Basic Concepts and Definitions

Among the greatest changes in work and family life in the latter half of the 20th century and into the 21st has been the dramatic rise in women's labor force participation and educational and occupational opportunities. Today's college student will find him- or herself surrounded by more female than male classmates; women also earn more associates, bachelor's, and master's degrees than do their male counterparts (Jacobs, 1996; National Center for Education Statistics, 2008). Women's labor force participation rate has hovered at just under 60% for much of the last decade, up from 43% in 1970 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008). At the same time, women have made inroads into a broader range of occupations. The index of occupational sex segregation, which is the percentage of male or female employees who would have to change from their current occupation to one in which their sex is underrepresented in order to equalize the sex ratio across occupations, remained in the mid- to high 60s between 1900 and 1970 but declined to approximately 50 by the turn of the 21st century (Padavic & Reskin, 2002). Correspondingly, the gender wage gap, the ratio of female to male wages (often expressed as a percentage), which fluctuated between 59% and 64% between 1955 and 1980, began to close in the 1980s and stood at 80.2% in 2007 (Padavic & Reskin, 2002; Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

However, despite this progress, substantial gaps remain. While women's increased representation among degree recipients was accompanied by decreases in the segregation of college majors, representation increased at a considerably faster rate than segregation decreased (England & Li, 2006). Moreover, while the segregation of college majors declined fairly rapidly in the 1970s and early 1980s, desegregation stalled in the late 1980s and throughout the 1990s (England & Li, 2006). In addition, measures of sex segregation at the occupational level do not tell the whole story--while men and women may increasingly be located in the same occupation, they are unlikely to possess the same job title or to be located in the same organization. Finally, the gender wage gap, while shrinking, exists even among recent college graduates and cannot be fully accounted for by working time, employment sector, prestige of undergraduate institution, or college major (Dey & Hill, 2007).
Although we know much about narrowing and continuing gender gaps in the public sphere in recent decades, only more recently has research begun to focus on economic gender gaps within families—that is, women’s earnings relative to those of their husbands. In this entry, I establish the importance of this topic to work and family studies, review the current literature on husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings (often expressed as the percentage of a couple’s total income earned by the wife), and discuss key research implications. In particular, I focus on trends in wives’ earnings relative to husbands’ over time in the population and within couples, variation across couples in husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings, and the impact of couples’ earnings ratios on marriage.

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

The shifts in women’s employment behaviors discussed above have changed the shape of American families. In 1970, over half of all married couples (aged 18 to 64) consisted of an employed husband and a nonemployed wife. In 2000, only 26% of all couples fit the breadwinner-homemaker model, while both the husband and wife were employed in just under 60% of couples (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). The percentage of couples in which the wife was the sole earner—while still a minority—rose by over 50%, from 4.6% to 7.1% (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Moreover, the increase in female labor force participation has been most marked among mothers—while less than half of all women with children under the age of 18 were employed outside the home in 1975, over 71.3% of mothers were in the labor force in 2007 (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008).

Why is it important for work and family scholars to understand husbands’ and wives’ relative income in particular? Feminist theorists have identified women’s economic dependency on men as one of the central mechanisms by which women’s subordinate position in the family is maintained (Hartmann, 1976). Sorenson and McLanahan (1993) argue that married women’s economic dependency is a problem for all women, writing, “the prospect of dependency and its social acceptability is a vehicle for the maintenance of women’s subordinate position in the labor market. It becomes the rationale for individual women’s making decisions that impede their labor market careers, and it enables institutions to justify paying higher wages to men” (p. 662). That is, employers assume that women are supported by their husbands at home, and this, in turn, is used to legitimate offering them lower wages. Conversely, male employees, particularly married men, may be given greater responsibility, promotion and relocation opportunities, and pay raises based on the assumption that they have families to care for (Eby, Allen, & Douthitt, 1999; Korenman & Neumark, 1991; see Correll, Benard, & Paik, 2007 for analyses focusing on the impact of parenthood). Female employees on the other hand, may not be offered similar advantages due to employers’ assumption that their husbands’ careers take precedence over their own (Eby et al., 1999). This impacts all workers, regardless of whether or not they are partnered and, if partnered, how heavily their household depends on their earnings. Gender inequality is institutionalized insofar as employers operate on outdated assumptions about the structure of contemporary American families.
Furthermore, wage earning is an important source of power for women in intact families (England, 1992; Ferree, 1990). Earnings, England and Kilbourne (1990) argue, enhance one’s power within marriage, specifically because they are portable outside of any particular marriage (unlike investments in household labor, which are more relationship-specific). Economic bargaining models argue that the partner with higher earnings is more likely to get his or her way in decision-making situations. At the same time, those advocating a gender perspective find that earnings may not be interpreted in gender-neutral ways; that is, wives’ earnings may not translate into decision-making power to the same extent that equivalent earnings on the part of husbands would (see, for example, Bittman, England, Folbre, Sayer, & Matheson, 2003; Tichenor, 1999). Moreover, husbands’ careers may be prioritized even if they earn less than their wives (see Pixley, 2008, for a review of relevant literature). Insofar as the balance of power in marriage is related to which spouse has an income advantage, husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings—and the meaning attached to those earnings—have implications for partners’ labor supply, the household division of labor, family migration decisions, and marital stability (the impact of husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings is discussed more fully below).

