



NORC's Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Scholars Program

Project Descriptions for Fall 2022 Scholars



Autumn Asher BlackDeer, PhD
Assistant Professor at the
University of Denver

Indigenous Reproductive Justice: Examining Attitudes on Abortion among American Indian and Alaska Native Communities

Dr. Autumn Asher BlackDeer is a queer decolonial scholar from the Southern Cheyenne Nation and serves as an assistant professor in the Graduate School of Social Work at the University of Denver. Her scholarship illuminates the impact of structural violence on American Indian and Alaska Native communities. Dr. BlackDeer centers Indigenous voices throughout her research by using quantitative approaches and big data as tools for responsible storytelling. Dr. BlackDeer is a racial equity scholar with an emphasis on Indigenous tribal sovereignty and is deeply committed to decolonizing the academy.

Study Description: Reproductive justice—defined as the right to have or not have children and to parent the children

they have and the ability to parent in a safe, supportive environment—has historically been and continues to be a struggle for Indigenous women. The proposed study will investigate attitudes toward abortion among American Indian and Alaska Native communities related to political party affiliation and ideology to set the necessary groundwork for reproductive justice advocacy. This research can benefit Native communities in advocating for reproductive justice and responsive policies to address health disparities, with direct implications for improving abortion access and policy advocacy.

Dataset: [General Social Survey](#)



Nora Marino, MPH
Senior Research Associate at
NORC at the University of Chicago

Using the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) to Identify Racial Disparities in the Health Care System

Nora Marino is a senior research associate at NORC at the University of Chicago, has experience with evaluation, survey research, and qualitative and quantitative analysis. She supports projects focused on substance use, mental health, and access to care, including the Managing Unhealthy Alcohol Use in Primary Care initiative and the Study of Illinois Medicaid Managed Care. Marino also has a strong interest in using research to identify racial inequities in health care access and strategies to eliminate them. She holds a BA from the College of the Holy Cross and an MPH from the University of Minnesota.

Study Description: This study uses the Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey (MCBS) data to examine relations between satisfaction with health care and engagement

with preventive health care services of community-dwelling older adults covered by Medicare and whether differences exist between racial and ethnic groups. Prior research found that satisfaction with health care is closely tied to quality of care and use of preventive services, thereby reducing the risk of morbidity and mortality. Therefore, research that identifies inequities in the health care system satisfaction between racial and ethnic groups is an essential step to develop equitable health policies and initiatives.

Dataset: [Medicare Current Beneficiary Survey \(MCBS\)](#)



Nneka Ibekwe-Okafor, PhD
Post-Doctoral Fellow at Boston
University

Identifying Systematic QRIS Barriers that Prevent Provider Engagement in Predominantly Black Communities: A Latent Class Analysis

Dr. Ibekwe-Okafor's research is at the intersection of developmental science, early childhood education, and social policy. She examines the social and environmental determinants of Black children's academic development by examining how poverty, racial discrimination, structural inequalities, and educational inequities influence access to quality early care and education and the developmental outcomes of Black children from birth to kindergarten. Her research focuses on identifying protective factors across various ecological levels in efforts to promote optimal developmental outcomes for Black children. She is a postdoctoral fellow for the Researchers Investigating Sociocultural Equity and Race (RISER) Network in the Center for the Ecology of Early Development at Boston

University. Okafor holds a PhD in human development and quantitative methods from the University of Pennsylvania, Graduate School of Education, an EdM in prevention science research from Harvard University, and an MSW from Columbia University. In her undergraduate studies, Nneka majored in sociology and African American Studies.

Study Description: This study uses the National Survey of Early Care and Education (NSECE) to examine relations amongst the opportunities for center-level quality improvement and proportion of students in an early care and education center who are Black. Another study by Jenkins and colleagues utilizing the NSECE 2012 data found that enrollment in quality rating and improvement systems (QRIS) in predominantly Black communities was lower compared to other communities. Although there are several debates about the utility of QRIS in measuring quality, it is one of few systematic frameworks across states that measure, improve, and communicate the quality of early childhood education programs. As such, increasing enrollment in QRIS could ensure that programs serving majority Black children support positive child development, which is essential to eliminating educational disparities and opportunity gaps.

Dataset: [National Survey of Early Care and Education \(NSECE\) 2019](#)



Jonathan Reid, PhD
Assistant Professor at Sam
Houston State University

Economic Insecurity and American Attitudes Toward Police Reform: Exploring the Role of Political Trust and Punitive Views

Dr. Jonathan C. Reid is an assistant professor in the Department of Criminal Justice and Criminology at Sam Houston State University. His research focuses on race, sociopolitical inequalities, and crime in the United States.

Study Description: This study uses data from the General Social Survey to examine the factors associated with public opinion on reforming the police. In particular, the study examines the direct effects of perceived national and personal economic insecurity on public support for reform and the indirect effects of these attitudes on police policy through punitive sentiments and political trust during a time of reduced economic growth, a policing crisis, and widespread sociopolitical turmoil.

Dataset: [General Social Survey](#)



Dominique Tunzi, Doctoral
Candidate at Vanderbilt University

Exploring the Relationship among Anti-Oppressive Attitudes and the Use of Meditation

Dominique Tunzi is a doctoral candidate in community research and action at Vanderbilt University. Her research aims to better understand the development of antiracist and anti-oppressive attitudes and actions to ultimately inform practice and policies that support this development. Her research also considers the role of emotionality, emotion regulation, and educational contexts. As a DREI research scholar, Dominique will examine the relationships amongst antiracist attitudes, other anti-oppressive views, and the practice of meditation.

Study Description: Using the General Social Survey, this study will explore how antiracist attitudes are related to other anti-oppressive views, using both variable-centered and person-centered approaches. The study will also

examine whether the use of meditation, which promotes acceptance as an emotion-regulation strategy, is related to the development of antiracist and anti-oppressive views.

Dataset: [General Social Survey](#)



Fei Wang, Doctoral Candidate at Case Western Reserve University

Social Discrimination and Mental Health among Older African Americans: The Paradox and the Mechanism

Fei Wang is dedicated to research that reduces the racial/ethnic disparities in mental health among older adults. Fei is interested in identifying the unique strengths of older African Americans that can mitigate the detrimental effects of psychosocial stressors on mental health. Fei has established a track record of developing and publishing research on the intersection of race/ethnicity and aging. Her most recent first-authored paper, published in *The Gerontologist*, innovatively revealed between-group (i.e., older African Americans and non-Latino Whites) and within-group (i.e., older African Americans and Caribbean Blacks) differences in the association between negative family interaction and mental health.

Study Description: The project will: 1) examine the role of reciprocal social support as a mechanism that explains the race paradox in mental health among older African Americans. 2) investigate the moderating role of reciprocal social support in the association between social discrimination and depressive symptoms among older African Americans.

Dataset: [National Social Life, Health, and Aging Project](#) (NSHAP)

For more information about NORC's Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Scholars Program, check out its webpage on NORC.org. To learn more about the 2021 Diversity, Racial Equity, and Inclusion Scholars Cohort and their research, visit [NORC's DREI Scholars 2021 Cohort webpage](#).