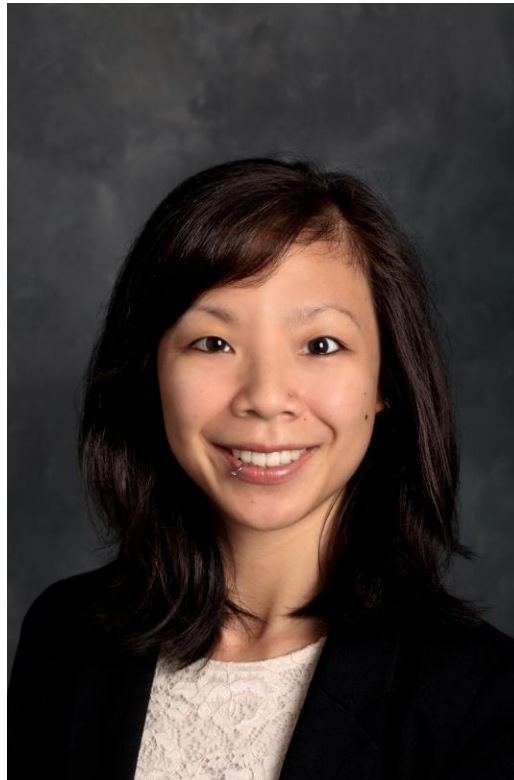




FEATURED SCHOLAR

Each month the Work and Family Researchers Network spotlights the contributions of a scholar who is making significant advances in understanding work-family concerns. We are delighted to present the following interview with Jaclyn S. Wong



Jaclyn S. Wong
Assistant Professor of Sociology
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Experts Panel Link: <https://wfrn.org/expert/jaclyn-s-wong/>

WFRN - *How did you first get introduced to work-family issues and become a researcher in this field?*

Jaclyn - I was first introduced to work-family issues by simply observing my own family! Growing up, my mom and dad both worked for pay and spent a lot of time with family, but my mom worked longer hours and earned more while my dad did more housework and childcare. If they were both at work, my grandparents, aunts, uncles, or cousins would watch me. I think this experience helped me question ideas about who “should” work for pay and who “should” do unpaid domestic work. I first became a researcher in this field during my first year of graduate school. I wrote a research proposal for my *Researching Gender and Sexuality* class that eventually turned into the foundation of my dissertation, an article published in *Gender & Society*, and the basis of my forthcoming book, *Equal Partners? How Dual-Professional Couples Make Career, Relationship, and Family Decisions*.

WFRN - *How did you first get involved with the WFRN? What do you value most about the organization?*

Jaclyn - I attended my first WFRN conference in 2016 and decided very quickly that this would be my conference “home.” I was interested in every session in the program and learned a lot from all the presentations I saw. Although I love seeing the research at WFRN conferences, what I value most about the organization is its strong culture of fostering connections across its members. I love meeting other people doing work-family research and WFRN does a great job facilitating networking opportunities that I have might be too intimidated to initiate myself.

WFRN - *Tell us about your current research, what are you studying?*

Jaclyn - I use qualitative and quantitative methods to study gender inequality in work and family across the life course. My book, *Equal Partners?* uses longitudinal interviews with both partners of young dual-professional couples to examine how structural forces, cultural attitudes, and partners’ joint actions create gender equality and inequality in couples’ work-family trajectories. I also just published a paper that uses nationally representative survey data to examine whether and how relationship quality changed among older adult couples since the COVID-19 pandemic began. My next major project will use surveys, experimental vignettes, and a field experiment to understand the extent of gender inequality in cognitive and physical housework, the mechanisms producing these inequalities, and whether informational and behavioral interventions can reduce these gaps.

WFRN - *What are your big findings? Did you make any unexpected discoveries?*

Jaclyn - Because I don't want to spoil my book for anyone, I'm only going to say so much here! *Equal Partners?* argues that gender equality in work and family among dual-professional couples is possible when partners both have access to supportive workplaces, endorse egalitarianism, and jointly coordinate their actions to make the most of their available resources. If there are weaknesses in any of these areas, couples are likely to experience gender inequality in work and family. For example, I was surprised to find that some couples who had access to workplace supports and attitudinally endorsed gender equality still reproduced a gender-unequal division of labor because partners failed to act collaboratively. In these couples, men often acted independently and encouraged women to do the same, but women acted on behalf of the couple and sometimes made more professional compromises than men did to do so.

WFRN - *Can you tell me about how your research might help individuals or families develop effective personal strategies?*

Jaclyn - My research suggests that different-sex dual-career couples can position themselves to experience gender equality in work and family if partners - and men especially - actively leverage their resources to support one another's equal participation in paid work and unpaid domestic responsibilities. For example, couples were more likely to experience egalitarianism in work and family if men took advantage of workplace resources like partner hiring policies to ensure women's continued employment following relocation. However, individuals and families can only do so much on their own. The most egalitarian couples in my study still found it difficult to maintain two equally successful careers because workplaces systematically advantaged men and disadvantaged women. For instance, women faced challenges like sexual harassment that slowed their career growth while men rode a glass escalator that accelerated their professional progression despite equally sharing housework and childcare. Organizational leaders need to address conditions in the workplace that create such disparate experiences for men and women for couples to maintain gender equality in work and family.

WFRN - *What directions hold the greatest promise for discovery in the work-family field? I am thinking here of theory, methods, or research questions that might be posed.*

Jaclyn - I am looking forward to seeing the results of all the work-family studies that have taken place during the COVID-19 pandemic. This major public health crisis has shaken up the way we do work and family, and there are so many good research questions to pose about what we will do as a society now that it's clear that COVID is

unfortunately going to be with us for the foreseeable future. I'm also very interested in seeing where work-family research will go methodologically as the pandemic required many of us to get creative with virtual data collection methods. I think this experience will open up new possibilities for understanding work, family, and their interplay.

WFRN - *What advice would you give to graduate students or those early in their professional careers?*

Jaclyn - Make friends with people who are at the same career stage as you as well as people who are just a little ahead of you in their careers. Peers working toward the same career milestones as you can provide empathetic support, motivation, and accountability. Mentors who are just a few steps ahead of you can provide immediately actionable advice as you prepare to approach milestones they have just passed.

ABOUT THE WFRN

The Work and Family Researchers Network's mission is to facilitate virtual and face-to-face interaction among academic work and family researchers from a broad range of fields as well as engage the next generation of work and family scholars. The WFRN welcomes the participation of policy makers and workplace practitioners as it seeks to promote knowledge and understanding of work and family issues among the community of global stakeholders.

To learn more about the WFRN, please visit our website [WFRN.ORG](https://wfrn.org). To become a member, please click on this link <https://wfrn.org/become-a-member/>.