State of Body of Knowledge

What have recent changes in men’s and women’s employment experiences meant for the relative income of husbands and wives? In recent years, a growing amount of both popular and academic attention has been paid to wives who out earn their husbands. Numerous online journals and print media outlets (e.g., Business Week, Fortune, Newsweek, New York Magazine, Psychology Today) have run feature stories on wives who earn more than their husbands (Conlin, 2003; Gardner, 2003; Morris, Muñoz, & Neering, 2002; Siegel, 2004; Tyre & McGinn, 2003), and several popular press books have been published in recent years, largely aimed at producing a “how to” guide for men and women in such marriages (Minetor, 2002; Pappenheim & Graves, 2005). Meanwhile, academic investigations of husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings have had two major objectives. The first class of analyses are aimed at documenting the percentage of couples falling into a variety of earnings categories, including those in which the wife earns more than the husband, and--through the use of repeated cross-sectional data--changes in the earnings arrangements of American couples over a period of years or decades (e.g., Raley, Mattingly, & Bianchi, 2006; Winkler, McBride, & Andrews, 1998). A variation on this focus has been a handful of recent analyses documenting change over time within couples, with a particular focus on the persistence of wives’ income advantage (Winkler et al., 2005; Winslow-Bowe, 2006). A second set of analyses focuses on the impact of wives’ income advantage on family life, particularly its impact on the household division of labor and marital stability (e.g. Bittman et al., 2003; Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000; Heckert, Nowak, & Snyder, 1998; Sayer & Bianchi, 2000). Each of these research foci will be considered in turn below.
Couples’ Earnings Patterns

Previous research has tended to place couples into one of four earnings categories: husband sole earner (i.e., a breadwinner-homemaker arrangement), husband primary earner (couples in which the wife is employed but earns a minority of the total income), co-provider (couples in which partners’ earnings are approximately equal), or wife primary earner (couples in which the wife earns the majority of the total income). Both Beckerian “new home economics” (Becker, 1991) and functionalist analyses of the family focus on specialized roles for husbands and wives. Becker (1991) argues that, in order to rationally maximize efficiency, partners specialize in the arena in which each has a comparative advantage--either home or work. More specifically, this approach asserts that men have an advantage in paid labor while women have an advantage in childrearing--an activity with which other household activities are more easily combined (Becker, 1991). Similarly, Parsonian functionalism posits that husbands carry out the “instrumental” role of income production while wives engage in “expressive” activities as a functional necessity for the maintenance of marriage (Parsons, 1949). While the specific theoretical propositions differ slightly, both of these models assert that the optimum household structure is a traditional gender-differentiated breadwinner-homemaker one in which the husband earns all of the family income.

However, in an era in which dual-earner households are the norm, pure gender-based specialization is rare among American couples. Instead, a more common pattern is one in which wives, while employed, earn significantly less than their husbands (see, for example, Moen, 2003; Raley et al., 2006). Raley et al. (2006) find that 39% of couples fit this pattern, in which the wife’s earnings are less than 40% of the couple’s total income, in 2001. In fact, the average percentage contribution of wives’ earnings to family income--35.6% in 2006--suggests that this pattern is normative in contemporary American society.

Others have focused on two less traditional earnings arrangements. The first of these consists of couples whose earnings are similar. Nock (2001) identifies “marriages of equally dependent spouses” (also known as co-provider couples) as those in which both spouses earn between 40% and 60% of couples’ total income. Although women’s increased labor force participation and educational advantages might suggest an increased incidence of earnings advantages on their part, the persistence of a gender wage gap suggests that earnings parity may be a more likely outcome of these recent demographic shifts. Nock’s (2001) own analyses indicate that, in the late 1990s, one-fifth of all married couples and just under one-third of dual-earner couples shared the breadwinner role. Analyses of repeated cross-sectional data indicate that the proportion of co-providing dual-earner couples nearly tripled between 1970 and 2001 (Raley et al., 2006).

A final subset of analyses focuses on wives who earn more than their husbands. Recent data indicate that approximately 25% of wives earn more than their husbands (Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2008); when defined as wives’ earning 60% or more of couples’ total income, 12% of couples contain a primary-earner...
wife (Raley et al., 2006). Moreover, this research reveals that the percentage of wives earning more than their husbands tripled between 1970 and 2001 (Raley et al., 2006). A related set of analyses investigates the persistence of wives' income advantage over time within couples. This research demonstrates that, although wives are increasingly likely to out earn their husbands, their income advantage is often temporary (Winkler et al., 2005; Winslow-Bowe, 2006). More specifically, using data from the early 1990s, I find that while nearly 20% of wives earn more than their husbands in a single year, only approximately 6% maintain this advantage for 5 consecutive years (Winslow-Bowe, 2006).

In addition to this variation over time, there is also variation across couples by key demographic traits. Co-providing and primary earning are more common among Black than White wives, while husbands' primary earning is less common (Winslow-Bowe, in press). Black women's greater attachment to paid labor explains some, but not all, of this differential. Choi (1999) argues that while Black and White wives do not have statistically different absolute earnings, Black wives make a more substantial contribution to total family income because Black husbands earn significantly less than White husbands. On the other hand, employed Hispanic women earn significantly less than White women yet make similar proportional contributions to total family income because Hispanic men earn significantly less than White men (Choi, 1999). Women with a bachelor's degree or more education have higher odds of co-providing or primary earning than do their counterparts with less than a college degree (Winslow-Bowe, in press). These racial/ethnic and educational differences persist even when controlling for weekly work hours and weeks worked per year. Thus, the findings reported here are indicative of earnings differentials net of any differences in labor supply that may lead some to earn more than others. Finally, women with children are less likely to be co-providers or primary earners than are women without children in the home (Winslow-Bowe, in press). For women with children under the age of six, this difference can be explained by their greater propensity to work part-time and/or part-year.

The Impact of Spousal Wage Gaps on Family Life

The second major focus of research on husbands' and wives' relative income has been its impact on marriage and family life. The bulk of these analyses have focused on the household division of labor and marital stability (another major focus has been geographic mobility, a topic reviewed thoroughly by Pixley, 2008, in this encyclopedia; see also Becker and Moen, 1999; Compton and Pollak, 2004). A relative-resources explanation for the household division of labor argues that the level of resources (generally measured as income) one brings to a relationship vis-à-vis those of one's partner determines how much household labor each partner performs—higher levels of income (economic resources) translate into greater power, which can, in turn, be used to bargain out of domestic labor. Economically dependent spouses (male or female), the theory postulates, cannot successfully bargain out of household labor (Brines, 1994). Several notable studies have focused on the relationship between husbands' and wives' relative income and the division of household labor, arguing that, in some instances, economic resources
do indeed translate into reductions in housework time (Bittman et al., 2003; Brines, 1994; Greenstein, 2000; see Gupta, 2007, for an argument focusing on women’s absolute rather than relative earnings). For example, Brines (1994) finds that as wives’ economic dependence on their husbands decreases (measured as an increase in wives’ proportional contribution to total income), their weekly household labor hours also decrease. Using Australian data, Bittman et al. (2003) find that, up to the point of equal relative earnings, wives’ increased earnings are associated with a reduction in household labor time on their part. In other words, both of these analyses would predict that a wife who earns 35% of the total income would spend less time on household labor than a wife earning 20% of the total income.

At the same time, recent research has argued that resources may not operate in gender-neutral ways. A number of analyses have found that women who earn more than their husbands do more household labor (“women’s” work), while their husbands do less (Bittman et al., 2003; Brines, 1994). Tichenor (1999) finds that, while more husbands in “status-reversal” couples (those in which the wife earns more) than in traditional couples perform between one-third and one-half of the household labor; women who earn more than their husbands are unable to trade their substantially higher earnings for a similarly substantial reduction in their household labor time. Bittman et al. (2003) demonstrate that as Australian wives’ economic contribution increases from just over half to all of the household income, their weekly household labor time increases. Greenstein (2000) obtains similar results using U.S. data—“breadwinner” wives perform a greater share of household labor than do co-provider wives, while their husbands perform less. These scholars interpret this finding to mean that, among couples in which the wife outearns her husband, housework is allocated so as to neutralize this non-normative (deviant, in Greenstein’s terminology) earnings arrangement (see also Brines, 1994).

Wives’ employment and earnings may have two potential effects on marital stability. On the one hand, there are reasons to expect that wives’ employment would decrease marital quality and increase marital instability. At the aggregate level, there is an association between divorce rates and female labor force participation. In an analysis of 71 nations, Greenstein and Davis (2006) find that countries with higher female labor force participation rates have higher crude divorce rates. During the latter half of the 20th century in the United States, divorce rates rose at the same time that women’s labor force participation increased (Cherlin, 1992; although see Oppenheimer, 1997, for evidence that divorce rates began to increase prior to the rise in women’s labor force participation). At the individual level, women’s employment necessarily reduces the specialization advocated by both functionalism (Parsons, 1949) and neoclassical economic theory (Becker, 1991), thus potentially making households less efficient and more prone to instability. A lack of economic specialization, these theories postulate, reduces the gains to marriage, thus making marriage less attractive relative to remaining single or getting divorced. Utilizing an economic bargaining model, which focuses on the power-conferring value of resources, one might argue that wives’ earnings are disruptive of marital life because they shift the gender-differentiated
balance of power in marriage by giving wives' greater decision-making leverage within the relationship and greater opportunities outside the marriage (England & Kilbourne, 1990; Lundberg & Pollak, 1996). There is empirical evidence to support these theoretical claims. Ono (1998) finds that wives who earn over $18,000 per year have a higher risk of divorce than do employed wives earning less than $18,000 per year. Using relative income data, Heckert et al. (1998) find that couples in which the wife earns between 50% and 75% of household income are substantially more likely to divorce than are other couples.

While much of the theoretical and empirical literature has focused on the independence effect of wives' earnings on marital disruption (described above), wives' earnings may have a positive effect (also referred to as an income effect) on marriage—by raising overall income, wives' contribution may raise couples' quality of life, thus increasing union stability (Oppenheimer, 1997). Oppenheimer (1997) argues that while breadwinner-homemaker specialization is increasingly risky, two incomes offer protection against economic uncertainty and financial instability. It is also plausible that greater similarity in pursuits and accomplishments may make marriage more desirable (Sayer & Bianchi, 2000). There is also empirical evidence to support these claims. Although reports of marital unhappiness have increased over time, changes in wives' share of couples' total income do not explain cohort differences in marital conflict (Rogers & Amato, 2000). Moreover, Sayer and Bianchi (2000) find that, after controlling for relationship quality and gender-role ideology, the effect of wives' share of couples' income on the odds of divorce is not significant.

In sum, research on husbands' and wives' relative income has found a reduction in the percentage of couples in which the husband is the sole earner, such that the normative earnings arrangement among contemporary American couples is one in which the wife is employed but earns less than 40% of the couple's total income. At the same time, recent decades have seen a sizeable increase in the percentage of couples in which the wife earns as much as or more than her husband. The effects these changes have had on family life continue to be debated. On the one hand, it seems that wives' earnings may buy them some reduction in household labor time. This is the case for at least the majority of women who do indeed earn less than their husbands. There is also evidence that wives' higher earnings may increase the risk of divorce. Both of these outcomes suggest that wives' higher relative earnings may disrupt the traditional gendered order of marriage. On the other hand, there is evidence to suggest that wives' earnings may not be disruptive to family life. Some studies find that wives' share of couples' total income is not significantly related to divorce, while others argue that wives' income may even offer protection from economic uncertainty. Finally, research on household labor suggests that wives' income advantage may not disrupt the gendered division of labor because couples do not let it—and, thus, they “do gender” (West & Zimmerman, 1991) even in the face of a non-normative earnings arrangement.
Implications for Research and Practice

Dual-earner couples are clearly the norm among contemporary American marriages (Jacobs & Gerson, 2004). Gone are the days in which employers could assume that their employees had someone at home to manage all the tasks involved in life away from work. Not only are women increasingly employed outside the home, but a growing minority earn roughly as much as or more than their husbands in any given year. The implications of these changes for employers, policy makers, and individual men and women are numerous and multifaceted. As Pixley (2008) comprehensively and persuasively argues, employers must take into account that employees are often making work-related decisions in the context of having an employed spouse who has his or her own employment concerns and commitments. Although couples may still prioritize a husband’s career irrespective of income differentials, the growing minority of couples in which the wife has an income advantage suggests that, for an ever-increasing subset of the population, career prioritization is contested terrain.

While research on husbands’ and wives’ earnings has grown in recent years, the existing body of literature suffers from two key limitations. First, the vast majority of analyses of husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings utilize cross-sectional data. Such data are useful in documenting the existence and prevalence of particular earnings arrangements and, when multiple years of data are combined, change over time in the population. However, cross-sectional data tell us nothing about the extent to which patterns persist or change over time within couples. A life-course orientation provides a useful theoretical framework for exploring the dynamic nature of individuals’ and couples’ earnings patterns. The life-course perspective approaches human lives as a series of interlocking, age-graded trajectories (in this case, earnings trajectories) that are shaped by particular events and transitions (Elder, 1994). A life-course paradigm further holds that individuals’ lives are affected by experiences in the lives of others to whom they are connected, a concept known as “linked lives” (Elder, 1994). Recent research has employed a life-course framework to demonstrate how individual and family careers develop, intersect, and fluctuate over time (see, for example, Moen, 2003). Two recent analyses of husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings, described earlier, take a step in this direction by utilizing panel data to examine fluctuation in husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings over time (Winkler et al., 2005; Winslow-Bowe, 2006). Both of these studies find that wives’ single-year income advantage is unlikely to persist over a period of years, suggesting that utilizing cross-sectional data to infer a stable earnings arrangement for any given couple is not wholly accurate.

Analyses of the impact of wives’ income advantage have also largely relied on cross-sectional data. Given the research demonstrating fluctuation over time in husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings, previous empirical research may not have yielded consistent results on the relationship between wives’ relative economic contributions and marital instability and the gendered division of household labor precisely because it has relied heavily on cross-sectional data. In preliminary analyses, I find the highest
reported levels of marital conflict among couples in which the income advantage fluctuates between partners over a period of several years, not among couples in which the wife has a persistent income advantage (Winslow-Bowe, 2007). These results suggest that what is potentially disruptive of marriage is not who holds the income advantage but whether the role of primary earner is contested or unstable terrain.

We can come to these more nuanced conclusions--and, thus, get the full portrait of couples’ relative earnings--with panel data. Unfortunately, little such data exist, and those data which do exist contain limitations. Both the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (the data set used by Winslow-Bowe, 2006, to examine the persistence of wives’ income advantage) are large-scale, long-term, nationally representative data sets, yet each moved to biennial data collection in the 1990s, making analyses of year-to-year fluctuations in husbands’ and wives’ relative income impossible. The Survey of Income and Program Participation (the data set used by Winkler et al., 2005) contains more recent data but has panels of much shorter duration. Other notable panel data sets utilized for family research (e.g., the National Survey of Families and Households) generally have several years between survey collection waves. While the collection of panel data is both time- and resource-intensive, such data are crucial for understanding how couples’ earnings develop and fluctuate over time. Perhaps a more reasonable step would be to collect retrospective earnings information in existing biennial panel designs such that researchers would have access to yearly earnings data.

Second, while research focusing on dynamic analyses of couples’ earnings has begun to emerge, this research focuses exclusively on large-scale quantitative data (see, for example, Winkler et al., 2005; Winslow-Bowe, 2006). At the same time, other research has examined the meanings couples attach to each partner’s earnings, finding that resources are often gendered such that they are less important or less powerful when contributed by wives. For example, in her analysis of the division of household labor, Tichenor (1999) finds that status-reversal couples (those in which wives earn more than their husbands) rework what it means to be a provider, with wives finding ways not to see themselves as the primary provider for their families regardless of their higher earnings. Drawing from interviews with wives in dual-earner couples, Potuchek (1992) finds that only one in six such women see breadwinning as a shared, nongendered activity. What is missing from the growing body of research on husbands’ and wives’ relative earnings are analyses that unite these two streams of inquiry--analyses that take a dynamic approach to understanding how couples’ earnings fluctuate over time and the meaning accorded to these earnings and their fluctuations. Such analyses would move us considerably closer to understanding the intricate relationship between gender, earnings, and power among contemporary American couples--a relationship that impacts individuals, families, and workplaces.
References


Minetor, R. (2002). Breadwinner wives and the men they marry: How to have a successful marriage while outearning your husband. Fair Hills, NJ: New Horizon Press.'


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

Note: The domain areas most closely related to the entry’s topic are presented in full color. Other domains, represented in gray, are provided for context.
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-Catsoughes 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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<td><strong>Domain F: Theoretical Underpinnings to All Domains</strong></td>
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