

Critical Race Theory in Human Development and Family Science:

Where we were, are, and must go.

THE GIST: Human Development and Family Science (HDFS) has grown into a broad field that explores how children and families are shaped by their environment, biology, and social systems. Over the past century, HDFS research has led to important discoveries about family well-being, poverty, and child development, influencing policies and programs that improve lives. However, like other fields, HDFS has historically overlooked the role of race, limiting its ability to fully address the diverse experiences of all children and families. Scholars have long called for a more inclusive approach, and professional organizations now recognize the need to confront racial bias within research, teaching, and practice.

THE TAKEAWAY: This paper uses Critical Race Theory (CRT) as a framework to analyze how race impacts HDFS research and policies. CRT provides alternative perspectives to understand systemic inequalities and calls for scholars to actively address racism in their work. The authors highlight two core CRT principles to examine racial bias in HDFS research and propose twelve actionable steps to make the field more equitable. By incorporating these changes, HDFS can evolve to better address racial disparities and create a more comprehensive and inclusive understanding of human development.