Black Families Flourishing Webinar Questions Follow-Up

Thank you for joining the Black Families Flourishing (BFF) webinar and engaging with our team. We're deeply grateful for your participation, questions, and commitment to our efforts to use research, collaboration, capacity building, and narrative shifting to support Black families' well-being. Below, we've compiled and responded to the questions asked during the webinar. We appreciate the thoughtfulness of the community and will draw on these questions to inform and shape how we move forward. We hope this document offers clarity, sparks new ideas, and opens the door to continued connection and collaboration.

Getting Involved with BFF

1. **Are there ways we can be involved with the survey or research, such as referring Black families for recruitment?**

   - Yes! We welcome your support in connecting with Black families. This includes families who may want to share their experiences in future research activities as well as those who may be interested in serving in an advisory capacity. All people who participate in research or advisory efforts will be compensated for their time. To stay informed about upcoming survey and research efforts, opportunities to engage with our team, or to learn about what we're up to please sign up for our newsletter and follow us on LinkedIn. To refer yourself and/or other families directly please email us at blackfamiliesflourish@childtrends.org.

2. **How do we get invited to the conversation (e.g., defining Afro-Latino families)?**

   - We're currently planning ways to keep interested parties up to date about our work. This will likely be through regularly scheduled webinars as well as our quarterly newsletter. We will also engage subject matter experts and individuals and organizations who work toward supporting Black family flourishing. Within the next few months, we will be identifying and reaching out to these individuals to assess interest in serving in an advisory capacity on the project. If this sounds like a role you might be interested in, please reach out to explore how to partner. We can be reached at blackfamiliesflourish@childtrends.org.

Research Framing, Context, Areas of Focus, and Communicating Learnings

3. **Can you remind us how you have defined "flourishing?" There are differences in how that is interpreted, similar to happiness or joy.**

   - The research literature often defines flourishing in terms of psychological well-being or life satisfaction. Through BFF, we're expanding that framing by drawing on Black families' perspectives, which, based on other research, we expect may include ideas such as connection, safety, legacy, spirituality, joy, cultural continuity, and more. Our upcoming activities with families and others will help us to refine and expand the definition.

4. **Will your research identify what policies and practices impact Black families positively?**

   - Absolutely. We are committed to lifting up both the strengths and challenges for Black families in interacting with systems. To do so, our research will examine the barriers Black families face, as well as the policies, practices, and programs that affirm, support, and empower them. Our belief, and one of our project principles, is that highlighting what's working is essential to designing and shifting systems in ways that support Black family flourishing. One of our first research tasks is a policy scan to facilitate the identification of promising policies and practices.

5. **Will the impact of this current political climate be captured in your research?**

   - Yes. While our research agenda is not focused exclusively on politics, the framework that we use to guide our work includes attention to the ways in which the country's economic, political, and social landscape may affect Black families' experiences. This includes attention to understanding how families navigate and are impacted by the systems and structures around them, including those influenced by the current political moment.

6. **Is your work focused on identifying discrimination that Black families encounter when accessing systems, or identifying where system policies and practices do not include the culture and nuances of Black families?**

   - A critical facet of our approach is examining the bidirectional interactions between Black families and systems—meaning the ways in which systems affect Black families and the ways Black families affect systems. This includes attention to racism, oppression, and discrimination (what we refer to as ROD). A key goal of this approach is to better understand how systems can be changed to more fully support Black family flourishing.

7. **How will you share your findings with the community at large? Will you all be publishing a book?**

- We're committed to sharing our findings in accessible and engaging formats, including in written documents such as briefs, reports, and data visualizations, and in other formats such as webinars, podcasts, and community events. A book is on our long-term vision list, but in the short term, we're focusing on delivering project learnings in ways that those interested can immediately use.

How Are Families Defined and Who is Included in the Project?

8. **Why are families with children the focus? Will families without children be included?**

   - Black Families Flourishing is housed at Child Trends, an organization focused on children and families. For the BFF project, we define family as a group of at least one self-identified Black adult related by birth, marriage, adoption, or choice to one or more children (infancy up to age 26). We are interested in the well-being and flourishing of Black families over time and the transfer of cultural assets and strengths across generations. As such, we have made a deliberate decision to focus on families with children understanding, however, that families have a wide variety of characteristics, come in many different structures, and can transfer cultural assets and strengths across generations with or without children.

9. **What's the difference between household and family in your project?**

   - As articulated in question 8, we have made an intentional decision to define families broadly (albeit ones with children), which goes beyond defining family as one that resides in the same household. While surveys like the Census often treat households as the unit of analysis, our aim is to also include relational and cultural definitions of family, which may or may not include those living in the same shared space or household.

10. **Would using the term "Black families" include immigrant families, or should we use the term Black families and African American families interchangeably?**

    - We use the term "Black families" to be inclusive and acknowledge families in the U.S. who hail from across the African diaspora, including those with varied ethnic or national identities. Our conceptualization includes families in the U.S. who are the descendants of those who were enslaved, as well as Black immigrant families from countries such as Ghana, Haiti, Jamaica, Nigeria, and others across the globe. As we conduct research, we will use analysis strategies that help to shed light on potential differences in Black families based on characteristics such as ethnic or national identity; place of residence; migration history; citizenship, economic, and ability status; sexual orientation; family structure; and other identifiers.

