



DECENTERING MARRIAGE AS A WAY TO DECENTER WHITENESS

Deadric T. Williams

Department of Sociology

University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Why I Study Families?

- To understand racial inequality in families
- To interrogate the role of family structure for understanding racial inequality
- To reorientate research on racial inequality in families by centering racism and race

Understanding Family Structure: General Trends & Empirical Studies

General Trends

Decline in marriage

Increase in nonmarital childbearing

Nonmarital childbearing overrepresented among mothers with lower-levels of education

The increase in nonmarital childbearing among women with high levels of education

Empirical Research

Married families, on average, have better outcomes compared to unmarried families

Racial Differentials: Trends & Empirical Studies

Trends

Steeper decline in marriage for Black and Latinx women

Higher number of nonmarital births for Black and Latinx women

Black women lead nonmarital births across educational levels

Empirical Research

Marriage mostly benefits White families

The effects of being unmarried most detrimental for White children

Implications for Family Structure Research

Given that White families are more likely to be married, focusing exclusively on the married/nonmarried dichotomy may center the lives of White Americans

The rise in nonmarital births to women with high levels of education challenges us to move beyond the married/high education versus unmarried/low education divide

Questions

How can family scholars measure more diverse family forms?

How can survey research adequately capture family structure variability between- and within-racialized groups?