Focus Group Work Plan for 2022

Name of Focus Group Diverse Family Structures

Chair/Co-chairs Todd Jensen, Caroline Sanner

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1. Do you wish to have a time allocated for your focus group during at the next NCFR Annual Conference?
   X Yes  □ No

2. If Yes, please list or attach tentative agenda.
   Tentatively, our agenda will prioritize the following:
   • Reflection on any products produced for and presented at the 2022 annual conference, which will likely feature content focused on how family-structure research can be moved forward productively.
   • Discussion related to the translation of conference materials into publishable products.
   • Plans for submitting proposals for the 2023 annual conference.
   • Discussion on instating an annual focus group award for papers/posters presented at NCFR related to the study of family structure.

3. Please list 2022 focus group goals/projects/aspirations.
   The focus group aims to co-develop content representing a thorough and in-depth compilation of our reflections (and evidence-informed assertions) on the core issues and questions that we believe need to be addressed to move family-structure research forward productively. The goal would be to develop a product, or set of products, that could serve as a roadmap for our work moving forward. Developing and disseminating content that addresses these issues/questions with concrete recommendations for future research will (a) help prevent us from having to circle back to these foundational issues/questions continually, (b) allow us to unite and co-create a shared understanding of family structure and our beliefs about whether and how it should be studied, and (c) highlight specific topics warranting empirical investigation.

4. Please identify any opportunities, suggestions, or concerns regarding the role of this focus group in furthering NCFR’s inclusion and diversity initiatives.
   The Diverse Family Structures Focus Group endeavors to disentangle family-structure research from the legacy and influence of white supremacy, racist systems, and racist ideologies. We continue to embrace critical perspectives, and those who espouse them, to ensure our work promotes racial equity. We continually seek focus group members with diverse experiences and identities, striving for a focus-group composition that aligns well with the experiences and identities of the families we study and seek to support.

5. Please list any areas where you would like assistance from NCFR staff.
   We have begun considering the establishment of Focus Group awards for NCFR conference proposals related to diverse family structures. Maddie Hansen has already been highly supportive and informative on this front. We will likely pursue this process further once it is more clear what the specific goals and criteria would be for the award(s). The focus group aspirations for this upcoming year will likely inform those award goals and criteria.

6. Are there any other concerns or questions that have come from the 2020 focus group annual meeting?
   N/A
Diverse Family Structures Focus Group  
NCFR 2021 Meeting Minutes  
11/11/2021

Focus Group Co-Chairs: Caroline Sanner, Todd Jensen

The focus group meeting began with brief introductions, followed by an overview of accomplishments linked to the focus group over the last year (e.g., papers that have been presented at NCFR or TCRM, publications).

Focus group members then reacted to the following prompts:

- Consider advances in how our thinking about/approaches to studying family structure have changed over the last 1-2 years (i.e., what have we learned, and what are we still learning?).
- What are some of the most critical questions or issues that we need to address in order to move family-structure research forward productively?

The following represent some of the key questions or issues raised by focus group members that warrant attention:

- What precisely is family structure and how has it been conceptualized historically?
- What is the value in studying family structure?
- How can—and for what purposes should—we optimally measure family structure, from both quantitative and qualitative perspectives? What characteristics of a family’s makeup could be featured in our measurements beyond parents’ marital status?
- How can we effectively differentiate between family structure and household composition in our research? How can we capture information about familial networks that change over time and span across multiple households?
- How can we disentangle the study of family structure from the legacy and influence of white supremacy, racist systems, and racist ideologies?
- How can family-structure research be more explicit in terms of the precise constructs being studied (e.g., marital status, rather than family structure per se)? How can we encourage this precision in future work?
- How much influence does family structure actually exert on families and individuals, above and beyond other potentially confounding factors?
- Is there value in conceptualizing family structure as an outcome variable? That is, is there value in attempting to identify predictors of family structure?
- Which family structures continue to be underrepresented in this body of literature?

The focus group co-chairs highlighted the potential value in crowdsourcing this discussion further via the online discussion board.

The group then discussed the possibility of co-developing content representing a thorough and in-depth compilation of our reflections (and evidence-informed assertions) on these (and other related) issues/questions. The goal would be to develop a product, or set of products, that could serve as a roadmap for our work moving forward. Developing and disseminating content that addresses these issues/questions with concrete recommendations for future research will (a) help prevent us from having to circle back to these foundational issues/questions continually, (b) allow us to unite and co-create a shared understanding of family structure and our beliefs about whether and how it should be studied, and (c) highlight specific topics warranting empirical investigation.
The group considered the possibility of submitting proposals to the next NCFR conference as a good opportunity to begin developing content of this sort.