11. **How are the terms multiracial families or families with non-Black parents represented?**

- We define Black families as those with individuals who report being Black alone or in combination with one or more races or ethnicities; for instance, an individual who identifies as Black only, as well as someone who identifies as Black and White combined or Afro-Latino. We are mindful that different conceptualizations of Black may affect family perceptions and interactions with systems and outcomes (among other things). As we engage with families and collect data, we are prepared to examine and disaggregate responses, when possible, to better understand and highlight this type of diversity in identity.

12. **Are we looking at the insights of youth (14-26) perspectives?**

- Yes. Our research is focused on understanding families from multiple perspectives including the perspectives of children and youth.

13. **Will your research include diverse families (e.g., LGBTQ+ families, military, those involved with child welfare)?**

- Yes. Historically, it has been difficult to capture the full range and diversity of Black families for several reasons. Our project is designed to capture the diversity and intersectionality of Black families which, depending on the research undertaken, may include military families, families involved with child welfare, families with children or parents with special needs, LGBTQ+ families, and others. We are also beginning to build a resource hub on our website that will house research about Black families occurring across the country.

14. **Are you considering the number of Black families who lost a family member during the pandemic, and was there an impact on those families' flourishing?**

- We know that many Black families were disproportionately and negatively impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. These experiences (e.g., illness, caregiving strain, economic disruption, social isolation, death) have implications for how families define and experience flourishing. While our research is not exclusively focused on the pandemic, we are considering how to reflect the ongoing impact of COVID-19 in the types of questions we ask, as well as the interpretation of data. Black family cultural assets and strengths will also be part of the broader story we aim to understand and tell.

15. **I hope you include communities that have been historically researched, and the resulting studies' findings have produced negative, deficit-based, and pathological findings.**

- The impetus for this project was borne, in part, out of a [100-Year Review of Research on Black Families](#) that highlighted (among many things) the ways in which research focused on Black families has been deficit focused and harmful to Black families. We are using the review, as well as other research, to inform our current research agenda and efforts.

16. **I'm curious about the malleability of these identities and circumstances, especially citizenship or family structure, given that they may change over time. Same with race/ethnicity... curious about shifts in how people may self-identify differently across the life span.**

- Great question—and one we've been thinking about too. You're absolutely right that identities and circumstances like citizenship, family structure, and even how someone thinks about their race/ethnicity can shift over time. These categories are often treated as static in data collection, but in reality, they're deeply shaped by context, life stage, and even political or social environments. These dynamics raise important questions about how to measure identity in a way that's both respectful and flexible. As we engage in this work, we're thinking about how we might capture families' current status as well as their evolution across time. This will occur in our nationally representative survey and other research efforts. We welcome any insights and/or resources you might have to support the capturing and sharing out of this type of nuance.

BFF National Survey Methods and Logistics

17. **How large will the [nationally representative survey] sample be? How will the data be gathered?**

- We plan to survey approximately 1,500 Black families across the U.S. The survey will be administered in partnership with NORC at the University of Chicago, using a nationally representative panel (AmeriSpeak) combined with community-based recruitment strategies. NORC's TrueNorth Calibration approach ensures that our community-based recruitment efforts can be weighted to reflect the broader Black population in the U.S. accurately.

18. **How will surveys be shared with families? Do you recruit through referrals, ads, or in-person outreach?**

- Families potentially interested in the survey will be contacted for participation through an already existing nationally representative sample (AmeriSpeak) as well as via community outreach. Community outreach strategies will involve a combination of methods such as mail, phone, social media, referrals from partner organizations, and in-person outreach. All individuals who participate in our survey and/or other research efforts will be compensated for their time.

19. **Does the survey include foster or adoptive families?**

- Yes. Our definition of family is inclusive of biological, adoptive, foster, and kinship caregiving arrangements. We want to reflect the full spectrum of caregiving experiences in Black families.

20. **Will families be asked about household safety, such as the presence of firearms?**

- We are still drafting the full set of survey questions. That said, family safety is an important area of inquiry, and we are considering questions related to the home environment, including items that reflect safety and protective factors.

Data Point Musings

21. **How are terms like "American," "African American," or "Black" used in your [data points] research?**

- For Census data: "American" families includes families who selected ancestries such as "United States," "North America," "African-American," and "Afro-American."

22. **Where did you gather this data from before? How big is the sample size you are looking for in various communities?**

- The data visualizations presented during the webinar comes from the American Community Survey (ACS), which is taken from the Census. Webinar data came from the 2019-2023 5-year ACS estimate.

23. **Are the "parent-headed households" two-parent households? or majority single mother households?**

- The parent-headed households referenced in the webinar data points included both two- and single-parent households. We are currently doing some work to disaggregate all parent-headed households in our sample. Current estimates show that about 51 percent are two-parent households and 49 percent are single parent households. These numbers may shift with additional examination and data checking.

24. **Regarding family ancestry, how far back did you ask parents to identify birth location? One generation removed from the parent (i.e., child's grandparents)?**

- The family ancestry variable came from an ACS survey question that asked individuals to report on their own ancestry. The question did not ask respondents to consider generational identity/ancestry. Here is an edited description of the ACS ancestry variable: "ANCESTR1 provides the respondent's self-reported ancestry or ethnic origin. In all years except 1990 and 2000, respondents could give as many ancestries as they saw fit. ANCESTR1 records the first response."