A great deal of work on gender inequality in work outcomes has focused on individual differences in men’s and women’s occupational investments and time spent on housework and childcare. A smaller but also important body of research examines how having a working spouse affects men’s and women’s occupational outcomes. With the increase in dual-earner couples, some researchers have focused on whether having a working wife has a negative effect on men’s income (Hotchkiss & Moore, 1999; Jacobsen & Rayack, 1996); much of this research takes for granted that the husband’s career is primary. However, as more wives are earning half or more of the household income, questions of career prioritizing -- or how couples prioritize spouses’ two careers -- have become more relevant (Pixley & Moen, 2003; Winkler, McBride, & Andrews, 2005). Despite advances in removing barriers for women in the workplace, married women who are secondary earners may find that their husbands’ careers act as a type of “glass ceiling” at home, constraining their own options (Philiber & Vannoy-Hiller, 1990). Spousal constraints may be especially problematic for women in professional and managerial occupations, who not only face high expectations for commitment at work and are more likely than their male peers to have a working spouse, but are more often married to someone who also has a high-status occupation (Jacobs & Winslow, 2004; Sobecks et al., 1999). Even so, having to negotiate the often conflicting needs of two work careers can affect men and women in all types of dual-earner couples.

Career hierarchy is a broad term, referring to the extent to which one spouse’s career takes precedence over that of the other (Pixley & Moen, 2003; Winkler & Rose, 2000). Three theories help explain how one career comes to take precedence. The classic human capital theories put forth by economists posit that couples’ major decisions about their two jobs are based on net family gains or losses (Mincer, 1978; Sandell, 1977). Although many factors may be considered as costs or benefits of any decision, income is an important criterion in most major decisions. Net of other factors, couples are expected to choose the option that will be best for the spouses’ total combined income, even if it means an income loss for one of the spouses. This calculation is assumed to be gender neutral regarding which spouse’s income increases or decreases: only the total income that would result from choosing each option should affect the decision. However, Becker (1981) argued that women are more productive at household labor, especially child care, and thus it is more efficient for households to assign the male partner to specialize
in market labor while the female partner takes responsibility for the household labor. As the husband devotes more time and effort to work, his career would logically be primary. Becker’s theory assumes that families act as single decision-making units, with all members sharing a common preference: to maximize joint family utility. Spouses’ relative resources are relevant only in that the spouse with higher earnings potential is more likely to be favored in such decisions, because what benefits his or her career is more likely to increase the total family income.

By contrast, in theories based on family power (Blood & Wolfe, 1960; Scanzoni, 1972) or bargaining (Lundberg & Pollak, 1996; Manser & Brown, 1980), the spouse with greater relative resources has more power to sway the couple’s decisions to match his or her preferences. While spouses do share some preferences and thus often act like a single unit, these theories recognize that two individuals’ interests are never exactly aligned. Although spouses appear to pool their incomes for some decisions, such as housing, other expenditures vary depending on which spouse controls more money (Lundberg, Pollak, & Wales, 1997; Phipps & Burton, 1998). Particularly important to the issue of career prioritization is the idea that certain benefits from one spouse’s career advancement are not directly transferable to the other spouse, including personal status, independence, job satisfaction, and the ability to support themselves (and any children) should they become single (England & Kilbourne, 1990; Oppenheimer, 1997). Net of other factors, then, spouses should prefer to advance their own careers. If so, men’s typically higher marital power helps to explain why their careers are more often favored in household decisions.

In the *gendered roles* approach, the attitudes of the spouses affect their decisions: more traditional couples are expected to prioritize the husband’s career, net of other factors (Bielby & Bielby, 1992; Cooke, 2003). Conversely, egalitarian couples may prioritize options that allow more equal outcomes for their two careers, even if this does not maximize family income. Couples may adopt traditionally gendered family roles to avoid sanctions from others for exhibiting sex-atypical behaviors (Costrich, Feinstein, Kidder, Marecek, & Pascale, 1975). Alternately, spouses may be driven by personal preference for more traditional or more nontraditional roles, which is consistent with the finding that mismatches between gender role attitudes and actual roles lead to lower marital satisfaction (McHale & Crouter, 1992). The pressure to enact traditionally gendered roles is used to explain research indicating that couples in which the wife earns more generally do not exhibit reversed or even egalitarian roles at home (Bittman, England, Sayer, Folbre, & Matheson, 2003; Tichenor, 1999).

