Basic Concepts & Definitions

Fatherhood defines a biological and social relationship between a male parent and his offspring. To father means to impregnate a woman and beget a child, thus describing a kinship connection that facilitates the intergenerational transfer of wealth and authority. Fatherhood also reflects ideals about the rights, duties, and activities of men in families and in society and generalizes to other social and symbolic relationships, as when Christians refer to "God the Father," Catholics call priests "Father," and Americans label George Washington "the Father" of the country. Fatherhood thus reflects a normative set of social practices that are institutionalized within religion, politics, law, and culture (Coltrane, 2004).

Social theories have employed the concept of social fatherhood to explain how the institution of fatherhood links a particular child to a particular man (whether father or uncle) in order to secure a place for that child in the social structure (Coltrane & Collins, 2001). Fathering or father involvement (in contrast to fatherhood) refers more directly to what men do with and for children. Although folk beliefs suggest that fathering entails behaviors fixed by reproductive biology, humans must learn how to parent as they learn other social behaviors. Although women have been the primary caretakers of young children in all cultures, fathers' participation in child rearing has varied from virtually no direct involvement to active participation in all aspects of children's routine care (Coltrane, 1996). Cross-culturally, fathers' contributions to their children are influenced by subsistence ecologies, modes of production, residence patterns, and cultural ideals (Hewlett, 2000). Historically, father involvement has varied considerably across regions, time periods, and ethnic or cultural groups, with economic, political, legal, and cultural practices structuring privileges and obligations within families and shaping fathers' ideal and actual behaviors (Griswold, 1993; LaRossa, 1997; Mintz, 1998; Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

How is Father Involvement Measured?

Although the structural aspects of fatherhood (marriage, paternity, co-residence) are sometimes correlated with various child and family outcomes, most contemporary researchers suggest that father involvement be studied directly by focusing on its three primary components: (1) interaction, including a father's direct contact with his child through caregiving and shared activities; (2) availability (or accessibility), a related concept concerning the father's potential availability for interaction by virtue of being accessible to the child (whether or not direct interaction is occurring); and (3) responsibility, or the
role the father takes in ascertaining that the child is taken care of and in arranging for resources to be available for the child (Lamb, Pleck, Charnov, & Levine, 1987). Within each of these categories, two further distinctions are often made: (1) distinguishing the amount from the quality of father involvement, and (2) constructing absolute as well as relative (in relation to partner) indices of involvement (Coltrane, 2004; Parke, 1996; Pleck, 1997).

Importance of Topic to Work-Family Studies

Fathers' family involvement, including interaction, availability, and responsibility, shapes and is shaped by men's involvement in paid work. Because both parental involvement and workplace participation are shaped by cultural ideals, it is important to understand how fathering and mothering are socially constructed according to gendered ideals in specific historical and cultural contexts. In the modern context, the concept of father as good provider (or breadwinner) plays an important role in fathers' family participation. This good provider model, in which fathers fulfill their family obligation by earning money away from home, is a relatively new ideal that did not emerge until the nineteenth century and arguably faded rapidly by the end of the twentieth century (Bernard, 1981).

Most work-family research has focused on women and mothers, but recent research is more likely to include men and we are beginning to understand how paid work is linked to fathering ideals and practices (Perry-Jenkins, Repetti & Crouter, 2000; Marsiglio, Amato, Day & Lamb, 2000). For example, mothers conceiving children outside of marriage are more likely to form a family or marry the father of the child if he is employed (Mincy & Dupree, 2001). In married or cohabiting couples, fathers are more likely to care for children on a regular basis when they are unemployed or work part-time, when their wives are employed, and when the parents work non-overlapping shifts (Presser, 1995; U.S. Census Bureau, 2003). When the overall economy enters a recession, the number and proportion of fathers who perform routine child care increases (Casper, 1997; Heubusch, 1998), but job loss or economic problems can also undermine a resident father's sense of competence and lessen his family involvement (Conger & Elder, 1994). Unemployment or under-employment decreases the likelihood that nonresident fathers will pay child support or visit their children (Maccoby & Mnookin, 1992).

