Basic Concepts and Definitions

In-depth interviews are a common data collection method in a range of disciplines. In-depth interviewing is a qualitative research method that uses open-ended questions to uncover information on a topic of interest and allows interviewees to express opinions and ideas in their own words. Various terms are used to refer to this research method, including qualitative interviews, intensive interviews, and semistructured interviews. This entry focuses on in-depth interviews that take place face-to-face between an individual researcher and his/her interview respondent (variably referred to as an interviewee, respondent, informant, or participant). We do not address unstructured interviews, focus group, or oral history methods. Nor do we address the structured interview wherein the interviewer uses a survey form and asks the same questions of each respondent, with a limited number of response categories. Although we focus on in-depth, face-to-face interviews, many of the points raised below can apply to other types of interviews.

Typically, prior to conducting interviews, researchers construct an interview guide (sometimes referred to as an interview schedule or instrument) that includes specific questions, topics of interest, or some combination of these that help focus the interview without locking the interviewer into a fixed set of questions in a rigid order and with specific wording. This flexible approach allows interviewee responses to guide the interaction and helps shape the order and structure of the interview. The use of follow-up questions, often referred to as probes, is also common. The primary goal of using an interview guide is to balance the systematic collection of data with the flexibility needed to tap respondent’s understandings. The amount of prestructuring can vary, depending on a number of factors, including the comfort or experience of the researcher, the extent of the researcher’s familiarity with the culture of those interviewed, the degree to which the topic is understudied, and the complexity of social processes involved (Maxwell, 2005).
Researchers who choose this method rarely begin research projects to test preformulated hypotheses (explicit statements regarding the nature or direction of relationships between variables) (Schutt, 2009). Instead, they typically develop a research question or set of related research questions geared toward discovering what people think and feel, how they account for their experiences and actions, and what opportunities and obstacles they face. In-depth interviews enable the researcher to explore complex topics and allow for ideas to emerge that have not been predetermined by the researcher (Berg, 2009; Denzin & Lincoln, 2000; Esterberg, 2002; Warren & Karner, 2005). In-depth interviews may be conducted over the telephone (see Berg, 2009, pp. 121-123, for a discussion of the relative costs and benefits of telephone interviews in qualitative research); this is a viable alternative when researchers do not have direct access to individuals (e.g., when respondents are geographically dispersed). However, conducting interviews face-to-face allows researchers to record expressive or emotive nonverbal responses that may indicate the importance of particular questions or topics to respondents. Seeing people’s reactions also may influence the researcher to probe further or ask additional questions.

With interviews, the researcher can ascertain the participants’ point of view on why they do what they do. The researcher can capture the ways respondents describe and explain their decisions, actions, and interactions with others. Collecting data in this way makes it possible to examine and interpret the motivations behind respondents’ actions and identify the various constraints they face. By understanding and contrasting respondents’ motivations and explanations for their behavior, the researcher can understand the meanings of the social phenomena under study. In sum, face-to-face in-depth interviews offer a way to explore people’s lives and the contexts in which they make decisions and yield “thick descriptions” of social life (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006).

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

Many books and articles that investigate work-family concerns are based on in-depth interviews. This method can be used as the sole data collection method, or it can be combined with other methods as part of a larger study. The value of in-depth interviewing for work and family studies derives from the ability to gain rich qualitative data about particular processes or subjects from the perspective of selected individuals (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2006). Because many daily work and family social processes are ordinary, routine, and taken for granted, this method allows the researcher to uncover hidden information. Furthermore, because in-depth interviews permit people’s ambivalences to surface as they share their stories, it is an excellent method for understanding family patterns and the different meanings that people make of work and family arrangements. Finally, in-depth interviewing facilitates researchers’ access to information about traditionally marginalized groups of people such as women, gays and lesbians, and people of color, thereby enabling diverse patterns, nuances, and voices to be recognized. In this section
we present work-family scholarship that originates from in-depth interviewing to highlight some of the empirical, conceptual, and theoretical innovations in the work-family field.

Researchers have extensively used interviews to illuminate the nuanced and complicated processes involved in work-family decision making. In-depth interviews are particularly useful for exploring new or emerging patterns. For example, Gerson (1985) began her first in-depth interview study with an interest in how women were making work and family decisions during a period of social and demographic change. This required an exploratory study targeting a particular cohort (i.e., women who came of age during the 1970s). In this and subsequent work, Gerson (1985, 1993, 2009) analyzed work and family decision-making by charting the personal biographies of her subjects and linking their work and family paths to the shifting opportunities and constraints they encountered around paid work, marriage, and childbearing. Gerson’s analyses challenged predominant explanations for women’s and men’s choices and prevailing conceptual categories, critiquing the focus on early childhood socialization and the conception of women and men as possessing distinctly different personalities. She demonstrated how individuals actively interpret and respond to social circumstances, often in unanticipated ways that prompt significant individual change. Her latest work (2009) examined the transition to adulthood among a diverse sample of women and men ages 18 to 32 that grew up in a range of family and living arrangements and were charting their life paths amid the uncertain terrain of changing work and family options.

To explore the claim that women were “opting out” of careers, Stone (2007) used data from 54 in-depth interviews with married women who quit high-status professional careers to be stay-at-home mothers. The majority of the participants had worked in elite, male-dominated professions such as business, medicine, and law and left those careers in response to pressures originating both in the workplace and at home. Similarly, Blair-Loy (2003) conducted interviews with 56 executive women in finance-related fields and with 25 women who left full-time business careers when they had children. With in-depth interviews, she captured the moral and emotional elements of two dominant cultural schemas—“devotion to work and devotion to family. Both of these studies drew attention to ideal worker norms that precluded involvement in family life, to the complicated relationship between work and family devotion, and to the role of gendered work and family commitments in creating and reproducing work-family conflict.

Interviewing people in depth can also reveal contradictions and ambivalences in how they view options for work and family. For example, Nemoto (2008) interviewed 26 highly educated women in Japan to understand their decision to postpone marriage. Her interviews showed that most of the women rejected cultural norms of femininity that emphasized women’s subservience to men at home and work but were also concerned about appearing less feminine. Their desire for marriage and family coexisted with a fear of financial dependence and resentment over pressure to sacrifice work for marriage and children.
In-depth interviews are particularly well suited to get at emotional experience and response. Hochschild’s (1989) research explored how 50 dual-earner couples negotiated work and family. By asking respondents about their typical day and observing 12 couples at home, she was able to elucidate relationships among ideology, behavior, feelings of fairness, and real-life circumstances. Because observations alone may not capture everything that a researcher wants to know, combining observation with in-depth interviews allows researchers to access perspectives other than their own to better understand others’ points of view (Esterberg, 2002). Concepts from Hochschild’s now-landmark study, such as “second shift” and “economy of gratitude,” are widely used by qualitative and quantitative scholars and continue to inform work-family scholarship.