The distinction between career hierarchy and career prioritizing is subtle, but important. Career hierarchy can arise from neutral causes, as when couples make decisions based on the greatest net household benefit, but one spouse’s career advancement happens to produce better joint outcomes. Career hierarchy can also arise from career prioritizing, when one or both spouses give greater priority to one spouse’s career outcomes in decision-making (Pixley & Moen, 2003). For the purpose of addressing
career prioritizing, the above theories can be reorganized to explain major decisions about spouses’ careers in two ways. Decision-making is neutral if spouses attempt to maximize certain outcomes (such as total household income) and select the option that best meets these criteria, regardless of which spouse’s career benefits more from the decision. If so, one spouse’s career may have precedence in any given decision because favoring it leads to a higher joint income, even though it was not prioritized in the decision-making process. This is consistent with neutral economic theories of household behavior. Alternately, decision-making may explicitly prioritize the outcomes for one spouse’s career, either because the spouse with more bargaining power pushes the decision in that direction or because both spouses share that preference (influenced by their gender role attitudes). It is important to note that prioritizing one spouse’s career outcomes is not equivalent to prioritizing that spouse’s will or preferences. For example, if a wife pressures her husband to take a better-paying job so that she can reduce her work hours, she is prioritizing his career outcomes over her own, but not necessarily his preferences.

State of the Body of Knowledge

Attitudes about husbands’ and wives’ careers

The gender role attitude questions used in most large surveys do not directly ask whether Americans think wives’ careers should be as important as husbands’ careers, but they do offer some insight into career hierarchy norms. For example, the International Social Survey Programme includes six items about gendered family roles, all of which focus on whether women should work rather than focus on family responsibilities. As expected, respondents who are more traditional on these items also report a more traditional division of housework (Fuwa, 2004). Although the questions do not ask about career hierarchy directly, we can infer that respondents who disagree that married women should work do not feel that wives’ careers are as important as those of their husbands. Somewhat more directly, the General Social Survey asks whether respondents agree with these statements: “It is more important for a wife to help her husband’s career than to have one herself,” and “It is much better for everyone if the man is the achiever and the woman takes care of home and family.” Responses to these questions have become more egalitarian among both men and women since the 1970s, although women have changed more rapidly than men, increasing the gap over time (Brewster & Padavic, 2000). Respondents are consistently much more willing to endorse a wife having a career than they are to accept changing the husband’s primary role as “achiever” or the wife’s primary responsibility for the home. This suggests that Americans generally accept a wife working, as long as the husband’s work remains more important than hers.
One aspect of career prioritization is whose career is considered indispensable and whose is considered optional. The idea of being the “breadwinner” or “family provider” is wrapped up in the traditional “husband” role (Potuchek, 1997), and wives are often more willing to take on this role than husbands are willing to let them have it (Loscocco & Spitze, 2007). Even when wives contribute substantially to the household income, spouses may not feel that the wife has the same duty to provide financially that the husband does (Warren, 2007). These attitudes could affect decisions: if one spouse has more duty to provide financially, it would seem rational to prioritize that spouse’s earnings over those of the other spouse. Wives in dual-earner couples are more likely to see themselves as family providers if they believe that it is “ideal” for spouses to be equal providers (Potuchek, 1992). Husbands are more likely to embrace egalitarian notions of breadwinning when their wives earn more than they do, although there does not appear to be a reciprocal effect of attitudes on behavior (Zuo, 2004). Still, this suggests that an increase in wives’ relative incomes over time should lead to more couples with equal approaches to their two careers.

National averages for attitudes about spouses’ two careers can be misleading, because cohort replacement is an important aspect of global liberalization of gender role attitudes (Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Ciabattari, 2001); as members of more traditional older generations age and die, the population’s average attitudes are increasingly influenced by people from younger, more liberal cohorts. The generation of women and men who are now at the peak of their work lives established their careers during a period of much more conservative attitudes about husbands’ and wives’ roles. Although many of them became more liberal over time, they still hold more traditional attitudes than average. Young women and men beginning their careers now have more egalitarian attitudes and different expectations than the generation before them. For example, in the 1990s, 36 percent of men gave conservative responses to the “husband achiever” item mentioned earlier. However, this figure represents 53 percent of pre-baby boom men, 32 percent of baby boom men, and 26 percent of post-baby boom men (Ciabattari, 2001). Another factor is that men have more egalitarian attitudes about gendered family roles when their wives work, and especially, when their wives earn a larger proportion of the household income (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Given that more men in the upcoming generation will have working wives than any generation before them, and that both men and women are beginning their relationships with more egalitarian ideals about spouses’ two careers, the next generation of dual-earner couples may look very different from those currently in late midlife. At the same time, many of the structural constraints to managing two careers and a family have yet to be resolved, suggesting that it will continue to be difficult for couples to have equal careers (Gornick & Meyers, 2003).