The quality of father-child interaction is influenced by work-family issues in many ways, with researchers finding that men report improved emotional states when they make the daily transition from work to home, whereas mothers tend to report increased stress and a decrease in positive emotions when they arrive home (Larson, Richards & Perry-Jenkins, 1994). Because mothers are often assumed to be responsible for housework and child care, they are less likely to enjoy family leisure than fathers, whose "primary breadwinner" status often allows them to use family time for diversion and self-expression (Larson & Gillman, 1997). Many researchers focus on how men tend to view work, family, and marriage as a
“package deal,” (Townsend, 2002), with father-child relationships shaped primarily by men's work lives and their relationships with their wives or partners (Coltrane, 1996; Nock, 1997).

State of the Body of Knowledge

American men say they value their families over their jobs and, indeed, research shows that married fathers are spending considerably more time with co-resident children than fathers did in past decades (Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003). Although fathers are increasingly likely to face work-family pressures that resemble those of mothers, they still spend significantly more time in paid work than mothers and do less parenting and housework than their wives (Coltrane, 2000). The weakening of the good-provider model, coupled with trends in fertility, marriage, divorce, and custody, has generated renewed attention to the symbolic role of fathers at the same time that the average American man is spending less time living with children than in previous generations (Coltrane, 1996; Eggebeen, 2002; Griswold, 1993; LaRossa, 1997; Kimmel, 1996). These developments are best understood with reference to the historical development and decline of separate work and family spheres for men and women.

Historical Links Between the Economy and Fathering: The economy of the 17th and 18th centuries was based on agriculture and productive family households. For families that owned farms or small artisan shops, their place of work was also their home. Slaves, indentured servants, and others were expected to work on family estates in return for food, a place to live, and sometimes other rewards. In this pattern of household or family-based production, men, women, and children worked together. Regional variations could be large, and fathers and mothers often did different types of work, but many tasks required for subsistence and family survival were interchangeable (Coltrane & Galt, 2000). Because most men's work as farmers, artisans, and tradesmen occurred in the family household, fathers were a visible presence in their children's lives. Child rearing was a more collective enterprise than it is today, with family behaviors and attitudes ruled primarily by duty and obligation. Men introduced sons to farming or craft work within the household economy, oversaw the work of others, and were responsible for maintaining harmonious household relations. The preindustrial home was a system of control as well as a center of production, and both functions reinforced the father's authority (Griswold, 1993). Though mothers provided most direct care for infants and young children, men tended to be active in the training and tutoring of children. Because they were moral teachers and family heads, fathers were thought to have greater responsibility for and influence on children than mothers and were also generally held responsible for how the children acted outside the home (Pleck & Pleck, 1997).

Wage Labor and the Ideology of Separate Spheres: As market economies replaced home-based production in the 19th and 20th centuries, the middle-class father's position as household head and master and moral instructor of his children was slowly transformed. Men increasingly sought employment outside the home, and their direct contact with family members declined. As the wage labor economy
developed, men's occupational achievement outside the household took on stronger moral overtones. Men came to be seen as fulfilling their family and civic duty, not by teaching and interacting with their children as before, but by supporting the family financially. The middle-class home, previously the site of production, consumption, and virtually everything else in life, became a nurturing, child-centered haven set apart from the impersonal world of work, politics, and other public pursuits. The gendered separation of home and work was attainable by only a fraction of the population, but the underlying ideology of separate spheres that emerged in the nineteenth century would shape the family and work lives of men and women during the twentieth century and beyond (Bernard, 1981; Coltrane 1998; Coltrane & Galt, 2000; Kimmel, 1996).

