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## Factors Influencing SoTL-Active Family Scientists' Target Journal Decisions

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**ABSTRACT.** This exploratory study investigated the factors that influence family science SoTL scholars' decisions regarding where to submit their FS-SoTL work for publication consideration, contributing to ISSOTL's Grand Challenge #5. Quantitative and qualitative data were collected from 12 SoTL-active family science faculty members. The results of the quantitative analyses revealed that the majority of the participants rated Helpfulness of peer reviews in improving the work, the Cost (or lack of cost) to publish, Has a readership/audience that I want to reach, and Journal/source publishes similar SoTL research as "Very important" or higher. Recursive thematic analysis of written open-ended responses yielded three themes: paucity of FS-SoTL, no home in largest disciplinary journals, as well as reach and publication processes. Collectively, the results provide valuable insight into not only the factors that influence family science SoTL scholars' decisions regarding where to submit their FS-SoTL work for publication consideration, but also illuminate how these determinations may deviate from decisions related to submitting non-SoTL FS research for publication. Preliminary findings suggest that SoTL-active family scientists' target journal decisions are influenced by some factors significantly different from those that typically influence disciplinary scholarship, yet that are also consistent with some patterns of SoTL scholarship across disciplines. Consequently, the reach of FS-SoTL scholars' work may be limited by some of the complex contextual factors identified in this exploratory study. Implications for the discipline of family science, recommendations for supporting FS-SoTL scholars, and future research are discussed.

*Keywords:* SoTL, publication influences, ISSOTL Grand Challenge #5, knowledge translation

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### Factors Influencing SoTL-Active Family Scientists' Target Journal Decisions

The Scholarship of Teaching and Learning [SoTL] can be defined 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)

The purpose of SoTL is not just to improve teaching and learning in one's own context but to contribute to the broader scholarly literature on teaching and learning for adaptation and use in other teaching and research contexts (Bishop-Clark & Dietz-Uhler, 2012). As Chick (2024) notes, SoTL is not just critiqued, adapted, and used by an appropriate community but is "supported by community or communities" (p. 103). The broader SoTL community is growing both among faculty integrating it into their own work and among new audiences and consumers of SoTL, including students (Cruz et al., 2024; Webb, 2020).

Although SoTL in family science is still relatively new (Maurer & Law, 2016), the National Council on Family Relations [NCFR] gives an annual award for the Outstanding Scholarship of Teaching and Learning (SoTL) Paper in family science (NCFR, n.d.-b), and family science educators clearly stand to benefit from family science-specific SoTL scholarship that could apply to their own teaching practice.

However, just 1% of all NCFR sessions over a 10-year period could be classified as SoTL (DiGregorio et al., 2016). Further, only 2% of all articles published over a 10-year period in *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Family Relations*, *Journal of Family Theory & Review*, and *Family Science Review*, could be classified as SoTL (Maurer et al., 2022). Among those published articles, over 80% appeared in *Family Science Review*, and published articles were rarely funded (externally or internally) and rarely cited, averaging just over one citation per year (Maurer et al., 2022). Additionally, only one author published SoTL in both *Family Science Review* and one of the three NCFR journals during that 10-year period, which suggested that different scholars are publishing in different outlets, potentially in response to different incentives or because of different influencing factors.

This supposition is further supported by Reinke et al. (2016), who reported that SoTL-active family science scholars were more likely to present and publish their SoTL work in teaching and learning outlets than family science outlets. This presents a significant problem for family science educators because as Webb and Tierney (2020) note, both knowledge and understanding of broader (i.e., non-family science) educational theory and engagement with the broader (i.e., non-family science) SoTL literature are threshold concepts that can serve as barriers to consuming the SoTL literature outside of one's disciplinary sources:

While the past twenty years have witnessed an explosion in SoTL papers [across disciplines], there tends to be a separation within disciplines, so that practitioners may confine themselves to SoTL papers written about their own discipline, by fellow practitioners, and find mainstream SoTL written by education researchers off-putting, and troublesome. (p. 619).

If SoTL-active family scientists are sharing most of their SoTL work in broader mainstream SoTL teaching and learning outlets, which requires engagement with both broader educational theory and extra-disciplinary SoTL literature, family science educators may not know about or be able to engage with family science SoTL work shared in those outlets. As SoTL "seeks understanding, and makes that

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understanding available to others through publicly shared products – which can be used by scholarly teachers to inform their teaching, potentially helping them teach more effectively” (Potter & Kustra, 2011, p. 7), if SoTL-active family scientists are sharing their work with largely non-family science audiences, that suggests the possibility of a misalignment between where these scholars are publishing and the audience that could most benefit from their work.

Additionally, this trend suggests that SoTL-active family scientists may face extra barriers in publicly sharing their SoTL work, as publishing in mainstream SoTL outlets instead of disciplinary ones requires navigating the threshold concepts mentioned above (Hubball et al., 2010). This could present a significant disincentive to engaging in SoTL, especially for family scientists who are relatively new to it.

### **General Barriers to Publishing SoTL**

The mainstream SoTL literature has documented multiple barriers to engaging in SoTL that can be found across disciplines. These findings help to inform our understanding of this issue in family science, which is of particular interest given the discipline's commitment to engaging in translational work with broad application (Hamon & Smith, 2017). The broader SoTL literature provides general context to understand not only the challenges to engaging in SoTL for family science scholars but also the factors that might influence SoTL-active family scientists' target journal decisions, ultimately shaping the dissemination and application of their work.

Perhaps the most significant barrier is the widespread misperception that SoTL lacks rigor (Fanghanel et al., 2016) and these perceptions have been identified as a significant inhibitor to doing SoTL among published SoTL scholars (Cruz et al., 2024). Likely related to that perception, SoTL is not recognized or credited as scholarship at many institutions or in many disciplines (Webb & Tierney, 2020; Witman & Richlin, 2007). Additionally, SoTL is smaller in scale and underfunded compared to disciplinary research in many fields, which further disadvantages it as a form of scholarship relative to many institutions' expectations for faculty productivity (Webb & Tierney, 2020).

As noted by Felten (2013), publication of SoTL in top-tier journals is not always possible or even appropriate. Epistemic gatekeeping, whereby top-tier journals determine certain topics “unworthy” of publication (Pittman, 2023), can preclude any possibility of publishing SoTL in those “top” outlets regardless of scholarly quality (Chick et al., 2021). Disciplinary SoTL journals, where they exist, are not widely read (Weimer, 2008), perhaps in part because they are not considered “top” outlets, which only serves to further reinforce the epistemic gatekeeping. Further, traditional citation metrics and other indicators of external credibility often miss or undervalue SoTL (Billot et al., 2017; Chick et al., 2021; Csete & Li, 2015; Masika et al., 2016; Maurer & Law, 2016). Citation practices within SoTL exacerbate this problem because they differ from those common in many disciplines, including far less consistency in citing a small number of “top” journals, far greater variability in the number of total references, and far more citations from multidisciplinary journals instead of disciplinary or specialist journals (Cappello & Miller-Young, 2020). Additionally, SoTL scholars consider journal ranking or impact factor to be among the least important reasons in guiding the articles they reference in their own scholarship (Chick et al., 2021).

Finally, the lack of appropriate outlets for publishing SoTL research is a critical barrier to doing SoTL scholarship (Hubball et al., 2010). Even when outlets exist, SoTL scholars experience significant tension between “the need for credibility in the face of academic expectations, while also placing the research findings in the hands of those who could apply them.” (Billot et al., 2017, p. 112). These findings suggest a general lack of options for SoTL scholars to publish their work, highlight the centrality of contextual factors in understanding SoTL (Felten, 2013), and encourage us to interrogate

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assumptions about the factors that might influence SoTL scholars' target journal decisions and how those might differ from decisions for disciplinary journals.

Furthermore, prior research across multiple disciplines (not including SoTL or family science) has documented multiple factors that influence scholars' target journal decisions for disciplinary scholarship. This research has established a fairly consistent pattern of "top factors": journal audience, abstracting and indexing, impact factor, journal prestige, and no author charges (Nicholas et al., 2022; Niles et al., 2020; Wijewickrema & Petras, 2017). Many of these priorities can be seen to align with many institutions' expectations for faculty productivity and the metrics they use to evaluate it while simultaneously being in direct conflict with either the reality of publishing SoTL, SoTL citation practices, or both (e.g., journal impact factor and prestige), as documented above.

### **Family Science Contextual Considerations**

The unique context of family science as a discipline also helps to inform our understanding of SoTL-active family scientists' target journal decisions. First, the broader family and consumer sciences of which family science is a part generally uses interdisciplinary perspectives and scholars in these fields may need to publish outside of their fields to satisfy requirements for publishing in journals that meet specific institutional criteria (Spangler & Harden, 2022). SoTL-active family scientists may be replicating their disciplinary publishing behavior by publishing their SoTL outside of family science journals.

Second, of the five characteristics that comprise the family science lens (National Council on Family Relations, n.d.-a), "translational" may have special relevance to family science SoTL. Although SoTL isn't "applied in real life to help strengthen families," it is applied in real life to help teaching and learning, and the translational skill set that is a central part of the family science lens may disproportionately enable and/or encourage family science SoTL scholars to share their work and its applications more broadly in more interdisciplinary outlets, especially if that is already their pattern for disciplinary scholarship. It may even be possible that because of this translational skill set, family science SoTL that otherwise wouldn't get published because of epistemic gatekeeping at NCFR journals may get published in non-family science outlets.

Third, Reinke et al.'s (2016) survey of family scientists revealed that a majority of their participants perceived significantly less support for SoTL through departmental norms than institutional norms, suggesting the field of family science may be less supportive of SoTL than some others. Further, Maurer et al. (2022) also noted that over 70% of faculty who published SoTL research in family science journals were at research-focused institutions, so it is likely that most of them were in programs that valued metrics like citation count and impact factor. Additionally, faculty in family science Ph.D.-granting programs across faculty rank have a mean h-index research citation statistic of 14.36 (Reifman et al., 2019). This is equivalent to slightly more than 14 peer-reviewed articles that have each been cited 14 or more times. Maurer et al. (2022) reported that family science SoTL articles averaged barely more than 1 citation per year, so in programs where citations are used as a metric of research "quality" (either directly or indirectly through measures like journal impact factor), there is a clear disincentive to do SoTL (cf. Weimer, 2008). It is possible that these factors may combine to influence SoTL-active family scientists' target journal decisions.

### **Current Project**

Guided by this literature, this pilot project will explore what factors influence family science SoTL scholars' decisions about where to submit their SoTL work for publication. In doing so, it will

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respond to the International Society for the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning's [ISSOTL] Grand Challenge #5 [GC5]:

SoTL practitioners study postsecondary teaching and learning to better understand and improve the practice, use, and growth of SoTL. SoTL practitioners explore, share, and translate the knowledge generated by its diverse research approaches in order to improve teaching, learning, and higher education more broadly. (Scharff et al., 2023).

More specifically, this project is focused on the GC5 sub-question, "What does the practice, use, and/or growth of SoTL look like in your specific context(s)?" in that it explores family science SoTL scholars' target journal decisions.

## Methods

### Recruitment

We posted a recruitment announcement to three locations: a) the listserv for the Advancing Family Science Section of the National Council on Family Relations, b) the Family Science Association Facebook group, and c) The Teaching Family Science and Psychology Facebook group. This post briefly explained the focus of the project and invited qualified individuals to participate by clicking on a link to a Qualtrics questionnaire. The first item on the questionnaire was an informed consent form that certified that by proceeding with the questionnaire, participants acknowledged agreement to the consent. The questionnaire was available for approximately 4 weeks.

### Participants

Twelve SoTL-active family science faculty members completed the questionnaire. Of the participants, two (17%) identified as a man, nine (75%) identified as a woman, and one (8%) identified as genderqueer/gender non-binary. Eleven participants identified as White (92%) and one identified as Asian (8%). One participant (8%) reported their ethnicity as Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx, nine participants (75%) reported their ethnicity as Not Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx, and two participants (17%) did not report ethnicity. The participants' ages ranged from 35 to 65 years ( $M = 49.82$ ,  $SD = 9.95$ ) and one participant did not report age.

All but one of the participants (92%) reported obtaining their highest degree in family science or a similarly named program. The other participant reported that their highest degree was from an affiliated/allied field (e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Early Childhood Education, Nutrition, etc.). Nine of the participants (75%) reported their current academic discipline as family science or a similarly named program, two reported their discipline as an affiliated/allied field (17%), and one did not report (8%). Teaching experience ranged from 0 to 37 years ( $M = 18.25$ ,  $SD = 11.28$ ).

In terms of their institutional rank, one participant reported Assistant Professor (8%), eight reported Associate Professor (67%), and three reported Full Professor (25%). Further, five participants (42%) indicated that they held an administrative role: two reported "Director" (17%), one reported "Program Chair" (8%), one reported "Dept. chair" (8%), and one did not specify which administrative role (8%). Three participants (25%) worked for private, not-for-profit institutions and nine (75%) worked for public institutions. Seven (58%) worked for doctorate-granting universities, four (33%) worked for master's colleges or universities, and one (8%) worked for a baccalaureate college.

### Questionnaire

The questionnaire was adapted from measures used by Nicholas et al. (2022), Niles et al. (2020), Forrester et al. (2017), and Wijewickrema and Petras (2017). The questionnaire was anonymous,

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included both closed-ended and open-ended questions, and was designed to take no more than 15 minutes to complete. See Appendix B.

## Data Analysis

### *Coding Procedure, Reliability, and Positionality*

Utilizing a thematic analysis approach, qualitative data from the open-ended questions were analyzed to identify patterns through open coding, subsequently followed by axial coding (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The process of open coding involves close examination of data for similarities and differences (Saldaña, 2013). Axial coding groups similar data into subcategories under primary themes (Saldaña, 2013). Memos were used by the coder to record impressions, thoughts, and ideas (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Through an ongoing analysis process, data were reintegrated and reanalyzed several times to ensure intracoder reliability (Belur et al., 2021). This approach of checking coding for consistency over time can help to protect against a “fatigue effect,” which can result from prolonged exposure to the task of coding (Rousson et al., 2002). Lastly, the single coder of the data self-identified as a 40-year-old White, genderqueer, queer individual teaching within family science. Within qualitative research, the researcher functions as the data collection instrument (Bourke, 2014). As such, it is likely that the coder’s experiences as a faculty member influenced the interpretation of the data.

## Results

### Quantitative Results

Participants’ responses regarding the importance of each of the 17 identified factors in their decisions about where to submit their family science SoTL research for publication were varied, but overall, clear differences in the importance of several factors emerged. Four factors received an average rating of 4 “Very important” or higher: Helpfulness of peer reviews in improving the work, the Cost (or lack of cost) to publish, Has a readership/audience that I want to reach, and Journal/source publishes similar SoTL research. Only one factor, Geographical location of the journal, was rated lower than 3 “Moderately important” by a majority of participants. The remaining 12 factors had average ratings ranging from 2.92 to 3.92. See Table A1, Appendix A. Five (42%) of the 12 participants reported having submitted family science SoTL research to one of NCFR’s journals: *Journal of Marriage and Family*, *Family Relations*, or *Journal of Family Theory and Review*.

### Qualitative Results

Responses to the open-ended questions helped to explicate the factors influencing SoTL-active family scientists’ target journal decisions. Utilizing recursive thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006), responses were analyzed together, demonstrating the presence of three themes: paucity of FS-SoTL, no home in largest disciplinary journals, as well as reach and publication processes. These findings are presented below, elaborated by select excerpts to illustrate each theme.

#### *Paucity of FS-SoTL*

Participants highlighted a dearth of SoTL that was conducted by family science scholars or in family science contexts in non-family science SoTL outlets. One participant noted:

I rarely see work conducted by Family Science scholars, although I likely don't know all of the folks who identify as Family Scientists or scholars. I typically see psychologists and sociologists who do work close enough that I can make the findings meaningful to my work/scholarship/classroom practice.

Another participant echoed this point, “Developmental psychology has produced some good work and relates to [sic] family science. But a true family science application is more rare.” One participant provided an estimate regarding how frequently they see SoTL that was conducted by family science scholars or in family science contexts in non-family science outlets, “I would say that 10% of the time is there something relevant to Family Science.” Collectively, participants acknowledged that they see SoTL that was conducted by family science scholars in non-family science outlets, but even when the SoTL work was not genuinely FS-SoTL, it was often relevant enough to be helpful.

### ***No Home in Largest Disciplinary Journals***

Participants communicated that they largely do not perceive NCFR’s three journals as viable publication outlets for FS-SoTL scholars. Participants described the specific factors that influenced their decision to not submit FS-SoTL research to one of NCFR’s three journals, including lack of inclusion of SoTL in the parameters of NCFR’s journals, concern that FS-SoTL work would not be accepted, and looking to journals that represented a better fit for their FS-SoTL work.

Participants frequently cited a lack of inclusion of SoTL in the parameters of NCFR’s three journals, highlighting the role of epistemic gatekeeping (Pittman, 2023) in shaping target journal decisions for their FS-SoTL research. For example, one participant stated, “I have not seen a section on SoTL in those journals. The Aims and Scope do not seem to mention scholarship of teaching.” Similarly, another participant noted, “I really did not see a specific [sic] niche for SoTL work in these journals.”

Additionally, some participants indicated that their decision was influenced by concern that their FS-SoTL work would not be accepted by one of NCFR’s three journals, alluding to the prevalent misconception that SoTL lacks rigor (Fanghanel et al., 2016). Apprehension related to work being perceived as lacking rigor was reported (Cruz et al., 2024), as indicated concisely by this participant, “A lack of confidence that the research would be published in those journals.” One participant stated, “The acceptance standards are too high. SoTL research does not meet the expectations of reviewers who are used to advanced data analysis and rigorous methodology.” Another participant stated, “I would consider submitting to *Family Relations*, but I don't really see other SoTL work there,” indicating that of NCFR’s three journals *Family Relations* was perceived as being most likely to consider publishing SoTL research, but with reservations about how their work would be received by the editor and/or reviewers. Participants illustrated their vested interest in publishing their FS-SoTL research and many perceived NCFR’s three journals as unwelcoming, either due to SoTL falling outside of their purview, concerns about their FS-SoTL research being well received, or both.

Lastly, participants indicated that they often look elsewhere to disseminate their FS-SoTL research, as noted by this participant, “SoTL work does not present as a good fit for the three available outlets offered by NCFR. There are other excellent options.” Moreover, participants reported that published FS-SoTL remains scarce outside of *Family Science Review*. Notably, 75% of the participants in this sample indicated that they have published FS-SoTL research in *Family Science Review*.

### ***Reach and Publication Processes***

Participants identified reach and publication processes as factors that influence where they submit their FS-SoTL research for publication. More specifically, participants highlighted the importance of the reach of the journal itself, the relevance of their work to the readership, and the potential for their FS-SoTL to have an impact. Additionally, participants indicated that they take aspects of the journal and its publication processes into account, such as whether or not the journal has

published other FS-SoTL research articles, the timeline for review, fit with the goals of the journal itself, and cost.

Participants in this sample more frequently cited interest in greater reach/audience, accessibility, and impact, as opposed to impact factor. One participant added, “Impact. Is it something that is needed solely for HDFS department instructors or something that could be learned more broadly is part of the consideration.” Similarly, participants highlighted the importance of the distribution of their work to “appropriate” and “desirable” audiences; one participant explained, “...relevance of my work to the audience I hope reads my work.”

The desire to publish FS-SoTL research through venues that support broad dissemination was also explicitly stated, with one participant noting, “...open access is a major priority for me. I feel strongly that academic research should be accessible.” Another participant concisely identified the desire to provide FS-SoTL research to support the work of the discipline as an influential factor, “I’d like a Family Science audience.”

However, three participants did mention impact factor as influencing their decisions. One participant stated, “There are few “high prestige” SoTL journals for Family Science research.” Another participant specifically expressed the desire for *Family Science Review* to be more widely recognized, “I wish *Family Science Review* could gain greater visibility.”

Some participants noted they look to see if a potential journal outlet has published other SoTL articles as well as the quality and topics of previous articles. Participants highlighted that there are numerous ways editorial teams can convey that a journal is receptive to SoTL work. For example, participants seek evidence of SoTL receptivity on journal websites as noted by this participant, “If the journals [sic] website indicates they are open to SOTL submissions.” Another participant noted they look for alignment between their work and the journal’s intentions, “how well the manuscript fits the goals of the journal.”

Additionally, publication processing time was a recurrent point, with participants stating, “If accepted, I hoped for a reasonable “time for review, revisions [sic], and publication” and “publication processing time,” which included the time leading up to a decision on their manuscript, as noted by one participant, “timeline for submission/review.”

Participants also highlighted cost as being a factor influencing their decisions related to where to submit their FS-SoTL work for publication consideration. A journal with “no publication charges” was viewed as more favorable. One participant indicated that they would consider one of NCFR’s journals if they were receptive to SoTL, but this was contingent upon waiving the publication fee, “I’d like to see a section in one of the NCFR journals (if they waive the review fee).” This point highlights the multiple factors that influence decisions around where to submit FS-SoTL work for publication and the ways in which they shape one another. Relatedly, one participant succinctly conveyed “Fit, tier, cost” as being influential factors.

## Discussion

The proliferation of SoTL in North American universities is well documented (Huber & Hutchings, 2005; Hutchings et al., 2011; O’Meara, 2005; O’Meara & Rice, 2005 as cited in Gurung et al., 2008; Wuetherick & Yu, 2016). However, the growth of SoTL has not been uniform across disciplines. Research indicates limited dissemination of family science SoTL work at NCFR’s annual conference (DiGregorio et al., 2016). Similarly, a scarcity of family science SoTL exists within NCFR’s three disciplinary journals (Maurer et al., 2022). As such, the visible integration of SoTL in Family

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Science is relatively nascent. The findings of this exploratory study deepen our understanding of the factors that influence family science SoTL scholars' decisions regarding where to submit their FS-SoTL work for publication consideration.

In the existing literature, the top factors influencing decisions for where to submit disciplinary research manuscripts that have consistently emerged are journal audience, abstracting and indexing, impact factor, journal prestige, and no author charges (Nicholas et al., 2022; Niles et al., 2020; Wijewickrema & Petras, 2017). From that list, only no author charges (2nd) and appropriateness of audience (3rd) emerged as top factors in the quantitative data in the current study, with abstracting and indexing ranking 9th, prestige ranking 12th, and impact factor ranking 14th out of 17 factors (helpfulness of peer reviews was 1st). The responses from the qualitative data likewise reinforced the importance of no author charges and the appropriateness of audience as factors influencing family science SoTL scholars' decisions about where to submit their SoTL work for publication.

Generally speaking, the quantitative and qualitative results highlighted the importance of impact over impact factor when deciding where SoTL-active family scientists submit their work for publication consideration. However, some qualitative responses bemoaned the epistemic gatekeeping of the more prestigious NCFR journals with higher impact factors and the lack of prestige of *Family Science Review*, where three-quarters of respondents had published their family science SoTL work. As Chick et al. (2021, p. 11) have noted, "metrics such as impact factors guide whose work gets read, circulated, cited, legitimized, and ultimately rewarded (e.g., through career progression based on research "impact")." Our data would suggest that although our participants were largely unmotivated by journal prestige or impact factor in selecting target journals for their family science SoTL work, they were nonetheless acutely aware of the connection between those factors and readership which emerged as the 4th most influential factor in our quantitative data as well as repeatedly in our qualitative data. Previous research indicates that family scientists may have limited awareness of the presence of SoTL in the discipline (Reinke et al., 2016). Reinke et al.'s (2016) findings also reveal that family science SoTL scholars are more likely to publish in refereed mainstream teaching and learning publications than in refereed family science outlets. Consuming mainstream SoTL research requires knowledge and understanding of broader educational theory and engagement with the broader SoTL literature, which can create significant barriers to consuming that literature (Webb & Tierney, 2020). Unfortunately, this pattern likely results in SoTL-active family scientists' work reaching fewer members of the target audience – other family scientists.

In turn, this pattern may contribute to another theme that emerged from the qualitative data: the paucity of family science SoTL. If family scientists are publishing their SoTL work in mainstream SoTL journals, which are far greater in number than family science journals, those publications could be more difficult to locate and are far less likely to be encountered serendipitously while reading through a journal family science faculty already consume. Additionally, because publishing in mainstream SoTL journals requires broader knowledge and understanding of educational theory and the SoTL literature than publishing in disciplinary journals (Webb & Tierney, 2020), the additional expertise necessary to publish in those journals could function as a barrier for SoTL-active family scientists who are trying to publish their work, ultimately reducing the amount of family science SoTL published.

The findings of this exploratory study provide valuable insight into not only the factors that influence family science SoTL scholars' decisions regarding where to submit their FS-SoTL work for publication consideration, but also illuminate how these determinations may deviate from decisions related to submitting non-SoTL FS research for publication. The data also highlight FS-SoTL scholars' conceptualization of how their work not only is applied, but how it could be applied if there were more

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welcoming outlets for FS-SoTL work within the discipline. The themes that emerged from the qualitative data illustrate participants' perception of a scarcity of FS-SoTL and that the largest disciplinary journals do not provide adequate "fit" for FS-SoTL alongside an insistence on prioritizing impact. In this way, FS-SoTL scholars' concern with their work reaching target audiences is in alignment with ISSOTL's GC5 and, as a result of a lack of disciplinary journals that are receptive to FS-SoTL, they are compelled to establish broader parameters for target readership. While a goal of SoTL practitioners is "to improve teaching, learning, and higher education more broadly" (Scharff et al., 2023), the reach of FS-SoTL scholars' work may be limited by the factors identified in this exploratory study. Therefore, application of FS-SoTL by family scientists may be lessened due to FS-SoTL scholars' seeking publication outlets external to the discipline. In order to support the translational nature of family science, the discipline must work to establish viable outlets to disseminate FS-SoTL research. By doing so, FS-SoTL work will realize its full potential and its capacity to support teaching and learning within family science and the transfer of those skills to application "in real life to help strengthen families."

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

This exploratory investigation was limited by a small number of participants (N = 12). However, this small number could be, in part, illustrative of limited SoTL-active faculty in family science or that many are engaging in projects that are not quite SoTL, but could bolster their designs to be more systematic and intentional to make them SoTL. Additionally, Maurer et al. (2022) documented only seven SoTL publications in NCFR journals from 2009-2018; our sample yielded five participants who had submitted SoTL to one of those journals and as such could still represent a sizable proportion of the total activity. Further, participant demographics for this sample were similar to prior research about SoTL in family science (DiGregorio et al., 2016; Maurer et al., 2022; Reinke et al., 2016). SoTL is more about context and replicability than generalizability (Felten, 2013; Friberg, 2018), so the similarities in context between this investigation and previous ones in the literature suggest an appropriate and overlapping context.

Additionally, as an exploratory investigation, the focus of this project was to begin the process of identifying potential influences on SoTL-active family scientists' target journal decisions, not to probe the topic in great depth. Notably, participant responses to the open-ended items were frequently presented in single sentence or fragmented responses. These data points reflected clear themes during analysis and provide a foundation for future research designs. Our preliminary findings suggest that SoTL-active family scientists' target journal decisions are influenced by some factors significantly different from those that typically influence disciplinary scholarship yet that are also consistent with some patterns of SoTL scholarship. Future research could explore these findings in more depth.

For example, the appropriateness of audience emerged as an important factor among our participants, but we did not interrogate who participants perceived their target audience to be and why. If SoTL-active family scientists do not view other family scientists as their primary audience, that could potentially explain why so many of them publish their work in mainstream SoTL journals (e.g., Reinke et al., 2016). If that is indeed the case, it also raises the question of why family scientists aren't the primary audience. Is it possible that this publication pattern is part of the broader translational approach of the family science lens (National Council on Family Relations, n.d.-a) that is central to family science's disciplinary identity (Hamon & Smith, 2017) with SoTL-active family scientists seeing broader applications of their work than just in family science contexts? If so, this could be part of a knowledge translation approach that has been emerging in SoTL and focuses not just on SoTL knowledge creation but also the authentic use of that knowledge by appropriate audiences (Maurer et al.,

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2021; Nowell & Friberg, 2022). There are limited examples of family scientists explicitly using a translational approach in their SoTL work (Maurer, 2023), but further research is needed to explore if this is a conscious effort on the part of SoTL-active family scientists in selecting target journals for their SoTL work.

Such future efforts would further contribute to ISSOTL's Grand Challenge #5 (Scharff et al., 2023) by exploring questions of what works where, why, and how in disciplinary SoTL contexts (Chick, 2023; Chng & Looker, 2013). Indeed, this attention to context is fundamental to family science scholarly approaches that seek to determine how common specific patterns are and under which conditions those patterns appear (Amato, 2014). Family science SoTL scholars seem particularly well-positioned to explore issues like these.

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## Appendix A

**Table A1***Importance of Factors Influencing Publication Decisions (N = 12)*

Factor	Response					M	SD
	Not at all important	Slightly important	Moderately important	Very important	Extremely important		
Helpfulness of peer reviews in improving the work	0%	0%	8%	33%	58%	4.5	0.67
The cost (or lack of cost) to publish	0%	17%	0%	33%	50%	4.17	1.12
Has a readership/audience that I want to reach	8%	0%	8%	42%	42%	4.08	1.17
Journal/source publishes similar SoTL research	0%	17%	0%	50%	33%	4	1.04
High standards of peer review	0%	0%	17%	75%	8%	3.92	0.52
Journal/source that I regularly read	0%	17%	8%	50%	25%	3.83	1.03
Time from submission to first/online appearance	0%	17%	17%	42%	25%	3.75	1.06
Quality of the publishing process	8%	8%	8%	67%	8%	3.58	1.06
Abstracting and indexing of the journal/source	8%	0%	42%	50%	0%	3.33	0.89
How often the journal/source appears to be cited	0%	17%	33%	50%	0%	3.33	0.78
Acceptance rate	0%	17%	50%	17%	17%	3.33	0.99
Overall prestige of the journal/source/publisher	8%	17%	33%	33%	8%	3.17	1.12
Open access publication	17%	25%	8%	25%	25%	3.17	1.53
Impact factor of the journal	8%	17%	42%	25%	8%	3.08	1.08
Availability of a persistent article identifier (e.g., DOI)	17%	8%	42%	25%	8%	3	1.21
Author contributions from different countries	17%	8%	50%	17%	8%	2.92	1.17
Geographical location of the journal	50%	17%	17%	8%	8%	2.08	1.38

*Note.* Factors are listed in descending order by mean importance

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## **Appendix B**

### **Survey Protocols**

This project is focused on the perceptions and experiences of Family Scientists who have published scholarship in the area of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning [SoTL]. For this survey, we have defined SoTL 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).

#### **Qualitative Questions**

Q1. Using this definition, have you ever produced a peer-reviewed publication in the area of the Scholarship of Teaching and Learning?

Q2. When you are searching for Scholarship of Teaching and Learning [SoTL] research specifically in the field of Family Science, where do you look? Please list the sources in the text box (conferences, journals, etc.)?

Q3. In non-Family Science SoTL outlets (conferences, journals, etc.), how often do you see SoTL that was conducted by Family Science scholars or in Family Science contexts (exclude your own work for the purposes of this question)? Please elaborate on how you would characterize the frequency of occurrence.

Q4. At which conferences have you disseminated your Family Science SoTL research, if any? Please list the names in the text box.

Q5. In which journals or other publications have you published your Family Science SoTL research, if any? Please list the names in the text box.

Q6. Have you ever submitted your Family Science SoTL research to one of NCFR's journals: Journal of Marriage and Family, Family Relations, or Journal of Family Theory and Review? (Note: We are not asking if your work has been \*published\* in those journals, only if you have submitted your Family Science SoTL research to any of those journals.)

#### **If yes on Q6:**

Q7. What factors influenced your decision to submit your Family Science SoTL research to one of NCFR's three journals? Please elaborate in the text box.

#### **If no on Q6:**

Q8. What factors influenced your decision NOT to submit your Family Science SoTL research to one of NCFR's three journals? Please elaborate in the text box.

Q9. What factors influence where you decide to submit your Family Science SoTL research for publication? Please elaborate in the text box.

### Quantitative Questions

Q10. How important are each of the following factors to you in deciding where you submit your Family Science SoTL research for publication? (1 = Not at all important, 2 = Slightly important, 3 = Moderately important, 4 = Very important, 5 = Extremely important)

- a. Journal/source publishes similar SoTL research
- b. Overall prestige of the journal/source/publisher
- c. Impact factor of the journal
- d. Abstracting and indexing of the journal/source
- e. Availability of a persistent article identifier (e.g., DOI)
- f. How often the journal/source appears to be cited
- g. High standards of peer review
- h. Helpfulness of peer reviews in improving the work
- i. Acceptance rate
- j. Quality of the publishing process
- k. Time from submission to first/online appearance
- l. Open access publication
- m. The cost (or lack of cost) to publish
- n. Has a readership/audience that I want to reach
- o. Journal/source that I regularly read
- p. Author contributions from different countries
- q. Geographical location of the journal

### Demographic Questions

Q11. What is your current gender identity? (1 = Man, 2 = Woman, 3 = Trans male/trans man, 4 = Trans female/trans woman, 5 = Genderqueer/gender non-binary, 6 = A better description not specified above)

Q12. Please indicate your race (check all that apply): (1 = American Indian or Alaska Native, 2 = Asian, 3 = Black or African American, 4 = Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, 5 = White)

Q13. Please indicate your ethnicity: (1 = Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx, 2 = Not Hispanic or Latino/Latina/Latinx)

Q14. What is your age?

Q15. Which of the following best describes your rank? (1 = Visiting professor, 2 = Affiliate/adjunct professor, 3 = Assistant professor, 4 = Associate professor, 5 = Full professor, 6 = Professor emeritus/emerita, 7 = Other, please describe).

Q16. How many years have you been teaching?

Q17. Which of the following most closely describes the field from which you obtained your highest degree?

1 = Family Science or a similarly named program (e.g., Human Development and Family Studies, Child and Family Development, Marriage and Family Therapy, etc.)

2 = Not Family Science, but an affiliated/allied field (e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Early Childhood Education, Nutrition, etc.)

3 = Neither Family Science nor an affiliated/allied field (e.g., Higher Education Administration, Art, Chemistry, etc.)

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Q18. What is your current academic discipline?

1 = Family Science or a similarly named program (e.g., Human Development and Family Studies, Child and Family Development, Marriage and Family Therapy, etc.)

2 = Not Family Science, but an affiliated/allied field (e.g., Psychology, Sociology, Anthropology, Early Childhood Education, Nutrition, etc.)

3 = Neither Family Science nor an affiliated/allied field (e.g., Higher Education Administration, Art, Chemistry, etc.)

Q19. Please indicate which of the following best describes your institution. (1 = Community college, 2 = Baccalaureate college, 3 = Master's college or university, 4 = Doctorate-granting university, 5 = Other)

Q20. Please indicate which of the following best describes your institution. (1 = Public, 2 = Private, not for profit, 3 = Private, for profit)

Q21. Do you have an administrative role at your institution (e.g., department chair, dean, etc.)? (1 = Yes, please indicate your role, 2 = No)

Q22. In the space provided below, please share any additional insights or comments you have about factors that influence decisions about where Family Scientists submit their SoTL research for publication.