

## Focus Group Work Plan for 2023

Name of Focus Group [Diverse Family Structures](#)

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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?

Yes  No

2. If Yes, please list or attach tentative agenda.

- [Welcome new attendees and introductions](#)
- [Review our refined, crowd-sourced compilation of the most pressing issues in family-structure research](#)
- [Coordinate plans to continue developing strategies for addressing particular pressing issues, which will likely result in numerous NCFR conference presentation proposals for subsequent NCFR conferences](#)

3. Please list 2023 focus group goals/projects/aspirations.

[We aim to accomplish the following during 2023:](#)

- [Review and synthesize notes from the 2022 focus group meeting and the collaborative workshop held during the 2022 NCFR conference.](#)
- [Develop and disseminate a web-based survey to continue crowd-sourcing the prioritization of pressing issues in family-structure research.](#)
- [Develop a white paper and publishable manuscript summarizing our findings, which will feature the top most pressing issues in family-structure research.](#)
- [Submit an abstract for the 2023 NCFR conference to present our findings related to the focal pressing issues in family-structure research.](#)

4. Please identify any opportunities, suggestions, or concerns regarding the role of this focus group in furthering NCFR's inclusion and diversity initiatives.

[Our focus group topic appears to be yielding wide interest by scholars across various disciplines and with widely varying backgrounds in terms of career level, family experience, racial/ethnic identity, and nation-of-origin.](#)

5. Please list any areas where you would like assistance from NCFR staff.

[N/A](#)

6. Are there any other concerns or questions that have come from the 2022 focus group annual meeting?

[We have no concerns or questions at this time.](#)

Attach your **2022 annual meeting minutes** to this form and return by **Thursday December 1, 2022** to [membership@ncfr.org](mailto:membership@ncfr.org)

## 11/18/22 – Diverse Family Structures Focus Group Meeting Minutes

- Welcome and Brief Introductions
  - 14 attendees, including 2 co-chairs, provided a brief introduction and highlighted their personal and professional connection to the focus group topic
- The focus group co-chairs provided context for the focus of the current meeting, which was to continue a discussion that took place during a workshop on Wednesday (11/16) entitled “Delineating the Pressing Issues in Family-Structure Research.”
- Focus group attendees contributed the following insights related to future advancements of family-structure research, which the co-chairs intend to compile and synthesize:
  - The study of family structure would benefit from interdisciplinary approaches, leveraging unique perspectives and vantage points across disciplines
  - We should move away from the notion of a “normative family”
  - We should investigate varying family forms across cultures and identify family strengths
  - A focus on parent development could offer insights related to understanding family structure
  - The study of family structure could be enriched when conceptualizing families as dynamic, developmental systems
  - There remain opportunities to clarify the concept of “family”
  - Family-structure research should focus on family well-being and the processes families apply to successfully withstand adversity over time
  - Family-structure research could move away from “where does one fit in the family tree” toward “who has salient roles in the family system”
  - Family-structure research should move beyond a focus on marital status, opening up opportunities to understand the roles and functions of other kin such as cousins, aunts, uncles, and siblings, etc.
  - Family-structure research could be enriched by multicultural perspectives on how (and what types of) families form
  - Rather than using family structure as a proxy for other variables, family-structure researchers could make explicit the variables they are intending to represent and endeavor to measure and analyze those variables; researchers should also be forthcoming about their rationale for using family-structure as a proxy earlier in manuscript content
  - Family-structure research could be informed and enriched by incorporating a historical perspective (e.g., why and when did marriage become a marker of a gold-standard family?)
  - Researchers could conceptualize family structure as a means to an end, with the end being to understand developmentally influential relationships, roles, and functions
  - There could be value in differentiating between the “study of family structure” versus “studying structurally diverse families”
  - To the extent the term “family structure” has become burdened by problematic definitions, conceptualizations, or connotations, family-structure researchers should reclaim and repurpose the term in ways that are productive
  - It could be worth considering whether “family structure” is the optimal term to label this area of research, and if it is, there would be value in all relevant qualitative and quantitative work using the term consistently so that empirical insights can be connected meaningfully
  - A major motivation to continue research focused on family structure is to address harms or policy missteps rooted in deficit-comparison research on family structure; family-structure researchers can flood policy debates with cutting edge research that represents the intricate realities of family life with the aim of guiding policy
- The focus group co-chairs outlined next steps, which are to (a) review and synthesize notes from this meeting and the collaborative workshop held during the 2022 NCFR conference, (b) develop and disseminate a web-based survey to continue crowd-sourcing the prioritization of pressing issues in family-structure research, and (c) develop a white paper and publishable manuscript summarizing our findings, which will feature the top most pressing issues in family-structure research.