Although less capable of getting at actual or relative hours of domestic labor than observations or daily record keeping of activities, research using interviews can get at perceptions of the gender division of labor within families to illuminate the complex and contradictory ways that employment influences domestic work and couple interactions. For example, Webber and Williams (2008a) explored how mothers experience household work and child care arrangements when they work part-time. In-depth interviews with 54 married mothers who voluntarily work part-time permitted the researchers to uncover three key factors for understanding the different ways part-time work can shape mothers’ experiences of the gender division of labor: pathway to part-time work, work location, and work schedule.

In-depth interviewing can also uncover the varied meanings people give to their lives and to their actions. Researchers interested in how people rationalize or explain work and family choices or in exploring implications of such discourses (language practices) or resulting ideologies for practice often use in-depth interviews. For example, Bolak (1997) offered a non-U.S. complement to Hochschild’s (1989) work on dual-earner couples. Through interviews and observations of 41 Turkish married female factory workers and 27 of their husbands, she was able to develop a typology based on discourse about men sharing family work. She also used interview data to flesh out the relative mesh between expectations and actual sharing in a different cultural and regional context. Walzer (1997) conducted qualitative, semi-structured interviews with 25 couples in upstate New York to better understand the interactional and institutional contexts impacting employment behavior and preferences of mothers during the role transition from non-parent to first-time parent. Her data revealed how new mothers and fathers constructed narratives to rationalize work and family arrangements in a way that reproduces gender inequality during the transition to parenthood. Similarly, Cooper (2000) employed semi-structured, open-ended interviews with 20 middle- to high-income fathers, ages 30 to 44, working in a range of high-tech companies in Silicon Valley to examine how gendered discourses, practices, and ideologies related to work features and family involvement.

Scholarship using in-depth interviews has generated important insights on workplace inequality as well.
Mirchandani (1998) conducted open-ended interviews with 30 highly paid, salaried women teleworkers in Canada to explore their conceptualization of work. Interviews helped Mirchandani locate aspects of home and work that underlie concerns over organizational intrusion into family life and about the “legitimacy” of their paid work. Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, and Saute (1999) employed 125 open-ended interviews with attorneys working part-time to flesh out the extraordinary time norms in the legal profession, to illustrate how ideas of commitment and achievement are intimately linked with extraordinary work hours, and to demonstrate the difficulties that part-time status presents for lawyers. Webber and Williams (2008b) compared and contrasted the experiences of women in professional and secondary part-time jobs, drawing on 60 in-depth interviews with mothers working in such “good” and “bad” jobs. They found that mothers at the top and at the bottom of the employment hierarchy faced unique disadvantages from their part-time employment to which they responded in different ways. In-depth interviewing can not only help expose otherwise “hidden” processes that reproduce inequality in the home and workplace but can also explore how individuals uniquely respond to situational and institutional demands.

As noted earlier, interviews can be beneficial for collecting data from marginalized populations. For example, Garcia-Lopez (2008) conducted 15 interviews in English, Spanish, and Spanglish with Chicana attorneys to explore and uncover organizational and interactional dynamics that led to their feelings of exclusion and experiences as outsiders. Through her interviews, Garcia-Lopez revealed how disparities in case assignments and pay reproduce workplace inequality. At the same time she demonstrated the ways that gender, race and ethnicity, class, and sexuality intersect as individuals resist and challenge oppressive structures. With in-depth interviews, marginalized populations are able to tell their stories in their own words (Esterberg, 2002). Through 17 semi-structured interviews with Black men nurses, Wingfield (2009) examined the experiences of minority men in the feminized field of nursing. Interview responses captured stereotypes of men nurses in general and of Black men nurses in particular. She developed the concept of “glass barriers” to describe how race influences interactions and opportunities for advancement for Black men nurses.

In-depth interviews have also been used to explore sensitive topics in a complex and nuanced way. For example, Elliott and Umberson (2008) engaged Hochschild’s concept of emotion work to analyze how couples negotiate gender and sexual expectations in their sex lives and to show how emotion work is linked to the domestic division of labor for dual-income couples. Using 62 in-depth interviews with long-term married men and women, they were able to expose “the interplay and tensions between various forms of work–“housework, emotion work, and paid employment–“and sex in marriage” (p. 403). This interview study addressed the sensitive topic of sexual intimacy, which is often overlooked in studies of families, relationships, and work despite the fact that much public discourse posits sex as being central to relationship happiness and personal well-being.
Researchers effectively use in-depth interviews to generate theory or to develop new conceptual models (i.e., distinctive ways of understanding or explaining social phenomena). For example, Garey (1999) used in-depth, open-ended interviews with 37 hospital workers to examine the meanings of motherhood and work that underlie the mothers’ work-family strategies. With her data, Garey developed a conceptual model of “weaving”; she showed how mothers were oriented neither only to work nor only to family, but instead “weave” their work and family responsibilities together, like cloth. To understand marital decision-making, Byrd (2009) asked respondents to break their lives into what they considered significant stages and used a semi-structured interview format to flesh out work, leisure, and relationship choices and experiences for each period. Using interview data, she elaborated two distinct ways young adults constructed marital commitment: first as a lifestyle option with a relative value, and second as a practical status with variable achievability. The resulting theoretical model illuminated how work, gender, and other factors shaped both the desirability and practicality of marital commitment.

In-depth interviews can be used to capture attitudes and actions not adequately understood with the structured questions used in survey research. For example, Shows and Gerstel (2009) examined the relationship between social class and fatherhood using survey data combined with intensive interviews from 18 physicians and 13 emergency medical technicians (EMTs). Intensive interviewing uncovered details about these fathers’ lives that were not evident from surveys alone, including differences related to work hours, occupational socialization, work schemas, and happiness with work-life balance. To better understand persistent gender inequality in the workplace, Roth (2006) employed a mixed methods research strategy that included in-depth, semi-structured interviews with 76 current and former Wall Street financial professionals. This study uncovered how a performance-based bonus system and subjectivity in performance criteria influenced gendered outcomes, particularly pay differentials and sex segregation within the industry. Using interview data, Roth (2006) argued that work hours are an imperfect measure of productivity and revealed how workplace culture influences the translation of hours and production into rewards.