**Prioritizing his and her careers in major decisions**

Career hierarchy may be a subtle, underlying factor in spouses’ daily interactions, but its most substantial
impact is thought to be through major decisions that affect both spouses’ careers, such as deciding whether to move. Studies focusing on how dual-earner couples make decisions show that couples tend to put more weight on the husband’s career than the wife’s career. As noted earlier in Blood and Wolfe’s (1960) classic study of marital decision-making, husbands continue to be the “leader” in most decisions about important issues, such as moving, especially when moving for the man’s job (Hardill, Green, Dudleston, & Owen, 1997). In important decisions, couples tend to choose options in which the husband remains the primary breadwinner and, when the spouses disagree, to choose the option that the husband prefers (Zvonkovic, Greaves, Schmiege, & Hall, 1996). Members of dual-earner couples in one middle-class sample were almost four times more likely to report favoring the husband’s career than the wife’s career in major decisions (Pixley & Moen, 2003).

The study of family migration offers substantial evidence that couples prioritize husbands’ careers over wives’ careers in these decisions. As wives typically have the secondary career, they are more likely than husbands to be trailing spouses -- what migration researchers call “tied movers” -- following their husbands to the location of his new job, company transfer, or overseas assignment (Shihadeh, 1991). Dual-earner husbands are more likely to be “tied stayers” than tied movers, as the wife’s job adds to the other costs of leaving the current location, such as leaving friends and finding new housing (Smits, Mulder, & Hooimeijer, 2003). However, as more women enter occupations in which career advancement requires geographic mobility, wives’ careers are also suffering from being tied stayers (McBrier, 2003), and husbands who are tied movers also seem to experience career setbacks (Little & Hisnanick, 2007).

If couples were looking only at the effects of these decisions on total family income, as predicted by classic economic theories (Mincer, 1978; Sandell, 1977), it should not matter whether the husband or the wife would benefit more from a migration opportunity. The husband’s and the wife’s occupational characteristics would be similarly predictive of whether and when couples move. Most migration research does not support this gender-neutral assumption, and instead suggests that couples prioritize husbands’ careers. On the one hand, even in the first wave of dual-earner couples, families were less likely to move when both spouses worked than when only the husband worked, which is consistent with the idea that wives’ jobs matter (Maynard & Zawacki, 1979; Shaklee, 1989). However, little else about the wife’s job predicted migration, including factors such as her education, professional status, and income (Lichter, 1982; Spitze, 1986). Analyzing data from the 1960s and 1970s, Spitze (1986) found that fewer than one in five wives had jobs lined up before the couple moved, which is clear evidence that the wife’s career outcomes were given short shrift in the decision. There is some indication that the wife’s work career has become more important over time in predicting family migration (Smits et al., 2003), but there is mixed evidence on whether wives’ education (an indicator both of career investment and of earning potential) has any impact on couples’ migration patterns (Compton & Pollak, 2007; Costa & Kahn, 2000). Even in very egalitarian countries, moves are still more strongly driven by factors in the male partner’s career, and
he does better after the move than his female partner (Nivalainen, 2005). Another indicator of career prioritizing is that wives’ incomes tend to decline directly after moving, largely due to subsequent unemployment (e.g., Boyle, Cooke, Halfacree, & Smith, 1999; Jacobsen & Levin, 1997; LeClere & McLaughlin, 1997; Shauman & Noonan, 2007). Wives who say they moved to follow their husbands are substantially less likely to be employed shortly after the move (Shihadeh, 1991). Some researchers argue that migration does not reduce women’s employment rates after accounting for which wives are most likely to become tied movers (Cooke & Bailey, 1996), and that the negative effect of moving on women’s incomes is short-lived (LeClere & McLaughlin, 1997). However, even these researchers do not claim that family migration patterns are gender-neutral.