The ideal that paid work was only for men and that only women were suited to care for family members remained an unattainable myth rather than an everyday reality for most families. Many working-class fathers were not able to earn the family wage assumed by the separate-spheres ideal, and a majority of African American, Latino, Asian American, and other immigrant men could not fulfill the good-provider role that the cultural ideal implied. Women in these families either had to work for wages, participate in production at home, or find other ways to make ends meet. Although the emerging romantic ideal held that women should be sensitive and pure keepers of the home on a full-time basis, the reality was that women in less advantaged households had no choice but to simultaneously be workers and mothers. In fact, many working-class and ethnic minority women had to leave their homes and children to take care of other people's children and houses (Dill, 1988). Even during the heyday of separate spheres in the early 20th century, minority women, young single women, widows, and married women whose husbands could not support them worked for wages.

Throughout the 20th century, calls for greater paternal involvement coexisted with the physical presence, but relative emotional and functional absence, of fathers (LaRossa, 1997). Nevertheless, some fathers have always reported high levels of involvement and emotional connection with their children (Griswold, 1993). By the 1930s, even though mothers bore most of the responsibility for care of homes and families, three out of four American fathers said they regularly read magazine articles about child care, and nearly as many men as women were members of the PTA (Kimmel, 1996). Increases in women's labor force participation during the 1940s briefly challenged the ideal of separate family and work roles, but in the postwar era, high rates of marriage and low rates of employment reinforced the ideology of separate spheres for men and women. The ideal father at midcentury was seen as a good provider who "set a good table, provided a decent home, paid the mortgage, bought the shoes, and kept his children warmly clothed" (Bernard, 1981, p. 3-4). As they had during the earlier Victorian era, middle-class women were expected to be consumed and fulfilled by wifely and motherly duties. With Ozzie and Harriet-style families as the 1950s model, women married earlier and had more children than any group of American women before them. Rapid expansion of the U.S. economy fueled a phenomenal growth of suburbs, and the consumer culture from that era idolized domestic life on radio and television. Isolated in suburban houses,
many mothers now had almost sole responsibility for raising children, aided by occasional reference to expert guides from pediatricians and child psychologists (Hays, 1996). Fathers of the 1950s were also told to get involved with child care—but not too involved (Kimmel, 1996). The separate spheres of white middle-class men and women were thus maintained, though experts deemed them permeable enough for men to participate regularly as a helper to the mother (Coltrane, 1996, 1998; Coltrane & Galt, 2000; Hays, 1996).

During the mid-20th century, separate-spheres ideology and the popularity of Freud’s ideas about mother-infant bonding led to widespread acceptance of concepts like maternal deprivation, and few researchers asked who besides mothers took care of children, although some researchers began to focus on father absence during the baby boom era (roughly 1946-64). Empirical studies and social theories valued the symbolic significance of fathers’ breadwinning, discipline, and masculine role modeling, even though few studies controlled for social class or measured what fathers actually did with children. Studies including fathers found that they were more likely than mothers to engage in rough and tumble play and to give more attention to sons than daughters (Parke, 1996; Pleck, 1997). In general, research showed that childcare was an ongoing and taken-for-granted task for mothers but a novel and fun distraction for fathers (Thompson & Walker, 1989).

**Contemporary Fathering:** Compared to the wholesome but distant good-provider fathers pictured on television programs like Ozzie and Harriet and Father Knows Best in the 1950s, a new father ideal gained prominence in the 1980s (LaRossa, 1997; Griswold, 1993). According to Furstenberg (1988), “[T]elevision, magazines, and movies herald the coming of the modern father—the nurturant, caring, and emotionally attuned parent. . . . Today’s father is at least as adept at changing diapers as changing tires” (p. 193). No longer limited to being protectors and providers, fathers were pictured on television and in magazines as intimately involved in family life. Fatherhood proponents focused on the potential of the new ideals and practices (Biller, 1976), but researchers in the 1980s reported that many fathers resisted assuming responsibility for daily housework or child care (Thompson & Walker, 1989). Some researchers claimed that popular images far exceeded men's actual behaviors (LaRossa, 1997), and others suggested that men, on the whole, were less committed to families than they had been in the past (Ehrenreich, 1984).

