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The Extent of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Published in Family Science Journals 2009-2018

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ABSTRACT. This study examined the presence of Scholarship of Teaching and Learning [SoTL] scholarship published in four refereed, disciplinary family science journals: *Family Science Review*, *Journal of Marriage & Family*, *Family Relations*, and *Journal of Family Theory & Review* from 2009-2018. Results revealed that just two percent of all articles published in these journals during the period could be classified as SoTL, though clear differences between the journals and a recent upward trend were evident. Over 80% of the articles classified as SoTL appeared in *Family Science Review*. Two-thirds of SoTL article authors were women and nearly 75% were from Carnegie Doctoral institutions. SoTL articles generally were unfunded and not widely cited. Findings are contextualized within the broader interdisciplinary SoTL literature. Implications for family science scholars and the future of family science SoTL scholarship are discussed.

Keywords: Scholarship of Teaching and Learning, publication count, Family Science

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The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) can be understood as:

the systematic study of teaching and learning, using established or validated criteria of scholarship, to understand how teaching (beliefs, behaviours, attitudes, and values) can maximize learning, and/or develop a more accurate understanding of learning, resulting in products that are publicly shared for critique and use by an appropriate community. (Potter & Kustra, 2011, p. 2)

SoTL is relatively new in family science, but it is growing (Maurer & Law, 2016) and SoTL research helps establish evidence-based practices in teaching and learning in the field. SoTL is also highly contextual (Felten, 2013; Friberg, 2018), with factors such as discipline, institution type and student demographics, and culture influencing that scholarship and potentially limiting its generalizability to different contexts. Even situational factors like institutional pandemic response during the COVID-19 pandemic influenced SoTL scholarship (Maurer, in press). Given this contextual nature of SoTL scholarship, examining the prevalence of SoTL publications in family science, as well as which conditions support faculty in efforts to publish SoTL, will help fill an extant gap in understanding.

There is evidence that family scientists are doing SoTL. For example, DiGregorio et al. (2016) documented the presence of SoTL in National Council on Family Relations [NCFR] conference sessions from 2006-2015. SoTL sessions accounted for just 1% of all NCFR conference sessions and appeared to remain static in frequency across the time period. Reinke et al. (2016) surveyed NCFR and Family Science Association members about their participation in SoTL research. Thirty-two of their participants reported having conducted SoTL research and 40% of those participants reported having published their findings in a refereed family science journal. Curiously, their SoTL-active participants were almost 50% more likely to publish their findings in a refereed teaching and learning journal than a family science journal, which Reinke et al. (2016) suggested could mean that SoTL-active family scientists perceive family science journals to be unwelcoming to family science SoTL research.

The results of DiGregorio et al. (2016) and Reinke et al. (2016) suggest that SoTL publications in family science journals would be relatively rare, but this has not yet been explicitly documented. Additionally, Maurer and Law (2016) have suggested that SoTL publications may be more common in family science's SoTL-welcoming journal, *Family Science Review*, than in family science journals more focused on scholarship of discovery research (e.g., *Journal of Marriage & Family*, *Family Relations*, and *Journal of Family Theory & Review*). Documenting these patterns explicitly would be the next logical step in understanding the presence of SoTL in family science. This work is especially important because many family scientists do not appear to know the extent to which SoTL is present in the discipline. Reinke et al. (2016) reported that nearly 75% of their participants were unsure about how the number of SoTL sessions at NCFR and other family science-related conferences had changed within the prior five years. Given the greater visibility of journal articles, SoTL publications in family science journals may be an even better indicator of the presence of SoTL in the field.

Additionally, it is undocumented the extent to which SoTL publication patterns will mirror presentation patterns (DiGregorio et al., 2016) for author characteristics like gender and

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institutional Carnegie classification, as well as the extent to which SoTL publications are grant-funded and cited. All of these factors would help provide important contextual information for understanding the presence--or absence--of SoTL in family science as well as who is doing this research, where it is being done, and the extent to which it is informing other scholarship. Such information, in going beyond the institutional level and describing the state of the field, would be classified as a “mega” level SoTL scholarship (Wuetherick & Yu, 2016). Wuetherick and Yu (2016) describe mega level SoTL as that which is represented in disciplinary and interdisciplinary contexts, including venues for publication and dissemination, as well as efforts of professional associations to support SoTL.

Moreover, this information is important not only to establish a “state of the field” with respect to SoTL, but also because of the implications of such scholarship on the scholarly teaching approaches of family science faculty. Scholarly teaching uses evidence about the connection between teaching and learning and best practices in pedagogy to further enhance student learning (McKinney, 2003). In essence, scholarly teaching requires a public body of relevant scholarship to draw upon (e.g., conference presentations, publications). Family science faculty who are interested in honing their teaching practice through examining scholarship on different methods of teaching within family science will turn to the SoTL literature; the question that remains is how much of that literature is there to be found in family science journals?

Building upon DiGregorio et al.’s (2016) research documenting the presence of SoTL in National Council on Family Relations [NCFR] conference sessions from 2006-2015, the current study examines the presence of SoTL scholarship published in four disciplinary family science journals: *Family Science Review*, *Journal of Marriage & Family*, *Family Relations*, and *Journal of Family Theory & Review* from 2009-2018. *Family Science Review* is the premier teaching-focused peer-reviewed academic journal in family science, which warranted inclusion in this study. The remaining three journals that were selected (*Journal of Marriage & Family*, *Family Relations*, and *Journal of Family Theory & Review*) are all hosted by the National Council on Family Relations, the largest disciplinary organization. This examination explores the ratio of SoTL to non-SoTL publications, and for SoTL publications: the gender ratio of authors (DiGregorio et al., 2016; McKinney & Chick, 2010), the Carnegie classification information for each author’s institution, the grant-funded status of the research, and citation statistics for each publication.

Method

Data Collection and Analysis

Given the purpose of this exploratory research, a qualitative approach was warranted. Patton (2014) notes that at the core of qualitative research designs is a focus on a specific phenomenon. The goal of this study was to document the chronological shifts in the existence of SoTL publications in disciplinary publication outlets within family science between 2009 and 2018. Publications within the four disciplinary journals were analyzed to identify themes and patterns (Berg, 2009). To facilitate comparisons, the current study utilized the same definition of SoTL as DiGregorio et al. (2016): “systematic study of teaching and/or learning and the public sharing and review of such work through presentations, performance, or publications” (McKinney, 2006, p. 39).

Coding procedure and reliability

The researchers adopted a methodological framework guided by grounded theory, which presumes that codes will evolve from the data (Creswell, 2014; Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). However, a decidedly emergent design was not utilized, as the researchers began the study with an a priori codebook consisting of two codes: SoTL publications and non-SoTL publications. Journal articles published between 2009 and 2018 in issues of *Family Science Review*, *Journal of Marriage & Family*, *Family Relations*, and *Journal of Family Theory & Review* were coded.

More specifically, three coders (coder A, coder B, and coder C) reviewed all of the journal articles published between 2009 and 2018 in the aforementioned journals independently. Coder A reviewed all of the articles published in all four of the selected journals with coder B and coder C each serving as a second reviewer for half of the articles, to ensure that each published article had at least two reviewers assigned. The coders examined each article to assess if the article met the criteria of SoTL (the “systematic study of teaching and/or learning and the public sharing and review of such work through presentations, performance, or publications”, McKinney, 2006, p. 39.). Open coding, or the initial development of thematic categories (Cho & Lee, 2014), was employed by coders to rate each article as “SoTL” or “non-SoTL.” Notably, the first round of independent reviews resulted in discussion of a potential “teaching-related but not SoTL” code. However, after repeated analysis of journal content, coders reconciled to identify “teaching-related but not SoTL” articles as part of the “Not SoTL” category. More specifically, through discussion and further analysis, coders reached consensus around categorizing “teaching-related but not SoTL” articles as “Not SoTL” articles that were centered around teaching, but did not meet this study’s adopted criteria from McKinney (2006) for being classified as “SoTL”. Subsequently, selective coding was utilized to systematically explore the core concepts that emerged during open coding (Cho & Lee, 2014; Patton, 2014). Collectively, these efforts resulted in the emergence of a third category, “possibly SoTL,” splitting the “SoTL” category into two sub-categories: “definitely SoTL” and “possibly SoTL”. Articles were categorized as “possibly SoTL” if it was unclear if the research design aligned with McKinney’s (2006) definition of SoTL; studies that assessed students’ preferences related to a course or feelings associated with specific course content often fell into this category. This approach is consistent with the lesser weight typically given to such indirect measures of learning in the SoTL literature (Maurer, 2018). Additionally, after reviewing the data, coders resolved the issue posed by articles examining the effectiveness of Certified Family Life Education (CFLE) programs by agreeing not to count Family Life Education (FLE) in the “definitely SoTL” or “possibly SoTL” categories, consistent with the focus of SoTL on higher education (Friberg, 2018) rather than education beyond the institution to the broader community.

The researchers calculated Cohen’s kappa (κ) to determine inter-rater reliability which resulted in almost perfect agreement in both sets of reviews. Inter-rater reliability between coder #1 and coder #2 resulted in a very strong level of agreement, $\kappa = .908$. Similarly, inter-rater reliability between coder #1 and coder #3 resulted in a very strong level of agreement as well, $\kappa = .873$. The coders met to discuss any differences in ratings and reached a consensus on the classification of each article. This process allowed for transparency in descriptive coding and, ultimately, supported the reviewers in reconciling the few discrepancies in classifying the publications (Thompson et al., 2004).

The coders also recorded the authors' gender. Gender was determined either by one or more of the coders having firsthand knowledge of the authors' gender identity or attempting to confirm the authors' gender identity through publicly available information, such as a professional bio on a faculty webpage. The researchers recognize that efforts to ascertain gender through the interpretation of names is uncertain and problematic. Moreover, the ambiguous nature of nomenclature makes it difficult to determine gender by first name alone (McConnell-Ginet, 2003 as cited in DiGregorio et al., 2016). Thus, if authors' gender identity could not be confirmed through these mechanisms, the author was classified as "gender unknown". Coders also totaled the number of articles published in each issue, assessed if the articles were supported through grants, and documented the authors' names and institutions.

Results

Initial Frequency Counts

The 1,712 articles published in the four journals yielded 40 articles across the 2009-2018 time period that could be classified as SoTL (N = 26 "definitely SoTL" and N = 14 "possibly SoTL"). Counted together, just over two percent of all articles published in these four journals over this 10-year period were about SoTL. Over 80% of the articles classified as SoTL appeared in *Family Science Review*. See Table 1 and Figure 1.

Table 1

Articles Qualifying as SoTL

Journal	Definitely	Possibly	Not	Total Articles in Journal
<i>Family Science Review</i>	25 (16.78%)	8 (5.37%)	116 (77.85%)	149
<i>Journal of Marriage and Family</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	815 (100%)	815
<i>Family Relations</i>	1 (0.20%)	6 (1%)	495 (98.80%)	502
<i>Journal of Family Theory and Review</i>	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	246 (100%)	246
Total	26 (1.52%)	14 (0.82%)	1,672 (97.72%)	1,712

Author Characteristics

The 40 SoTL articles had 91 unique authors. Of them, 78 (85.7%) were authors for a single identified article, eleven (12.1%) were authors for two articles, and two (2.2%) were authors for three articles. Consistent with DiGregorio et al. (2016) and McKinney and Chick (2010), each author was counted only once in subsequent analyses. Eight authors were classified as gender unknown, 22 authors (24.2%) were men, and 61 authors (67.0%) were women. Of the 42% of NCFR members who have self-reported gender, almost 75% identified as women (M. Hansen, personal communication, February 1, 2022). Compared to that data, the numbers from these identified articles do not suggest a feminization of SoTL within family science publications. See Figure 2.

Figure 1
Definitely SoTL and Possible SoTL Article Frequency 2009-2018

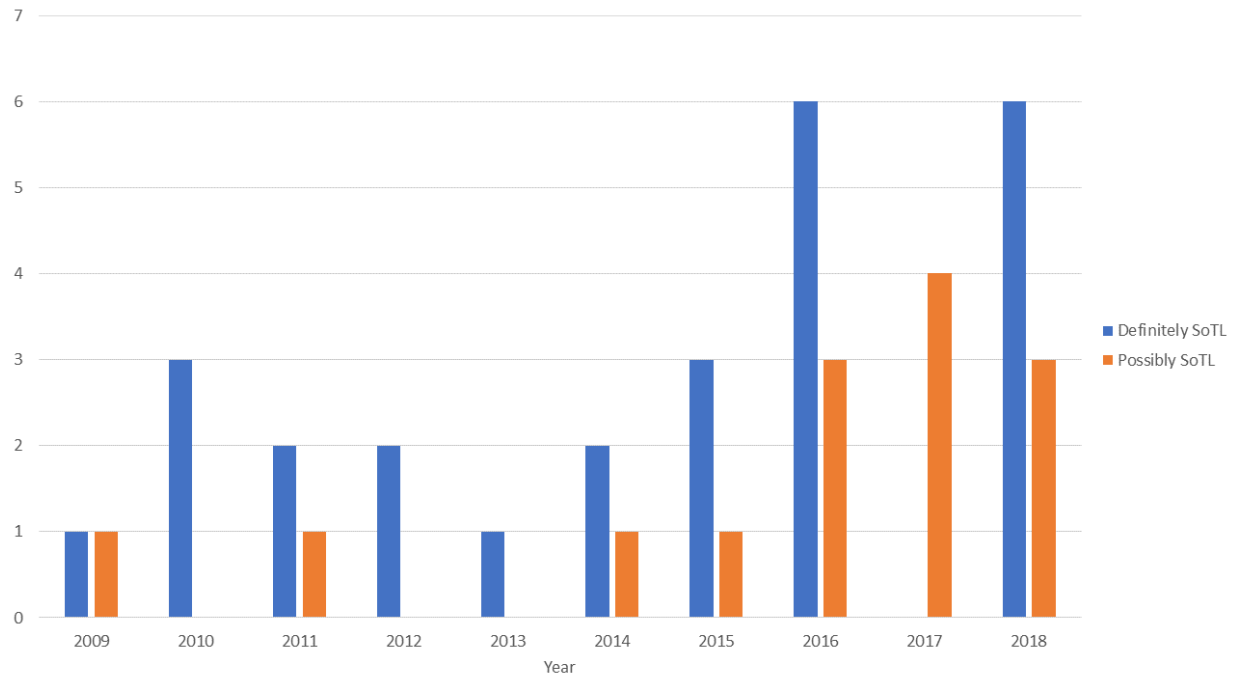
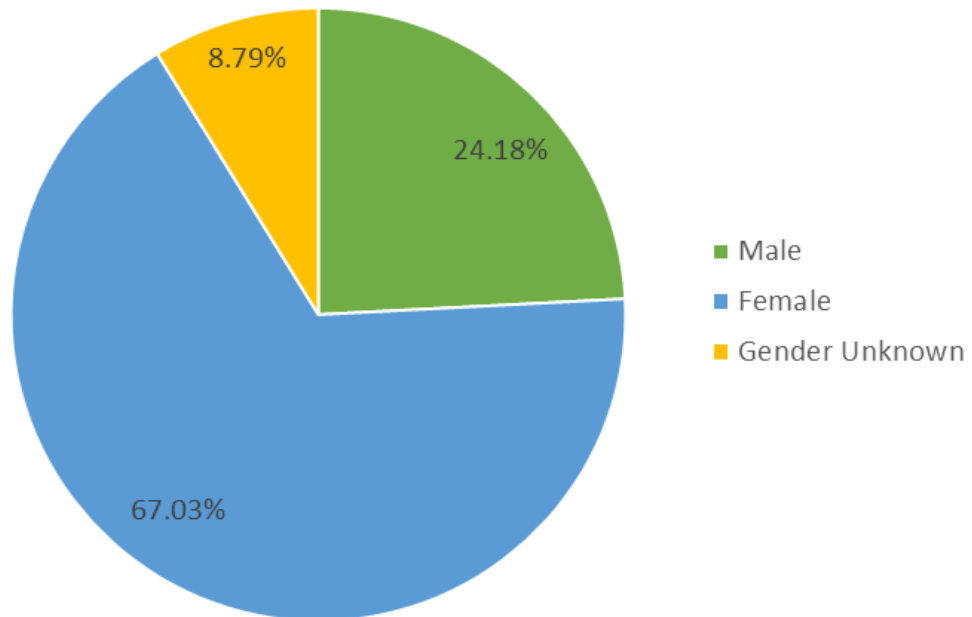


Figure 2
Definitely SoTL and Possibly SoTL Article Authors by Gender



Institutional Classification

The 91 unique authors represented 42 unique higher education institutions. The Carnegie classification for each institution was retrieved from the Internet site <http://carnegieclassifications.iu.edu/>. Three of those institutions were Canadian and did not have a Carnegie classification (3.3%). Over seventy percent of the institutions were doctorate-granting universities whereas almost one-fifth of the institutions were master's colleges and universities. Five percent of authors represented baccalaureate and associate's colleges. See Table 2 and Figure 3.

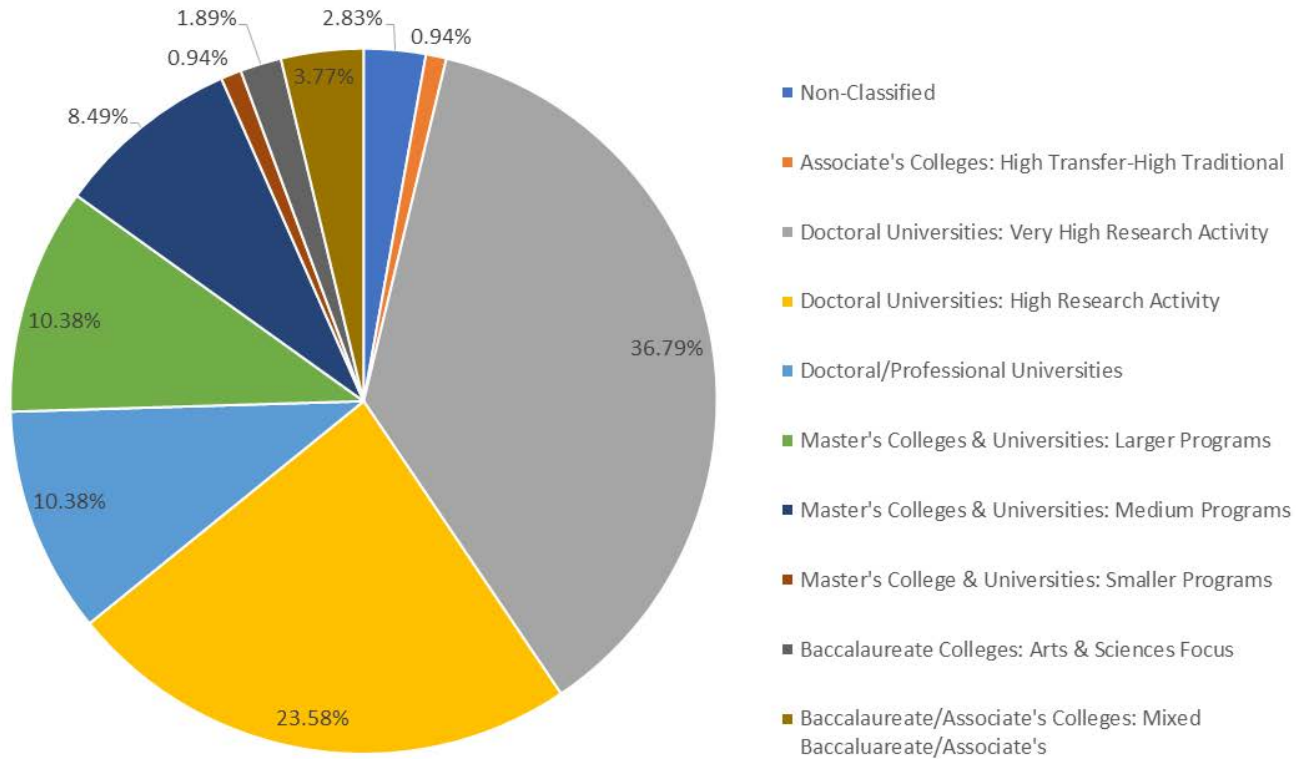
Table 2

Carnegie Classification Codes for Authors' Institutions (N = 91)

Classification	<i>n</i>	%
Doctoral universities	65	71.5%
Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity	33	36.3%
Doctoral University: High Research Activity	21	23.1%
Doctoral/Professional University	11	12.1%
Master's colleges and universities	18	19.8%
Larger Programs	10	11.0%
Medium Programs	7	7.7%
Smaller Programs	1	1.1%
Baccalaureate colleges	4	4.4%
Baccalaureate Colleges: Arts and Sciences Focus	2	2.2%
Baccalaureate/Associate's Colleges: Mixed		
Baccalaureate/Associate's	2	2.2%
Associate's colleges	1	1.1%
Associate's Colleges: High Transfer-High Traditional	1	1.1%
Other	3	3.3%
Non-classified Canadian institutions	3	3.3%

Note. This includes both Definitely SoTL and Possibly SoTL articles.

Figure 3
Carnegie Classifications for Authors' Institutions



Grant Funding

Of the 40 SoTL articles, 35 (87.5%) did not indicate any source of funding. One (2.5%) indicated departmental funding, one (2.5%) indicated institutional funding beyond the department level, two (5.0%) indicated funding from a U.S. government source, and one (2.5%) indicated multiple sources of funding.

Citation Statistics

Citation counts for each of the 40 SoTL articles were located with *Publish or Perish* (Harzing, 2007) using the Google Scholar database, consistent with the approach of Reifman et al. (2019). Citations per year were computed by dividing the number of citations by the number of years since the article had been published. Clear differences between the two journals in which the articles were published were visually evident, so results are presented by journal. Overall, 30% of the articles had no citations and the mean number of citations was 4.85 ($SD = 8.87$) with an average of 1.13 citations per year ($SD = 2.42$). See Table 3.

Table 3
Citation Statistics for SoTL Articles (N = 40)

Journal	Citations					Citations per Year			
	Number with 0	Min.	Max.	M	SD	Min.	Max.	M	SD
<i>Family Science Review</i> (N = 33)	12	0	18	2.06	3.40	0	2	0.36	0.49
<i>Family Relations</i> (N = 7)	0	4	41	18.00	14.31	1.33	13.67	4.72	4.30
Combined	12	4	41	4.85	8.87	0	13.67	1.13	2.42

Discussion

This study sought to document the presence of SoTL scholarship published in four disciplinary family science journals: *Family Science Review*, *Journal of Marriage & Family*, *Family Relations*, and *Journal of Family Theory & Review* from 2009-2018. Specifically, it explored the ratio of SoTL to non-SoTL publications, and for SoTL publications: the gender ratio of authors, the Carnegie classification information for each author's institution, the grant-funded status of the research, and citation statistics for each publication.

The results revealed that just two percent of all articles published in these four journals during the ten year period could be classified as either “definitely SoTL” or “possibly SoTL”, confirming the implications of DiGregorio et al. (2016) and Reinke et al. (2016). More specifically, the findings illustrate the relationship between the proportion of SoTL NCFR sessions to non-SoTL NCFR sessions and the proportion of SoTL publications to non-SoTL publications in the four academic journals that were reviewed. Notably, the proportion of SoTL scholarship to non-SoTL scholarship in these publications was double that documented by DiGregorio et al. (2016) in NCFR sessions (1.04% vs. 2.34%). Although the raw numbers were smaller (40 publications vs. 65 NCFR sessions), and two percent is still an extremely small proportion of all scholarship, this finding was both unexpected and encouraging.

Additionally, unlike DiGregorio et al.'s (2016) findings of NCFR conference sessions, these findings suggest that publication of SoTL research within these peer-reviewed family science journals has slightly increased in recent years. Figure 1 reveals two spikes in “definitely SoTL” articles in 2016 and 2018. These spikes coincide with two special issues of *Family Science Review* dedicated to SoTL. Three of the “definitely SoTL” articles in 2016 and four in 2018 appear in these special issues, representing 17.5% of the 40 identified SoTL articles. Those articles nearly fully account for the spike in publications in those two years. This suggests that *Family Science Review* special issues on SoTL may serve a unique role in promoting and advancing SoTL in family science and that there is clear interest among SoTL-active family scientists in publishing in discipline-specific SoTL outlets. Interestingly, Maurer and Law (2016)

called for *Family Science Review* to regularly publish special issues on SoTL to spur more family science SoTL scholarship; it appears their recommendation was prescient.

Similarly, Maurer and Law (2016) suggested that SoTL publications might be more common in *Family Science Review* than other family science journals. The results of this investigation support that assertion. One out of every six articles in *Family Science Review* during this time period were classified as “definitely SoTL” and nearly 83% of all the “definitely” or “possibly” SoTL articles published across the four family science journals reviewed were published in *Family Science Review*. These results suggest *Family Science Review* may be the only reliable source in the field for SoTL research in family science. For family science faculty who take a scholarly teaching approach and seek to stay current on research on best practices in teaching and learning in family science, this is incredibly valuable information.

With respect to the gender ratio of the authors of the articles, two-thirds of the authors were women, just slightly less than might be expected from NCFR membership data. These findings stand in contrast to those of DiGregorio et al. (2016), who documented a clear overrepresentation of women among SoTL session presenters at NCFR. Our data suggest that family science SoTL publications are 2.8 times more likely to be authored by a woman than a man, in contrast to DiGregorio et al.’s (2016) findings that NCFR sessions were 4.5 times more likely to be authored by a woman than a man. These findings may suggest that men might be responding to the greater incentive of a publication than a presentation and establish the need for publication space for SoTL research in the interests of gender parity and to avoid the feminization of SoTL in family science (McKinney & Chick, 2010).

Also differing from the findings of DiGregorio et al. (2016) were our results on the Carnegie classifications of authors’ institutions. Nearly 75% of the authors of the SoTL publications we identified were from institutions in the Doctoral category. Although that finding is not that different from the over 67% of authors in the Doctoral category for NCFR sessions that DiGregorio et al. reported, it was in the first subcategory of that category, Doctoral University: Very High Research Activity, where a noticeable difference appeared. DiGregorio et al. reported less than one-quarter of their authors worked at institutions in this most research-prolific category; in our study, over 36% of authors worked at such institutions. Conversely, in the next three subcategories, DiGregorio et al. reported higher percentages than we discovered. This pattern may reflect differential incentives for dissemination venues, with authors at Very High Research Activity institutions being more likely to have their scholarship recognized and rewarded from publications rather than presentations.

Unfortunately, this disproportionate locus of SoTL publications among authors at Doctoral institutions may substantially constrain SoTL in family science. The Doctoral category of institutions accounts for just 9.6% of all U.S. Institutions of Higher Education and just 35.9% of all enrolled students. Because SoTL scholarship is highly contextual (Felten, 2013; Friberg, 2018), scholarship that excludes over 90% of institutions and nearly two-thirds of students leaves many important teaching and learning questions both unanswered and unexplored. It also limits the utility of published scholarship to inform the scholarly teaching approaches of faculty who do not have the same teaching expectations or teach similar student populations.

Our results also revealed extremely limited grant funding for published family science SoTL work: just five publications (less than 13%) indicated any source of funding for the project

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at all, and almost none reported funding external to the institution. Reinke et al. (2016) documented that among the barriers to engaging in SoTL, participants identified institutional requirements to seek external funding, which is extremely limited for SoTL projects, as a significant hindrance. In some ways, this stands in contrast to the prior finding that higher percentages of authors worked at Very High Research Activity institutions, where such funding expectations are likely to be more common. It is plausible that these authors maintain primary lines of research outside of teaching and learning to meet funding expectations, and regard SoTL as a secondary mode of publication.

Finally, our citation analyses uncovered critical contextual information about family science SoTL publications. Overall, SoTL articles were rarely cited: they averaged approximately one citation per year and 30% of the articles had zero citations. Further, there were large differences between the two journals where the articles appeared, with articles published in *Family Relations* averaging an order of magnitude more citations per year than articles published in *Family Science Review*. Given that just 17% of family science SoTL articles published during this time period appeared in *Family Relations*, it appears that this citation pattern is largely missing the bulk of family science SoTL work published in family science journals. Further, only one of the 20 authors (5%) with a published SoTL article in *Family Relations* also had a published SoTL article in *Family Science Review* during this time period, which suggests very different populations of scholars are publishing in the two journals.

Reifman et al.'s (2019) analysis of citation statistics for faculty at the 50 Ph.D. granting nonclinical HDFS programs may offer some insight into these citation patterns. As Reifman et al. noted, faculty members can be judged by their citation statistics and family science Ph.D. programs can be ranked according to faculty research productivity (which can include citation statistics), so faculty may be incentivized to produce, and their organizational units and institutions incentivized to demand or reward, scholarly publications that are highly cited. Because SoTL research is focused on improving teaching and learning, the overwhelming majority of the beneficiaries of that research (i.e., non-SoTL faculty instructors and students) will never themselves conduct SoTL research which will cite SoTL research. As a result, conventional measures for assessing research impact (e.g., citation metrics) are particularly problematic for SoTL scholarship (see Csete & Li, 2015; and Felten, 2013). Given the overall low citation rate for family science SoTL articles, this situation may be creating a self-sustaining cycle that disincentivizes scholars from publishing and citing SoTL scholarship.

Collectively, findings from this study, DiGregorio et al. (2016), and Reinke et al. (2016) illustrate that family science scholars would benefit from more information about the state of SoTL in the discipline. Moreover, family science scholars respond favorably to opportunities to publish SoTL work within family science, as evidenced by the success of the two SoTL special issues in *Family Science Review*. Providing a consistent, refereed outlet for SoTL scholars in family science may encourage greater participation, readership, and, in turn, may have a ripple effect and bolster the number of SoTL presentations at disciplinary conferences.

However, the fact remains that higher education continues to send competing messages to many faculty regarding the importance of teaching juxtaposed to that of publishing research. SoTL is well-poised to provide faculty with a pathway to both value teaching and learning and to examine it rigorously through scholarship. As SoTL becomes increasingly visible in surrounding disciplines (e.g., psychology) and family science scholars submit manuscripts to journals outside

of family science, as reported by Reinke et al. (2016), the discipline finds itself at a pivotal moment to carve out space for SoTL publications. *Family Science Review* is well-positioned to clearly establish itself as a resource for SoTL in family science.

Ultimately, the goals of SoTL are intrinsic to those fundamental to higher education, including but not limited to, improving instruction (Huber & Hutchings, 2005). SoTL provides a feasible method for institutions to promote faculty efforts to hone their teaching skills and improve student learning, while simultaneously responding to the demand for increased scholarship. How SoTL is conceptualized will shape its success within the field. Maurer & Law (2016) noted:

Within the interdisciplinary SoTL community, there have been calls for an inclusive “big tent” approach to defining and recognizing SoTL (Huber & Hutchings, 2005; Hutchings, Huber, & Ciccone, 2011). This approach refers to the field’s openness to multiple forms of inquiry (including documentation and reflection) and not just to inquiry on student learning. (p.3)

Using a broader, more inclusive definition of SoTL would serve to recognize a greater diversity of scholarly efforts to reflect upon and improve teaching and learning as SoTL. Less than 1% (.82%) of the articles examined in this study were categorized as “possibly SoTL” because the nature of the research design prevented causal attributions about direct measures of student learning. All of these articles, however, did focus on some meaningful aspect of teaching and learning in higher education. Using a definition of SoTL that makes room for multiple forms of rigorous inquiry, such as introspective and collaborative methods, would ultimately strengthen the overall presence and visibility of SoTL. Autoethnographic approaches to inquiry, such as ongoing critical self-reflection and meticulous analysis of instructor’s own teaching and classroom experiences, are scholarly inquiries beneficial for both the reader and the writer (Chang, 2016). Other forms of inquiry, such as collaborative interviews and artifacts, require scholars to use the thoughts and feedback of others to make meaning of their experiences (Chang, 2016). Further, even seasoned instructors can bolster their teaching practices by engaging in and reflecting on other instructors’ teaching experiences, classroom successes, and perceived missteps, both within and external to the field of family science.

As evidenced by the results of this study, as well as DiGregorio et al. (2016) and Reinke et al. (2016), there is palpable interest in SoTL among family science scholars. By consistently exposing family science scholars to SoTL’s multiple forms of inquiry in disciplinary journals, and through engaging with, and supporting, SoTL broadly, the culture of higher education is reminded of its teaching and learning roots. Ultimately, students, faculty, and their institutions, can all be beneficiaries of SoTL.

Limitations

This investigation had several limitations. First, although it was based upon DiGregorio et al.’s (2016) examination of NCFR sessions from 2006-2015, the date range selected for this investigation was three years later. Although that decision was appropriate--those three years were available for this investigation but not DiGregorio et al.’s--it does partially limit the ability to compare across the two studies. Of most importance is the fact that SoTL publication spikes were observed in 2016 and 2018 apparently in response to special SoTL issues of *Family Science*

Review. Without comparable data on NCFR sessions from 2016-2018, it is difficult to conclusively attribute these spikes in publications to those special issues.

Second, to facilitate comparison with DiGregorio et al.'s (2016) examination, this project used the same operational definition of SoTL as was used in that investigation (i.e., McKinney, 2006). However, that definition is highly restrictive and could leave out important SoTL work. In fact, using that definition resulted in the exclusion of three articles from the 2016 *Family Science Review* SoTL special issue (DiGregorio et al., 2016; Maurer & Law, 2016; Reinke et al., 2016), which were foundational for the current project. Those three articles could be conceptualized as “about SoTL” and operating at the “mega” level (beyond the institutional level at the national or global level) of Wuetherick and Yu's (2016) framework. They have 12 citations between them (range: 2-6), whereas the three articles from that special issue that were counted as SoTL have only 9 citations (range: 2-5). Clearly, they represent important and influential SoTL scholarship in family science, so it is problematic to use a definition of SoTL that does not count them.

One alternative definition, suggested by Maurer and Law (2016) is Potter and Kustra's (2011), which appeared at the opening of this article. That definition is more explicitly open to different forms of inquiry and leaves some room to include scholarship “about SoTL”, which is critical to contextualizing and advancing SoTL. Future research that uses that definition could potentially better capture the evolving nature of SoTL in family science.

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