Having a spouse with a prioritized career can also affect the chances of relocating for company transfers or accepting overseas assignments, which can be important steps on certain career ladders. Married women are assumed to be less able to relocate for their careers because of their husbands’ job ties (Eby, Allen, & Douthitt, 1999; Stroh, Varma, & Valy-Durbin, 2000) and comprise a small proportion of professionals and managers who accept global assignments (GMAC Global Relocation Services, 2004; Selmer & Leung, 2003), even though both supervisors and workers agree that this can hurt women’s chances for career advancement (Moore, 2002). Spousal willingness to move is a strong predictor of workers’ own willingness to relocate, disadvantaging women with secondary careers (Eby & Russell, 2000; Konopaske, Robie, & Ivancevich, 2005).

Gender role attitudes may help determine whether and how much the spouse’s career matters. For example, data from 1977 on hypothetical decisions about moving for their own careers showed that husbands were much more willing than wives to say they would take the job and move the family (Bielby & Bielby, 1992). However, for husbands with more egalitarian gender role attitudes, their willingness to move was negatively related to how much their wives earned, whereas traditional husbands’ decisions were not influenced by their wives’ income. Similarly, a study about military men’s plans to re-enlist found that the economic consequences for the wife affected the husband’s decision, but this effect is significantly weaker in more traditional households (e.g., when wives describe themselves as homemakers, or when husbands report that their wives have little influence over their decisions) (Gill & Haurin, 1998).

Career prioritization can affect a range of other decisions about which spouse will make work sacrifices, ranging from everyday interruptions to major cutbacks. Dual-earner couples can outsource many household tasks (De Ruijter & Van der Lippe, 2007), but even when couples can afford substantial outside help, certain responsibilities must fall to one of the spouses. A thorough review of the research on how couples divide household labor is beyond the scope of this entry, but it is clear that women in heterosexual couples do a larger proportion of housework and childcare than their male partners (Sayer,
To the extent that spending more time on tasks at home interferes with time devoted to work (Stratton, 2001), assigning more household tasks to one spouse is tantamount to giving less priority to that person’s career. The spouse with the secondary career may indirectly support the primary career by protecting it from home-role intrusions (Pavalko & Elder, 1993): for example, taking time off work to wait for a repairperson; spending workday time on the phone dealing with bill problems or hiring household services; or cleaning, grocery shopping, or doing other tasks in the evenings or on weekends while the other spouse works or rests. Division of home tasks can be especially problematic for dual-earner parents, who must often negotiate issues such as who will leave work early to pick the children up from school or daycare, who will stay home from work when children are sick or school is canceled, and possibly, who will cut back their weekly work hours to care for children on a more regular basis (Maume, 2007). In addition, many professional jobs require traveling, late night or weekend work, or being on call, and parents with such jobs are unable to care for children during evenings or weekends. It is extremely difficult to coordinate child care if both parents’ jobs have these demands, especially as they may arise at the last minute. Most likely, one parent will turn down travel and other late night and weekend work in order to watch the children, thereby restricting his -- or more likely, her -- career advancement so that the other spouse can do more at work (Gustafson, 2006; Maume, 2006a). Although research has not yet tied work cutbacks directly to career hierarchy, there is indirect evidence for this. Married women’s work restrictions for family, such as turning down promotions, travel, interesting assignments, or overtime, are affected by their husband’s careers, such as their work hours, education, and professional status, whereas wives’ careers do not impact their husband’s work cutbacks (Maume, 2006a). That is, women adapt their work efforts to match their husband’s work situation, but the reverse is not true. Even in dual-physician couples, in which both spouses have similar, substantial career investments, wives report working fewer hours per week, spending fewer days on call (Johnson, Johnson, & Liese, 1991), and being less available to patients because of family demands (Hinze, 2000).

**Spouses’ relative incomes**

The difference between spouses’ current incomes can reflect their history of career hierarchy and can also potentially influence future decisions about prioritizing their two careers (Winkler & Rose, 2000). The extent to which recent statistics on spouses’ relative earnings indicate that husbands’ careers are favored (or alternately, that wives’ careers are favored more often now than in the past) depends upon how the comparison is made. Using a cut-off point of 50 percent of household income for all married couples, husbands earned more than wives in 78 to 80 percent of couples in 1999, depending on the data set used (Winkler et al., 2005). However, this cut-off point is rather extreme, lumping together husbands who earned almost all the household income with those who earned one dollar more per year than their wives. Also, it includes couples in which the wife is not currently working, which may be misleading. By contrast, limiting the comparison group to only dual-earner couples and considering couples equal if each
spouse earns 40 to 60 percent of household income, only 55 to 57 percent of couples are defined as having male breadwinners (that is, husbands earn more than 60% of the household income). Of course, this classification issue also affects the estimate of female breadwinner households, because many “breadwinner wives” earn just over half the household income. For example, among dual-earner couples in 1999, 21 percent are considered female-breadwinner using the 50 percent threshold, while only 9 percent are considered female-breadwinner using the 60 percent threshold.

Regardless of how it is measured, wives are earning a larger proportion of household income now than they did in the past. The prevalence of American married couples in which the wife earns about half of the household income (defined as 40% to 60%) has more than doubled in recent decades, from nine percent in 1970 to twenty-four percent in 2001, while wives as primary or sole earners (more than 60% of household income) tripled over the same period, from four to twelve percent. (Raley, Mattingly, & Bianchi, 2006). Looking only at dual-earner couples in the same study, the ratio of the wife’s income to the husband’s income rose from 38 percent to 55 percent over the same three decades.

However, longitudinal research shows that couples in which the wife earns more are more likely to shift away from that earning pattern within a few years than couples in which the husband earns more (Winkler et al., 2005; Winslow-Bowe, 2006). This suggests that couples defined as female-breadwinner at any one point in time are not necessarily favoring the wife’s career, but may be experiencing a setback in the husband’s career. Indeed, Australian research suggests that the persistence of the wife-breadwinner state over time is more often linked to the husbands’ weaker labor market position than to spouses’ ideological support for egalitarian family roles (Drago, Black, & Wooden, 2005).

**Importance of Topic to Work-Family Studies**

The allocation of spouses’ time and energy to paid work and unpaid household labor is often seen as a balance (or struggle) between each individual’s work role and family role or alternately, as a comparison between the husband’s and wife’s family role. That is, to explain why wives do more housework and child care than husbands, we may study the relative importance given to family roles versus work roles by wives, compared to by husbands. Alternately, we may look at the two spouses’ family roles: for example, whether couples think the wife is better or more efficient at household tasks than the husband, or if they view the mother’s relationship with the children as being more important than the father’s relationship with them. Career hierarchy encourages us to look at the fourth comparison: that between the two spouses’ work roles. As mentioned earlier, if household tasks require someone to take time and energy away from work, the spouse with the secondary career is expected to make more sacrifices, so that these demands do not interfere with the other spouse’s pursuit of the primary career. In other words, wives may make more cutbacks at work to handle family tasks not (only) because work is less important than family to
them, or because wives’ family roles are more important than husbands’ family roles, but because wives’ careers are less important and more dispensable than husbands’ careers.

As one major example, it may be that women are more likely than men to cut back at work when they have children not (only) because the couple values the mother’s contribution to parenting more, but because the couple values the father’s continued work involvement more. Partly, this is financial: if paid leave is not an option and the wife earns much less than her husband, it makes more economic sense that she be the one to take more time off work. One study indicated that in 1994 (shortly after the passage of the Family and Medical Leave Act), only 47 percent of Americans’ work leaves for family reasons were fully paid, and leaves were most likely to be taken by married women (Gerstel & McGonagle, 1999). However, women are also more likely than men to use their paid vacation time, presumably in part to handle family emergencies and other home-related tasks; it is notable that married men whose wives work full-time use more of their vacation time than other men (Maume, 2006b). As another indicator, when countries’ policies offer paid parental leave that can be divided across either parent, couples tend to allocate all the time off work to the mother rather than the father (Moss & O’Brien, 2006), causing a much greater disruption to her career than to his. This suggests that we could better understand which mothers and fathers use parental leave, and for how long, if we knew more about how spouses prioritize their two work careers.

Another work-family implication is that women who have secondary careers, or anticipate having them, may make very different choices about education, training, and jobs. As many professional or managerial careers require either geographic mobility or long term stability, women may see these careers as incompatible with prioritizing their husband’s career in future migration decisions, and dismiss them as possibilities. Others may invest in such careers, but find their advancement frustrated by their role as tied mover or tied stayer, or due to making too many cutbacks in order to handle family demands. Women with secondary careers may deliberately enter traditionally “female” jobs as nurses, teachers, or secretaries, assuming that female-dominated occupations must be family-friendly, and that they can find jobs anywhere their husbands are transferred. Ironically, these traditional jobs offer very little flexibility to handle family interruptions. Evidence suggests that although male-dominated professional and managerial occupations have high work demands, they are also more likely to offer the flexibility and autonomy that make it easier to balance work and family demands (Glass & Camarigg, 1992). Employees report lower levels of work-family conflict when they have a sense of control over their work, including control over scheduling and the ability to rearrange work to deal with family needs (Thomas & Ganster, 1995): that is, the type of control more often found in higher-status occupations. Another potential issue is that women who have secondary careers may be more likely to take advantage of work-family policies like telecommuting and reduced hours, which has been shown to negatively affect wage growth for mothers in professional and managerial jobs (Glass, 2004). In other words, women with
secondary careers may be more likely to select themselves into situations that actually make it more
difficult for them to pursue their careers while handling their family responsibilities.

Implications for Practice and Research

Career hierarchy in dual-earner couples is an important issue for employers and should be duly
considered in the formation of organizational policy. Employers can no longer assume that their best
potential employees have the only career, or even the primary career, in their households. If they want to
hire and retain the best workers, employers need to be aware of the two-body problem, and be prepared
to assist with spousal job placement for both male and female employees (Wolf-Wendel, Twombly, &
Rice, 2000). Being a tied mover is especially problematic for those in professional fields where good jobs
are concentrated in one or two institutions in any given location. Although potential jobs for managers,
lawyers, accountants, architects, and other professionals are spread across many firms in any
metropolitan area, positions for academic faculty, doctors, and scientists are concentrated in a few
universities and hospitals even in larger cities (Deitch & Sanderson, 1987; Johnson et al., 1991). The
increase in workers whose spouses’ careers must be considered is also particularly problematic for
companies that send workers on short term international assignments, as they offer few options for
trailing spouses to continue pursuing their careers (Konopaske et al., 2005).

It is not surprising that companies that regularly transfer their employees across the country or send them
on international assignments are curious about why some employees are more willing to go than others.
However, acknowledging that women are more likely than men to have secondary careers, and are thus
less able to move for transfers or overseas assignments, should not be used to justify statistical
discrimination against partnered women. Research into which employees are most likely to accept such
assignments may lead employers to target their promotion opportunities to certain demographic profiles
(Brett & Stroh, 1995). This would amount to discriminating against wives in dual-earner couples, some of
whom are, in fact, willing to relocate. At the same time, companies are short-sighted if they continue to
think of the “two-body problem” as only applying to women, and not also to men with working wives (Brett,
Stroh, & Reilly, 1993).

Researchers, too, should be more aware of the intersection between spouses’ work careers. In
particular, the study of women’s work pathways and occupational attainment can be hindered by an
overly individualistic approach. Women's careers may be better understood as occurring within a
framework of what life course researchers call “linked lives,” in which their work trajectories are tied to
those of their husbands (Moen, Kim, & Hofmeister, 2001). Women who anticipate facing conflicts as part
of a dual-career couple may delay making family commitments until their careers are firmly established
(Oppenheimer, 1988), and in doing so, can reduce their chances to marry and have children. Career
hierarchy is increasingly salient for men’s careers as well, as more men are now in couples which give equal or sometimes more weight to the wife's career. There are clear advantages to having a wife with a well-paid career, such as the flexibility to take advantage of risky opportunities (Barnett & Rivers, 1996). Still, men with equal or secondary careers face more constraints on what Rosanna Hertz called the “unbridled pursuit of one career to the possible disadvantage of the other” than those with primary careers (Hertz, 1986: 59).

Finally, researchers should be more conscious about measuring and inferring career hierarchy. Especially, we should be aware that which spouse earns more money does not necessarily imply whose career is given more priority in the couple or whether spouses think of themselves as breadwinners (Potuchek, 1992). When more studies include explicit measures of career hierarchy, it will be easier to disentangle the causal relationships between early career investments, career prioritizing in decision-making, and career outcomes, and to test the extent to which having the secondary career has the same effect for men as for women.

References


**Locations in the Matrix of Information Domains of the Work-Family Area of Studies**

The Editorial Board of the Teaching Resources section of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network has prepared a Matrix as a way to locate important work-family topics in the broad area of work-family studies. ([More about the Matrix...](#)).

Note: The domain areas most closely related to the entry's topic are presented in full color. Other domains, represented in gray, are provided for context.
<table>
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<th>Domain B: Work-Family Issues and Experiences</th>
<th>Domain C: Covariates</th>
<th>Domain D: Responses to W-F Issues and Experiences</th>
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<td>Individual Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Individual Covariates</td>
<td>Individual Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
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<tr>
<td>Family Antecedents</td>
<td>Family Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
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<td>Workplace Antecedents</td>
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<td>Community Antecedents</td>
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<td>Societal Antecedents</td>
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<td>Societal Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
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**Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains**
About the Matrix

Sloan Work and Family Research Network
Resources for Teaching: Mapping the Work-Family Area of Studies

Introduction

It was appropriate that the members of the Founding Editorial Board of the Resources for Teaching began their work in 2000, for their project represented one of the turning points in the area of work and family studies. This group accepted the challenge of developing resources that could support the efforts of teaching faculty from different disciplines and professional schools to better integrate the work-family body of knowledge into their curricula. The Virtual Think Tank began its work with a vision, a spirit of determination, and sense of civic responsibility to the community of work-family scholars.

A fundamental challenge emerged early in the process. It became clear that before we could design resources that would support the teaching of those topics, we would first need to inventory topics and issues relevant to the work-family area of studies (and begin to distinguish the work-family aspect of these topics from "non work-family" aspects).

The members of the Virtual Think Tank were well aware that surveying the area of work and family studies would be a daunting undertaking. However, we really had no other choice. And so, we began to grapple with the mapping process.

Purpose

1. To develop a preliminary map of the body of knowledge relevant to the work-family area of study that reflects current, "across-the-disciplines" understanding of work-family phenomena.

2. To create a flexible framework (or map) that clarifies the conceptual relationships among the different information domains that comprise the work-family knowledge base.

It is important to understand that this mapping exercise was undertaken as a way to identify and organize the wide range of work-family topics. This project was not intended as a meta-analysis for determining the empirical relationships between specific variables. Therefore, our map of the workfamily area of study does not include any symbols that might suggest the relationships between specific factors or clusters of factors.
Process

The Virtual Think Tank used a 3-step process to create the map of the work-family area of studies.

1. **Key Informants:** The members of the Virtual Think Tank included academics from several different disciplines and professions who have taught and written about work-family studies for years. During the first stage of the mapping process, the Virtual Think Tank functioned as a panel of key informants.

   Initially, the Panel engaged in a few brainstorming sessions to identify work-family topics that could be addressed in academic courses. The inductive brainstorming sessions initially resulted in the identification of nearly 50 topics.

   Once the preliminary list of topics had been generated, members of the Virtual Think Tank pursued a deductive approach to the identification of work-family issues. Over the course of several conversations, the Virtual Think Tank created a conceptual map that focused on information domains (see Table 1 below).

   The last stage of the mapping process undertaken by the Virtual Think Tank consisted of comparing and adjusting the results of the inductive and deductive processes. The preliminary, reconciled list was used as the first index for the Online Work and Family Encyclopedia.

2. **Literature review:** Members of the project team conducted literature searches to identify writings in which authors attempted to map the work-family area of study or specific domains of this area. The highlights of the literature review will be posted on February 1, 2002 when the First Edition of the Work-Family Encyclopedia will be published.

3. **Peer review:** On October 1, 2001, the Preliminary Mapping of the work-family area of study was posted on the website of the Sloan Work and Family Research Network. The members of the Virtual Think Tank invite work-family leaders to submit suggestions and comments about the Mapping and the List of Work-Family Topics. The Virtual Think Tank will consider the suggestions and, as indicated, will make adjustments in both of these products. Please send your comments to Marcie Pitt-Catsouphes at pittcats@bc.edu

Assumptions

Prior to identifying the different information domains relevant to the work-family area of study, members of the Virtual Think Tank adopted two premises:
1. Our use of the word "family" refers to both traditional and nontraditional families. Therefore, we consider the term "work-family" to be relevant to individuals who might reside by themselves. Many work-family leaders have noted the problematic dimensions of the term "work-family" (see Barnett, 1999). In particular, concern has been expressed that the word "family" continues to connote the married couple family with dependent children, despite the widespread recognition that family structures and relationships continue to be very diverse and often change over time. As a group, we understand the word "family" to refer to relationships characterized by deep caring and commitment that exist over time. We do not limit family relationships to those established by marriage, birth, blood, or shared residency.

2. It is important to examine and measure work-family issues and experiences at many different levels, including: individual, dyadic (e.g., couple relationships, parent-child relationships, caregiver/caretaker relationships), family and other small groups, organizational, community, and societal. Much of the work-family discourse glosses over the fact that the work-family experiences of one person or stakeholder group may, in fact, be different from (and potentially in conflict with) those of another.

**Outcomes**

We will publish a Working Paper, "Mapping the Work-Family Area of Study," on the Sloan Work and Family Research Network in 2002. In this publication, we will acknowledge the comments and suggestions for improvement sent to us.

**Limitations**

It is important to understand that the members of the Virtual Think Tank viewed their efforts to map the work-family area of study as a "work in progress." We anticipate that we will periodically review and revise the map as this area of study evolves.

The members of the panel are also cognizant that other scholars may have different conceptualizations of the work-family area of study. We welcome your comments and look forward to public dialogue about this important topic.

**Listing of the Information Domains Included in the Map**

The members of the Virtual Think Tank wanted to focus their map of work-family issues around the experiences of five principal stakeholder groups:
1. individuals,
2. families,
3. workplaces,
4. communities, and
5. society-at-large.

Each of these stakeholder groups is represented by a row in the Table 1, Information Domain Matrix (below).

**Work-Family Experiences:** The discussions of the members of the Virtual Think Tank began with an identification of some of the salient needs & priorities/problems & concerns of the five principal stakeholder groups. These domains are represented by the cells in Column B of the Information Domain Matrix.

- Individuals' work-family needs & priorities
- Individuals' work-family problems & concerns
- Families' work-family need & priorities
- Families' work-family problems & concerns
- Needs & priorities of workplaces related to work-family issues
- Workplace problems & concerns related to work-family issues
- Needs & priorities of communities related to work-family issues
- Communities' problems & concerns related to work-family issues
- Needs and priorities of society related to work-family issues
- Societal problems & concerns related to work-family issues

**Antecedents:** Next, the Virtual Think Tank identified the primary roots causes and factors that might have either precipitated or affected the work-family experiences of the principal stakeholder groups. These domains are highlighted in Column A of the Information Domain Matrix.

- Individual Antecedents
- Family Antecedents
- Workplace Antecedents
- Community Antecedents
- Societal Antecedents

**Covariates:** The third set of information domains include factors that moderate the relationships between the antecedents and the work-family experiences of different stakeholder groups (see
Column C in Table 1).

- Individual Covariates
- Family Covariates
- Workplace Covariates
- Community Covariates
- Societal Covariates

**Decisions and Responses:** The responses of the stakeholder groups to different work-family experiences are highlighted in Column D.

- Individual Decision and Responses
- Family Decisions and Responses
- Workplace Decisions and Responses
- Community Decisions and Responses
- Public Sector Decisions and Responses

**Outcomes & Impacts:** The fifth set of information domains refer to the outcomes and impacts of different work-family issues and experiences on the principal stakeholder groups (see Column E).

- Outcomes & Impacts on Individuals
- Outcomes & Impacts on Families
- Outcomes & Impacts on Workplaces
- Outcomes & Impacts on Communities
- Outcomes & Impacts on Society

**Theoretical Foundations:** The Virtual Think Tank established a sixth information domain to designate the multi-disciplinary theoretical underpinnings to the work-family area of study (noted as Information Domain F).
### Table 1: Matrix of Information Domains (9/30/01)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain A: Antecedent Descriptives</th>
<th>Domain B: Work-Family Issues and Experiences</th>
<th>Domain C: Covariates</th>
<th>Domain D: Responses to W-F Issues and Experiences</th>
<th>Domain E: Outcomes and Impacts</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Antecedents</td>
<td>Individual Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Individual Covariates</td>
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<tr>
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**Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains**