in the United States (105.9 births per 1,000 women ages 15-44) were a bit higher than the national average (89.2 births per 1,000 women ages 15-44) in the 1930s.[132] Life expectancies[q] of Negro men (47.6 years) and women (49.5 years) were slightly higher in the 1930s than in the 1920s, although still lower than the national averages of 53.3 for men and 56.1 for women.[133]

In the 1930s, the United States Census updated its definition of families, recognizing the family as a unit. The Census noted that a family was "a group of persons related either by blood or by marriage or adoption, who live together as one household, usually sharing the same table. Single persons living alone are counted as families ... as are a few small groups of unrelated persons sharing the same living accommodations as 'partners'" (pg. 5-6).[134] The majority of Negro families with children lived in rural communities (a trend that held true for all families in the United States at the time). The median family size among Negros was just over three people (3.2 persons) per family.[135]

Geography of Black families

Negro families in America continued to migrate into Northern states in the 1930s. Approximately three out of four (78.7%) Negros lived in the South in 1930, with a growing portion (20.3%) living in the North. The individuals living in the Northern states were almost all living in urban communities, while most in the South lived in rural communities.[136] Less than 1 percent (0.8%) of Negroes living in the United States in 1930 were foreign-born.[137]

Black families' economic outlook

Economic challenges continued into the 1930s and deepened amidst the worsening financial depression. Overall employment rates for Negro men and women in the United States were relatively high in the 1930 Census (59.2%) and similar to those seen in the 1920s. Men (80.2%) still far outnumbered women (38.9%) in gainful employment.[r] In 1930, the majority (73.1%) of Negroes in the United States were renting their

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[m] Generally, the 1930 United States Census defined the urban population as those residing in cities and other places that had 2,500 or more residents. Individuals living outside of these areas were considered part of the "rural population."
[n] This percentage was calculated from Census tables.
[o] This percentage was calculated from Census tables.
[p] Statistics in this decade are reported as they appear in their original source. Throughout the decade, we use the term "Nonwhite," which was used by authors of several documents from the 1930s Census. It is not our intention to use this term to draw comparisons between Black and White people, so we do not provide the data for White families for reference.
[q] Data on life expectancies were reported from 1929-1931.
[r] Unemployment data in the 1930s show drastic changes in estimates as the effects of the Depression impacted families. Estimates from the 1930s Census are likely not representative of the experiences of Black Americans throughout the decade and are therefore omitted. In 1931, there was a special Census on unemployment; however, these data were not available disaggregated by race.

homes and continued to battle racism and discriminatory housing practices when trying to find and maintain their housing, especially in the North.[138]

Overview of Select Research Topics, Methods, and Approaches Related to the Applied Study of Black Families in the 1930s

Research on Black families in the 1930s delved into a theme that had come to the fore in the 1920s: the disorganizing effects of migration, and particularly the effects of migration from the rural South to urban cities in the North (and elsewhere) on Black families. While the vast majority of Black families were not financially stable, some were economically secure. As such, explorations of markers such as class and caste differences were documented.[139,140] E. Franklin Frazier also played a key role in conducting and advancing research on Black families in the 1930s (and beyond), producing an inordinate number of articles and books throughout the decade.[141, 142, 143, 144, 145, 146] Frazier was also instrumental in mentoring and supporting students who conducted research on Black families and in influencing the direction and focus of Black family scholarship more generally. Descriptions of Black family life on Southern plantations,[147] family planning,[148] and linkages between environmental conditions and family functioning also emerged as key areas of study in the 1930s.[149,150,151]

Below, we highlight select recurring and/or particularly salient research topics from the 1930s, along with findings. When available, we also shed light on the methods and approaches used to better understand Black families during this decade.

Research content highlights

- **Intra-racial class stratification.** In the early part of the decade, E. Franklin Frazier wrote about a typically unexplored population of Black families—those who had been free before emancipation. His work covered the origins, growth, locations, and character of free Black people and families prior to the Civil War.[152] This undertaking, in part, was an effort to get away from utilization of White families as the "North Star" of family functioning, and to center learnings from families whom he deemed to be the forerunners of Black success. Frazier[153] and others[154,155] also examined class issues in Black families in relationship to migration. The overarching finding was that more industrious and intelligent Black people moved to larger cities (rather than remain in the rural South), and that these individuals developed family cultures and traditions that resulted in the transmission of leadership qualities. His conclusions were based on observations and on an examination of 125 college graduates and just over 300 people listed in the *Who's Who in Colored America* publication, alongside variables such as place of birth and occupational status across generations. Frazier also reasoned that the Black families who moved North from the South were typically "house slaves," meaning those who had had closer proximity to White people (whom he referred to as the "master class"). This proximity, he argued, gave

them knowledge and cultural advantages that "field slaves"[s] did not possess.[156] Toward the end of the decade, Frazier's seminal and possibly most influential piece of work, *The Negro Family in the United States,*[157] also touched on class stratification in Black families. This topic was explored alongside other issues such as the impact of slavery on family cohesion and the exploration of relationships between families, community, and poverty. Based on these findings, Frazier concluded that social conditions were key facilitators or barriers to Black family functioning.

- **Continuity of African culture**. In contrast to E. Franklin Frazier, who argued that Black families patterned their lives on the "master class" or dominant culture, Melville Herskovits, a Jewish-American anthropologist, posited that Black family characteristics and functioning were in part linked to African culture.[t] While not a popular sentiment of the decade (in fact, Frazier's hypothesis that Black families had no ties to Africa appears to have been the prevailing opinion), Herskovitz's 1933 paper laid the foundation for his groundbreaking book in the 1940s[158] that delved deeper into this theory. His viewpoint originated from observations during his travels across Africa and other parts of the world with significant numbers of Black people of African origin (Brazil, Suriname, Haiti, the West Indies, etc.). Across these geographies and peoples, he noticed common features such as family solidarity, commitment to children and kin (blood and otherwise), religious practices, and art and music that were strikingly similar to those found in West African culture.[159] Although not given much attention in the 1930s, Herskovits' work grew in importance in the 1940s and was the precursor to pioneering research in the 1970s—primarily led by Black scholars—that focused on Afrocentricity and strengths-based perspectives on Black families.[160, 161]

- **Living conditions.** Documentation and analysis of Black family living conditions were also important areas of inquiry during the 1930s.[162,163] This research was specific to particular locales and, as with explorations examining the finances of families that began in the 1920s (and that continued in the 1930s), much of it occurred to inform government and social service agencies and workers about how best to help families. Housing was a big area of focus in living conditions research, likely because of the federal government's interest in the topic. Early in the decade, President Hoover commissioned a nationwide study on living conditions, designating a special committee to study housing issues for Black people specifically.[164] The results of these efforts showed that, across U.S. cities, Black people were spending a significant proportion of their income on shelter.[165,166,167] Moreover, Black family domiciles lacked basic features such as indoor and up-to-date plumbing and proper ventilation.[168] The presence of vermin was also common, both within and outside of their homes.[169] In general, the Committee concluded that housing-related issues contributed to low standards of living and poverty for many families.

  Lack of access to appropriate housing was also cited as a contributing factor to child corruption. For instance, the inability to afford housing caused Black families to share space, often with people who were unrelated and/or not part of the family unit. These boarders made already cramped conditions worse and limited privacy. As such, the potential existed for children to observe adult activities such as sexual relationships (between children's parents/adult caretakers and between boarders), as well as

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[s] Field and house slave nomenclature indicated the locations in which slaves labored. Field slaves worked outdoors, primarily on plantation fields, while house slaves primarily worked indoors in the slave owner's home. In some cases, these designations also denoted a hierarchy, with field slaves having less prestige and status than house slaves. For instance, being enslaved in the house enabled observation and learning of White people's intimate habits, thinking, socialization, recreational, and educational processes. In some cases, Black enslaved people also participated in these activities. Skin complexion played a key role, and house slaves (often the product of rape) tended to be closer looking to White people (i.e., lighter-skinned, having straighter hair, etc.). Heuman, G. H. & Walvin, J. (2003). *The Slavery Reader*. Routledge.; Jacobs, H. (1861) *Incidents in the life of a slave girl*. Boston: Published for the Author
[t] Examination of Herskovitz's work indicates that he relied heavily on the expertise of Black researchers such as Zora Neale Hurston and Louis King, who had connections to Black people around the world. Source: Harrison, I.E., & Harrison, F.V. (1999). *African American pioneers in anthropology*. University of Illinois Press.

other behaviors from boarders that may not have been condoned by their families. These types of experiences were identified as catalysts to "loose living," as endangering family unity, and as precursors to behaviors such as prostitution.[170,171]

- **Black people's marriage rates**. Quantitative research using multiple statistical methodologies was not a significant area of focus with respect to Black families in the 1930s. The work of Oliver Cox, however—a Trinidadian-born, Black sociologist trained at the Chicago School of Sociology—bears mentioning. Cox's dissertation used correlations, scattergrams, and other statistics to show the effects of demographic variables (e.g., age, sex ratios, employment, school attendance, urbanization, population growth, and place of residence) on the marital status of Black people.[172, 173] Cox produced many works following his dissertation and these writings laid the foundation for his future theoretical scholarship on racism, caste, and class in the United States.[174, 175, 176, 177, 178, 179] In this body of work, Cox used examples such as interracial romantic relationships and marriage to argue that racism was a function of capitalism and economic exploitation of Black people in America, and not of intolerance. At the time, this theoretical shift was groundbreaking, as most studies of United States were influenced by E. Franklin Frazier, Robert Parks, and others who posited that conflicts with assimilation into White normative society were the lens from which to view Black families.[u, 180]

Methods and approaches

Despite a lack of evidence that family structures and processes common to White people were appropriate for study within Black families, in the 1930s they were often (and continue to be) used as the norm by which Black families are compared empirically. Frazier and Herskovitz took steps toward challenging this norm, making initial forays into exploring intra-racial differences and commonalities between Black Americans (Frazier) and other Black cultures such as West Africa (Herskovitz) to understand Black families' lives in the United States. However, Frazier also used survey data (useful for generalizing across varied and large groups) to understand trends between Black families and the general population.

As in the 1920s, qualitative data collection strategies continued to be the predominant research strategy to understand the lives, motivations, and experiences of Black families. For social work and other human service professions, practices shifted from simply providing fiscal resources to families to making efforts to address the reasons behind families' need of support.[181] This shift corresponded with analyses of family budgets. For example, researchers sought to make determinations about family incomes, and draw conclusions on what appropriate family incomes *might be*—not just what actual incomes *were*. This type of analysis was the foundation for the development of minimum income standards.[182,183]

Research, Policy, and Practice Connections

Much of the research during the 1930s centered around ameliorating challenges common in Black families, an ongoing theme for research focused on Black families. The approaches in the 1930s varied; as highlighted here, they included examinations of intra-racial differences such as class and cultural assimilation, as well as attention to environmental issues such as the availability of employment and housing, an often-identified barrier to optimal family functioning.

Informal advising to the White House by select leaders and researchers from the Black community (known officially as the Federal Council on Negro Affairs, and unofficially as the Black Cabinet) also informed policy

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[u] The Rockefeller Foundation provided monies to advance this perspective though its Social Science Research Council (Adams, J., & Gorton, D. (2004). Southern trauma: Revisiting caste and class in the Mississippi Delta. *American Anthropologist*, *106*(2), 334-345. https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2004.106.2.334

and practice during the decade. This group of 45 Black individuals (demographers, economists, sociologists, social workers, and others) were all Black men, except for Mary McLeod Bethune, a Black woman who played a key leadership role in the group. Her guidance and close relationship with First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt provided the Black Cabinet with leverage and (mixed) influence. On one hand, the Black Cabinet provided insights (heavily centered around the Great Depression and the New Deal) to President Roosevelt on policy issues relevant to Black people and families that resulted in improved access to federal benefits, education, training programs, and employment.[184, 185] On the other hand, the Black Cabinet was much less successful in influencing a broader civil rights agenda that included efforts to end lynchings, eliminate poll taxes, and stop discrimination in employment and housing.[186]

The challenges presented by the Great Depression in the early part of the decade resulted in an interest and commitment by the federal government to enact policies and programs to support families. These programs had a sizeable influence on families, particularly Black ones, who often lacked sufficient incomes and lived in poverty. The general sentiment in the country, however, was that the challenges Black people and families faced resulted from their own faults. Thus, Black people and families were viewed as unworthy and undeserving of access to public programs.[187,188,189]

New Deal policy directly addressed the byproducts of the Great Depression. For example, ADC and the first large-scale public housing programs in the country—Techwood Homes in Atlanta, GA—sought to remedy the many challenges to American citizens resulting from the lack of access to income and affordable and high-quality housing[190,191]—a challenge for families noted in much of the decade's government-funded research. In line with the era, ADC regulations were sexist and racist and public housing programs were residentially segregated. For instance, Techwood Homes was initially built as a resource for White families only,[192] resulting in the displacement of large numbers of Black families to facilitate its construction.[193] Occurrences like this (as well as segregated public housing in communities with minimal opportunity and resources) destabilized families and played a role in exacerbating issues such as unemployment that continue today.[194]

Decade: 1940-1949

"Straighten Up And Fly Right" (1943) | Recorded and written by:
The Nat King Cole Trio

Context

Presidents Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945) and Harry S. Truman (1945-1953) presided over the country in the 1940s. Unlike the 1930s, a decade characterized by economic challenges and by subsequent recovery from the Great Depression, the 1940s brought increased prosperity for Americans. This shift occurred via a combination of factors, including production of materials and goods for World War II (WWII) and increased income and stability brought about, in part, by the 1944 G.I. Bill (formally the Servicemen's Readjustment Act of 1944), which provided opportunities for free education and home ownership assistance to returning WWII veterans.[195]

The 1940s also saw the continued relocation of Black Americans—both men and women—from the South and into Northern, Midwestern, and Western cities for industrial and factory work.[196] In 1943 and 1944, tensions mounted across the country in a number of cities and neighborhoods (Detroit, Michigan[197]; Beaumont, Texas[198]; Mobile, Alabama[199]; and Harlem, New York[200]) among Black and White residents, and between Black communities and majority-White police departments. The end results were riots that led to injury and death for many involved. These situations occurred in part because of White people's resistance to the influx of Black people into what were historically White communities. The demographic shifts in cities and neighborhoods created competition between Black and White people for jobs and income, a shortage of housing, and displays of resentment and racist activity from White people toward Black people—because of

anger about the "encroachment" of Black people into what White people had come to expect as solely White enclaves.

The push for equality by Black people continued throughout the 1940s, with a few victories. For instance, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP), an activist and advocacy group that aimed to support Black people, won a Supreme Court case to strike down a Virginia law that had allowed racial discrimination on interstate buses.[201] In addition, President Truman, newly appointed to office because of the unexpected death of President Roosevelt, convened a special committee to investigate racial conditions. The resulting report, *To Secure These Rights*,[202] laid the foundation for the civil rights movement of the 1960s. And, in 1948, the California Supreme Court overturned its ban on interracial marriages, one of the first states to reverse family policy on this topic.[203]

Data on Black families

The Census continued to use the same approach as in 1930 for identifying Americans using race "or color," separating the United States population into "White," "Negro," or people of "other races."[v] In alignment with the previous decades (1920 and 1930), data on Black families from the 1940 Census may include Black Americans who reported more than one race or ethnicity, or Americans who themselves may not have identified as Black, but whom their community deemed to be Black. Much of the data on Black families in the United States at this time were reported in combination with families who were of a race other than White—illustrative of the separation between White and "nonwhite"[w] Americans.

Race, ethnicity, and the 1940 decennial Census

Information on "Color or Race" was enumerated in the following categories on the 1940 Census: (1) white, (2) Negro, (3) Indian, (4) Chinese, (5) Japanese, (6) Filipino, (7) Hindu, (8) Korean, and (9) any other race. Mexican Americans were considered White, "unless definitely of Indian or other nonwhite race," and a person was identified as Negro if they had any Black family lineage; however, for the latter category, the Census did make exceptions for cases where "the Indian blood very definitely predominates and [the individual] is universally accepted in the community as an Indian" (p. 43).[204]

Black family demographics

In 1940, there were 131,669,275 people living in the United States, of whom 12,865,518 (9.8%) were identified as Negro.[205] The number of Negro women in the United States remained slightly higher than Negro men (100 women to every 95 men).[206] The fertility rate for "nonwhite" women continued to be higher than the national average, at 102.4 births per 1,000 "nonwhite" women ages 15 to 44, compared to 79.9 births per 1,000 women ages 15 to 44 overall.[207]

A note on Census terminology

Data in this section draw primarily on the decennial United States Census with occasional references to other sources. For all sources, we present the data using the language (including capitalization standards) as reported either on official Census records or from the original data source. For example, in this decade, we refer to Black people as "Negros" and capitalize the N in alignment with the original Census reports.

For each decade, we present information on families' demographics, geography, and economic outlook. Unless otherwise noted, all demographic information is from 1940.

There is limited information on the economic well-being of families in the 1940 census. For example, national-level poverty data were not available before 1959.

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[v] In 1940, Mexican Americans were once again identified as White, after a brief change on the 1930 Census.
[w] Statistics in this decade are reported as they appear in their original source. Throughout the decade we use the term "nonwhite," which was used by authors of several documents from the 1940s Census. It is not our intention to use this term to draw comparisons between Black and White people, so we do not provide the data for White families for reference.

The life expectancy of Negro men in 1940 was 51.5 years, compared to 54.9 years for Negro women.[208]

In 1940, 60.6 percent of Black men were married, 32.7 percent were single, 5.6 percent were widowed, and only 1.0 percent were divorced. Among Black women, 58.5 percent were married, 23.7 percent were single, 16.0 percent were widowed, and 1.7 percent were divorced.[209] Within Black[x] families,[y] the majority (77.1%)[z] were married (husband and wife) households,[aa] followed by households maintained by a woman with no husband present (17.9%) and those maintained by a man with no wife present (5.0%).[210]

Geography of Black families

As in the previous decade (1930s), just over three quarters (77.0%) of Black[bb] Americans lived in the Southern United States, with just under one quarter (22.0%) in the North.[211] In the 1940s, Black Americans continued a shift that started in prior decades (1920s and 1930s) of moving into more urban areas, a trend that would continue into future decades.[212]

Black families' economic outlook

As the country grappled with the economic fallout of the Great Depression in the 1930s, the U.S. Census Bureau attempted to collect information on families' incomes for the first time in the 1940s.[213] In 1940, the median annual income for "Nonwhite" families was $511—which was $378 less than the national average.[214] In the 1940s, the number of "Nonwhite" women working in professional, technical, and kindred services[cc] began to increase, a trend that would continue into the 1950s.[215] In 1940, almost two thirds (65.6%) of Negro men and just under one third (32.2%) of Negro women were engaged in gainful employment.[dd, 216] Still, one in 10 Negro men (10.8%) and women (11.3%) ages 14 and older in the United States were unemployed and seeking work in 1940.[217] Many "nonwhite" women (41.5%) not engaged in employment or looking for work were engaged in unpaid housework in their own home,[ee] a stark contrast to the less than 1.0 percent (0.4%) of "nonwhite" men doing the same.[218] Black families also continued to have lower rates of home ownership (22.8%) than renting (77.2%), diminishing their potential for accumulating generational wealth from owning a residence.[219]

Overview of Select Research Topics, Methods, and Approaches Related to the Applied Study of Black Families in the 1940s

Jim Crow laws proliferated across the South and were evident in the North during the 1940s. Because of these laws, people were residentially segregated and Black families of all classes lived in the same communities.[220] Black-owned businesses such as funeral homes, cafes, taverns, liquor stores, and barber and beauty shops

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[x] The report used to identify this statistic uses the term "Black" and not "Negro."
[y] "Families" includes households with a single person.
[z] The report used to identify these statistics reported to the nearest whole percent.
[aa] In married households, men are always considered the head of the household.
[bb] The report used to identify this statistic uses the term "Black" and not "Negro."
[cc] Kindred services refers to general office work, such as bookkeeping; taking and transcribing dictation; typing, auditing, and keeping records (often referred to as pencil work or paperwork); and duties pertaining to the operation of various office machines, such as adding machines, calculating machines, and duplicating machines.
[dd] These percentages were calculated from the cited source.
[ee] The 1940 Census considered those engaged in "own home housework" as "persons primarily occupied with their own home housework."

flourished because Black people were unable to patronize White establishments providing similar services.[221] Although the number of businesses was small, a Black middle class consisting of business owners and other professionals (trade and union workers, religious figures, teachers, nurses, human service workers, and others) began to emerge.[222] Under this backdrop, researchers sought to understand the evolution of Black families, including their relationship to social institutions,[223,224,225,226,227] income and class differences and distinctions,[228,229] and transmission of values and access to opportunities[230,231]—in addition to how these occurrences affected families, including children and youth. [232,233,234,235,236,237]

Below, we highlight select recurring and/or particularly salient research topics from the 1940s, along with findings. When available, we also shed light on the methods and approaches used to better understand Black families during this decade.

Research content highlights

- **Family evolution**. Published at the tail end of the 1930s and serving as a launchpad for research in the 1940s, *The Negro Family in the United States*[238] provided the most in-depth exploration of Black families at the time of its writing. Authored by E. Franklin Frazier, the tome covered multiple aspects of Black family functioning over a period of 150 years. Frazier documented the ways in which key transitions of Black families—Africa to America, enslavement to Emancipation, and migration from Southern/rural/plantation living to urban cities—resulted in challenges to Black family functioning. Alongside this seminal book was other scholarship on Black family development led by Frazier[239,240] and others,[241] as well as another groundbreaking book, *Black Metropolis*,[242] that provided an in-depth and expansive account of Black people and families on the South Side of Chicago. Like Frazier, the authors St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Cayton Jr.—both Black men and both college-educated in sociology at the University of Chicago—examined Black migration over time. They also highlighted class differences, exploring areas such as work, recreation, religion, family cohesiveness and conflict, sex relations, child functioning, and use of "relief" or social support services. Overarching findings from this body of research affirmed the value of Black families, although moralizing about class and lifestyle nuances was prevalent to varying degrees. Frazier, Drake, and Cayton all concluded that the full or complete evolution of Black families (which, for Frazier, involved integration into White European American culture) could not occur in the isolated enclaves where Black families were forced to live.

- **Institutional influences.** The impact of social and educational institutions on family life was a burgeoning area of inquiry in the late 1930s and 1940s. Particular attention was given to identifying activities that resulted in youth success, including institutions as a way to socialize young adults[243,244,245,246,247,248] and stabilize families.[249,250,251,252] Research during this time focused on how these milieus were mechanisms for the transmission of heritage and values, as well as facilitators of positive social control. One such study was conducted at Claflin College, a co-ed Black institution of higher education in South Carolina.[253] The research sought answers to a number of questions, including whether individuals from the same family attended and graduated from the same college; whether there was any social significance to having generations of college graduates in the same family; whether college attendees tended to marry their classmates and, if not, who they did marry; and whether there were significant differences between the social positions of college graduates and non-graduates in Black

communities. Findings from this work revealed that college, among other things, provided opportunities for young people to connect with those who held similar interests and facilitated courtship and marriage. The study also uncovered that college attendance strengthened connections between parents, children, and siblings through the sharing of similar experiences, which aided in expressions of loyalty, reverence, and familial (and school) pride.

Methods and approaches

The amount of research on Black families in the 1940s began to grow, in large part because of the availability of federal, state, and local funding designated for documenting the day-to-day experiences of Black people, families, and communities,[ff] along with the increase in Black people attending college and moving into academia and professorships.[254] Most of the government-funded research covered similar topical areas, such as the number of residents in a particular locale (the Census was a common source of data), household composition and structure, access to employment and education, and housing quality. This research sought to document, summarize, classify, and sometimes compare populations (e.g., Black people to White people, lower to middle to upper class, etc.) to support the conceptualization and development of local programs and policies.

Other research, such as the *Negro Family in America* and *Black Metropolis*, was grounded in the tradition of the Chicago School of Sociology and had a broader scope and nationwide influence.[gg] The Chicago School tradition prioritized the exploration of human behavior within larger societal contexts such as the urban environment.[255] In terms of methodology, St. Claire Drake and Horace R. Cayton Jr.*'s Black Metropolis* was highly ambitious—the gold standard of the time. The research was longitudinal and spanned a period of about five years. It included an interracial team of about 200 people (researchers, editors, typists, etc.) and was funded by a wide variety of entities, including the federal government, Black liberals, foundations, unions, communists, and churches.[256] Data collection strategies included ethnographic observations, interviews, and reviews and analysis of statistical and historical data.

Explicit frameworks and theories were often not highlighted in research in the 1940s; however, E. Franklin Frazier's evolutionary interpretation of the Black family is in line with other family-focused research of the time that utilized a structural functional approach[hh] to understand family processes.[257] Frazier also assumed that the Western family model—a married nuclear family with a male breadwinner husband as the head of household, and a female stay-at-home wife who tended to the home and children—was the pinnacle of family evolution.[258] Deviation from this "norm" (while acknowledged to occur because of constraints brought about by racism) were thought to be problematic and not in the best interest of the family or society.

Finally, the aforementioned Claflin College study reviewed student records, administered questionnaires, and examined college catalogues. The study also used an early form of social network analysis by gathering

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[ff] The Works Progress Administration funded many of these research efforts, requesting a contribution of 10.0 to 30.0 percent of research costs from states and locales. Source: Howard, D.S. (1943) *The WPA and Federal Relief Policy.* Russell Sage Foundation. https://www.russellsage.org/sites/default/files/WPA-Federal-Relief-Policy.pdf

[gg] Other highly influential works of the 40s include: *American dilemma: The Negro problem and modern democracy by Gunnar Myrdal*, published in 1944 by London, Harper & Brothers with research assistance by Richard Sterner and Arnold Rose, and *Deep South: An anthropological study of caste, class* researched and written by Allison Davis, Burleigh B. Gardner, and Mary R. Gardner and first published in 1941. Davis, Gardner, and Gardner's work was not focused exclusively on families, but its exploration of the color caste systems overlaid by class stratification in the deep South had relevance to Black families. Sources: Gunnar, M. (1944) *An American dilemma: The negro problem and modern democracy.* London, Harper & Brothers. Davis, A., Gardner, B.B., & Gardner, M.R. (1942). *Deep South: A social anthropological study of caste and class.* University of Chicago Press.

[hh] Structural functionalism posits that there are foundational structures in society, including in families, that result in growth and progression. Any deviations from the foundational structures (i.e., nuclear family) cause tension and stressors, which may disrupt family stability and cause adaptations. Early proponents of functionalism theory include Herbert Spencer and Talcott Parsons. Robert Merton dominated the 1940s. Smelser N.J. & Baltes P.B. (2001). *International encyclopedia of the social & behavioral sciences* (1st ed.). Elsevier.

and diagramming family histories from interviews and supplementing these histories with college records to arrive at its conclusions.

Research, Policy, and Practice Connections

As noted earlier, research conducted during this timeframe was often funded by the federal government in collaboration with state and local governments and entities. Meetings also occurred to set research agendas and ponder issues of importance related to Black families. A HathiTrust search of materials catalogued from conferences on, or related to, Black families brought up meeting proceedings that covered topics such as "Negro Problems in the Field of Social Action," as well as highlights and statements related to the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy (January 1940) and the National Conference on Family Life (May 1948).

During the 1940s, Morehouse College, an HBCU, collaborated with the Planned Parenthood Federation of America to hold a family-focused conference—which they referred to as an Institute. Institute materials specified goals of encouraging "thinking of persons with professional interest in the family" and dramatizing the "significance of courses dealing with this problem in the colleges" to address challenges and potential solutions. Topics covered included courtship and engagement, petting problems,[ii] sexual adjustment in marriage, premarital physical examinations, marriage problems of the soldier, community responsibility for building successful marriages, and juvenile delinquency, among others.[259]

These meetings were attended by representatives of a wide range of professions (e.g., teachers, university academics, social work and human service professionals, church officials, politicians, and policymakers). The meetings included formal addresses to lay out the issues of concern (often informed by research), followed by opportunities for questions, discussion, the formulation of recommendations, and action planning and next steps.

[ii] Courtship behaviors or actions other than sexual intercourse.

Decade: 1950-1959

"Yakety Yak" (1958) | Recorded by: The Coasters **|** Written by: Jerry Leiber and Mike Stoller

Context

Assuming the presidency after the death of Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1945, President Harry S. Truman presided over the country from 1945 to 1953, and President Dwight D. Eisenhower (1953-1961) closed out the 1950s. The beginning of Truman's tenure coincided with the end of WWII in 1945—which brought about an era of prosperity for some Americans in the 1950s—and new ideological tensions between the United States and the Soviet Union, later recognized as the beginnings of the Cold War.[260] Truman's presidency also initiated a shift in government focus related to the civil rights of Black people in America. In 1946, he established a presidential "Committee on Civil Rights."[261] The Committee conducted research and wrote a report documenting discrimination toward—and the harm of—Black people in in U.S. systems such as housing, education, and policing. The report also touched on challenges Black people faced when engaged in activities of daily living and citizenry such as utilizing public facilities and voting.[262]

During the 1950s, many White people moved from cities and bought homes in the suburbs to start and raise families. Often, the monies to subsidize mortgages came from the federal G.I. Bill—a vehicle not just for buying homes, but for catalyzing future affluence. These benefits, however, did not result in the same level of postwar prosperity or wealth accumulation for Black American families. Racism affected the way the G.I. Bill was implemented, resulting in fewer opportunities for home ownership and education acquisition for Black veterans, and an increase in already existing disparities in education, wealth, and wealth building between Black and White Americans.[263]

Despite these differences, the return of soldiers from WWII resulted in families across the country having more children. In fact, about 4 million babies were born each year during the 1950s.[264] This period, referred to as the Baby Boom, played a role in shifting the composition of the labor market. In WWII, White women

worked outside of the home in numbers not seen prior to the war. Work was considered an act of patriotism, and resources such as government-subsidized child care supported women's employment.[265] After the war, however, child care was withdrawn and public sentiment (fueled by patriarchy and fears of communism) often held that White women needed to return home and care for their children.[266]

Economic necessity, however, continued to keep Black people (both men and women) in the labor market. Thus, a dual occurrence of White (non-immigrant) families living in the suburbs with a breadwinner husband and stay at home wife/mother[267] (sometimes with domestic help) and Black men and women living in cities working and raising children became the norm. More affluent Black families, however, made efforts to move to the suburbs. In fact, despite spite of differential enforcement of housing regulations that preferred

White people, coverture laws forbidding Black people from living in particular areas, redlining to limit where Black people could buy property, high interest rates, and intimidation and violence by White people against Black people,[268] nearly 1 million Black people moved to the suburbs in the 1940s and 1950s[269] and raised families.

The aforementioned issues—prosperity, suburbanization, the emergence of the non-immigrant White nuclear family as normative, racial conflict, concern about the Cold War and communism, the urging of White women to leave the workforce and embrace their roles as wives and mothers, and a growing push for equal access and civil rights—characterized much of the 1950s.

Data on Black families

Race, ethnicity, and the 1950 decennial Census

Options for race[jj] in the 1950 Census included: (1) white, (1) Negro, (3) American Indian, (4) Chinese, (5) Japanese, (6) Filipino, and (7) all other races. Census taker directions asked enumerators to "assume that the race of related persons living in the household is the same as the race of your respondent, unless you learn otherwise" (p.I-469).[270] Directions also asked enumerators to ask about the race of "unrelated persons (employees, hired hands, lodgers, etc.) … because knowledge of the housewife's race (for example) tells nothing of the maids [sic] race" (p.I-469).[271]

Race-related data from this decade were often reported using the categories White and "Nonwhite," assuming that

A note on Census terminology

Data in this section draw primarily on the decennial United States Census with occasional references to other sources. For all sources, we present the data using the language (including capitalization standards) as reported either on official Census records or from the original data source. For example, in this decade, we refer to Black people as "Negro" and capitalize the N in alignment with the original Census data.

For each decade, we present information on families' demographics, geography, and economic outlook. Unless otherwise noted, all demographic information presented here is from 1950. National-level poverty data are not available before 1959.

[jj] For the first time, directions to Census enumerators specified "determining and entering race" for enumerators and did not ask for "race or color."

all individuals and families who did not identify as White had similar enough experiences and needs to be reported together as one group.

Black family demographics

In 1950, there were 150,697,361 people living in the United States, of whom 15,042,286 (10.0%) were identified as Negro.[272] The gender ratio continued to widen, with the proportion of Black women growing (51.5%) in comparison to Black men (48.5%).[kk] Marriage rates in "Nonwhite" families continued to rise in 1950: 64.1 percent of "Nonwhite"[ll] men and 62.0 percent of "Nonwhite" women (ages 14 and older) were married. Among unmarried "nonwhite" men, 28.7 percent were single and the rest were divorced or widowed (7.2%).[mm] Nonwhite women were more likely to be widowed or divorced, at 17.2 percent; conversely, slightly less were single (20.7%).[273] In 1950, births across the country began to rise, marking the beginning of the Baby Boom and the end of a century of declining fertility rates. The birth rate for Black women and women of "other races" jumped to 137.3 births for every 1,000 women ages 15 to 44, which was still higher than the national average of 106.2 births for every 1,000 women ages 15 to 44.[274] The life expectancy of all "Nonwhite" Americans also continued to rise in the 1950s, with women having a slightly longer (63.2 years) life expectancy than men (59.2 years), although still lagging behind national averages of 71.5 years for women and 65.8 years for men.[275]

Geography of Black families

In 1950, over two thirds (68.0%) of the Negro population lived in the South. Across the United States, the majority (62.0%) of the Negro population lived in urban communities[276, 277]

Black families' economic outlook

The unemployment rate among Black and other "nonwhite" Americans was 7.8 percent for men and 7.9 percent for women over age 14.[278] However, employment rates of Black and other "nonwhite" women continued to remain steady, with about one third (33.8%) of women and over two thirds (69.0%) of men employed.[279] A sizeable portion of these women (42.0%) were employed as housekeepers. The median household income for "Nonwhite" households was $1,869 in 1950, just over half the national average of $3,319.[280] Approximately one third of Black families owned homes (34.4%), compared to over half of the general population (55.0%).[281]

Overview of Select Research Topics, Methods, and Approaches Related to the Applied Study of Black Families in the 1950s

Many Americans made employment and economic gains during the 1950s, although the progress of Black people during the decade varied: While the Black middle class grew, many Black people and families did not experience these gains.[282,283] Research started to examine and point to the role of parents, including their responsiveness and attention, in facilitating the positive growth and development of children, particularly infants.[284,285,286] For many working families, though—especially poor and near-poor families—caring for children while trying to meet employment demands created conflicts.[287] Linkages and comparisons across varied socioeconomic classes also began to occur in research.[288,289,290] In general, research indicated many

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[kk] This percentage was calculated from Census tables.

[ll] Statistics in this decade are reported as they appear in their original source. Throughout the decade, we use the term "Nonwhite," which was used by authors of several documents from the 1950s Census. It is not our intention to use this term to draw comparisons between Black and White people, so we do not provide the data for White families for reference.

[mm] The 1950 Census did not report the percent divorced and widowed separately. See the Conclusions for more on historical data quality and its implications.

challenges for Black people and families,[291] although it also documented optimism about the progress being made and the attainability of equitable conditions.[292,293]

Below, we highlight select recurring and/or particularly salient research topics from the 1950s, along with findings. When available, we also shed light on the methods and approaches used to better understand Black families during this decade.

Research content highlights

- **Juvenile delinquency.** Growing research interest in families' role in supporting children's positive development began to extend to adolescents in the 1950s. A topic of increasing importance in research was understanding the origins of delinquent attitudes and behaviors in adolescence and whether behaviors could be changed. Research by Ruth Shonle Cavan,[294] a White woman and criminologist, and others[295, 296, 297] played important roles in informing these questions. Like many scholars who studied Black family life, Dr. Cavan's work drew on research conducted by E. Franklin Fraizer, who noted that issues such as the absence of socializing influences for children and youth (such as men and family traditions) set the stage for juvenile delinquency, as did residential mobility.[298,299] Cavan also argued that issues related to juvenile delinquency were class-based. That is, families with fewer social supports (lower- and under-class families) lacked resources (e.g., time, financial, social capital), making them less likely to be able to invest in things that support healthy family functioning and children's development and well-being. As a result, children from poor homes were less protected against delinquency. In addition to class, Cavan and other researchers found that family characteristics such as structure,[300] racial identification,[301] and interpersonal relationships between family members and children and adolescents (including perceptions of self) also played a role in juvenile delinquency activity.[302,303]

- **Class**. In addition to the ways in which class affected children and youth, research on Black families also explored class as a general construct. Books such as E. Franklin Frazier's *Black Bourgeoisie* played an important role in documenting the rise in numbers of the middle class in Black communities, while also noting how the road to middle class status left many Black people disconnected from the Black community, unacknowledged by White society, and loathing of self.[304] Other writings that touched on class examined the ways in which skin color became a marker of status and social standing (lighter skin was deemed better)[305] and affected family-related issues such as who to date and marry.[306,307,308,309]

Methods and approaches

Research approaches that began to make causal connections between variables and individuals within families and the families themselves began to come to the fore in the 1950s. Examples can be found in literature on juvenile delinquency and other topics. For instance, the Social Prediction Scale—developed by Dr. Eleanor Glueck, a Russian female social worker, as the first tool of its kind—made accurate predictions about the future behavior of young boys based on parameters from when they were 6 years old.[310]

Most of the studies reviewed for this chapter, however—including descriptive observations, personal narratives,[311] and organizational/agency documents used to collect data—highlight family challenges and support interpretations and generalizations. For instance, a Guidance Questionnaire for students enrolled at Southern University from 1956 to 1958 included space to list the names of all family members and the number of years of schooling they had received. The final sample of 400 facilitated understanding about higher education and family advancement.

Research, Policy, and Practice Connections

Research conducted in the 1950s for states and locales highlights some policy and practice connections. For example, the federal Housing Act of 1954 included mandates that all cities had to generate development plans that included community support and local governments had to establish housing standards regarding "structural integrity and healthfulness" within the cities. This Act was based on research indicating that Black families' living quarters were substandard. The push for civil rights also played an important role and brought issues related to housing and residential segregation—which research connected to lack of access to jobs, education, voting, recreation, and public spaces—to the forefront of national and local debates.[312] Despite these occurrences, policies such as housing covenants assured that Black families could not live in particular areas—policies based on a fear that property values would decline if Black families moved in to predominantly White neighborhoods. Urban renewal efforts also displaced Black residents from certain communities by drawing on eminent domain policies. In spite of these occurrences, Black families resisted these efforts when they could. A research report chronicling housing issues in Alexandria, VA in the 1950s illustrated the agency of Black families. Many families—including the Peters family, direct relatives of this volume's lead author—resisted unfair laws and policies. In fact, in 1959, the Peters family went against city planners who wanted their land for a park, instead selling most of it to a local school,[313] which generated income for their family.

Decade: 1960-1969

"Keep on Pushing" (1964) | Recorded by: The Impressions |
Written by: Curtis Mayfield

Context

The 1960s was a decade shaped by the Vietnam War (which America entered in 1955 and by the push and pull between those who opposed and supported civil rights—for Black people, women, individuals with disabilities, and others. The early part of the decade (1961) began with the installation of John F. Kennedy (1961-1963) as president. Kennedy grappled with how best to address civil rights for Black people, an ongoing hot-button issue during the era. Cautious about losing Southern support, he appointed an unprecedented number of Black Americans to administrative positions within the White House[314] and used executive orders—rather than await congressional legislation—to address poverty (a situation that affected many Black people because of the impact of racism and discrimination) and civil rights.[315] His assassination in 1963, however, did not allow him to see this work through.

After Kennedy's assassination, his vice president, Lyndon B. Johnson, assumed the presidency and led the country. Johnson's agenda included plans to tackle poverty and advance and expand civil rights. President Johnson's (1963-1969) signature initiative, the Great Society, directly addressed poverty and racial injustices. The plan included health care for seniors and Americans living in poverty via Medicare and Medicaid programs; a holistic, two-generation program called Head Start that was designed to level the educational playing field for Black children and provide employment and leadership opportunities for their parents; and Job Corps, an education and vocational training program designed to support skill-building for people in need of work.[316] In totality, the Great Society was designed to maximize opportunities for poor people, Black people, and other people who were marginalized in the United States by facilitating access to

opportunities and resources such as education, training, and work. Access to opportunities was hypothesized to decrease the negative by-products of issues related to racism, discrimination, and poverty.[317]

Although Great Society programs and other initiatives did not ameliorate the impact of racism, discrimination, and poverty, Johnson's work critically furthered Americans' civil rights. His championing of the Great Society programs and their positive impact on Black people and families was particularly remarkable, given evidence that he held racist viewpoints and treated Black employees offensively.[318]

Presidents Kennedy and Johnson—in addition to the federal government's growing role, more generally, in using policy to deal with civil rights—occurred in part because of political leadership and support. Organized protests, demonstrations, and pressure by Black Americans, liberal White Americans, college students, and others interested in changing the status quo also fueled policy changes to address civil rights. Marches to promote women's rights; antiwar demonstrations in cities, public places, and at college and universities; and attention in the arts and media culminated in the 1960s being referenced as the decade of cultural revolution.[319]

Data on Black families

Race, ethnicity, and the 1960 decennial Census

The 1960s was the first year for which the Census was mailed to households, which became the primary method for conducting it in subsequent years. As a result, there are no directions for enumerators available.[320] For each person in the household, the person filling out the form was asked to identify their race. Options for answering this question included: (1) White, (2) Negro, (3) American Indian, (4) Japanese, (5) Chinese, (6) Filipino, (7) Hawaiian, (8) Part Hawaiian, (9) Aleut, (10) Eskimo, (11) etc.[321]

In some instances, data are not available specifically for Black families alone and are reported for Black families and families of "other races" together. In this case, "other races" includes any race other than White.

A note on Census terminology

Data in this section draw primarily on the decennial United States Census with occasional references to other sources. For all sources, we present the data using the language (including capitalization standards) as reported either on official Census records or from the original data source. For example, in this decade, we refer to Black people as "Negro" and capitalize the N in alignment with the original Census data.

For each decade, we present information on families' demographics, geography, and economic outlook. Unless otherwise noted, all demographic information is from 1960. National-level poverty data were not available before 1959.

Black family demographics

In 1960, there were 179, 323,175 people in the United States, 18,871,831 (10.5%) of whom were identified as Negro.[322] In 1960, Negro women outnumbered Negro men in the United States (93.8 men per 100 women).[323] The majority of "Nonwhite"[nn]

[nn] Statistics in this decade are reported as they appear in their original source. Throughout the decade, we use the term "nonwhite," which was used by authors of several documents from the 1960s Census. It is not our intention to use this term to draw comparisons between Black and White people, so we do not provide the data for White families for reference.

men and women were married (62.9% and 60.0%, respectively). Almost one third of Negro men (19.2%) and just under one quarter of women (18.2%) were single, and the remainder were either widowed (12.0% of women, 2.8% of men) or divorced (6.1% of women, 2.4% of men).[324]

Fertility rates were on an upswing, with more "Nonwhite" women than ever giving birth (153.6 births for every 1,000 women ages 15-44).[325] Following historical trends from the 1920s to 1950s, almost three out of four households were headed by a married couple (74.1%), followed by female-headed households[oo] (21.7%) and male-headed households (4.1%).[326] Three out of four Negro children lived in a household with two parents.[327]

Life expectancies for Negro women (66.3 years) and men (61.1 years) continued to rise into the mid-1960s, although they remained lower than for the general population (73.1 and 66.6, respectively).[328]

Geography of Black families

In 1960, Black families continued to move throughout the Northern United States, with just over half (59.9%) of Negros living in the South. During this time, almost three out of four (73.0%) Black households were living in urban communities.[329, 330]

Black families' economic outlook

The median income for Black households and households of "other races" in 1960 was $3,233; by 1968, it had increased by over $1,500 to $4,755.[331, 332] The poverty rate for Black families with children under age 18, however, was still over twice the national average (48.8% versus 18.3%).[333] In 1960, 2,617,888 (38.1%)[pp] Black women and women of "other races" were employed, the majority of whom (56.9%)[qq] were service workers (36.2% of whom worked in private households).[334] In 1960, 4,004,770 (63.8%) Black men and men of "other races" were employed, most in blue-collar jobs such as nonfarm laborers (20.4%); operatives, except for transit (24.4%); and craft and kindred workers 9.8%).[335] Unemployment rates were still high, at 8.4 percent of "nonwhite" men and 7.9 percent of "nonwhite" women.[336]

Just over one third of Black households in America owned homes (38.1%) in the 1960s and the majority of Black people lived in rented housing.[337]

Overview of Select Research Topics, Methods, and Approaches Related to the Applied Study of Black Families in the 1960s

A rejection of traditional societal norms and the embrace of a counterculture revolution occurred throughout the country in the 1960s. The revolution included a reduction in marriage[338] and birth rates[339] and increases in divorce.[340] Civil rights progress, including shifts in employment and advancement opportunities for Black Americans, was also underway.[341] Despite these developments, Black families continued to be subject to socioeconomic disadvantages as a result of ongoing systemic racism. Of particular interest were explorations of the ways in which socioeconomic status (SES), especially low SES, affected Black families and Black households with children.[342,343] This attention may have occurred, in part, because of an increase in government intervention to support families' well-being—including Black families, who were deemed by much of society to be "undeserving."[344,345,346]

Throughout the decade, researchers grappled with the juxtaposition of some Black people and families' gains—experienced, in part, because of progressive civil rights legislation[347]—against the deteriorating situation of other Black people and families, described as "tangled" in "pathology."[348] Family formation and

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[oo] Female-headed households include widowed and single women, women separated from husbands in the armed services or away from home involuntarily, and those divorced.
[pp] This percentage was calculated from Census tables.
[qq] This percentage was calculated from Census tables.

planning,[349,350,351] explorations of families occupying lower socioeconomic strata,[352,353,354] fathers,[355,356] matriarchy,[357,358,359,360, 361] interracial relationships, marriage,[362, 363, 364, 365, 366, 367, 368, 369] birth, and family functioning[370, 371, 372, 373, 374] were all flourishing areas of Black family-focused research during the decade.

Below, we highlight select reoccurring and/or particularly salient research topics from the 1960s, along with findings. When available, we also shed light on the methods and approaches used to better understand Black families during this decade.

Research content highlights

- **Families and poverty**. It is unlikely that any other scholarship had as great an influence on Black families and policy in the 1960s as the controversial report, *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*.[375,376] The federally sponsored document, written by Daniel Patrick Moynihan—who, at the time, was assistant secretary at the Office for Policy, Planning, and Research at the U.S. Department of Labor—sparked considerable debate. Citing research by scholars such as E. Franklin Frazier, a renowned Black sociologist who conducted research focused on Black families, Moynihan sought to understand how poverty was experienced by Black families in the United States.[377] He drew largely on Census data, supplemented by conversations with researchers and civil rights activists, to examine educational outcomes, employment prospects, neighborhood poverty, crime, and other social issues in relationship to Black families.[378] Moynihan concluded that nonmarital births and children raised in female-headed homes created circumstances in which Black men were marginalized and undermined in households.[379] The result, he argued, was an abandonment of what were deemed to be normative, nuclear family roles for men: husbands, fathers, and providers.[380] The Moynihan Report, as it came to be known, was both lauded and contested, and has sparked debate about its conclusions both in previous years and in the present day.[381,382,383,384,385,386]

- **Race, class, and family stability**. A number of studies conducted during the 1960s highlighted the ways in which race and class variations affected family life, including marital stability.[387, 388, 389, 390, 391] Examinations of marital satisfaction—which was linked to divorce—found that income played an important role. Although not the primary focus of the research, a qualitative study designed to develop a theory about power dynamics in marriages in Detroit, Michigan (urban) and Southern Michigan (rural) examined marital power, including comparisons across race and class. The findings were based on hour-long interviews of 731 women in Detroit and a comparison group of 178 women in rural Southeastern Michigan. Examinations of decision making and divisions of household work—alongside other data related to the economic, parenting, and other family functions—showed that marital satisfaction was lower for Black women.[rr, 392] The researchers noted that marital satisfaction increased alongside socioeconomic status, reasoning that because Black couples had lower incomes, economics played a key role. Other research conducted during the decade extended Blood and Wolf's (both White male sociologists) work, also finding that racial differences in divorce were largely determined by economic differentials.[393, 394, 395] Hylan Lewis, a Black male sociologist and pioneer of community-based research, noted that findings from his research indicated that Black couples valued

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rr Blood and Wolfe's work was seminal and critically important to the field of family studies and the topics of decision making, conflict, and power in marriage. Criticisms worth mentioning include issues related to weighting of responses (do insignificant or less consequential decisions merit the same weight as important ones?); validity and generalizability (is a study of marital decision making/conflict/power valid if only one individual in the relationship was questioned?); and whether decision making can be used to reflect marital conflict or power. For more insight into these critiques please see: Safilios-Rothschild, C. (1969). Family sociology or wives family sociology: A comparison of husbands' and wives' answers about decision making in Greek and American culture. *The Journal of Marriage and the Family*, (31), 290-301; Granbois, D. H., & Willett, R. P. (1970). Equivalence of family role measures based on husband and wife data. *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *32*(1), 68–72. https://doi.org/10.2307/349973; Scanzoni, J. (1965). A note on the sufficiency of wife responses in family research. *Pacific Sociological Review*, (8)2, 109-115.

marriage, but that it was challenging for young, Black, adult males to find the "ways and means … to meet the economic maintenance demands of marriage and family life."[396]

Methods and approaches

Much of the decade's research focused on Black families but did not attend to the larger systems within which they were embedded. Two scholars—one Black, one White and Jewish, and both men—addressed this shortcoming. Their work is particularly important because of its theoretical contributions to the field of family studies.

Andrew Billingsley, a Black male professor of social welfare, penned *Black Families in White America* in 1968. He used systems and ecological approaches, a precursor to the work of Urie Bronfenbrenner, who initially studied individuals to posit that Black family units were embedded in both the larger Black community (an institution in and of itself) and other institutions in American society more generally. As such, unidirectional research that made observations based on single influences (e.g., Black families and marriage or Black families and employment) were insufficient for understanding the relationships between each, because single characteristics were not emblematic of the environments in which Black (or any) families lived and developed.[397]

Billingsley used observational methods to illustrate the ways in which Black families were participants in U.S. systems (economic, educational, health, political) but simultaneously excluded from them. He also shed light on the nuances of Black families, expanding observations of other scholars before him. Like E. Franklin Frazier, for example, he identified class as an important construct in Black families, noting that race was a tie that bound together Black families of all classes, geographies, etc. in America. He went one step further than Frazier, however, to identify nuances in class and other variables that had not been articulated previously and that had consequential effects on Black family life. For example, Billingsley did not just divide Black families into low, middle, or upper classes to understand their socioeconomic status: He separated those classes into finer-grained distinctions while simultaneously exploring the ways in which geography (rural, suburban, urban, ghettos), family structure (nuclear, extended, augmented), authority and decision making (male-focused, female-focused, egalitarian), household labor divisions, family size, parenting practices, etc.) played a role in Black people's quality of family life. His work was theoretically important because it dispelled the prevailing notion of a culture of poverty among Black lower-class families, showing that there was heterogeneity among all Black families—including among those with low incomes. Billingsley also noted families moved between various classes in response to external factors.

Research on dating, marital relationships, and parenting from the perspective of Black men was a rarity in the 1960s. Elliott Liebow, a White, Jewish sociologist, conducted participatory field research to provide insight into the lives and perspectives of two dozen Black men on the aforementioned issues and others. His ethnographic approach to the study of Black men vis-a-vis family considerations was novel. He approached the work without intention of testing an *a priori* hypotheses or theory. Liebow's findings, however, had theoretical implications that shaped perceptions of Black men in public, scholarly, and policy circles. Over the course of a year, Liebow studied Black men in their early 20s to mid-40s who congregated in a particular

area of Washington, DC.[ss] The men were either single, married, or separated, and all had children. Liebow connected with these men across multiple venues in and outside of Washington, DC, including in hallways, hospitals, courts, jails, places of recreation, homes, and the streetcorner. His findings were a first response to the culture of poverty thesis advanced by Oscar Lewis, a Jewish American anthropologist who posited that poor people are morally inferior to those with higher incomes and that this inferiority is transmitted across generations.[398] Liebow also informed debates centered around ideologies that held that Black families were pathological because of the absence of Black men. Using commonly held beliefs about the role of men in society as anchors (breadwinner, husband, father, etc.), he examined the ways in which the men in his study enacted these roles. He ultimately concluded that Black men in poverty subscribed to dominant societal values about male roles. They were unable, however, to realize their values because of factors such as racism, discrimination and prejudice, and other issues that limited their opportunities. In response, Black men developed compensatory values to govern their behavior—for example, talking positively about their children but not spending time with them. These contradictory behaviors, Liebow asserted, were a result of men's inability to meet children's basic needs (e.g., food, housing, clothing, etc.), resulting in their articulated values differing from their actions.

Research, Policy, and Practice Connections

Our review suggests that select research in the 1960s identified that systems with which Black families interfaced were particularly troublesome for them. However, as previously stated, much of the research focused on Black families specifically and paid little attention to systems, including the ways in which systems needed to shift to stop perpetuating harm on Black families. Financial entitlements, formally known as Aid to Dependent Children (ADC), provide a vehicle to examine the interplay between research, the welfare system, and Black people and families.

In the 1960s, policies and philosophies related to ADC underwent many changes. At its initiation, ADC was a federally funded state-level grant program. Monies from the federal government enabled states to provide cash or welfare payments to children without parental support or care, or because a parent was absent, disabled, deceased, or unemployed. Anyone who was in a federal eligibility class and who met the state-set income and resource eligibility standards was eligible for welfare and, as such, the state had to provide payments. In 1961, states were granted the autonomy to extend benefits to families in which the primary breadwinner was unemployed.[399] In 1962, the moniker ADC was changed to explicitly reference families— Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC)—and included the addition of caregivers' stipends (the name change occurred in part because of concerns that the program rules were not marriage-friendly).[400] By 1967, states were required to establish the paternity of children eligible for the program.[401]

These rapid changes occurred in large part because of the shifting demographics of people on the welfare rolls. In short, the program went from one based in paternalism—in which primarily White women were expected, and supported to care for their children at home—to a more punitive program with invasive policies focused on morality, such as the requirement to have a man in the house,[402] suitable home policies,[403, 404] and work requirements that did not value women as caretakers of their own children. The codification of these policies was emblematic of fears across the nation related to class, race, and gender, and the belief that Black women were undeserving.

These policy shifts occurred despite a federal report that drew on data from the National Office of Vital Statistics, the Public Health Service, and other government, state, and local agencies. This report indicated

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[ss] The location of Tally's corner has now been revealed. It was at 11th and M streets NW in the Shaw neighborhood of Washington, DC. Source: Kelley, J. (2011) *44 years later, Tally's Corner is revealed*. The Washington Post. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/44-years-later-tallys-corner-is-revealed/2011/02/25/ABf5FTJ_story.html

that children of unmarried mothers represented only 16.0 percent of all ADC children (and their families accounted for 20.0 percent of all ADC families); that almost half of all children's families had incomes below the states' poverty levels (welfare payments included); that unmarried mothers received ADC for less than 2.5 years, on average; and that the "great majority" of "illegitimate" children on ADC were born before the family received assistance. The authors concluded that it was unlikely that women were having additional children out of wedlock, as welfare payments were so low as to not cover the basic needs of a child.[405]

The Civil Rights Movement was happening in tandem with these changes and organizing efforts for equality extended to welfare rights. The National Welfare Rights Organization (NWRO) became an important force. By the late 1960s, the NWRO had approximately 20,000 members, most of whom were Black women who were poor.[406] NWRO also received increasing attention from the media.[407,408] As such, it gained access to White House staff, including Daniel Patrick Moynihan and Robert Finch, secretary of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. Among other things, the NRWO sought (to some degree of success) welfare payments that were compatible with "decency and health"—language that was used in the original drafting of the Social Security bill[409]—a voice in the policy process, and non-racist and dignified treatment from the human services system.[410]

By the end of the decade, the Nixon Administration's 1969 Family Assistance Plan (FAP)—a proposal to replace Aid to Families with Dependent Children—was moving through the U.S. Congress. Informed and influenced by the Moynihan's research,[411] the impetus for the FAP was that people who were unemployed or working and poor should have a basic level of income support. This income would stabilize families and enable people to find work, enroll in training, and/or find better-paying employment so they would not need welfare. The FAP proposal did not pass Congress, but it did lay the groundwork for guaranteedincome programs. These programs occur in many cities across the country today and provide a nominal direct cash transfer to individuals and families experiencing economic hardship.[412,413]

Volume 1: 1920-1969

Conclusion

This volume, the first in a two-part series, contributes to a larger mission of informing an ongoing research agenda at Child Trends focused on Black families with children. In our quest to inform our own work, we also expect that the lessons learned from this review will be valuable for others engaged in research on Black families, and especially for those engaged in applied research.

As the lead authors began to plan for this 100-year review, the intent was to write one paper that linked key findings from the decades and provided conclusions for research (and, by extension, for policy and practice) based on the overarching learnings across the century. As described in the overview, differences in approach and areas of emphasis (among other things) resulted in the reviews being split into two separate and distinct volumes—while this volume begins in 1920 and ends in 1969, Volume 2 begins in 1970 and ends in 2019. As a result, the findings and lessons learned in Volume 1 are not always carried through as a thread in Volume 2. And while this volume presents findings from 1920 to 1969, it also shares present-day implications of these findings, noting research that may not be highlighted in Volume 2.

The findings for this volume are organized into two categories that include: (1) factors that influence research, which highlights research funding and focus; and (2) scholars and stages of research, which highlights research approaches, sampling, and data. This structure allows the findings to be accessible for researchers and to others who are interested in understanding, conducting, or supporting the production of applied research focused on Black families. As described in the introduction, overlap exists between applied research, policy, and practice. To ensure that these intersections are not ignored, our learnings also highlight implications for social policy and programming when relevant and feasible.

Lessons learned for research funding, focus, and scholars

- **Federal, state, and local governments played a key role in funding research on Black families, although other types of organizations (such as philanthropy) also provided fiscal resources to support such research.** From 1920-1969, governments were a major funder of applied research focused on Black individuals, families, and communities, although the level of funding varied over time.[414] Across the five decades included in this review, government funding was distributed to a variety of entities, including monies to local research and social service organizations and institutions of higher education. As a result, research was often localized and commissioned to shed light on issues relevant to specific issues and contexts. For instance, a state or city government might fund a local organization, group, or individual to study issues related to housing because they were interested in developing approaches and solutions to addressing housing issues specific to Black individuals or families. This review indicates that philanthropic dollars were not generally as narrowly focused on specific issues or geographic areas, but that these monies were used to fund scholarship that sought to shed light on

Black people and families across a range of topic areas or issues. Sometimes, philanthropic funders charged researchers with simply documenting the lives of Black people and families without a specific policy or program goal.

- **The focus of research funded by government (and other entities) was primarily problem-centered and focused on people, not on institutions**. Societal well-being was an important impetus behind government-sponsored funding. The enslavement of Black people in the United States created situations that continue to negatively affect Black people and the systems with which they and others interface (e.g., employment, housing, health care, education, etc.) to the current day.[415, 416] As a result, research was (and continues to be) commissioned to better understand and/or address the problems that Black families were facing. Importantly, Black people and families—not the aforementioned systems with which they interfaced—were viewed as a problem to be fixed.

- **Black academics, particularly Dr. E. Franklin Frazier, played an important role in studying Black family life between 1920 and 1969. Many of these individuals, including Dr. Frazier, were men who began their careers at Historically Black Colleges or Universities (HBCUs)**. Governments and other institutions (such as academia) reflect their times. During the timeframe of this review, predominantly White institutions of higher education rarely had an interest in hiring Black people or women as professors, and often were not interested in accepting them at universities as students either.[417,418] If and when admitted, Black students often faced discrimination and prejudice.[419] HBCUs were borne out of a need for Black people to have access to higher education, including education that was nondiscriminatory and non-racist. During this time, HBCUs employed majority-Black faculty and had explicit and implicit goals regarding the economic and social uplift of Black people.[420] The professorate at these institutions were keenly aware of the struggles faced by Black communities (often including themselves), making them particularly committed to HBCU goals—including research focused on Black families and relevant issues. From 1920 to 1969, Black men dominated published writings about Black families. Dr. E. Franklin Frazier was one of the most prolific writers during this time. His work was referenced heavily and had an outsized influence on the field and the nation's understanding of Black family life, despite shifts in his approach and focus across the decades.

- **Mentoring and relationship development occurred across generations of Black scholars and represented an important vehicle for conducting applied research related to Black families that was strengths-based, multidimensional, and intersectional, and which attended to systemic issues such as racism.** Research entails advancing already existing knowledge and creating new learnings. For applied research, the end goal is to provide answers to questions that inform policy and practice. The structure and expectations of academic institutions, and particularly HBCUs—as well as the commitments of seasoned scholars—played a

particularly important role in facilitating the development and growth of future generations of researchers. This support helped extend already existing research, fill in research gaps, promulgate new ideas and areas of inquiry, and create a steady supply of scholars focused on Black families.

- *The Negro Family: The Case for National Action*, **commonly referenced as "the Moynihan report," set the stage for federal policy development related to Black families, and much of this framework exists today.** In 1965, Daniel Patrick Moynihan, assistant secretary of Labor, wrote a self-initiated, government-funded report to influence federal policy related to Black families. His findings emphasized cultural and psychological factors as the impetus for issues such as high rates of single motherhood in Black families, arguing that family structure deficiencies characteristic of Black families would hinder economic equality between Black and White Americans. The report received much criticism, but also was an important vehicle for linking social science research, American discourse, media attention, and federal policy focused on Black families.[421]

Implications of lessons learned

- **Exploring where and how federal government monies have been historically spent—and where they are currently spent—would be a valuable undertaking to determine future research funding priorities, goals, and mechanisms**. Resources for this review did not allow for an in-depth exploration of where—and to whom—federal government (or other) dollars have been allocated and/or spent in relationship to Black family-focused research. This area of inquiry is an important one, given the government's role in both stymying and supporting the advancement of Black people and families in America. Having a baseline understanding about certain issues—including the amount of resources that have been allocated and spent, the types of research that have been conducted, where research has taken place, who has led and/or been engaged in the research, how the research questions have been framed and answered, and where the results have been shared—has critical implications for how Black families are perceived and how policy and programs are enacted.

- **Allocation of monies and development of policies and programs to strengthen the pipeline of Black scholars—particularly at HBCUs and other institutions committed to supporting Black scholars—would support research on Black families that supports their well-being and challenges systems of oppression**. The number of Black faculty members across post-secondary institutions is quite small, with the most recent data showing that Black faculty today make up only about 6.0 percent of full-time faculty.[422] Despite higher teaching loads, invisible labor, and less resources,[423,424] Black faculty have remained committed to the study of issues affecting Black people and communities, producing scholarship that has facilitated breadth and depth of understanding of Black families for centuries.[425] This review shows that much of the research produced by Black scholars from 1920 to 1969 attended to the complexity of Black family life in ways that challenged research practices that promoted deficit- and problem-focused conceptualizations of Black people and families even when research agendas and questions promoted those perspectives. Black scholars have also been key in highlighting the ways in which contextual factors such as

employment, housing, education, and larger societal forces (such as systemic and institutional racism, discrimination, and prejudice) have affected Black families. These findings suggest the critical importance of providing Black people opportunities to enter and advance in careers in academia and other research spaces. Our work suggests that the presence of Black scholars facilitates diversity of thought and perspectives that challenges and informs research approaches—as well as policy and practice—in ways that protect, promote, and preserve Black families.[426] A good place to address this issue is at HBCUs. HBCUs are large employers of the limited number of Black scholars in academia (there is currently no national data available regarding the number of Black researchers at think tanks or other research organizations outside of academia), with the most recent data showing that Black people make up about 56.0 percent of full-time faculty at HBCUs.[427]

- **Understanding the role of "super scholars" and/or specific institutions in how we understand Black families may be important for illustrating influences on social policy.** Lessons learned from this volume indicate that certain individuals, disciplines, and specific institutions played influential roles in research related to Black families that laid the foundation for how Black families are perceived and set the stage for policy formation and implementation. The scholarship of these individuals and institutions persists in research, policy, and programming, despite the challenges that have been identified with their approaches and shifting societal norms. Documenting and attending to the influence and continued impact of these scholars and institutions' messaging on research and social policies is a worthwhile and important endeavor to further surface incongruences in social policy and programming that affects Black families in the present day.

Lessons learned for research approaches, sampling, and data

- **A broad range of research approaches were used to understand and document Black family experiences from the 1920s to 1960s**. The context and time period in which research occurs affects how it is approached. A wide variety of research strategies were used to understand and document the experiences of Black families from 1920 to 1969. They included document reviews (archival and current), diaries, interviews, short observations, case studies, and ethnographies. Quantitative strategies included surveys (self-reported and delivered by data collectors) and the utilization of Census, administrative, and other data. Survey topics included examinations of family life, including elements such as daily living activities and documentation of expenditures for items like shelter, clothing, and food—methods that set the stage for today's indicators of family well-being such as minimum family income standards.[428,429] Data analysis strategies and the presentation of findings were often descriptive and geared toward illustrating individual and family characteristics, behaviors, activities, and experiences, as well as changes in people's experiences and/or population shifts over time. Exceptions included issues related to validity measurement and construct examination, such as IQ, and the creation of analytical models with predictive capabilities, such as those created by Dr. Oliver Cox to understand rates of marriage in particular geographic areas. Black family scholars also combined research strategies and worked across disciplines, particularly for studies occurring over longer periods of time, conducting what is now known as mixed methods research.

- **Theoretical perspectives were often absent from and/or not explicitly named in research focused on Black families; when evident, they reflected the values and biases of the times**. Capitalism, racism, paternalism, and sexism fundamentally shaped the institutions—academia, think tanks, government, philanthropy, and other settings that conducted and/or funded research—that were part of the country from 1920 to 1969. This reality affected the ways in which research was framed. For instance, much research held expectations that the nuclear family (heterosexual couple with husband as breadwinner and wife as homemaker) was the normative standard, and this unit was the foundation on which early research on Black families rests. When Black families differed from this standard, they

were considered dysfunctional, deviant, and/or pathological. Civil rights activism began in the latter timeframe for this review, elevating issues important Black people, women of different races, and other marginalized and minoritized groups. As ideas around intersecting identities and ideologies shifted, so, too, did research and (as an extension) theory. Black women, for example, were marginalized and fought against institutionalized racism and socioeconomic issues across the country, but they also battled patriarchy within higher education,[430] a reality that limited their voices in research and theory focused on Black families from the 1920s to 1960s.

- **Research related to Black families was often small in scale, specific to certain geographic areas, and often focused on mothers and families living in poverty.** Much of the research conducted during the decades highlighted in this volume includes small-scale research studies in Southern rural areas of the country and in Northern and Midwestern cities such as Philadelphia, PA, Washington, DC, and Chicago, IL. As a result, there was limited understanding about Black families in other parts of the country, or those with diverse incomes—such as Black working, middle, and upper-class families. There was also little depth of understanding about where and how these families accessed education and recreation, the type of employment they engaged in, the income and wealth they possessed, and/or their perceptions of and participation in dating, marriage, child rearing, and other family related activities. Because mothers were often thought to be the parent that should be responsible for child rearing decisions and actions in the earlier decades (some would argue this is true today), women were often the specific focus of family-focused research. Moreover, because funding was often directed toward solving societal problems—often a result of low incomes—what we know about Black families from 1920 to 1969 is often focused on Black families (mothers) with low incomes. This knowledge has shaped researchers', policymakers', and program developers' perceptions about Black families, which in turn shaped public discourse, media coverage, and codification in policies—often at the local levels.

- **The United States Census Bureau collected data that researchers often used as a primary large-scale data set to understand Black people, families, and the U.S. population as a whole.** Census data were (and continue to be) used to make decisions about issues such as political representation and resource allocation, with race being an important variable on which decisions have been made. Prior to and throughout the period from 1920 to 1969, racial categories for the Census changed over time. Before the 1920s, categories such as mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon were used to designate levels of Black and White ancestry, a practice put in place to measure the alleged negative effects of race-mixing.[431] In 1900, these categories were combined into Black, then switched in 1920 to Black and mulatto. After 1920, "percentage of Black" identifiers were eliminated again, using "science" to influence the change (polygenists, a group of individuals who endorsed White supremacy, argued the human race did not a share a common ancestor).[432] Notably, up until the 1960s, information about an individual's racial or ethnic identification was determined by the data collector, which meant that collectors' perceptions determined each household's race and ethnicity.

Implications of lessons learned

- **Long-term visioning and strategic planning about how to disrupt and shift systems that perpetuate harmful perspectives about Black families is a necessary component of planning and conducting research focused on Black families**. Theoretical approaches and perspectives on Black families from the 1920s to 1960s (albeit often not explicitly called out as theory) often presented Black families as deficient (even when examining interracial issues), sought to understand Black families' assimilation into the dominant White society, and shed light on the influence of U.S. systems and their negative effects on Black families. Black family deficiency and assimilation perspectives dominated social policy and programming. As a result, notions about the inferiority and undeserving status of Black families became cemented into social policy and programming. These actions included framing policy solutions to put the onus of addressing familial challenges on families and not systems. While current research has shed more light on systemic inequalities and their impact on Black families, policy and programming still rests on a foundation that assumes Black people are deficient and systems do not need to change. As a result, policy solutions designed to support Black families rarely give attention to Black cultural mores and assets, the ways in which systems operate to stifle and disadvantage Black families, or the strategies and solutions that can disrupt these systems. To promote changes in systems, intentional and long-term efforts are necessary. An initial strategy should include ongoing coordination and collaboration in visioning and strategic planning—across government agencies and with major U.S. systems that affect families—about how best to conduct research and shift systems that address historical wrongs.

- **Translation of research for policymakers and program developers is needed**. This review has illustrated the ways in which research has impacted policy and programming, and vice versa. It has also shown that these relationships are not always direct and that research, policy, and programming has been built on an antiquated foundation that no longer reflects changes in (or the complexity of) the cultural and social realities of the United States or Black family life. As a result, research is often conducted and used with outdated and inaccurate lenses that privilege White and patriarchal perspectives. Researchers, then, must begin to communicate this reality to ensure that policy and program decision makers understand that they are making decisions from a foundation that is not current, and is likely problematic for present-day research and policy approaches.

- **More large-scale data sets are needed to understand Black family life**. Our understanding of the experiences of Black families in the United States is shaped, in part, by inaccurate and inconsistent historical data collected by the United States Census Bureau. For instance, up until the 1950s, most Census data about race and ethnicity was presented as a dichotomy: non-White and White. This strategy was grounded in an approach that centered the experiences of White people as the norm, obscuring the diversity and nuances of Black families in America. Datasets such as The National Survey of Black Americans (NSBA)—a series developed by the Program for Research on Black Americans at the Institute for Social Research, University of Michigan—are useful for addressing the

limitations of Census and other data. These datasets have a predominant sample of Black people living in America, which can facilitate (and has facilitated) understanding about the heterogeneity and varied aspects of Black people's lives, both intra- and interracially and ethnically. Supports for data collection and the development of new datasets such as these will help broaden our understanding of Black families, including multi-racial families, multigenerational families, and Caribbean and African Black people living in America. Data such as these have the potential to move the field away from one-size-fits-all "policy hammers" that rest on dated theory, inaccurate statistics, and insufficient attention and toward the varied experiences and characteristics of Black families.

This 50-year review of research focused on Black families is not intended to be an end point. Rather, the ideas presented here and in Volume 2 have been carefully considered to generate next steps and ongoing discussion about scholarship focused on Black families in relation to policy and programs. At a time in which our country's debates about families loom large and have become increasingly partisan, it is important to fund, generate, and use research to advance family policy and programming in ways that attend to the varied forms, functions, and diversity of Black family life. Our hope is that the findings from this review will advance this goal.

Acknowledgements

We'd also like to thank the esteemed Dr. Robert Taylor for agreeing to review our work, despite subsequently having to decline because of delays in our timeline that did not align with his availability. We were very much looking forward to his engagement and are excited about future connections regarding the work.

We also think it important to state that Black families have endured, and continue to endure, the effects of our country's history of and ongoing commitment to upholding racist principles, policies, programs, and ideologies—including (but not limited to) transatlantic human trafficking, chattel slavery, rape, lynching, *de facto* and *de jure* segregation, Jim Crow, economic and political disenfranchisement, criminalization, silencing of voice, and exploitation. Our review has happened not only despite these experiences, but also because of Black people's sacrifices, including those of our own families.

This review would not be complete without acknowledgement of Black scholars. We know—and have experienced—the questioning, judging, unfair treatment, minimization, and tokenization that institutions have visited upon Black scholars, all while they've had to endure challenges such as limited access to resources; the need to fight for access to high-quality, culturally centered, accessible education and professional development; misunderstanding and mistreatment in "professional" settings; and the need to labor relentlessly, both personally and professionally and with minimal rest or concern from our broader community of peers. The breadth of this review necessarily limited inclusion of many exceptional scholars who conduct research in the service of Black families, and we are regretful we could not highlight them all. Our omissions include the work of our external reviewers, as well as currently active Black scholars such as Dr. Chalandra Bryant, Dr. William A. "Sandy" Darity, Dr. Darrick Hamilton, Dr. Bradley Hardy, Dr. Iheoma U. Iruka, Dr. August Jenkins, Dr. Sean Joe, Dr. Brenda Jones Harden, Dr. Ronald Mincy, Dr. Darcey Merritt, Dr. Mary Pattillo, Dr. Antonius D. Skipper, Dr. Shardé McNeil Smith, and many, many others. These exclusions were not of the head or heart—we see you!

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