Survey research often relies on the assumption that interviewees understand questions in the same way and that the questions can adequately capture the interviewee’s reality (Berg, 2009; Esterberg, 2002). In-depth interviewing focuses on respondent understandings of their lives and acknowledges how questions may have different meanings for different interviews. For example, Hertz and Charlton (1989) conducted 90 in-depth interviews with 44 rotating shiftworkers and their spouses to explore how shiftwork couples adjust family routines in response to work conditions. They used interview data to argue that understanding what reference points people used for comparison (actual experiences versus idealized versions of “normal”) allowed a better interpretation of couples’ satisfaction with their situations.
Finally, data collected through in-depth interviewing has helped refine measures used in quantitative studies. For example, Hood (1983) examined work and family decision-making in 16 middle- to lower-middle-class couples after the wife returned to full-time work. Interviews suggested flaws in prevailing conceptualizations of the provider role in dual-earner couples, leading Hood (1986) to develop an argument specifically addressing this issue. Hood (1986) suggested survey researchers pay more attention to definitions of work as a job versus a career, how families make the distinction between working and providing, and how families use each spouses’ economic contributions (e.g., basics versus extras). Potuchek (1992) drew on Hood’s research to develop a set of structured interview questions and used multiple regression methods with a sample of 153 dual-earner couples to identify factors predicting a range of orientations toward breadwinning. Together, this body of research offers insights on the intersection of work and family that are left undiscovered by other methods.

State of the Body of Knowledge

In-depth interviewing is a critical research method in the work-family arena. As demonstrated above, it has been widely used on multiple topics of relevance to work-family scholars and practitioners. As with any selected method, the researcher must make choices on various issues throughout the data collection process. Generally, the choices that researchers make should be tied to specific project and research goals. Below we address common topics to consider when engaging in-depth interviewing for work-family research: interview guide design and use; sampling; conducting interviews; data analysis; ethics; and limits.

Interview guide design and use

In-depth interviews are useful for getting at experiences or behaviors, opinions or values, feelings, factual knowledge, and personal background (Esterberg, 2002). As previously noted, typically researchers construct an interview guide to help focus the interview and ensure comparable data across interviews. Often this guide lists primary research topics with accompanying questions, including follow-up questions or probes. Researchers do not necessarily follow the guide rigidly in conducting interviews, but rather adapt questions during the course of the interview. This may require changing both the phrasing and the order of questions during the interview based on participant responses. The benefit of this approach is that it combines predetermined questions and special topics. It asks questions of each respondent in a systematic manner, but at the same time allows flexibility and freedom that permit the researcher to probe for answers that go beyond what may have originally been expected. The result is a more textured account than one could get if following only a closed-ended question guide.
At the outset, the researcher will not necessarily know all the probes that may be needed. However, it is useful to denote some possible probes up front based on initial presuppositions, theoretical or conceptual models, or sensitizing concepts (Strauss & Corbin, 1998) from the available literature (Berg, 2009; Esterberg, 2002). For example, Gerson’s (1985, p. 266) interview guide included the following question and related probe: “Different people want different things out of their jobs. What are the things you yourself feel are most important in a job? [Probe: Why do you say that? If necessary: What about (1) advancement; (2) the people you work with; (3) the type of work; (4) the pay; (5) amount of independence; (6) amount of prestige?].” Since the researcher will not know every question that may be relevant to ask, the interviewer must adapt and generate probes along the way. This flexibility allows interviewers to pursue ideas and patterns that spontaneously arise during the interview (Berg, 2009).

*Question phrasing and order*

It is important to pay attention to question phrasing and the order of questions. Some common problems that can arise include asking questions that may elicit antagonism (e.g., asking why instead of how something occurred); asking about two different topics in the same question; and asking overly complex and long questions that the respondent may not be able to answer effectively (Berg, 2009). Interview questions should be open-ended and not easily answered by a yes or no. Interviewers should avoid leading questions that might influence respondents’ answers. Questions should use appropriate wording and style for the target audience. It is important that the researcher asks questions that make sense to participants and strike the appropriate level of formality, which depends on the situation, topic, and respondent (Esterberg, 2002). Questions should be formulated in language that is familiar and comfortable to participants and that is appropriate for respondents’ educational, social, and ethnic backgrounds (Berg, 2009).

In the interview, both general and specific questions are important to data gathering. Many researchers recommend that general questions be asked first, especially easier, less threatening questions, and that more controversial or sensitive questions be left for the middle or end of the interview (Berg, 2009; Esterberg, 2002). For example, it is common to begin by asking basic demographic questions such as age, educational level, marital status, parental status, date of birth, location of residence, and race or ethnicity. After beginning with general questions, researchers should ask specific questions that enable probing for details. It is essential to ask questions that encourage respondents to draw on specific experiences rather than general opinions. Question order may change from interview to interview as the conversation develops with informants. Although time pressure nearly always exists when conducting interviews, it is important to allow interviewees to move at their own pace to some degree, while also maintaining a comfortable conversational tone.
Depending on researcher preference and topics under study, some researchers use detailed questions throughout the interview while others use short, summary main topics as guides for questions. For example, Gerson (2009) asked open-ended but highly structured questions in sequential order, with questions beginning in the respondent’s early childhood and continuing up to his or her current age. Similarly, Blair Loy (2003) used a life history questionnaire to gather chronological stories. In contrast, Mirchandani (1998) used a less structured approach in which general topics and issues were covered but the exact wording and sequence of questions were decided during the interview.

Many scholars recommend pretesting the interview guide. Pretesting requires that researchers conduct “test” interviews to check the quality of their questions for eliciting the in-depth information they are seeking. By pretesting, the researcher can refine, improve, and reorder questions as needed. Additionally, conducting test interviews increases the researcher’s familiarity with the interview guide, which can encourage a more conversational tone and better data outcome. As an example, Roth (2006) conducted 11 pretests prior to full data collection in order to refine and reorder her questions.

The interview guide needs to be comprehensive so that data is collected systematically, but not so rigid as to prevent additional themes from emerging. If there are time constraints, the interviewer can gently nudge the respondent back on track. If, during the course of the interview, relevant research topics are not covered, then the researcher should directly ask the respondent about these topics prior to the conclusion of the interview.

Sample size

How to determine the “correct” sample size is one of the most frequently asked questions concerning qualitative interviewing; however, there is no simple answer for determining how many interviews to conduct. García-López (2008) interviewed 15 Chicana attorneys. Gerson’s (1985; 2009) interview projects included over 100 informants. Most interview studies average 40 to 60 respondents. Much depends on research interests and goals, the accessibility of informants, and the available time and resources of the interviewer or interview team. Theoretical and practical considerations should be taken into account. Larger samples are required if the goal is to generalize to an entire population, but fewer cases are necessary if the goal is to generalize to theory. In the work-family field, it is rare to find an analysis built on a single case, but it is common for researchers to collect several case studies for comparison (Ambert et al., 1995). In comparative designs, researchers strive for approximately equal numbers of each group of interest. For example, to facilitate a gender analysis, Byrd (2009) and Roth (2006) aimed for equal numbers of men and women respondents.

Taylor and Bogdan (1998) recommend determining the size of the sample toward the end of research.
rather than at the beginning. A good rule is to continue to interview until additional interviews yield no new insights into the phenomena of interest (Taylor & Bogdan, 1998) -" what is commonly referred to as a point of theoretical saturation (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Finally, the practical limitations of sampling must be kept in mind. Larger projects often require research assistance, time available to schedule multiple interview sessions, money to pay participants, resources for travel, and so forth. In-depth interviewing yields rich data, and even with small numbers, the researcher can be left with several hundred pages of interview text to analyze.

Sample selection and recruitment

It is important to select a sample purposely, focusing on the group the researcher theoretically wants to study (Esterberg, 2002). A researcher should choose participants for the specific qualities that they bring to the study. This is often called “purposive strategy”-"intentionally sampling research participants for the particular perspectives they offer. A carefully chosen sample allows researchers to explore different experiences among various individuals or groups (Esterberg, 2002). Unlike quantitative designs, which are more likely to aim for generalizability with large samples and random sampling procedures, in-depth interview studies tend to have much smaller sample sizes and are interested in particular categories of individuals that would be more difficult to locate by chance (e.g., minority populations and populations adopting alternative work and family arrangements). Selection decisions must consider the researcher’s ability to access research participants. Because identifying people to participate in a qualitative in-depth interview study can be challenging, we address several ways that research participants have been recruited.

One avenue is to obtain names of potential respondents through the researcher’s personal contacts, which may include colleagues, friends, neighbors, former work colleagues, and other acquaintances. This is often called snowball sampling. Contacting participants provided from a personal/professional network facilitates access to people because the researcher and participant have a person in common. Referrals from initial contacts allow the researcher to locate additional respondents. For respondents who are referrals, it may be necessary to ask the “referrer” to first get permission prior to initiating contact. This means that follow-up with original respondents can be required. However, in some cases, after an interview, respondents may be excited to refer another person to participate in the research, because they may feel their friends would enjoy the interview. It is also common to vary points of entry and to limit referrals from any one source.

Stone (2007) developed her sample from a variety of networks and referrals, resulting in participants from four broad regions in the United States. Cooper (2000) recruited her sample via email messages requesting a 1-hour interview, sent through friends and acquaintances to fathers working in high-tech
companies. She also sent emails over a parents’ listserv at a large company and a university requesting interview respondents. For Nemoto’s (2008) study of women’s marital choices in Japan, she contacted faculty and graduate students at several large universities via email and in person asking them to notify students and alumni about her particular research project. Additionally, she got referrals from a group of married Japanese women living in the United States, and recruited in Tokyo’s downtown business district. Using personal and professional contacts, Webber and Williams (2008a; 2008b) obtained names of potential respondents. After each interview, respondents were asked for referrals. Additional respondents were located via mother-oriented listservs and posted flyers about the study in pediatricians’ offices.

In many cases, researchers will seek participants from particular organizations to which they can gain access and where the likelihood of locating representative individuals is enhanced. Bolak (1996) was interested in blue-collar working couples and selected her interview sample based on rapport she developed earlier in factories where she conducted initial fieldwork. Hochschild (1989) located her sample of working couples through a manufacturing company’s personnel roster and later supplemented it with referrals. Wingfield (2009) recruited Black men nurses from attendees of an annual meeting of the National Black Nurses Association, and Blair-Loy (2003) recruited executive women through professional networking organizations.

Others have been able to select representative individuals from information that is publically available. Interested in first-time parents, Walzer (1997) located respondents through birth announcements published in local newspapers over a year period. For their analysis of the relation between social class and fatherhood, Shows and Gerstel (2009) selected married physicians and EMT fathers with minor children at home that were part of a larger project on work hours and schedules. The respondents in the latter project were sampled randomly using state certification lists. Roth (2006) used placement reports and alumni information from particular years (1991-“1993) from five elite graduate programs in finance to obtain research participants.

**Type of sample**

Research agenda and interests determine the types of samples that scholars seek (see Miles & Huberman, 1994, pp. 27-“34 for a range of sampling strategies). For example, some scholars focus on “the extreme case” by selecting a group least representative of common patterns because this can illuminate phenomena in a way “typical cases” cannot (Maxwell, 2005). To explore the social construction of gender in work and family decision-making, Blair-Loy (2003) employed the extreme case sampling strategy; she chose to interview successful high earning women, cases expected to be the least traditional in gender orientation. Roth (2006) theoretically sampled by selecting the extreme case of Wall Street, where pay, prestige, and time commitment are well above average. Hertz and Charlton (1989)
chose military families as an extreme case of shiftwork couples because of the military's more rigidly structured work expectations.

Other work and family scholars are interested in how individuals variably respond to social, political, economic, or demographic changes. An age cohort is a group of people born at approximately the same time and assumed to have been impacted by similar sociohistorical factors. Cohort sampling is typically used in life course research or where the aim is to maximize variation in respondent choices or understandings for comparison either within or between cohorts. For example, Gerson (1985) was concerned with how women made work and family decisions during a period of social and demographic change and developed a theoretical model of women's choices by comparing a cohort of women who had followed varied paths either toward or away from domesticity. Similarly, Byrd (2009) used age as the dominant criterion for selecting a sample of men and women living in the New York metropolitan area whose experiences might reflect shifting marital and relationship patterns.

In-depth interviews capture one person's point of view. For example, if the researcher is interviewing mothers for their perspective on work-family conflict, in-depth interviews with mothers do not capture the fathers' perspectives directly. While mothers may report on fathers' involvement and behaviors, without hearing from the fathers, the researcher cannot have direct knowledge of fathers' words or opinions. Hertz & Charlton (1989) demonstrated the risks of interviewing only one spouse by showing how interviewing both spouses provided a more robust picture of the impact of shiftwork. In contrast, Lareau (2000, p. 431) suggested that if researchers are faced with limited resources, mothers are a good choice of respondent because they are “core family members.” Researchers should be sensitive to the limits imposed by their sampling method and choice of respondents and address it in their research. As in all research strategies, there are risks of interviewing only people with the same perspective and of missing people who might offer different perspectives. Therefore, it is important for the researcher to be aware of who might be missing, including those who might refuse to participate.

Conducting the interviews

Several books introduce interviews as “conversations with a purpose,” but this conceptualization does not capture the diverse ways researchers approach interview situations. According to Berg (2009, p. 127-"146), who advocated for “the dramaturgical interview,” unlike normal conversation, the interview is not a completely spontaneous situation wherein one is simply “reacting” to the respondent. Although dramaturgical interviewing depends heavily on the researcher gaining and maintaining good rapport and establishing common ground with the interviewee, it does not emphasize sharing information (what Berg referred to as the participatory model) or creating “dialogue.” Instead, he suggested that the interviewer remain focused on getting information and maintain some control over the situation, especially over his or
her own part in the interaction (e.g., through presentation of verbal and nonverbal cues). In contrast, drawing on Weiss (1994), Matthews (2005) recommended approaching the interview as "an episode of participant observation" where "essentially, the interviewer's role is to encourage the informant to create field notes about the research topic that record the world through the informant's eyes" (p. 801). Gerson (2009) described interviewing as a "conversation" as well as an opportunity for respondents to reflect on their experiences, and Esterberg (2002, p. 85) favored thinking about interviewing as a form of a relationship wherein two people come together to create meaning about a particular topic.

Clearly, interviewers do not agree on preferred interviewer style or the extent to which the researcher should "share" with the respondent (i.e., how much the researcher should reveal about him or herself in an interview). Informed by a feminist orientation, Bolak (1996) brought in personal details about her life as a way to facilitate her interactions with informants. In contrast, Gerson (1985) strove to develop rapport and trust with respondents but was careful not to share personal information until after the interview. It is beyond the scope of this paper to debate the relative strengths and weaknesses of alternative styles or approaches. Each can produce rich interview data. Additional considerations to keep in mind when choosing among interview styles include whether the interview is a one-time event versus one in a series of interviews with the same respondent and individual personality factors (e.g., whether one is more reserved or outgoing) (Esterberg, 2002, p. 88).

Where to conduct interviews

Location consideration is important and should account for respondent convenience, comfort, and privacy. Interviews can be conducted in multiple places, such as the participants' homes or workplaces, coffee shops, libraries, or other public venues. Respondents do need to feel that they are in a safe space, so psychological comfort is paramount. Face-to-face interviews allow researchers to collect data not only from the interview itself but also from the research setting. Many choose to interview respondents in the setting of interest so that interviews can be combined with observations to elicit additional information. Data gathering can include casual conversations (before and after the interview) as well as incidental observations of personal or work space. Such additional data can provide contextual information (such as descriptions of respondents or house arrangements), offer a different perspective than listening to the interview itself, and provide a check on the interview data (Maxwell, 2005). As a practical concern, these observations can be recorded in memos or on the interview schedule, but it is highly recommended that the researcher do this as soon after the interview as possible.

There are benefits and drawbacks to choosing between private and public space for interviewing. In addition to safety and comfort, there is the issue of noise and distractions. When a recorder is being used, some researchers prefer a fairly quiet place, but this may be more difficult if interviewing mothers with
young children at home. Although an interview in the home may mean more distractions and more breaks in the interview (making transcribing more challenging), seeing a respondent’s home life can offer insight on the interviewee that may not be accessible in a public environment (Esterberg, 2002).

Blair-Loy’s (2003) account of her experience is particularly revealing. Blair-Loy, who studied high-earning women in the financial field, conducted interviews both in offices and in homes and found it more difficult to conduct interviews in respondents’ offices due to the greater likelihood of interruptions related to work. She found that her longest and richest interviews took place in respondents’ homes (p. 208). Interviewing in the office did, however, provide an opportunity to observe the respondent at work, and she was able to note characteristics of the office location that aided in analysis. For example, she was able to note not only the office furnishing but also a contrast between how women office staff and executive women managed pregnancy.

There are always trade-offs in decisions about interviewing, and not all are in the control of the interviewer. For example, although Blair-Loy was able to observe some interactions between family members in their homes, she found that the majority of mothers scheduled interviews during times when young children were not present. Due to the private nature of the nuclear family and time and money constraints on interviewers, prolonged observations in respondent homes are often not feasible, and “naturalistic approaches” (where intensive interviews and observations are combined) of the kind used by Hochschild (1989) and Lareau (2003) are relatively rare (Matthews, 2005).

Interviewer rapport and skills

In-depth interviewing requires active listening, following up, and keeping the conversation going (Esterberg, 2002). There is general agreement on the importance of establishing and maintaining rapport and developing skills as an “active listener.” It is important to acknowledge respondents’ feelings and attitudes, ask if they have any questions, and make them feel appreciated. Berg (2009) recommends spending several minutes making small talk with respondents prior to asking questions. In the respondent’s home, for example, the researcher can ask about photographs, books, or other artifacts to put the respondent at ease and help establish rapport.

Rubin and Rubin (1995) emphasized the importance of demonstrating interest in participants’ comments by using nonverbal cues, such as nodding and eye contact, and verbal cues, such as “ah, that makes sense.” However, it is also important that researchers be careful not to interject much discussion, opinion, or experiences as they seek to be an active listener. Sometimes after respondents answer a question, they might say, “is that what you are looking for?” In such cases, it is important to reassure them that you are interested in their experiences, thoughts, and feelings, and that there are not any “right” or “wrong”
answers. Interviewers may also want to periodically signal to respondents where the interview is going (e.g., preparing them for the next conceptual category or series of questions) (Berg, 2009; Esterberg, 2002).

Because much is dependent on what respondents can reveal about the topic of interest, interviewers are sensitive to respondents’ depth of response. Relationships that develop during the interview situation can be changing and complex, as is the relationship between rapport and depth of response. Maxwell (2005, p. 83) notes that it is possible to have too much or too little rapport, but adds that the kind of rapport may also be critical: “A participant can be very engaged intellectually in an interview, but not be revealing anything deeply personal, and for some studies this kind of relationship may be ideal. Conversely, someone may be very open about personal matters to a stranger whom they never expect to see again, but not be willing to engage in any critical reflection on this material.”

There are strategies interviewers often use to facilitate better depth of response. The use of probes (such as “Could you say more about that?” or “What happened next?”) is especially important. Follow-up questions and prompts not only help elicit more information but also serve as a resource for showing the respondent the attention and interest of the researcher. A skilled interviewer can encourage respondents to talk with body language as well as verbal cues. As noted above, researchers should be sensitive to nonverbal communication (e.g., body language) as well as verbal communication from the respondent and manage their own verbal and nonverbal communication accordingly to demonstrate active listening (e.g., lean in, nod their head, say “uh huh,” and/or restate what the respondent said to ensure correct understanding). It is also recommended that researchers ask respondents about specific incidents and personal examples as they probe for details about the topic of interest. This allows the researcher to get at the larger social or personal context and to move beyond general attitudes to get at particulars that can be later analyzed. Asking about specific incidents is also more likely to elicit data that can get at tensions, contradictions, and feelings (Matthews, 2005).

Types of responses will likely vary from detailed personal narrative to speaking in generalities. Getting an inadequate or poor response from a particular respondent may not be due to a personal failure of the interviewer and could simply be a product of poor timing or other unrelated factors. For example, Lareau (2000) noted a range of response patterns in her interviews with fathers. She attributed fathers’ more elaborate answers about work and leisure as opposed to the less detailed responses regarding the daily lives of their children to the gendered nature of parenting. Further, no matter how skilled the interviewer, not all respondents will evince the desired self-reflection in responses. Respondents of varying social class may have had different opportunities to reflect on their lives that may influence their answers to interview questions. Additionally, some people may experience more tightly scripted cultural roles and boundaries than others, which could mean that they have less time and energy to reflect on their lives or
alternatives in their lives. Thus, it is important to be skilled with probing questions and maintain patience when waiting for participants to formulate responses.

Technology

The role of technology and the logistics of conducting interviews deserve a brief mention. Perhaps the most significant technological innovation to impact interviewing is the availability of increasingly sophisticated recording devices.

There are several advantages to using these devices. They make possible complete and accurate transcriptions of interviews, allow the interviewer more freedom to explore and become involved in the interaction (active listening), and can facilitate researcher reflection about the interview process by allowing him or her to review recorded responses to questions and probes in order to correct or refine the interview guide. The researcher can also be less concerned with note taking and problems of recall. Finally, transcriptions can be used to validate a study by allowing others to review the data for bias. Although not everyone combines note taking with the use of recorders, using both allows the researcher to document things not likely to be revealed in a recording (e.g., body language) and may prevent the complete loss of data in case the recording device fails.

There are also some disadvantages to using recording devices. Transcribing an entire interview can be costly and time consuming. Additionally, some respondents may experience discomfort or become self-conscious in the presence of a recorder (although in our experience, as the interview progresses, the respondent seems to forget the recorder is there). Nevertheless, the immense value of capturing the interview verbatim generally outweighs the disadvantages.

Interviewers have also incorporated computer-related technological innovations into their research designs. Computer-assisted interview techniques, which allow the interviewer to maintain face-to-face contact but require respondents to record responses on the computer during the interview session, are now an option (see Berg, 2009, pp. 124-125 for a brief discussion of this type of face-to-face interviewing). Additionally, a range of computer-assisted software (e.g., NVivo, Atlas.ti, Ethnograph) is available to aid in the analysis of vast amounts of transcribed interview material.

The following brief logistical summary may be helpful. First, before leaving for the interview, researchers should check that they have the interview guide, recorder, tapes or memory cards, extra batteries, contact information, consent forms, pens, and anything else they may need. It is very important to make sure the recorder is working prior to the interview session. Interview length is highly variable and depends on the research questions, the particular topics of interest, the length of the interview guide, and the depth of
response from informants. If time is an issue, consider scheduling interviews across multiple sessions. Finally, before leaving the interview, ask if there is anything else the respondents would like to say or add, and, most importantly, do not forget to thank them for their participation.

Data Analysis

Data analysis frequently occurs in several stages. Once interviews have been conducted, managing and organizing data is a critical first step in analysis. All files (electronic, tape, paper) must be labeled and interviews transcribed. Often, at the beginning stages of interviewing, researchers make detailed notes after each interview, or they may write memos or field notes that reflect additional information and insights that arose from the actual interview. For example, a researcher might describe their overall assessment of each respondent’s situation. A researcher might also describe how reflective or introspective the participant was regarding interview questions. After the interview, primary themes and patterns that seemed evident can be documented in a memo or field note. Over time, researchers may make only brief notes identifying any key issues that arose in the interview. It is likely that similar accounts and experiences will arise in multiple interviews; we recommend maintaining a notebook or electronic file describing recurring themes and patterns that emerge.

Transcription can be completed after all interviews are conducted or during the process of data collection. A subsequent stage of data analysis is to code each interview using a software package designed for data analysis (e.g., NVivo, Atlas.ti, Ethnograph). Software packages such as these enable researchers to code data, correct transcripts as they code, and create subgroups of interviews based on various attributes (e.g., race, class, work hours). Prior to coding each interview, it is recommended that the researcher reread each transcript and the associated notes. If using software, the researcher will likely want to have some preliminary codes established before starting. These codes represent themes and patterns that the researcher has noted in field notes as he or she has conducted the interviews. Coding categories will increase and became more fine-tuned as more interviews are coded. An important feature of data analysis software is that it enables researchers to easily apply more than one code to a particular section of text, thereby capturing multiple themes embedded in one quote without duplicating the text itself. After all transcripts are coded, the researcher can generate reports that provide all quotes for each category or theme. The thematic categories are used to organize and understand respondents’ experiences.

The final stage of data analysis often occurs during the writing stage. Themes will likely be revisited and revised as analysis is refined when writing the results of the research. During analysis, researchers may find positive and negative assessments of the same social phenomena by the same participant, so it is the responsibility of the researcher to unpack contradictions, ambivalence, and structural constraints.
faced by people. Researchers should accurately portray the perceptions, feelings, and experiences of respondents, but it is also the case that a critical analysis of all available information does not always match with participants’ views of their situation. In the end, analysis relies on the researcher’s interpretation of the interview data.

**Ethical considerations**

Two issues in particular are of importance when considering the ethical responsibilities of the interviewer: maintaining confidentiality and obtaining informed consent. In academic settings, both are subject to strict guidelines and requirements imposed by institutional review boards. These range from requiring signed consent from informants prior to the interview, making provisions for referrals to qualified experts, and detailing procedures for handling, storing, or destroying interview material (e.g., files, tapes). These can present challenges for work and family scholars who are especially likely to address such sensitive topics as sexuality, perceived unfairness, abuse, and workplace discrimination in their interviews. Because of the open-endedness of responses, an interviewer can never completely predict what will occur during the course of the interview. Researchers may be confronted with a situation in which they find out disturbing information, such as abuse or neglect. Further, because this method elicits in-depth responses, maintaining confidentiality is rendered more difficult. Although most researchers change the names of respondents or research sites, the rich detail of informants’ lives often required to contextualize theoretical and empirical findings means that researchers may not be able to tell the necessary story without providing particulars that could give away who the respondent is (Esterberg, 2002).

Feminists have raised additional ethical concerns related to interviewing. In particular, Thompson (1992, p. 14-16) suggested two ethical concerns: (1) attention to power differentials between researcher and informant and to whose interests are being served by the research, and (2) sensitivity to preserving the subjectivity and authority of research participants. To illustrate, Bolak (1996) wrote candidly about sensitivity to possible power differences between herself (from a more educated, urban background) and the women of more traditional, rural backgrounds with whom she spoke. Acknowledging ethical concerns regarding reciprocity and inequality in field research, Bolak (1996) viewed her respondents as collaborators and active agents rather than subjects, minimized any pressure for them to participate, and employed an interview style that involved empathy and relative symmetry in research relationships.

**Limits to method**

Researchers should be aware of the limits of this research method. In-depth, face-to-face interviewing involves personal interaction. Cooperation between interviewer and interviewee is essential. Certain researchers may find this type of personal interaction uncomfortable or difficult to sustain. Researchers
may also find respondents unwilling or unable to share all information the interviewer hopes to access. Respondents may be unwilling or unable to articulate what is most important or relevant for understanding their motives, actions or emotions. Respondents may be unaware of the patterns in their lives, may not be asked the right questions, or may have reasons not to be fully cooperative or truthful during the interview situation (Taylor & Bogdan, 1988).

The interview is a particular type of situation maintained for a particular purpose rather than a naturally occurring interaction. People may say and do different things in an interview situation; the researcher cannot know for sure what the person would say or do in a different setting (Taylor & Bogdan, 1988). Although skilled interviewers design questions and use probes to get at the larger context, they cannot get at it as directly or with as much detail as with participant observation. Interviewers depend on what respondents say (rather than actually observing what respondents do) and must rely on assumptions about things unobserved, and these assumptions can be incorrect (Taylor & Bogdan, 1988).

Smaller and less representative samples limit the generalizability of findings from in-depth interview studies. Based on surveys from a larger, more representative sample, Brett and Stroh (2003), for example, found little support for Hochschild’s (1997) argument (developed through interviews with managers and workers at a large Fortune 500 company) that work was becoming an emotional respite from family. Interview data help researchers identify and suggest probable relationships and interconnections and can uncover the processes by which particular outcomes (e.g., the gendered division of labor at home and pay differentials at work) are produced, but larger and more representative studies are better suited for research aimed at testing hypotheses or determining causation. Further, with in-depth interviews, interviewers have the flexibility to reorder questions, explore new themes as they arise, and probe for meaning, but the more open-ended nature of questions and the subsequent variation in possible responses also make it more difficult to compare data from one study to another. Finally, conducting, transcribing, coding, and analyzing multiple in-depth interviews is time-consuming, making this method less attractive to scholars and practitioners under increased pressure to quickly produce research reports and publish findings.

**Implications for Research and Practice**

Interviewing is an established and well-documented technique for social science research. This method is included in general textbooks on research design (e.g., Babbie, 2007; Schutt, 2009) and books on qualitative research (e.g., Berg, 2009; Esterberg, 2002; Gilgun, Daly & Handel, 1992; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), and it has become the subject of a growing number of books devoted exclusively to interviewing styles and strategies (e.g., Holstein & Gubrium, 1995; Kvale & Brinkmann, 2009; Weiss, 1994). Although the organization of these discussions varies, most sensitize researchers to the wording and ordering of
questions; cover the theoretical and practical exigencies of sampling; address style, dress, and demeanor; and highlight ethical and analytic concerns. We encourage work and family researchers and practitioners to review these and other resources. Gaining a familiarity with this method will not only help those who are considering implementing an in-depth interview project but also sensitize those who evaluate and fund these projects to their unique contributions (and limitations).

Additionally, feminist and critical theories have raised issues of reflexivity and subjectivity that also have implications for the practice of interviewing in the work and family field (Ambert et al., 1995; Fox & Murry, 2000; Thompson, 1992). By sensitizing researchers to the situated nature of knowledge and experience, these perspectives challenge researchers conducting interviews to acknowledge potential biases and to reflect on how social position influences interactions between interviewer and interviewee, the nature of the data collected, and subsequent interpretations of data. Researchers are encouraged to make potential biases explicit in written reports of methods, analytic procedures, and data. Evidence of such reflective awareness on the part of the researcher may be increasingly expected by editors of books and reviewers of journals who evaluate research on work and family.

In-depth interviews provide an excellent complement to other research methods. In-depth interviewing is rarely used with longitudinal research, however, and much can be gained from including an in-depth interview component. A notable exception is the Time, Love, Cash, Caring, and Children Study, an intensive interview study embedded into a larger, nationally representative birth cohort study, the Fragile Families and Child Wellbeing Study (for an example of published research from this project, see Gibson-Davis, Edin & McLanahan, 2005). Follow-up studies with the same participants offer the opportunity to see what changes have occurred in respondents' lives that may shed further light on work-family processes, help to support preliminary conclusions drawn from a prior round of interviews, or compel a rethinking or refinement of the original analyses. A particular work-family strategy that was identified in the original research may have lead to unanticipated consequences that can be uncovered by reinterviewing participants. Additionally, access to an already identified sample and familiarity with respondents' life histories can help the research proceed at a faster pace. Finally, if prior research has been successfully published, a follow-up study offers the advantage of a ready-made interested audience for the next phase of findings.

Studies that use mixed methods have demonstrated the effectiveness of combining in-depth interviewing with other methods (e.g., Hochschild, 1989; Lareau, 2003; Roth, 2006; Shows & Gerstel, 2009). To facilitate such research, better strategies for tracking respondents over time should be pursued. In addition, the expense and time required for effectively conducting in-depth interviews could be defrayed by encouraging collaborative efforts. The use of Skype and other videoconferencing technology may also
be used to minimize costs of travel and encourage such collaboration by enabling researchers to work together across geographically distinct locations.

As demonstrated above, in-depth interviewing has been used fruitfully to explore many topics of interest to work and family scholars and practitioners, including work-family decision-making (Blair-Loy, 2003; Gerson, 1985, 1993, 2009; Hertz & Charlton, 1989; Stone, 2007); marriage (Byrd, 2009; Elliott & Umberson 2008; Nemoto, 2008); the domestic division of labor (Bolak, 1997; Hochschild, 1989; Webber & Williams, 2008a); conceptions and constructions of parenthood (Cooper, 2000; Garey, 1999; Shows & Gerstel, 2009; Walzer, 1997); and subtle processes of bias in paid work (Epstein, Seron, Oglensky, & Saute, 1999; García-López, 2008; Mirchandani, 1998; Roth, 2006; Webber & Williams, 2008b; Wingfield, 2009).

We believe that research on any topic of interest to work and family practitioners and scholars would benefit from including an in-depth interview component, but ultimately, decisions to use this method should be tied to the nature of the particular research questions and the research agenda. Research agenda refers to researcher motives, project goals, and stated purposes for conducting research. Below, we briefly address three areas related to research agenda for which in-depth interviewing may be successfully used and offer some suggestions for future directions: examining unexplored topics and populations, developing theory, and informing policy.

The majority of interview studies on work and family continue to focus largely on white, middle-class families. Feminist scholars have been at the forefront of bringing attention not just to gender but also to other marginalized populations, including those based on race, class, culture, and ethnicity, and they have illuminated dynamics of power and inequality in work and family settings. A research agenda committed to exposing multiple inequalities has shaped the choice of topics studied and the types of analysis. Shows and Gerstel (2009), García-López (2008), and Cooper (2000), for example, drew on feminist scholarship to address the undertheorized role of gendered (and race and class) subjectivities in work and family negotiations. Although there is a growing body of work documenting the strengths and struggles of traditionally marginalized groups, we feel more can be done in this area. Further, many studies have effectively illuminated barriers and constraints, but we feel the work and family field could also benefit from more studies specifically aimed at examining the unique strengths and resilience of these groups. In-depth interviewing is a research method well-suited for getting at strategies of adaptation, resistance, and resilience. More attention to other relatively neglected populations, such as people with disabilities or special needs, is also warranted.

The popularity of grounded theory methodologies has increased, and we encourage efforts to include theory construction in work and family research agendas. Grounded theory is an approach to research
(and a related set of procedures) aimed specifically at developing theory that is grounded in, or based on, the data that is collected. Many of the aspects of in-depth interviewing reviewed here fit with a grounded theory design, including purposive sampling, the use of flexible interview guides that can explore new themes as they emerge, theoretical saturation, and increasingly fine-tuned coding procedures (for a reader-friendly overview of grounded theory methods and their applicability to family studies, see LaRossa, 2005). Although grounded theory can be used with a variety of methods, the relative flexibility and open-ended nature of in-depth interviewing make it especially well-suited for grounded theory research designs. In fact, the majority of research studies reviewed here state some form of grounded theory or constant comparative approach and use the intensive interviewing method as a vehicle for building theory.

Finally, two related goals of work and family research are to inform policy and offer alternative visions of work and family and the linkages between them. Work and family scholars are especially likely to discuss the policy implications of their work. For example, Byrd (2009) and Nemoto (2008) tied their findings to public policies around marriage and family in their respective contexts (the United States and Japan). Others have addressed the need to expand current workplace policies (e.g., Gerson, 1985, 1993; Hochschild, 1989; Webber and Williams 2008b) or have exposed the limits of these policies (e.g., Gerson, 2009; Mirchandani, 1998; Roth, 2006). Finally, some have used interview data to demonstrate emerging or alternative visions of the work-family interface (e.g., Blair-Loy, 2003; García-López, 2008).

Conclusion

There are benefits and drawbacks to any research method. With in-depth, face-to-face interviews, common risks include not getting information that can adequately address research questions, eliciting what respondents consider socially desirable answers (i.e., the self-serving bias), and confronting problems with recall in retrospective accounts. Interviewers can minimize these risks by carefully selecting appropriate respondents, limiting outsider presence that could influence responses during the interview (e.g., not interviewing with a spouse or older children present), developing rapport and trust, and probing for context in sufficient depth to allow a cross-check of expressed feelings and attitudes with accounts of actual behavior. When respondents tell their stories, such as what happened last week at work, or what happened when they gave birth, they often reveal their core beliefs and the realities of their lives—which is a key advantage of the in-depth interview. Treating interview transcripts as texts rather than “facts” and utilizing triangulation procedures (e.g., having multiple coders and combining interviewing with other methods) are also options. At every point in the research process, from initial conceptualization to data analysis, there will be points where decisions have to be made in the face of time and money constraints. It is nonetheless important to keep in mind the implications (both positive and negative) of these choices.
No single research method is superior. Decisions about in-depth interviewing and other methods should be guided by research questions, researcher resources, and research interests. In-depth face-to-face interviewing can, if done with diligence, sensitivity, and care, foster an atmosphere in which respondents can speak freely, allow the researchers to get to know respondents and develop rapport, elicit a fuller understanding of what respondents mean, and, most importantly, produce rich data to analyze.

WORKS CITED


**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.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Domain A: Antecedent Descriptives</th>
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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)

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<td>Family Experiences: Needs &amp; Priorities; Problems &amp; Concerns</td>
<td>Family Covariates</td>
<td>Family Decisions &amp; Responses</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Workplace Antecedents</td>
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</tr>
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</table>

**Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains**