

Introduction to the Special Issue:

“Intersections: Understanding Family Diversity and Social Justice in Family Science”

I can recall throughout my childhood and my formative years the lessons related to intersectionality and family diversity that I learned from my parents and the elders of the Latino and Black communities in my hometown in Southeastern New Mexico. The complexity of diversity within each family system and how those dynamics manifest themselves in larger community, social, educational, economic, and political systems were often discussed and debated. As a family scientist, the vivid memories of my father stressing the importance of respecting others and different “realities” they may bring to the table still serve as my introduction in my family diversity courses.

With that said, Black elders always reminded me of how “Knowledge is Power” and the importance of it being used for the good of the family and the community. This socio-centric holistic paradigm grounded and shaped my understanding of local, national, and global issues. Moreover, it provided a visual of how Black and Latino communities socialize their members (Viramontez Anguiano, Salinas & Garcia, 2010). Yet, by no means should this be limited to Black, Latino, and other collective communities; rather, the discussion of the intersections of family diversity and social justice could serve as a mechanism to move toward a circular synergetic dialogue and practices within familial and larger social systems. Dr. Patricia Hill Collins has been credited for moving this process along with her work and theoretical development of the importance of seeing the world through an intersectional lens. She emphasizes that “intersectionality references the critical insight that race, class, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nation, ability, and age operate not as unitary, mutually exclusive entities, but as reciprocally constructing phenomena that in turn shape complex social inequalities” (Hill Collins, 2015). Whether on traditional forms of media or modern social media, families are consistently being asked to better understand the familial and social realities of the intersectionality of family diversity and social justice.

What follows in this special issue is a thorough basis of knowledge that explores family diversity beyond limited linear explanations. Moreover, the special issue delves into how “Knowledge is Power” can manifest itself into “Social Justice is Power” through a strengths perspectives with diverse family systems.

First, there is Le Anne Silvey, Sandra Bailey, and James Ponzetti’s article “Understanding the Role of Grandparents in Indigenous families: Principles for Engagement.” Within this article the importance of Indigenous grandparents and their extended families and communities is examined. Moreover, the authors provide best practices for family and other service providers when working with Indigenous families. Finally, the authors provide a foundation of understanding the intersectionality of historical trauma, oppression, and marginalization on Indigenous communities and the importance of incorporating culturally responsive practices with Indigenous communities. The authors’ end the article by stating “culture is prevention” which is

a profound statement of understanding the fine detail of family diversity, in this case related to Indigenous families.

Bethany Willis Hepp's article "Perspectives of Foreign-Born Undergraduates on Campus Community Life" is a cross-sectional study that includes self-reported data from 153 foreign-born undergraduates. Data were collected during the first year of the Trump administration, a sensitive socio-historical time period for this population. Quantitative correlations and ANOVAs were used in this study. The findings demonstrated that sociopolitical contexts impact this population negatively; however, university campuses can support foreign-born undergraduates by creating and maintaining safe campus spaces for peer-to-peer and peer-to-faculty interactions. Another important finding concerned the importance of civic engagement and preventive education within Family Science and Family Life Education programming by helping facilitate a positive-strength based environment for all students. It was clear in this article that social justice perspectives were important in providing a learning environment during this complex political climate for the students.

Mirna E. Carranza's article "Colonial Immigrant & Family Acculturation: Latin American Transnational Families in the Global Economy" focuses on revisiting the concept of acculturation as a family process. Latin Americans who have settled in North America were used as a case sample, as they share the common thread of colonization and oppression. The application was relevant to diverse groups from colonized spaces, and examined three theoretical frameworks, family systems, social psychology and economic sociology, to better understand the acculturation process. Important aspects of this reconceptualization of acculturation within a family context contributes to the literature in different manners, including better understanding of familial immigration and migration experiences. The article also brings light to the ongoing violence and marginalization experienced by families throughout their migration journeys, due to being constructed as the racialized "other" and other important factors. Clear aspects of intersectionality and social justice within families and outside families are presented in comprehending the acculturation process.

Next comes Jennifer "Jenn" Greiving's article "Historical Literacy and Cultural Competence in College Students enrolled in Family Sciences Courses." This article explored how students in family science courses may lack historical knowledge and how that may result in a diminished understanding of local and global issues discussed in their family courses. Moreover, this study examines the connection between students' self-reported historical knowledge and cultural competence. A quantitative study of 123 students at a Mountain West urban university campus was used. Results show that historical literacy may play a small but statistically significant role in cultural competence. This study also demonstrates how the intersection between historical literacy and cultural can ultimately impact students view on the world. Moreover their perspectives on social justice and diverse family systems and communities at the local, national and global levels are affected.

Sylvia Niehuis and Shera Thomas-Jackson's article, written for our issue's Professional Development and Reflection Corner (PDRC), "Teaching Emotionally Charged Cultural Diversity Topics in Family Science: The Pivotal Role of Instructors' Emotions," examines the influence of instructor emotions when teaching diversity courses. The authors examine best practices for dealing with difficult classroom situations and present thought questions to spur further dialogue and research in this area.

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Best Regards,
Ruben P. Viramontez Anguiano, Guest Editor

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