Research on fathering in two-parent households shows a noticeable and statistically significant increase in men's parenting, both in absolute terms and in relation to mothers, although fathers' levels of interaction with, availability to, and responsibility for children lag well behind those of mothers (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Parke, 1996; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003). Measurement strategies vary, with time-use diaries generally producing the most accurate estimates of fathers' interaction and availability. On average, in the 1960s to early-1980s, fathers interacted with their children about a third as much as mothers and were available about half as much as mothers (Lamb et al., 1987). During the mid-1980s to
early-1990s, the average co-resident father interacted about two fifths as much as mothers and was available to his children almost two thirds as much (Pleck, 1997). In the late 1990s, he was available to his children about three fourths as much as mothers, interacting on weekdays about two thirds as often, but over four fifths as much on weekends (Bianchi, 2000; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003; Yueng, Sandberg, Davis-Kean, & Hofferth, 2001). In an estimated 20% of two-parent families, men are now about as involved as mothers interacting with and being available to their children. At the same time, in most families, fathers and mothers share much less of the responsibility for the planning, scheduling, emotional management, housework, and other maintenance activities associated with raising children (Coltrane, 1996; Deutsch, 1999; Hochschild, 1989).

**When Do Fathers Get Involved?** As demonstrated in comprehensive reviews (Pleck, 1997; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003; Marsiglio et al., 2000), father involvement is multiply determined, with no single factor responsible for the different types of involvement. Researchers have begun to isolate the effects of income, marriage, employment, work schedules, and other factors on father involvement, though results are often incomplete or contradictory. For example, the relation between socioeconomic status and father involvement is complex. Income is often found to be positively correlated with father involvement among various ethnic groups (Fagan, 1998; Parke, 1996). Relative income contributions by wives are also associated with higher proportionate levels of father involvement in housework and child care (Coltrane, 2000; Yeung et al., 2001), though some studies still find that financially dependent husbands do less domestic work than others (Brines, 1994). Wealthier men do little routine family work, but the amount their wives do varies dramatically, with higher-earning wives more likely to purchase domestic services (e.g., child care, house cleaning, laundry) (Cohen, 1998; Coltrane, 2004; Oropesa, 1993).

When financial stability is hard to achieve, fathers only minimally involved with their children may nevertheless see themselves as “good fathers” because they work hard to provide financially. Because of inequities in the labor market, men of color are disproportionately likely to face difficulties being adequate providers (Bowman & Sanders, 1998; Hamer & Marchioro, 2002). Comparisons between white, African American, and Latino fathers suggest similar levels of involvement with children after controlling for family type, though Latino fathers may be more involved in family rituals than non-Latino fathers and nonresident African American fathers may contribute more to children than nonresident white fathers (Coltrane, Parke, & Adams, 2004; Wilson, Tolson, Hinton, & Kiernan, 1990; Yeung et al., 2001).

Lamb, Pleck, and colleagues suggested that for fathers to become actively involved with children, they required four facilitating factors: (a) motivation, (b) skills and self-confidence, (c) social approval, and (d) institutional support (Lamb et al., 1987; see also Pleck, 1997). Institutional supports can include factors such as fewer work hours and more flexible work schedules (Pleck, 1993). Most research shows that a father’s availability (as determined by work hours) is a strong predictor of his involvement in child care. When mothers of preschool children are employed, a father’s time availability predicts whether he will
serve as a primary caregiver (Brayfield, 1995; Casper & O'Connell, 1998). Fathers and mothers with non-overlapping work shifts are the most likely to share child care (Presser, 1995). When mothers of school-aged children are employed more hours, their husbands tend to do a greater portion of the child care and housework, and fathers tend to be more involved to the extent that they view their wives' career prospects more positively (Pleck, 1997). Whereas men formerly interpreted long work hours to relieve them responsibility to perform child care at home, there are indications that things are changing. Brewster (2000) found that fathers in the late 1970s and early 1980s tended to use nonworking discretionary hours for personal leisure activities, whereas in the late 1980s and 1990s, they were likely to use those hours for child care (Coltrane, 2004).

About half of children in the United States will live apart from their biological fathers during some part of their childhood because of marital disruption or nonmarital birth (Bumpass & Sweet, 1989; Ventura and Bachrach, 2000). Although national, state, and local efforts intended to encourage nonresident fathers to see their children and provide them with financial support have been implemented, research indicates that many nonresident fathers have little contact with their children after divorce or separation (Manning & Smock, 1999; Seltzer, 1998). At least forty percent of nonresident fathers go on to form new families, raising subsequent biological or stepchildren with their new spouses or partners (Smock & Manning, 1997). Nonresident fathers who remarry or form new families tend to disengage by having less contact with their children from the earlier relationship (Furstenberg & Cherlin, 1991; Manning & Smock, 1999).

**Future Prospects for Father Involvement:** The forces that are driving changes in fathers’ involvement in families are likely to continue. In two-parent households (both married and cohabiting), men share more family work if their female partners are employed more hours, earn more money, and have more education. All three of these trends in women’s attainment are likely to continue for the foreseeable future. Similarly, fathers share more family work when they are employed fewer hours and their wives earn a greater portion of the family income. Labor market and economic trends for these variables are also expected to continue for several decades. Couples also share more when they believe that family work should be shared and that men and women should have equal rights. According to national opinion polls, although the country has become slightly more conservative about marriage and divorce than it was in the 1970s and 1980s, the belief in gender equality continues to gain acceptance among both men and women. In addition, American women are waiting longer, on average, to marry and give birth, and they are having fewer children- additional factors sometimes associated with the sharing of domestic labor. In summary, increasing economic parity and more equal gender relations should allow more mothers to buy out of domestic obligations imposed by the cultural ideal of separate spheres and encourage them to bargain with their partners to do more at home. The trends noted above also promote women’s autonomy and allows them to have children outside of marriage or to end marriages through separation or divorce. Finally, even though most women assume custody of children after divorce, as courts remove gender
inequities from family law, more men will seek and obtain some form of legal or physical custody of their children, and the number of single father families will increase.

**Influence of Father Involvement on Children and Mothers:** What difference does it make if fathers take an active role in parenting and housework? Most researchers find that positive father-child relationships and greater financial contributions are beneficial for children’s development and future life chances (Marsiglio, Amato, Day, & Lamb, 2000; Parke, 1996; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003). Preschool children with fathers who perform 40% or more of the within-family child care show more cognitive competence, more internal locus of control, more empathy, and less gender stereotyping than preschool children with less involved fathers (Lamb et al., 1987; Pleck, 1997). Adolescents with involved fathers are more likely to have positive developmental outcomes such as self-control, self esteem, life skills, and social competence, provided that the father is not authoritarian, violent, or overly controlling (Mosley & Thomson, 1995; Pleck & Masciadrelli, 2003). Research consistently shows that children with nonresident fathers fare better when those fathers make regular child support payments (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999), but results are more mixed for continued visitation with nonresident fathers, for the nonresident father’s authoritative parenting, and for feelings of closeness between nonresident father and child (Amato & Gilbreth, 1999; Seltzer, 1994; Stewart 2003). Studies examining differences between the presences of biological fathers versus other father figures suggest that it is the quality of the father-child relationship rather than biological relationship that enhances the cognitive and emotional development of children (Dubowitz et al., 2001; Hofferth & Anderson, 2003; Silverstein & Auerbach, 1999). Reports of greater father involvement when children were growing up have also been associated with positive aspects of adult children’s educational attainment, relationship quality, and career success (Amato & Booth, 1997; Harris et al., 1998; Nock, 1998; Snarey, 1993).

Father involvement in routine family work tends to benefit mothers as well as children. When fathers share child care and housework with their wives, employed mothers escape total responsibility for family work, evaluate the division of labor as more fair, are less depressed, and enjoy higher levels of marital satisfaction (Brennan et al., 2001; Coltrane, 2000; Deutsch, 1999). When men care for young children on a regular basis, they emphasize verbal interaction, notice and use more subtle cues, and treat sons and daughters similarly, rather than focusing on play, giving orders, and sex-typing children (Coltrane, 1996; Parke, 1996). These styles of father involvement have been found to encourage less gender stereotyping among young adults and to encourage independence in daughters and emotional sensitivity in sons (Coltrane, 2004).

**Changing Contexts for Fathering:** The context in which American couples negotiate fathering has definitely changed. The future is likely to bring more demands on fathers to be active parents if they want to stay involved with the mothers of their children. For fathers to assume more responsibility for active parenting, it may be necessary to change cultural assumptions that men are entitled to domestic services
and that women are inherently predisposed to provide them. Further changes in fathering are likely to be driven by women's increasing independence and earning power as well as the restructuring of the workplace. Ironically, women's enhanced economic position enables them to form families and raise children without marrying or staying with the father, creating pressure on men to be more equal partners at home. In the future, men will be even less able to rely on their superior earning power or the cultural ideal of the good provider to maintain their connection to families and children. Increasingly, they will need to adopt fathering styles that meet specific family circumstances and perform household tasks that men have not been accustomed to doing. If dual-earner families continue to expand at current rates, men's work-family stresses and dilemmas should come to resemble those of women, potentially leading more men to see the wisdom in restructuring work schedules, benefits, and programs to better meet the needs of working parents.

**Implications for Policy and Practice**

The increasing diversity of family forms in the United States is seen by some researchers and political activists as signaling a breakdown in family values that should be rectified by re-instilling respect for traditional fatherhood and renewing our faith in the sanctity of marriage (Blankenhorn, 1995; Popenoe, 1996; Waite & Gallagher, 2000; but see Coontz, 1997; Stacey, 1996). Elsewhere, I argue that such movements appear periodically throughout history and are motivated by fears about the increasing economic independence of women and the erosion of white male privilege (Coltrane, 2001; Coltrane & Adams, 2003). Political rhetoric aside, research suggests that the institution of marriage is in fact quite healthy, that the recent trend toward diversity in family forms is inevitable, and that national campaigns to promote idealized father-headed families will have little influence on marriage rates or the forms of father involvement that matter most for child development (Coltrane, 2001). Simplistic attempts to reduce fathering to breadwinning, role modeling, or family headship are detrimental to scholarship on fatherhood and misleading for public debates about potential family policies. Programs aimed at increasing father involvement must be careful not to marginalize and punish the increasing number of single mother- and other families that do not fit the nostalgic image of a male-breadwinner family.

Fathers and mothers do many different things with and for families and children (and in the workplace), and we need to pay attention to all of them -- for both men and women. Research and public policy should recognize the various ways that fathers participate in family life and the multiple pathways to father involvement that exist. Instead of lamenting the passing of the good-provider model and trying to reclaim a nostalgic vision of responsible fathers and soft patriarchs, we should be studying and promoting a wide range of fathering styles and focusing on those activities that we know are beneficial to healthy child development. As researchers, practitioners, and agenda setters for public policy debates, we should stop making excuses for men's limited involvement in families and thereby help raise cultural expectations for the involvement of men in the everyday tasks of parenting and housework.
References


**Other Recommended Readings on this Topic:**


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 ...).

Concepts related to adult development are relevant to all of the "Individual" domains in the Matrix of Information Domains of the Work-Family Area of Study. In addition, theories of adult development are relevant to Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings.

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.
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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>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Individual Antecedents</td>
<td>Individual Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Individual Covariates</td>
<td>Individual Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
<td>Individual Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Workplace Antecedents</td>
<td>Workplace Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
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<td>Societal Outcomes &amp; Impacts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains