Work-Family Balance: An Interpretive Approach to Understanding Perceptions and Strategies of Dual-Earner Couples in Cape Town, South Africa

by

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submitted in accordance with the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

In the subject

PSYCHOLOGY

at the

University of South Africa

Supervisor: Dr Jacques Livingston

February 2015
DECLARATION

I declare that “Work-Family Balance: An Interpretive Approach to Understanding Perceptions and Strategies of Dual-Earner Couples in Cape Town, South Africa” is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE ___________________________ Date ___________________________

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to those who have assisted me throughout this research journey:

• The Almighty God for making me the person I am today. I know it is only through His grace that I was able to pursue and complete this study.

• My supervisor, Doctor Jacques Livingston, for his ongoing encouragement throughout this study. Your patience, availability, knowledge, and detailed feedback have been invaluable throughout my research journey. It has truly been a privilege and an honour for me to be your student.

• This thesis would not have been possible without the ten couples who graciously gave their time and shared their life stories with me. I appreciate your contributions and feel deeply honoured to have known you!

• Lastly, to my family who have provided me with support throughout my studies. In particular, I would like to thank my husband and dual-earner spouse, Desmond Seeley. I thank you for your unwavering support, love and understanding throughout this journey.
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ABSTRACT

Balancing the work and family domains is an ongoing concern for men and women in dual-earner relationships. However, most of the research studies that have explored work-family balance, have been conducted within the North American context using highly educated middle-class couples. Furthermore, no known South African studies have explored work-family balance experiences and strategies based on the couple as a unit. The aim of this study is therefore to understand how middle-class South African dual-earner couples experience and pursue work-family balance. A sample comprising ten multi-racial, middle-class, heterosexual dual-earner couples with children, who work in different employment sectors, and reside in Cape Town, South Africa, were selected purposefully through the use of convenience and snow-ball sampling techniques. The interpretive approach located within the qualitative paradigm was employed to understand the subjective experiences of couples through the method of semi-structured conjoint interviews. All conjoint interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed for later analysis. Patterns and themes within the data were identified using thematic analysis and later organised through the use of thematic networks. Two organising themes were uncovered for the global theme “subjective experiences of work-family balance amongst dual-earner couples”, namely that work-family balance is a unique experience, and that work-family balance is a dynamic process. Furthermore, the data analysis revealed ten organising themes for the global theme “strategies dual-earner couples use to pursue a work-family balance”, namely that striving towards an egalitarian marital relationship helps to promote couples’ experience of work-family balance; proactively structuring opportunities for time with family contributes to a balanced work and family life;
accessing familial and paid support promotes feelings of being successful in balancing work and family roles; shared planning and organisation facilitates a better balance of work and family roles; living within means relieves couples of unnecessary financial stress; creating opportunities for “alone time” supports couples’ work-family balance; work validation and satisfaction encourages greater experiences of work-family balance; having the ability to control one’s schedule ensures greater freedom to transition between work and family domains; setting boundaries around work and family domains helps couples maintain their balance; and relying on faith to cope with work and family stressors leads to a more balanced life. Each organising theme contained several basic themes which were discussed in relation to previous literature and/or research studies.
KEY TERMS

Dual-earner couples; Work-family balance; Multiple roles; Strategy; Interpretivism; Cape Town; South Africa.
GLOSSARY

Cohabitation

The Department of Social Development (2011) defines the cohabitation family as a union whereby two adults with or without children are living together without any contractual agreement.

Dual-earner Couple/Relationship

A dual-earner couple or relationship refers to a married or cohabiting couple whereby both of the spouses or cohabitants are engaged in outside paid employment (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011). In the literature, these couples are also referred to as dual-career or dual-income couples (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006) and dual-wage earner families (Clay, 2005).

Egalitarian Relationship

An egalitarian relationship refers to a relationship whereby partners are able to share their benefits, chores and responsibilities (Reis & Sprecher, 2009).

Expansionist Theory

The expansionist theory posits that multiple roles, in general, are beneficial for men and women (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). This theory is based on four empirically testable principles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).
Family

The sociological description which captures the definition of family in this study is “a group of interacting persons who recognise a relationship with each other, based on a common parentage, marriage or adoption” (Department of Social Development, 2011, p. 27). Family may also be regarded as a pillar of society as it sets the foundation that shapes a society’s structure, organisation, and purpose (Department of Social Development, 2011). As a result of cultural diversity and different social contexts, there are various configurations of family patterns which may change during the life stages of individuals (de Vaus, 2004).

Interpretive Approach

The interpretive approach aims to explain the subjective reasons and meanings underlying social action (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006). Furthermore, this approach assumes “that people’s subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology), that we can understand others’ experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology), and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (methodology)” (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 123).

Marriage

Due to the diversity of cultures and religious practices in the South African context, there are different forms of marriage. Among these is The Recognition of Customary Marriages Act, 120 of 1998, which permits customary registration of marriage under African customary law, as well as a more recent law of The Civil Union
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Act, 17 of 2006, which allows solemnisation of a civil or religious marriage, a civil partnership regardless of gender.

**Strategy**

A strategy is defined as “a plan, method, or a series of manoeuvres for obtaining a specific goal or result” (Dictionary.com, 2013, para. 4). Whereas a strategy is regarded as resulting from a deliberately planned set of actions, it may also result from unintentional and unplanned actions (Emigh, 2001).

**Unpaid Work**

Unpaid work refers to domestic house chores, childcare and voluntary work undertaken by individuals (Statistics South Africa, 2013; Veiga, 2009). Unpaid work is also referred to in literature as unpaid care work (Antonopolous, 2009; Statistics South Africa, 2013). The difference between paid and unpaid work is that an individual does not receive remuneration for carrying out unpaid work tasks (Antonopolous, 2009).

**Work**

Work may be defined as “a job or activity that you do regularly especially in order to earn money” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2013, para. 1). In this study, work refers to employment or paid work undertaken by an individual outside their home (Antonopoulos, 2009; Jacobs & Gornick, 2002). The literature suggests that globalisation and technological advancement have intensified working hours for individuals and that paid work is progressively consuming more of people’s time (Lewis, 2003).
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**Work-family Balance**

A definition of work-family balance is the “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum role conflict” (Clark, 2000, p. 751). Additional definitions of work-family balance are acknowledged and discussed in Chapter Two of the dissertation.

**Work/family Border Theory**

The work/family border theory suggests that people are daily border-crossers who manage and negotiate between the work and family spheres, and the borders between these, in order to attain balance (Clark, 2000).

**Work-family Conflict**

Work-family conflict is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role [home] is made more difficult by participation in another role [work]” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77).
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the background and motivation for the research. Firstly, the personal and professional motives for, and the anticipated value derived from conducting this study are explained. With this context in place, the aims of the study are presented followed by a brief description of the methodological approach underpinning the research and the data analysis. Lastly a chapter outline delineates the contents of subsequent chapters in the dissertation.

1.1 Background and Motivation for the Research

1.1.1 Personal motives for the study.

The inspiration for this study primarily originates from conversations held with colleagues and family friends who live in dual-earner relationships with children. More specifically, these dialogues focus on work and family responsibilities and the challenges faced while managing the two spheres in a person’s everyday life. On the one hand, these men and women express feelings of being overwhelmed and stressed as a result of increased workloads and family responsibilities, while on the other hand, these individuals convey feelings of pride in their work and family arrangements, and cannot see themselves not being in a dual earner relationship. When I discovered that these individuals spoke of personal strategies that they employ to avoid conflict in either of their major life domains, I became interested in how such couples experience work and family life.
Fascinated by these conversations on work-family balance, I developed a more personal reason for conducting this study, namely that of my own interest in the phenomenon, especially as a newly-wed in a dual-earner relationship looking to start a family of my own. What does work-family balance mean for me? What is my secret recipe for having a balanced work and family life? Will I be able to maintain a balance when I have a child? To answer these questions, I have to reflect on my own experience of work and family life. Firstly, I feel proud of being in a dual-earner relationship, especially when I contribute to the household expenses or simply treat my husband to a fancy night out or a weekend away. Secondly, I appreciate the relationships and networking opportunities which have developed as a result of my work. Thirdly, I take pride in my work, especially when I receive positive feedback from clients, which further motivates me to excel and develop myself further personally and professionally. Of course, there are also disadvantages at times in a dual-earner relationship. Since both my husband and I work, it sometimes becomes a little frantic when we have too much work on our hands and just not enough time in the day or time for one another.

I work as an independent consultant to three companies in Cape Town. I do not work a traditional eight hour schedule, but rather split work time accordingly for each project I undertake. For example, on some days I may finish work as early as one o’clock and on other days I may finish at eight o’clock in the evening, and when necessary, even work on Saturdays. Being a consultant to different companies also means that I travel more than an individual who works at one place of employment would. However, for some project phases, I am able to work from home, which frees me from having to travel to the client. My husband also works as a consultant for the same companies that I work for in Cape Town. He often travels out of the country and at times between Cape Town and Johannesburg for business. At present, like me, he
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has flexible working hours, and a day off during the week. Working on the same projects also means that when possible, we are able to travel together on some of the overseas and local trips.

In the home, I do the cleaning, washing, and prepare the evening meals with the exception of weekends when we normally go out to a restaurant or order takeouts. My husband prepares breakfast every morning when he is at home and sometimes helps with washing up after meals. We also go grocery shopping in the evenings every second day. At present, I am content with this arrangement and feel that my husband’s contribution to house chores is more than sufficient. He has always given me the option to hire help if needed it, which I have declined for the time being. I am certain that I would need help with housework when we have a child, when I would consider hiring help for cleaning, ironing, and washing. I am also enrolled for the masters programme with the University of South Africa, which means that I spend time every week working on my dissertation. I generally dedicate an hour a day to my studies every week.

For me, work-family balance does not entail splitting my time equally between work and family, but rather, the ability to spend more quality time with my husband than on work. I believe that I am very blessed as my work allows me to choose the projects I work on and we are able to travel together on business, which gives us extra time to spend with each other.

An important strategy for us to balance work and family is to go away on holiday at least once a year. This holiday is strictly for relaxation, which means no cell-phones or email and is normally far away from the home. We give our hotel details only to our families in case of an emergency. Another strategy that we use is to have supper together and discuss everything about work, family, planning holidays, shows, and personal issues. We also have a ritual of taking a relaxing bath together when possible, give one another mini massages and other romantic
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gestures similar to this. When the weather allows, we go for a long walk on the promenade where we enjoy the beautiful view of the sun setting on the sea. In our free time, we also relax at home, go out to a restaurant or show, or do some sight-seeing in and around Cape Town. I also utilised some of this free time to work on my masters dissertation. On Sunday mornings, we go to church together and normally have coffee and cake straight after the service, where we express our interpretations of the religious message received on that day.

Of course, I am very realistic that my husband and I have made our work arrangements beneficial for us and not everyone would prefer or perhaps be afforded the opportunity to choose the projects that they work on and to join their spouse on business travels. In addition to this, we may still call ourselves fortunate in that we are able to spend this quality time with one another since we do not have children yet. Also, as individuals and couples are different (Barnett & Hyde, 2001), their experience of work-family balance will be unique to them. Fascinated by this complex phenomenon, I developed the following formal research questions: “How do dual-earner couples with children, in Cape Town, experience family balance?” Furthermore, “What strategies do these couples use to manage a balanced work and family life?”

1.1.2 Professional motives for the study.

Work and family are considered particularly important domains in the lives of employed individuals and balancing both work and family roles is an ongoing concern for men and women (Parker & Wang, 2013; Shimada, Shimazu, Bakker, Demerouti, & Kawakami, 2010). I began by searching for literature available on dual-earner couples and work-family balance and came across a vast amount of literature on the topic. Firstly, the conflict and strain experienced among dual-earner couples while juggling work and family life’s multiple roles have been a central
topic in the social sciences, especially since the rise of women’s participation in the workforce (Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba, & Lyness, 2006; Straub, 2007). Researchers such as Edwards and Rothbard (2000), Greenhaus and Beutell (1985), Katz and Kahn (1978), Rothbard and Dumas (2006), and Staines (1980), to mention a few, have explored this topic. A second body of research focuses on identifying the benefits of being in a dual earner relationship, for example, literary works by Barnett and Hyde (2001), Frone (2003), Haddock and Rattenborg (2003), and Zimmerman, Haddock, Current, and Ziemba (2003).

It also became evident while reviewing the literature that researchers are developing new interests in the work-family balance phenomenon as a result of: (a) the feminisation of the labour market (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Franks, Schurink, & Fourie, 2006); (b) the rise of dual-earner relationships (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock, Zimmerman, Ziemba, & Current, 2001); (c) the rise of living costs (Legg, 2014; Maimane, 2012; Potelwa, 2014); (d) advancements in telecommunications (Ahemad, Chaudhary, & Karush, 2013; Kelan, 2009); (e) the increased intensity of work (Lewis, 2003); and the organisation’s interest in the work-family balance of employees (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; Huang, 2010; Veiga, 2009), dual-earner couples experience in contemporary society (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Gurney, 2010; Parker & Wang, 2013). This initiated my next motive for developing this study, namely the importance of work-family balance research in the 21st Century. This motive supports the idea that work-family balance research should focus on the current trends in the lives of men and women as opposed to the outdated theories and views presented in literature (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

Lastly, I reviewed research that identified strategies used by dual earner couples to balance work and family life. Although various research studies have investigated the strategies
used by dual-earner couples in balancing work and family life, for example, Forsberg (2009), Haddock et al. (2006), Haddock et al., (2001), and Ornstein and Stalker (2013), these have largely been conducted in a North American context among highly educated middle-class dual-earner couples.

South Africa, in contrast, is argued to be a developing country, with a burgeoning economy, and diverse political systems, economies, linguistics, religious and ethnic groups (Mubangizi, 2012) compared to that of the North American context. Thus, I saw a potential shortcoming in the academic literature which is another important motive for conducting this study. Furthermore, the South African researchers who have reported qualitative findings of work-family life balance among employed adults (De Villiers & Kotze, 2003; Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010; Mostert & Oldfield, 2009; Veiga, 2009), have interviewed only one of the spouses or cohabitants in a couple. From my personal experience, being in a dual-earner relationship, decisions with regard to how to balance work and family life are made jointly by my husband and I. This view is also supported in the literature which suggests that couples “operate within dyads” (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 793), and based on their personal needs, they develop strategies on how to manage their work and family life (Moen & Wethington, 1992). To date, no known South African literature has investigated work-family balance using the dual-earner couple as a unit. To address this void, this study aimed to use the interpretive approach to understand the subjective experiences of couples as lived by them in their own words through the qualitative method of semi-structured conjoint interviews.
1.2 Anticipated Value of the Study

Difficulties relating to balancing work as well as family life are exceedingly significant to couples’ everyday lifestyles (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011; Veiga, 2009). Therapists working with dual-earner couples have noted that nearly one third of couple cases entail concerns associated with work-family balance (Haddock & Bowling, 2002). The literature suggests that many therapists lack the knowledge and experience of how to deal with such issues (Haddock & Bowling, 2002). Therefore, there is a significant need for further research on perceptions and strategies for work and family balance in communities such as those in South Africa. This qualitative study aims to capture the dual-earner couple’s subjective experiences and strategies of work and family life balance in Cape Town, South Africa.

The purpose of this research is not to generalise the results, but to capture the lived experiences of dual-earner couples of work and family and balance in a South African context. The findings of this research will build on the existing multiple discourses in the field as well as literature documenting how dual-earner couples manage a balance between work and family life. Furthermore, this study seeks to raise awareness of work-family balance in dual-earner relationships for occupational and organisational psychologists in South Africa. Lastly, it is hoped that this study will enhance the profile of South African research in the field of, and stimulate debates on key issues in relation to, work-family balance.

1.3 Aims of the Study

The aim of this research study is to investigate the strategies used by multi-racial, heterosexual middle-class South African dual-earner couples to balance work and family life.
The objective is to investigate how middle-class South African dual-earner couples experience work and family life balance and what strategies they employ.

The following sub-objectives are:

(a) to describe the strategies used by South African dual-earner couples in rich detail by focusing on the subjective phenomenology; and

(b) to explore the strategies used by South African dual-earner couples in rich detail.

1.4 Research Design and Scope

I chose the interpretive approach (Terre Blanche & Durrheim, 2006; Walsham, 2006) as it allows me to interact with the dual-earner couples and explore in-depth how these couples perceive work-family balance and understand the strategies they utilise. I used a combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques to select my sample (Durrheim & Painter, 2006). The sample consists of ten (N=10) multiracial, heterosexual, middle-class dual earner couples with at least one child in their care. Eligibility of couples was considered if they met the following prerequisites of the research: a) they are married (including custom marriages) or had been in a cohabiting heterosexual relationship for at least two years; b) each spouse/cohabitant was engaged in outside, paid employment of at least 30 hours per week; c) each couple was the primary caregiver of at least one child or has a child under the age of 18 residing with them at least half of the time; d) both spouses were fluent in English; e) the couple resided in Cape Town; and (f) both spouses wanted to participate in the study.

The qualitative method for engaging with each couple involved semi-structured conjoint interviews which lasted approximately 90 minutes. The interviews were audio-recorded and
transcribed. Data analysis was conducted using thematic analysis which identified, analysed and reported on themes within the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

To ensure trustworthiness within this study, criteria and techniques developed by Lincoln and Guba (1985) were applied.

1.5 **Chapter Division**

The remainder of this dissertation is presented to the reader as follows:

**Chapter Two** consists of the literature review. The purpose of this review is to situate the study in the context of previous theories and research pertaining to work-family balance. With this context in place, an overview of existing literature available on dual-earner couple’s strategies of work-family balance is critically evaluated. This chapter also identifies shortcomings in existing South African literature which this study seeks to address.

**Chapter Three** explains the methodological approach to this study, including the research methodology, sampling population, measuring procedures and analysis of the data.

**Chapter Four** discusses the findings presented as themes that emerged after careful thematic analysis of how couples experience work-family balance and the strategies they use in pursuance of balance. The themes will be defined, discussed, supported by various extracts from the couple’s quotations and referenced to previous literature and/or previous research studies.

A summary of the overall findings of this thesis is presented in **Chapter Five**. This chapter also addresses the limitations of this study and identifies areas of focus for future research.
1.6 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has set the stage and provides an overview of the background and motivation for the study. My personal and professional motivation for the study is explained. I have also explicated the importance of work-family balance for dual-earner couples in the 21st century, and identified the void in South African literature pertaining to work-family balance research. In addition, formal research questions, aims and objectives, and anticipated value derived from conducting the study are examined. Lastly, I furnished an outline of the dissertation chapters.
CHAPTER 2
LITERATURE REVIEW

In this chapter I present an overview of the literature within which the study of dual-earner couples and work-family balance in South Africa is situated. This chapter also highlights the deficiencies in the South African literature pertaining to the work-family balance of dual-earner couples.

I commence with an overview of the Cape Town social and economic context within which the dual-earner couples live.

Work-family balance is contextualised by evaluating its influencing factors, the different definitions of the phenomenon available in the literature, and 21st Century issues that impact the work and family balance of dual-earner couples in South Africa.

Thereafter I present and discuss the relevant theories available in the literature. The theoretical contributions include the works of Barnett and Hyde (2001) (the expansionist theory), and Clark (2000) (the work/family border theory). For each theory, I present a brief overview of the historical development, explain central concepts, and provide a critical evaluation.

Lastly, I examine research studies conducted on the strategies that dual-earner couples use to achieve work-family balance. These studies are critically evaluated with respect to results, conclusions, and methodological aspects.

2.1 The Cape Town Social and Economic Context

Firstly, to understand the work-family balance of dual-earner couples in Cape Town, an insight into the social and economic context in which they live is useful.
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2.1.1 Demographics.

Cape Town is the second most populated city in South Africa. As the provincial capital of the Western Cape, the city hosts 3 740 026 million people (66 % of the province’s population) (The Western Cape Destination Marketing Investment and Trade Promotion Agency, 2013). The population of Cape Town is predominantly under the age of thirty-five and sex ratios (95.9 males per 100 females) suggest that there are more females than males (Statistics South Africa, 2012a).

The majority (78.4 %) of individuals in Cape Town live in formal settlements, while a reported 20.5 % live in informal settlements (Statistics South Africa, 2012b).

The coloured population group is the predominant group in Cape Town (42.4 %), followed by black (38.6 %), white (15.7 %), Asian/Indian (1.4 %), and other (1.9 %) groups (The Western Cape Destination Marketing Investment and Trade Promotion Agency, 2013). The Afrikaans language is spoken by the majority of the population (41.4 %), followed by Xhosa (28.7 %), and English (27.9 %) (The Western Cape Destination Marketing Investment and Trade Promotion Agency, 2013). Religious affiliations are largely Christian (76.6 %) and the rest fall in the minority; no religion, (10.7 %), Islam (9.7 %), Judaism (0.5 %), and Hinduism (0.2 %) (Statistics South Africa, 2003).

Cape Town reports suggest that only 16.3 per cent of adults aged 20 years or older have attained higher education, while 30.3 per cent have completed a matric qualification, and 1.8 per cent have no education (Statistics South Africa, 2012b).
2.1.2 Family patterns.

While the majority (57.1%) of individuals in Cape Town have never been married, 36.3 per cent of individuals are married or in a cohabiting relationship, and the average household consists of 3.3 individuals (Statistics South Africa, 2012b).

The 2011 census reports also suggest that 43.6 per cent of those individuals participating in the workforce are responsible for supporting child dependants (0-14 years) and aging adult dependants (65 years or more) (Statistics South Africa, 2012b). Moreover, the literature suggests that the Western Cape has the largest percentage of nuclear families as well as the greatest prevalence of female-headed single parent families amongst all provinces in South Africa (Department of Social Development, 2011).

2.2 Economic overview.

Cape Town is considered the second wealthiest city (after Johannesburg) in South Africa (The Western Cape Destination Marketing Investment and Trade Promotion Agency, 2013). Since 2001, the average annual household income in the Western Cape increased by 83.6 per cent and now stands at R143 461 (Statistics South Africa, 2012b). The city of Cape Town reports an employment rate of 76.12 per cent and a household average of R161 762 per annum (Statistics South Africa, 2012b). The largest sectors contributing to the economic activity of Cape Town are the financial business service industry, insurance and real estate. The second largest sectors are the wholesale and retail trade, and the catering and accommodation sectors (The Western Cape Destination Marketing Investment and Trade Promotion Agency, 2013).
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However, Cape Town is a city in a developing country and its context is very different to other cities in North America which will most likely influence work-family balance experiences (Brink & De la Rey, 2001). For example, the last recorded (2012) Gross Domestic Product per capita for South Africa was $ 6,618 and $ 53,143 for the United States (The World Bank, 2014). In addition, the 2011 unemployment rate in Cape Town was 23.9 per cent (Statistics South Africa, 2012) whereas the 2011 average American unemployment rate was only 8.9 per cent (United States Department of Labor, 2013).

To conclude, the social and economic context in which dual-earner couples in Cape Town live varies significantly from that of the North American context. This may result in different experiences of work-family balance. The next aspect focused on in the sub-sections below, is the aspect of contextualising the work-family balance phenomenon.

2.3 Contextualising Work-Family Balance

2.3.1 Meaning of work.

Work may be defined as “a job or activity that you do regularly especially in order to earn money” (Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary and Thesaurus, 2013, para. 1). In this study, work refers to employment or paid work undertaken by an individual outside his or her home (Antonopoulos, 2009; Jacobs & Gornick, 2002). The literature suggests that globalisation and technological advancement have intensified working hours for individuals and that paid work is progressively consuming more of people’s time (Lewis, 2003).

Unpaid work refers to domestic household chores, childcare and voluntary work undertaken by individuals (Statistics South Africa, 2013; Veiga, 2009). Unpaid work is also
referred to in the literature as unpaid care work (Antonopolous, 2009; Statistics South Africa, 2013a). The difference between paid and unpaid work is that an individual does not receive remuneration for carrying out unpaid work tasks (Antonopolous, 2009).

2.3.2 Meaning of family.

Defining family is challenging as the concept differs from culture to culture and individual to individual (de Vaus, 2004). The sociological description which captures the definition of family in this study is: “a group of interacting persons who recognise a relationship with each other, based on a common parentage, marriage or adoption” (Department of Social Development, 2011, p. 27). Family may also be regarded as a pillar of society as it sets the foundation that shapes the structure, organisation and purpose of a society (Department of Social Development, 2011). As a result of cultural diversity and different social contexts, various configurations of family patterns which may change over the life stages of individuals need to be acknowledged (de Vaus, 2004). These diverse configurations are: (a) traditional families or nuclear families (two heterosexual parents and their biological or adopted children); (b) single parent families (only one parent of either sex and their children); (c) childless families (a couple with no children); (d) step-families or blended families (two separate families, such as in the case of previously divorced individuals, bringing their children into their new marriage); (e) grandparent families or skip-generation families (children are raised by their grandparents); (f) extended families (nuclear family combined with relatives through blood or legal marriage); (g) single families (married couple with children where one spouse is absent); (h) elderly only families (only elderly individuals); (i) single-adult families (only one adult); (j) child-headed families (all individuals are under eighteen year of age); (k) sibling only families (all individual
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adults and children are siblings); (l) polygamous families (marriage includes more than one wife and the children of all these wives); and (m) migrant and refugee families (individuals who have moved from different regions or countries with or without children) (de Vaus, 2004; Department of Social Development, 2011; Holborn & Eddy, 2011).

Research suggests that the nuclear family is the most common form of family in South Africa (Holborn & Eddy, 2011). Families in the South African context may include a combination of nuclear and extended families, as well as caregivers or guardians (Holborn & Eddy, 2011).

2.3.2.1 Work-family balance defined.

As stated previously, there are various definitions of work-family balance available in the literature. Below, I will evaluate their similarities and differences.

The following definitions of work-family balance are provided in the literature: (a) “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum role conflict” (Clark, 2000, p. 751); (b) “equilibrium or maintaining an overall sense of harmony in life” (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004, p. 121); (c) “low levels of inter-role conflict and high levels of inter-role facilitation” (Frone, 2003, p. 145); (d) “the extent to which an individual is equally engaged in- and equally satisfied with- his or her work and family role” (Greenhaus, Collins, & Shaw, 2003, p. 513); (e) “global assessment that work and family resources are sufficient to meet work and family demands such that participation is effective in both domains” (Voydanoff, 2005, p. 825); and (f) “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p. 458).
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The above definitions all suggest that work roles and family roles impact one another. Some of these theorists (Clarke et al., 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Voydanoff, 2005) view balance as being equally involved in work and family roles. Equilibrium is synonymous with equality.

Greenhaus et al. (2003) contend that work-family balance consists of three components: time balance, involvement balance, and satisfaction balance. They present work-family balance as a continuum of imbalance fixed on each end, one favouring work and the other family. In the middle of this range, balance is positioned as impartial to both domains. This creates the impression that balance occurs when an individual is able to invest an equal amount of time, involvement and satisfaction across work and family roles. However, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) argue that there is limited evidence to suggest that people “seek for equally or even near equality” in the work and family domains (p. 457).

Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) also assert that defining balance in relation to satisfaction may be conceptually problematic as it “isolates individuals in their work- and family-related activities from the organizations and families in which these activities are performed” (p. 457). Firstly, they claim that these definitions take into account only the psychological construct of work-family balance. Instead of focusing on satisfaction, the focus for Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) in work-family balance falls on “accomplishing role-related activities across roles and life domains” (p. 458) which results in a social rather than a psychological construct. Finally, to attain work-family balance, Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) claim that people have to socially negotiate and share responsibilities in work and family domains in their frequent interactions with other domain partners.
The above definitions also suggest that balance occurs when low levels of inter-role conflict exist (Clark, 2000; Frone, 2003). Work-family conflict is defined as “a form of inter-role conflict in which the role pressures from the work and family domains are mutually incompatible so that participation in one role [home] is made more difficult by participation in another role [work]” (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985, p. 77). When there is conflict, an imbalance occurs and the consequences may include dissatisfaction with work and family, distress at work and at home, destructive parenting and behaviour (Belsky, 1984; Patterson, 1986), and withdrawal from work and family (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). Veiga (2009) regards time-based conflict as a precursor to conflict in the work and home domains. Therefore, “good functioning” (Clark, 2000, p. 571) and “harmony” between the work and home domains (Clarke et al., 2004) result in less conflict and strain in an individual’s life.

In her later works, Clark (2002) proposed that “balance is attained when a person feels comfortable with the way they have allocated their time and energy, and integrated and separated their responsibilities at work and at home” (p. 24). In other words, balance is seen as subjective for each individual and thus what constitutes balance for one person in work and family life may constitute something different for another (Chan, 2008; Saungweme, 2010; Veiga). This is also consistent with definitions of work-life balance identified by Gropel and Kuhl (2009) as “the perceived sufficiency of time available for work and social life” (p. 53); and Guest (2002) as the “perceived balance between work and rest of life” (p. 263).

In summary, work-family balance is a complex phenomenon which does not have a definition that is agreed upon (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). However, what can be accepted for this study is that every individual experiences work-family balance differently (Saungweme,
In addition, Veiga (2009) claims that work-life balance is not static, but rather changes over time and is dependent on the situation that individuals are faced with.

Achieving work-family balance entails experiences of greater benefits combined with little stressors for an individual involved in life’s multiple roles (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007; Rothbard, 2001; Voydanoff, 2005). Work-family conflict results in negative or poor outcomes, or both for employers, such as employee absenteeism, job dissatisfaction, lower productivity, staff turnover, and increased tardiness (Goff, Mount, & Jamison, 1990; Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985; Posig & Kickul, 2004). Therefore, work-family balance is an ongoing concern for employers, employees, and for the development of human resource policies and practice (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007), making this phenomenon an important social concern in our era (Halpern, 2005).

In the sub-section below, I will explore how gender and the division of household labour influence work-family balance.

### 2.4 Gender, Time, and the Division of Labour

Literature studies suggest that the origins of studying work-life balance may be traced back to role theories (Rantanen, Kinnunen, Mauno, & Tillemann, 2011). Gender roles are often shaped by cultural standards which dictate how men and women should behave (Johnson, Greaves, & Repta, 2007). So, for instance, traditional masculine gender roles propose that men should be authoritarian and successful, while the traditional roles of women focus on feminine aspects such as nurturing and domestic behaviours (Mahalik et al., 2005).
The theory of gender role conflict was developed by Joseph Pleck (1995) while investigating role strain in men. According to the author, gender role strain occurs as a result of stereotypical and inconsistent gender role norms (Pleck, 1995). These stereotypes stipulate how people should act, and therefore non-conformance results in social denunciation and psychological consequences (Pleck, 1995). The following sub-types of role strain in men are identified by Pleck (1995): (a) discrepancy strain: where individuals attempt to conform to traditional gender role standards. “(N)ot conforming to these standards has negative consequences for self-esteem and other outcomes reflecting psychological well-being because of negative feedback as well as internalised negative self-judgement” (p. 13); (b) gender role trauma strain: this type of strain results from a traumatic event during socialisation which can have negative consequences for men; and (c) dysfunctional strain: this means that fulfilment of a gender role can have serious negative consequences “because the behaviour and characteristic these standards prescribe can be internally dysfunctional in the sense of being associated with negative outcomes either for the male himself or for others” (pp. 16-17).

However, Barnett & Hyde (2001) argue that traditional theories of psychological gender differences are only supported in part by meta-analytic studies. According to these theorists, psychological differences between men and women depend on the behaviour or trait in question rather than on the gender differences in personality characteristics.

Literature studies further propose that gender affects career development and perceptions of work for women as a result of gender inequalities (Rothbard & Dumas, 2006). In addition, the acuity of women regarding their work role is considered to be repeatedly shaped by barriers to career promotions, reimbursement and networking opportunities (Rothbard & Brett, 2000). In
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contrast, theorists such as Barnett (2004), Barnett and Gareis (2006), and Barnett and Hyde (2001) argue that empirical evidence suggests that gender differences in workplace behaviours are generally small. Furthermore, Barnett and Hyde (2001) aver that: (a) workplace behaviours are not considered to be shaped by gender, instead they are shaped by the opportunity structures in the workplace of the individual; (b) both employed men and women experience similar stressors in the workplace; and (c) both men and women in managerial positions are “similarly reactive to opportunities for advancements” (p. 791).

Time-use studies are also valuable when considering the work-family balance of dual-earner couples. An egalitarian relationship refers to a relationship in which partners are able to share their benefits, chores and responsibilities (Reis & Sprecher, 2009). Several studies conducted recently in the United States demonstrated that the allocation of time to family work (unpaid work) and paid work between men and women became more egalitarian (Sayer, 2005). For example, due to an increase in free time available to men, it is believed that this time was primarily spent on childcare (Bianchi, Robinson, & Milkie, 2006). These scholars explained that the time spent on childcare escalated in the mid-1980s due to an increase in free time available to men and a decrease in the available free time to women to perform family activities. Hook (2006) conducted a series of time-use studies using 44 time-use surveys in 20 countries across Europe, Australia, and North America from 1965 to 2003 and found that an average of 6 hours became available to men for unpaid work such as domestic chores and childcare. Bianchi et al. (2006) argued that the increase in the participation of men in domestic chores is also due to the lack of time available to women in a day. However, despite this observed change, research studies in the United States indicate that childcare remains largely the responsibility of the mother, while fathers continue to spend more time on paid work and leisure activities (Saxbe,
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Repetti, & Graesch, 2011). Similarly, results of a time-use study conducted by Craig (2006) in Australia, reveal that mothers still spend more time compared to fathers on household chores and childcare.

The South African time-use survey (Statistics South Africa, 2013b) conducted in 2010 reported that women (98.9%) and men (97.1%) were involved in household maintenance activities (i.e., cooking, cleaning, home improvements). With respect to care work (i.e., looking after children, helping with homework), the results suggest that women (29.5%) spent more time on such activities than men (8.1%). Married or cohabiting men and women reported higher participation in paid work activities than those in other relationships. The paid work participation of men in the Western Cape is 54.4 per cent compared to that of women at 42.7 per cent; however, with respect to unpaid work (i.e., household maintenance, childcare and voluntary work) men participated only 68.9 per cent compared to women at 89.2 per cent. Those who were able to hire domestic workers reported doing less house work, but despite the extra assistance women still spent more time than men on unpaid work activities. The survey also indicates that when the expenditure of households increases, the time spent on household maintenance and caregiving decreases for women. When the household expenditure reached R6 001 or more, the gender difference in participation of household maintenance decreased. In addition, time spent on household maintenance and care work increased when people had their own children living with them. Finally, the study indicated that men in urban formal settings spent more time than women on leisure activities irrespective of geographical location and also spent more time travelling than their counterparts, irrespective of the mode of transport used.
Lastly, in the sub-sections below, I explore what factors influence the work-family balance of dual-earner couples in the 21st Century.

2.5 Factors Influencing Work-Family Balance in the 21st Century

2.5.1 The impact of women participating in the workplace.

The literature indicates that in the 21st Century, women are not only entering higher education but also the workforce at an equal or even greater rate vis-à-vis their male counterparts (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Some scholars maintain that in the years to come there will be more women than men occupying the workforce in South Africa (Franks, Schurink, & Fourie, 2006). The Department of Labour suggests that the increase may be as a result of the HIV epidemic, and the implementation of governmental policies banning gender-based discrimination and ensuring equal treatment of women in the labour market, such as the Gender Equality Act 39 of 1996 (Mokomane, 2009). For example, in South Africa between 1995 and 2005, the employment of women escalated more than that of men (Department of Labour, 2006). Females participating in the workforce reported a growth of 58 per cent compared to that of men at 42 per cent. In 2011, the United States of America reported that the employment of women constituted 48 per cent of which 52 per cent were married (U.S. Labour of Statistics, 2013). In the same year 44 per cent of women participated in the labour force in South Africa (Statistics South Africa, 2013a).

2.5.2 Rise of dual-earner couples and increased cost of living.

As a result of female participation in the labour market, the traditional male breadwinner family has been on the decline, and in modern society an emerging number of dual-earner and single-parent families have been on the rise (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock et al., 2001; Raz-
Yurovich, 2011; Shimada et al., 2010). A dual-earner couple or relationship refers to a married or cohabiting couple where both of the spouses or cohabitants are engaged in outside paid employment (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011). In the literature, these couples are also referred to as dual-career or dual-income couples (Cavanaugh & Blanchard-Fields, 2011; Rothbard & Dumas, 2006), or dual-wage earner families (Clay, 2005). Barnett and Hyde (2001) add that in modern society women no longer spend all their time on household chores and childcare and that men no longer spend their time only on paid work. Some scholars (Straub, 2007; Veiga, 2009) argue that a reason for the rise in dual-earner families is the increased cost of living which necessitates couples to pursue two incomes in order to afford their lifestyle. For example, since the global recession in 2009, South Africans have experienced significant increases in the cost of living (Hlongwane, 2012). Despite the recent rand plunge, interests rates, food, electricity and petrol costs continue to rise (Legg, 2014). Financial analysts predicted that the year 2014 would be by far the worst economically for South Africans compared to previous years (Legg, 2014; Maimane, 2012; Potelwa, 2014).

**2.5.3 Impact of telecommunications and the increasing intensity of work.**

During the last 20 years, advancements in telecommunications have introduced multiple ways for being constantly available through the use of personal devices such as laptops, smartphones, wireless connectivity, the internet, email, Skype, “always on” technology, and “push” technology. These are all examples of advancements in telecommunications which allow individuals to interact with their work and personal lives digitally on a 24/7 basis. Some scholars (Ahemad, et al., 2013; Kelan, 2009) argue that advancements in technology are like a double-edged sword, where on the one hand it allows individuals flexibility in their work, on the other
hand it negatively impacts their work-life balance, since they are always connected to their work. Also as a result of the economic downturn, businesses and professionals participating in the global market have become more competitive than ever. This may result in an increased intensity of work, thereby inducing longer hours devoted to paid work. For example, in a Lexis Nexis (2010) survey on the global recession, 68 per cent of South African professionals reported that their workloads increased significantly when compared with professionals in the U.K (52 %) or the U.S. (48 %).

2.5.4 Organisational interest in the work-family balance of employees.

Work-family balance is not only an important issue for employees, but it is also important for the organisations they work for. The literature suggests that work-family imbalance may have negative consequences for employers, resulting in employee absenteeism, increased tardiness, job dissatisfaction, lower productivity, job turnover, as well as general negative consequences for individuals and society as a whole (Downes & Koekemoer, 2011; Huang, 2010). According to Todd (2004) and Veiga (2009), a shift has taken place where some organisations are introducing flexible working schedules and policies promoting the integration of work and life for employees. Research suggests that individuals searching for jobs or those thinking about changing employers consider their work-family needs and are more likely to select those organisations that offer flexible working schedules and a supportive work-family culture (Beauregard, 2007). For example, in a recent global survey, 67 per cent of South African professionals remarked that they had turned down job offers from employers which did not support work-life balance (Visser, 2013).
2.6 Theoretical Framework

2.6.1 The expansionist theory.

Traditional psychology theories on gender, work and family (such as the psychoanalytic theory [Freud, 1905], the functionalist theory [Parsons, 1949] and sociobiological/evolutionary theories [Buss, 1989]), suggest that gender differences are considerably large with regard to the personalities, abilities, roles and behaviours of men and women in society (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). For example, structural-functionalists Parsons and Bales (1955) regarded work and family systems as though each functioned autonomously from the other. They observed that men engaged in paid work and assumed financial responsibility in the family, while women performed the role of homemakers and assumed responsibility for domestic chores and children. Barnett and Hyde (2001) argue that classic theories on gender, work and family developed from an era (1950s) of “remarkable sex segregation, gender asymmetry, and stability in the work and family patterns” and are therefore not a true reflection of current times (p. 781). In addition, Barnett and Hyde contend that the majority of empirical findings do not support sociobiological, psychoanalytic and functionalist theories; instead, the results indicate that by assigning the worker role to women and the family role to men their lives are enhanced.

From a bird’s eye view, the literature pertaining to whether multiple roles (i.e., spouse, parent, and work roles) are beneficial or harmful to men and women is divided between two competing theories, namely the scarcity theory or hypothesis (Goode, 1960) and the expansionist theory or hypothesis (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).
The scarcity theory proposes that multiple roles are not suitable for women as they lead to an unbalanced life and may result in mental and physical health problems (Geller, Graf, & Dyson-Washington, 2003). Consistent with this theory, work-family conflict results when role pressures arising in the workplace and family are mutually incompatible such that it becomes difficult for individuals to participate in one role, for example, the family role when this is negatively impacted by their participation in the work role (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985).

In contrast with the scarcity theory or hypothesis, empirical studies suggest that engaging in multiple roles will not result in conflict, stress and psychological problems, but rather hold more benefits than drawbacks for men and women (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Kirchmeyer, 1992; Rothbard, 2001; Ruderman, Ohlott, Panzer, & King, 2002). As a result of outdated traditional theories and empirical evidence supporting the benefits experienced when individuals occupy multiple roles, Barnett and Hyde (2001) proposed an expansionist theory on gender, work and family. The expansionist theory is based on the belief that, in general, multiple roles have a positive impact on one another and result in overall improvement even when taking into consideration the conflict and stress experienced (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Greenhaus & Powel, 2006).

Both men and women who engage in multiple roles report lower levels of stress-related mental and physical health problems and higher levels of subjective well-being than their counterparts who engage in fewer roles (Barnett & Baruch, 1985; Barnett and Hyde, 2001). For example, employed women reported higher levels of subjective well-being than unemployed women or women involved in only the spouse or mother role (Barnett & Baruch, 1985).
From a scarcity perspective, Goode (1960) asserts that absolute devotion and conventionality to one role reduces the amount of time and energy available to the other role due to the limited supply of energy available per day. Barnett and Hyde (2001), however, maintain that human energy is expandable and when individuals engage in multiple roles, more energy becomes available. In other words, there is no limit to how much energy an individual can have. Furthermore, this energy is able to expand when taking on more roles which may result in psychological, financial, and relationship rewards for individuals (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Consistent with the expansionist theory, Greenhaus and Powel (2006) support the positive relationship between work and family roles and claim that these have enriching effects on one another. They introduced the concept of work-family enrichment which they define as “the extent to which experiences in one role improve the quality of life in another role” (Greenhaus & Powel, 2006, p. 73).

The expansionist theory consists of four principles which are based on empirical evidence of dual-earner couples. These are:

(a) **Multiple roles are beneficial.** Empirical evidence suggests that multiple roles are beneficial for the mental, physical and relationship health of both men and women (Barnett, 2004; Baruch & Barnett, 1986; Barnett & Gareis, 2006; Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Barnett, Marshall, & Singer, 1992; Buehler & O’Brien, 2011; Kostiainen, Martelin, Kestilä, Martikainen, & Koskinen, 2009; Ruderman et al. 2002).

(b) **Processes that contribute to the benefit of multiple roles.** There are various processes, namely “buffering, added income, social support opportunities to experience success, expanded frame of reference, increased self-complexity,
similarity of experiences, and gender-role ideology” which contribute to experiencing the benefits of holding multiple roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).

(c) **Conditions for multiple role benefits.** Naturally, “there are upper limits to the benefits of multiple roles” that an individual may take on (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 789). For example, when the number of roles become too great and the demands of some are excessive, it may result in overload and distress for the individual (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). “Role quality is more important than the number of hours worked or time in one role” (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 790), or the number of roles occupied (Kostiainen, et al., 2009), thus suggesting that quality is better than quantity. Being involved in satisfying roles is more beneficial to individuals in spite of the number of hours worked in a role (Barnett, 2004).

(d) **Psychological gender differences are generally small.** In relation to psychological gender differences in personality traits, behaviour, affect, workplace behaviours and traits, and family behaviours, Barnett and Hyde acknowledge that these are “neither large nor immutable” (Barnett & Hyde, 2001, p. 790).

2.6.2 **Strengths of the expansionist theory.**

This theory offers a balanced perspective on understanding multiple roles held by dual-earner couples (Barnett & Hyde, 2001). Barnett and Hyde suggest that researchers should be more balanced when conducting studies and not be one-sided but rather concentrate on both positive and negative consequences of holding multiple roles. The expansionist theory does not imply that there are only positive results to be gained from holding multiple roles, but rather that
there are more rewards an individual may enjoy when compared to problems one may experience in multiple roles.

This theory evidently carries more weight when compared to traditional theories (i.e., scarcity theory) as it is supported by the bulk of empirical data (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Geller et al., 2003).

Very few research studies have been conducted using couples as a unit (Zhang & Liu, 2011). Barnett and Hyde (2001) aver that the majority of individuals function at couple level and decisions with regard to employment and hours spent on work are made together.

The South African studies which have investigated the work-family life balance of individuals (De Villiers & Kotze, 2003; Koekemoer & Mostert, 2010; Mostert & Oldfield, 2009; Veiga, 2009) have concentrated on the individual only (for example an employee, or women in dual-earner relationships). One of the recommendations proposed by Koekemoer and Mostert (2010) for future study is to not only include the employee in a study, but also to seek information from other individuals who are present in the work and family life of the employee. This raises the issue of dual-earner couples where both individuals work. What is the shared experience of the couple with regard to work-family life balance?

### 2.6.3 Limitations of the expansionist theory

One of the limitations to this theory is that it is culturally bound as it uses mostly white Americans for its empirical research to form the foundation of the study. Firstly, this theory is not able to predict whether multi-cultural couples would have the same experiences of multiple roles. Secondly, the theory cannot predict that the results will be similar for developing
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countries. Barnett and Hyde (2001) advise researchers to recognise and conduct studies of situations where diversity of dual-earner couples exists with regard to “race and ethnicity, sexual orientation, life stage and social class” (p. 793).

Also, the theory is time-bound as it is based on empirical studies conducted between the 1980s and 1990s. However, empirical data continues to verify the benefits of multiple roles. Recent studies indicate that work and family roles enrich one another (Carlson, Kacmar, Wayne, & Grzywacz, 2006; Greenhaus & Powel, 2006; Stoddard & Madsen, 2007); multiple roles are associated with better health (Grzywacz & Bass, 2003; Hanson, Hammer, & Colton, 2006; Stoddard & Madsen, 2007); multiple roles are associated with higher levels of life satisfaction, psychological benefits, development of multi-tasking skills, higher self-acceptance for women (Ruderman, et al., 2002); and couples benefit from earning their own income, solving work problems, utilising all their talents, and enjoying employee benefits such as medical aid (Barnett & Gareis, 2006).

Tsai (2008) claimed that although both the expansionist and enrichment theory aimed at explicating the positive effects of holding multiple roles, the former focuses only on the benefits experienced by the individual, whereas the latter considers how they may influence both the organisation and the family which is more practical for these institutions.

The expansionist theory may not be a suitable theory for studies on single-earner couples or gay couples and cannot predict outcomes for such relationships as it is built on studies of heterosexual dual-earner couples.
Regardless of the above mentioned limitations, empirical studies continue to support the expansionist theory even in current times, rendering it an important theory on gender, work and family.

2.6.4 Work/family border theory.

Work and family life are interconnected domains which are considered significant in the lives of employed individuals (Veiga, 2009). According to the open-systems approach, it is presumed that occurrences in the workplace impact incidences in the home and vice versa (Katz & Kahn, 1978). Spill-over theory (Staines, 1980), which developed from the open-systems approach, hypothesised that events in either of the domains (work or family) may spill over emotions and behaviours (positive and negative) to the other (Clark, 2000; Xu, 2009). For example, work-family conflict may occur as a result of negative emotions experienced by individuals in their work life which negatively impacts their behaviour in family life. Compensation theory, on the other hand, states that an opposite relationship exists between work and family whereby individuals vary in terms of their personal investment of themselves in one domain to compensate for what is lacking in another (Staines, 1980).

Clark (2000) argues that there are limitations to the spill-over and compensation theories as they fail to understand the process of how work-family conflict occurs as well as how work-family balance is achieved. According to Clark, work-family balance is defined as “satisfaction and good functioning at work and at home, with a minimum of role conflict” (p. 751). As a result, she developed the work/family border theory which “encompasses the human interaction, individual meaning creation, and complexity of work and home situations” (p. 750). Fundamental to the work-family border theory is the “idea that ‘work’ and ‘family’ constitute
different domains or spheres which influence each other” (Clark, 2000, p. 750). Individuals are regarded as “border-crossers” who navigate from one domain to the other on a daily basis while modifying their “focus, goals, and their interpersonal style to fit the unique demands of each” (Clark, 2000, p. 751). The concepts central to the work/family border theory are discussed below.

2.6.4.1 Domains.

Clark (2000) describes work and family as two separate domains in the life of an individual, which influence one another. She compares these domains to countries in which different languages, rules, behaviours and thought patterns are practised. In each domain, different value ends and value means exist. For example, value ends in the work domain may be earning an income, while a value end in the family domain may be the close relationships one has. Value means refer to the ways in which individuals would behave in order to attain their value end. For example, a value end of attaining an income would be being competent in one’s work, while a value end for attaining close relationships would be to be caring or supportive to others.

Workplace cultures and family cultures are a result of a “collection of means and rules about which means takes priority” (Clark, 2002, p. 754). Often cultures in the work and family domains are very different. However, individuals are capable of integrating the two domains to some extent. Integration is regarded as the process whereby individuals are not able to make a distinction between the two domains. In contrast, segmentation refers to complete separation of the two domains whereby individuals adopt different styles for each respective role, whether in the work or family domain.
2.6.4.2  **Borders.**

The work and family domains are each surrounded by lines separating where one domain starts and ends. Borders may be physical (where), temporal (when) and psychological (emotions, thinking patterns, relevant behaviours).

Permeability refers to the access of entering one’s physical, temporal, and psychological borders. A very permeable border may cause distractions (i.e., being disturbed while at work by a family member) but may also serve as reminders to individuals of their responsibilities in the other domain. Psychological permeations may occur when negative or positive, or both emotions in one domain spill over into the other domain. The literature suggests that ideas shared between work and family domains may assist in solving problems that individuals may be facing.

Border flexibility refers to “the extent to which a border may contract or expand” (Clark, 2000, p. 757). Using myself as an example, a flexible temporal border would occur if I am able to choose the hours I work, a flexible physical border occurs if I have a choice to work from home on a project, and a flexible psychological border is present if I allow myself to think about work while at home and my family life while at work.

When there is high permeability and flexibility, the area surrounding each border is no longer designated exclusively to any one of the domains, creating a blending effect. For example, psychological blending may occur when using experiences in the work domain to enrich one’s family domain or vice versa. The blending process (also called a borderland) may have a negative effect on the lives of individuals if the work and family domains are very
different, but when these are similar “some blending can lead to integration and [a] sense of wholeness” (Clark, 2000, p. 757).

The combination of permeability, flexibility and blending define the strength of the border. Borders that are strong do not allow for the blending process to occur, are not impermeable and are not flexible. Those borders that allow high levels of blending, flexibility and permeability are considered weak borders.

2.6.4.3 Border-crossers.

Clark (2000) refers to individuals as border-crossers who transition from one domain to the other frequently. For work-family balance to occur, participants should become central participants in each domain. Central participation refers to the internalisation of the culture of a domain, competence in one’s responsibilities, a connection with members that are important to that domain, and an identification with the responsibilities of the domain. Border-crossers who are ignorant of domain culture, are not competent in domain responsibilities, have no connection with members and do not identify with the responsibilities of the domain are referred to as peripheral participants.

Central participants who identify with the responsibilities of the domain want to achieve work-family balance. They have an advantage as they are able to manage their borders and domains as a result of good relationships with central domain members. In contrast, peripheral participants who do not identify with domain responsibilities lose balance, become frustrated and have poor relationships with central domain members.
2.6.4.4 **Border-keepers and domain members.**

Border-keepers are those individuals who exert an influence over borders, for example at work they may be one’s managers and in the home, one’s spouse. Domain members, although influential, have less power than border-keepers, for example, one’s co-workers in the workplace and one’s children in the home.

The relationship between border-crossers, boarder-keepers and domain members is important for achieving work-family balance. Secondly, communication between domain members and border-crossers is key to achieving balance. These relationships should be supportive and unconditional, and experiences of other domains are shared in their communication.

2.6.4.5 **Strengths of the work/family border theory.**

Work-family balance is an outcome of this theory. The latter is developed specifically for working parents involved in work and family domains and it may be used to understand how conflict occurs as well as to identify ways in which individuals can achieve work-family balance (Clark, 2000). This theory also offers a practical framework for understanding work and family domains in the lives of individuals and ways in which they can achieve balance (Clark, 2000). Finally, the work/family border theory is also important as it offers individuals and organisations tools for achieving work-family balance (Clark, 2000).
Figure 2.1. A pictorial representation of work/family border theory (Clark, 2000, p. 754)

2.6.4.6 Limitations of the work/family border theory.

Firstly, the work/family border theory has been criticised for focusing solely on working parents and children, and work and family domains only (Bourke, 2009; Gurney, 2010). Bourke (2009) claims that caring for aging parents is a reality many adults are faced with and which most research adopting the work/family border theory does not take into consideration. In addition, Bourke argues that a limited number of studies have explored the frequent transition between multiple roles which are not exclusive to work and parenting roles. Gurney (2010) on the other hand, claims that leisure, an often compromised domain, should be added to the work/family border theory diagram.

Certain scholars (Emslie & Hunt, 2009; Gurney, 2010) aver the work/family border theory does not consider gender and socio-economic structure differences with respect to
domains, temporal borders and border strength.

Another aspect neglected by the work/family border theory according to Gurney (2010) is that domains are not fixed, but rather change during the life course of individuals. In addition, she contends that every individual will attach different importance to domains depending on their personal circumstances and as a result of unique experiences the work/family border diagrams would differ from person to person.

Saungweme (2010) maintains that very few studies have conducted research using the work/family border theory. Although her results support the work/family border theory, she argues that this theory provides insufficient information pertaining to border permeability and that it fails to explore how work-family culture contributes to work-family balance. In contrast to the work/family border theory, Saungweme further suggests that it is not central participation at work, but rather work-family culture that produces strong relationships. In addition, work-family culture is considered to be a predictor of work-family balance and work-family conflict. Saungweme (2010) recommends future studies to include “work-family culture as an aspect of border permeability in the work/family border theory” (p. 75).

2.7 Strategies Used by Dual-Earner Couples for Achieving Work-Family Balance

The literature indicates that nearly two thirds of parents with children under the age of 18, both engage in paid employment (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007). Dual-earner couples are a norm in contemporary society (Shimada et al., 2010). These couples juggle both work and family roles in their daily lives which may result in experiences of guilt about family arrangements (Haddock et al., 2001; Tengimfene, 2009), women still taking on the bulk of household and
childcare responsibilities (Haddock et al., 2001; Saxbe et al., 2011; Tengimfene, 2009), and conflict (Haddock et al., 2001; Tengimfene, 2009).

However, despite these drawbacks, the literature suggests that overall dual-earner couples are able to enjoy more benefits than drawbacks from participating in, and combining work and family roles (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). Haddock and Rattenborg (2003) claim that dual-earner couples with children are able to benefit from role modelling an egalitarian relationship, increased self-identity and well-being, increased financial resources and flexibility, better parenting due to time spent away from children, development of social networks in the workplace, and improved social and intellectual skills to use with their children.

The literature further proposes that once the couple assesses its own financial and emotional needs, they jointly develop strategies on how to manage their work and family life (Moen & Wethington, 1992), and once “they realise their strategies they experience compatibility and low distress” (Barnett, Gareis, & Brennan, 1999, p. 307).

A strategy is defined as “a plan, method, or a series of manoeuvres for obtaining a specific goal or result” (Dictionary.com, 2013, para. 4). Whereas a strategy is regarded as resulting from a deliberately planned set of actions, it may also result from unintentional and unplanned actions (Emigh, 2001).

The following literature presents strategies which are regarded as helpful to dual-earner couples for achieving a balanced work and family life.

In a Colorado study using dual-earner couples, results indicated that the following ten strategies assisted dual-earner couples to successfully balance work and family life: valuing
family, striving for partnership, deriving meaning from work, maintaining work boundaries, focusing and producing at work, taking pride in dual earning, prioritising family fun, living simply, making decisions proactively, and valuing time (Haddock et al., 2001).

In a later study, using the same data from the study above, Haddock et al. (2006) published the following workplace strategies which assist dual-earner couples with work-family balance: flexible work scheduling, non-traditional working hours, professional or job autonomy, working from home, supportive supervisors, supportive colleagues and supervisees, and the availability to set firm boundaries around work (Haddock et al., 2006).

Both of these studies are of relevance to the current era in which dual-earner couples are living. Data collection was obtained through conjoint interviews (both spouses interviewed together) which allowed for an understanding of their experiences and strategies as a unit. Eligibility of couples was based on issues such as whether they work a minimum of thirty-five hours paid employment, have at least one child of 12 years or younger in their care, and whether both spouses agreed to participate in order to continue setting up conjoint interviews (Haddock et al., 2001; Haddock et al., 2006).

However, as stated in the introduction, the majority of qualitative research studies have been conducted in North American societies, using highly-educated individuals. These studies above are therefore context bound. The results cannot predict similar adaptive strategies for dual-earner couples in developing countries such as South Africa.

Another limitation is that both studies use the same data sample of 47 couples to conduct their research. As the sample is already limited to couples in Colorado only, it lacks diversity of
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participants. In addition, the studies interviewed couples with children under 12 years of age for their study. Therefore, these studies cannot predict adaptive strategies for dual-earner couples with children under 18 years of age.

Recent qualitative South African studies (Singh, 2013, Tengimfene, 2009; Veiga, 2009) conducted on the work-life balance of employed individuals are consistent with some of the strategies suggested by Haddock et al. (2001) and Haddock et al. (2006). For example, spousal and extended family support (Singh, 2013; Tengimfene, 2009; Veiga, 2009), supervisor and co-work support (Singh, 2013; Veiga, 2009); flexi-time (Singh, 2013), and planning and proactive problem-solving (Veiga, 2009). In addition, all three scholars found that South African women hire domestic help in their homes. Singh (2013) found that women use exercise as a strategy, while Veiga (2009) found that only men referred to exercise (and socialising) as strategies for work-life balance.

However, these studies also have limitations. Veiga’s (2009) sample consists of only black women and men employees in a customer care environment, while Singh’s (2013) sample consists of only women participants employed in the sales and credit division of a bank, and three quarters of Tengimfeme’s (2009) sample are women employed in the public sector. This implies that even if some of the participants are in dual-earner relationships, they were interviewed alone, without taking into consideration the negotiations and decisions couples jointly make to balance their work and family life.

To date, no known qualitative South African study has published strategies of heterosexual dual-earner couples with children considering the couple to be a unit. Barnett and Hyde (2001) and Zhang and Liu (2011) propose that work-family research should aim to understand
dual-earner couples as a unit that jointly makes decisions with respect to work and family life. In addition, Koekemoer and Mostert (2010) claim that studies pertaining to work and life balance should consider other individuals in the life of the employee as well (in this case, one’s spouse or cohabitant).

2.8 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I explored and discussed the literature within which the study of work-family balance and dual-earner couples in Cape Town is situated. This includes the theoretical background to the study, a contextualisation of work-family balance, and an evaluation of previous studies pertaining to strategies that dual-earner couples employ to achieve a balanced work and family life. In addition, I identified the deficiencies in the South African literature pertaining to the work-family life balance of dual-earner couples.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH DESIGN

The aim of this chapter is to provide a detailed description of the research design and methodology adopted for my study. The research design, also referred to in the literature as a “road map” (Myers, 2009) or “blue print” (Babbie & Mouton, 2001, p. 77) is defined as “a strategic framework, a plan that guides research activity to ensure sound conclusions are reached” (Durheim 2006, p. 36). Decisions regarding research designs are made along four dimensions, namely: the research purpose, the theoretical paradigm informing the research, the context within which the research is conducted, and the selected research techniques for collecting and analysing the data (Durrheim, 2006). Thus, the research design serves as an overall plan for guiding the research process in order to achieve the intended aims and objectives of the study.

This chapter situates the study within the qualitative research paradigm informed by the interpretive approach. In addition, a detailed discussion of the sampling procedure, the size and characteristics of the sample, the methods for collecting the data, the methods for processing and analysing the data, the interpretation and reporting thereof, as well as ethical principles and guidelines applied to this study are discussed. Lastly, the criteria and techniques used to ensure trustworthiness within the study are addressed.

3.1 Purpose of the Research

The bulk of research studies in this regard have explored the work-family balance of dual-earner couples by conducting interviews at the individual, rather than the couple level.
Conjoint interviews produce a different kind of data from individual interviews when working with married or live-in couples (Arksey, 1996; Racher, 2003; Torgé, 2013). Therefore, to understand experiences of work-family balance, researchers should aim at conducting conjoint interviews whereby dyads are interviewed as a unit who jointly make work and family decisions (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Zhang & Liu, 2011).

Studies exploring dual-earner couple’s experiences of work-family balance using conjoint interviews have been predominantly conducted in the North American context. Two such studies (Haddock et al., 2001; Haddock et al., 2006) relevant to my research topic, and the current era in which dual-earner couples are living, were critically evaluated with respect to results, conclusions, and methodological concepts. The former (Haddock et al., 2001) presented ten adaptive strategies to assist dual-earner couples to successfully balance work and family life; while the latter (Haddock et al., 2006) presented workplace strategies perceived as successful by dual-earner couples to balance work and family life. However, several limitations were discussed, namely that both studies (a) are context bound; (b) lack diversity of participants; and (c) only take into account parents with children 12 years or younger.

I specifically highlighted that due to economic and cultural diversities, it is important to understand work-family balance experiences in the South African context as opposed to adopting American views (Brink & De la Rey, 2001; Tengimfene, 2009). However, to date, no known South African research has explored these by interviewing the couple together. Relevant studies pertaining to the work-family balance of employed individuals in the South African context were therefore evaluated with respect to results, conclusions and methodological concepts. A number of emergent themes (spousal and extended family support [Singh, 2013; Tengimfene, 2009;
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Veiga, 2009]; supervisor and co-work support [Singh, 2013; Veiga, 2009]; flexi-time [Singh, 2013]; and planning and proactive problem-solving [Veiga, 2009]), were consistent with some of the strategies suggested by Haddock et al (2001) and Haddock et al (2006). However, none of these studies have taken into consideration the decisions that couples jointly make to balance their work and family life. In addition, the majority of participants in these studies were women who worked in a specific employment sector. Therefore, similar experiences and strategies cannot be assumed for dual-earner couples, as in this case, both spouses are engaged in employment, which may not necessarily mean by the same employer or in the same employment sector.

Finally, the literature suggests that therapists working with dual-earner couples lack the knowledge and experience regarding how to deal with work-family balance concerns (Haddock & Bowling, 2002). Therefore there is a need for more research to be carried out on work-family balance experiences and strategies at couple level in the South African context, as opposed to focusing only on individuals. For example, Koekemoer and Mostert (2010) have suggested that future studies pertaining to the work-family balance of individuals should include other individuals in the employee’s life, such as in this case, the employee’s spouse.

Considering these voids and recommendations in the work-family balance literature, the aim of my study was to investigate how dual-earner couples experience work-family life balance and what strategies they employ. In addition, I identify two sub-objectives, namely: (a) to describe the strategies used by South African dual-earner couples in rich detail by focusing on the subjective phenomenology, and (b) to explore the strategies used by South African dual-earner couples in rich detail. My study may therefore be described as exploratory in nature
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(Babbie, 2007). The literature suggests that the majority of social research is undertaken by researchers who want to explore or familiarise themselves with a specific topic (Babbie, 2007). Consistent with this type of design, I am looking to discover ideas and gain insights into the joint strategies couples use to balance work and family life as experienced by them, which requires a more flexible approach to the present research.

3.2 The Qualitative Research Paradigm

A theoretical paradigm refers to the “researcher’s point of view, or frame of reference for looking at life or understanding reality” (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2005, p. 261). Paradigms are characterised along three dimensions namely ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Durrheim, 2006). Ontology refers to the philosophical choice made by the researcher to define the nature of the truth or reality that is to be studied (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Epistemology specifies the “nature of knowledge and how it can be acquired” (Snape & Spencer, 2003, p. 23). Methodology refers to the methods and techniques adopted by researchers to study whatever they believe can be known (Durrheim, 2006).

The qualitative research paradigm does not assume that there is an external and fixed version of reality or truth. Instead, the qualitative research paradigm assumes the existence of multiple and dynamic realities which are closely related to the context within which they occur (Nolan & Behi, 1995). It is therefore essential to value each participant’s interpretation of their own reality, as these are real and should not be taken for granted. Since interpretations are considered to be richly dependent on their contexts, these may not be separated or generalised to larger populations (Holstein, 2000; Terre Blanche, Kelly, & Durrheim, 2006).
How one views reality and truth influences how they will approach obtaining knowledge (Denzin, 1994). Qualitative researchers accept an internal reality and therefore cannot be objective in “the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known” (Denzin, 1994, p. 108). Therefore, these researchers embrace a subjective epistemology as they interact and listen to their participants, and together are active in creating meaning (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Since qualitative researchers are interested in understanding participants’ meanings, perceptions and experiences of a particular phenomenon, they are required to employ specific qualitative methods and techniques most suitable to their research participants, the research topic and the intended objectives of the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). For the qualitative research paradigm, a phenomenon is understood by identifying specific qualities about it. Data gathering is conducted through observations of people’s actions, listening to their descriptions and experiences of the phenomenon, and examining supporting artefacts. Data are analysed by identifying emergent themes (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999). In addition, the qualitative research paradigm “tries to describe and interpret people’s feelings and experiences in human terms rather than through quantification and measurement” (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 123). This means that qualitative researchers use words rather than numbers to report on findings; they use empathy in their observations, and interpret results within the contexts in which they occur (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Rossman and Rallis (2003) suggest that there are five hallmarks of qualitative research, namely that it: (a) takes place in a natural setting, (b) adopts multiple humanistic methods, (c) focuses on the research context, (d) is emergent and evolving, and (e) is fundamentally
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interpretive. Furthermore, Marrow and Smith (2000) suggest that qualitative research is emic and idiographic, as it is characterised by categories emerging from the “insider” perspective of participants, and “produces knowledge claims about one or a very few individuals, groups, or institutions” (Marrow & Smith, 2000, p. 200).

Lastly, qualitative inquiry involves an interactive research process which “requires a flexible, non-sequential approach” (Durrheim, 2006, p. 35). Thus, researchers adopting this perspective do not embrace fixed designs as these are regarded as limited and not suitable for the bulk of exploratory and inductive research (Durrheim, 2006).

The qualitative research paradigm is therefore applicable to my study, as the perceptions and experiences in relation to dual-earner couple’s work family balance are subjective in nature. Given the purpose of my study, which is to understand the joint experiences and strategies of work-family balance amongst dual-earner couples, a qualitative study enabled me as the researcher to interact with, and explore in depth the feelings, behaviours, experiences, perspectives of, the research participants, on work-family balance and the strategies used to pursue this balance. In addition, the qualitative research paradigm seeks to answer questions of “How” or “What” rather than “Why” (Creswell, 1998). Therefore using the qualitative research paradigm is particularly appropriate for answering my research questions, namely “how do dual-earner couples with children, in Cape Town experience work-family balance?” and “what strategies do these couples use to manage a balanced work and family life?”

Before proceeding to the next sub-section, it is important to note that the qualitative research paradigm consists of multiple theoretical traditions and approaches. Amongst these are:
(a) ethnography; (b) autoethnography; (c) reality testing/positivist and realist approaches/analytic
induction approaches; (d) constructionism/constructivism; (e) phenomenology; (f) heuristic enquiry; (g) ethnomethodology; (h) symbolic interactionism; (i) semiotics; (j) hermeneutics; (k) narratology/narrative analysis; (l) ecological psychology; (m) systems theory; (n) chaos theory/nonlinear dynamics; (o) grounded theory, and (p) orientational/feminist inquiry/critical theory/queer theory (Patton, 2002). While there may be some overlap amongst these traditions of qualitative inquiry, each “offers a different emphasis, framework, or focus” (Patton, 2002, p. 77). Furthermore, Patton (2002) regards each theoretical framework as a “mini paradigm within its own internal logic and assumptions” (p. 134). Therefore, the choice of theoretical frameworks depends on what one wants to do and the assumptions they share (Patton, 2002).

In the sub-section below, I will present a discussion on the theoretical framework I have selected as the foundation to my research endeavour, namely the interpretive approach.

3.3 The Interpretive Approach

Consistent with the qualitative research paradigm, the interpretive approach assumes “that people’s subjective experiences are real and should be taken seriously (ontology), that we can understand others’ experiences by interacting with them and listening to what they tell us (epistemology), and that qualitative research techniques are best suited to this task (methodology)” (Terre Blanche & Kelly, 1999, p. 123). Although the interpretive approach does not prescribe a particular methodological toolkit for producing data, but rather prescribes a particular way of treating data (Bevir & Rhodes, 2006), it is generally accepted that interpretivists adopt qualitative research methods that are flexible, context sensitive, and concerned with understanding complex issues (such as in-depth or unstructured interviewing) (Carcary, 2009).
Philosophers and sociologists such as Wilhelm Dilthey (1833-1911) and Max Weber (1864-1920) believed that social science should be concerned with empathetic understanding as opposed to imitating natural sciences. Rooted in anthropology, philosophy, sociology and social psychology, the interpretive approach draws from certain philosophical underpinnings and concepts, in phenomenology and hermeneutics to “inform assumptions on the nature of reality, knowledge and values (Chilisa & Preece, 2005, p.28).

From a phenomenological perspective, the truth lies within the human experience and as people have different experiences, multiple realities exist which are “time, space and context bound” (Chilisa & Preece, 2005, p. 28). Phenomenology therefore seeks to obtain “a careful description of ordinary conscious experiences of everyday life... a description of ‘things’...as one experiences them” (Schwandt, 2001, p. 191).

From a hermeneutic perspective, reality is “humanly interpreted, referring to meaning and acquired through life experience” (Fersch, 2009, p. 20). Hermeneutics is therefore primarily concerned with understanding and interpreting meaning within qualitative textual data. Interpretation advances through the hermeneutic circle which suggests that individual parts of a text may not be understood independent of the whole work, and meaning cannot be gained by looking at the whole work without understanding its parts (Schwandt, 2001). This continuous process is regarded as important during all phases of interpretation in qualitative research (Kelly, 2006).

Interpretivists, constructivists and social constructionists believe that reality is constructed as the result of human and social interaction. Therefore, the truth and knowledge individuals attain is as a result of their social interaction with others (Creswell, 2013). Both
social constructionism and the interpretivism are qualitative, interpretive and concerned with meaning. However, whereas interpretive researchers are concerned with the subjective understandings and experience of individuals, social constructionists are interested in how these “understandings and experiences are derived from [and feed into] larger discourses” (Terre Blanche et al., 2006, p. 278).

Philosopher Edmund Husserl (1859-1938) claimed that it is critical for researchers to bracket-out (set aside) any previously attained knowledge or experiences of a phenomenon when listening and reflecting on individual’s lived experiences (Woodruff, 2013). In contrast, philosopher Martin Heidegger (1889-1976) argued that, “humans are embedded in their world to such an extent that subjective experiences are inextricably linked with social, cultural, and political contexts” (Lopez & Willis, 2004, p. 729). Unlike the Husserlian tradition, Heidegger regards the context as crucial to understanding phenomenon through interpretation. Given both these traditions, it is evident that subjectivity is inevitable in interpretive studies; however, it is still important for researchers to be reflexive in their studies (Chan, Fung, & Chien, 2013; Crotty, 1996).

Subjective meaning is at the heart of interpretivism, and in order to understand participant’s reality, interpretivists interpret these meanings within their contexts (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The phenomenological concept of “verstehen”, or understanding phenomenon in its context, involves elements of empathy which in general refer to reflective reconstructions and interpretations from within their contexts. Interpretive research is therefore committed to understanding human phenomenon in context, and uses qualitative methodology to understand human phenomenon (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).
The interpretive approach is therefore “fundamentally concerned with meaning and it seeks to understand social members’ definitions and understandings of situations” (Henning, Smit, & Van Rensburg, 2004, p.21). Furthermore, the interpretive approach is not concerned with description of the laws and mechanisms that operate in social life, “but rather seeks to produce descriptive analysis that emphasise deep, interpretive understanding of social phenomenon” (Henning et al., 2004, p. 21).

Researchers are free to use multiple methodologies to attain understanding, but should take care to note their own voices “as the researcher has a more prominent role in the text as the reader draws meaning through your interpretive lens” (Chism, Douglas, & Hilson, 2008, p. 58). Consequently, researchers should reflect on their own perceptions, biases, value and assumptions, prior to engaging with participants. Reflexivity will be discussed under the sub-section “Role of the Researcher”.

In summary, the interpretive approach recognises that humans construct and attach meanings to things they experience in their world and that these meanings are deeply embedded within their contexts. Meanings vary from person to person and change with time or depend upon circumstances. Therefore, consistent with the qualitative research paradigm, interpretivists assume the existence of multiple realities. In addition, the interpretivist approach recognises that both the participant and researcher bring personal experiences, values and biases to the research and that in order to gain a deeper understanding of a particular phenomenon, these experiences, values and biases need to be acknowledged. Therefore, researchers adopting this approach do not conduct the research in a detached manner, as their aim is to describe and understand phenomenon and opposed to establishing cause-effect relationships (Roth & Mehta, 2002).
As stated previously, work-family balance is a subjective phenomenon; therefore, multiple realities of work-family balance exist. To be able to gain a rich understanding of every couple’s work-family balance, I needed to uncover their internal reality of subjective experience, which required a certain interpretive approach. The interpretivist assumptions are therefore consistent with the aims of my research, which are to uncover and explore dual-earner couple’s subjective experiences and strategies of work and family life balance in Cape Town, South Africa. Through direct interaction with couples I was be able to understand couples’ first-hand accounts and taken-for-granted meanings associated with their perceptions of their work-family balance, and the strategies they adopt to pursue this balance.

3.4 Research Design

3.4.1 Role of the researcher.

The interpretive approach assumes that reality is socially constructed and that the role of the researcher is to serve as the vehicle through which this reality is revealed. Consistent with the qualitative research paradigm, I served as the primary instrument for collecting and analysing the data (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

Qualitative researchers adopting the interpretivist approach seek to understand people’s experiences in their natural settings, in other words working with data in context. Interpretive researchers should therefore aim to become a natural part of the context within which the phenomenon occurs. This may be achieved through interactions between the researcher and participant that are open and empathetic.
The literature suggests a researcher develop the following set of skills to be able to conduct good interpretive research: (a) effective listening skills; (b) interpretive skills and (c) describing and interpreting own presence appropriately (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In addition, I continuously sought to understand the unique experiences of the couples with as much sensitivity to their personal perspectives as possible.

Furthermore, researchers adopting the interpretivist approach should be aware how their role in the research may affect the research process. Researchers should therefore look at themselves and provide a discussion on their subjective response to the research process, also referred to as reflexivity (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

I am aware that my personal experiences and ideas of work-family balance, and those of being in a dual-earner relationship, are not isolated from the research process and that these may to some extent influence the meaning of the data in the study (Charmaz, 2000). To help me with this process, I chose to make personal reflective notes in a journal to document any thoughts or behaviours on work-family balance, biases, findings, questions, decisions, and rich descriptions of the context that may to some extent impact the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). The literature suggests that notes written by researchers in their journal aid them in developing better research skills, discovering new ideas which they may not have been aware of, stimulate even more ideas, and allow for audiences to understand the researcher’s process of knowledge during a study (Watt, 2007). Therefore, reflexivity was essential to understand the work-family balance phenomenon and the research process (Watt, 2007).

Below, I present some of the personal, professional, and process-related reflections of my study.


3.4.1.1 Personal reflections.

I grew up as an only child in a family where all married individuals with children were in dual-earner relationships. Women in my family worked not because they had to, but because they wanted to, and also because they did not know anything different. In addition to their work roles, women did all the housework and looked after the children.

I was born in communist Romania, and as these times were difficult, my parents agreed it would be best to send me off to my mother’s parents who lived in a small village. However, both my grandparents worked too. In the mornings, my grandmother would drop me off at the local primary school where I would play while she was at work. Although it was not preschool, and I did not participate in any of the lessons, the school offered a support structure that many of the villagers used.

I later returned to Bucharest to formally start primary school. Both my parents were employed full-time. My mother worked night shifts, so she would make me lunch, take me shopping, and help me with school work. My father often took on extra jobs during the evenings and weekends, but somehow still found time to spend with me and my mother. Usually, we spent weekends as a family, went away on holidays, and simply enjoyed each other’s company. Shortly after the collapse of communism, my father took the decision to leave Romania and relocate his family to a “better” place. One such place was South Africa.

Immigrating to a foreign country has its own benefits as well as challenges. My parents had to work hard to build a new life. And they did. In fact they worked so hard I ended up not seeing much of them at all. In fact, they did not see much of each other either. My mother no
longer spent any time with me, nor did she pay attention to my homework, or things that happened in my life. I remember being alone in the house with no one to talk to, frustrated that I couldn’t understand what was being said on TV; I had no friends or family to call or go to. These were challenging times for me, and I longed for the life where my parents were not constantly dominated by their work.

During my teenage years, I came across a newspaper article which dealt with the importance of maintaining a work-family life balance. Unfamiliar with the “work-family balance” concept, I asked my father what it meant. Very confidently he told me it had to do with making enough money to look after ones family. I was, however, convinced that his answer was wrong. I approached other adults in the search for the “right” answer. Some gave a textbook definition, while others spoke of what they thought it meant personally. I then came to the realisation that work-family balance had no right answer and it had different meanings for different people. This meant that after all, my father was not wrong. His experiences in Romania shaped his perception of work-family balance. Coming from a less privileged family, he wanted to do something more, something better for me and my mother. Succeeding financially allowed him to provide for all the needs of his family. This was his balance, in his reality.

In my early 20s, I was employed by a large corporate company. I was grateful to have a good job, where I was respected and earned good money. After all, having a good job was important for my parents. A good salary meant a better life. But it also meant more hours dedicated solely to work. During those years I worked Monday to Friday, eight to five, and spent time with my family and friends over weekends. However, I knew I wanted something
different, especially when I started my own family. Although having a career was and still is of importance to me, I knew that I did not want to prioritise my career rather than my family.

When I married three years ago, I consciously wanted a healthy balance between my work and family life. To achieve this, I left the corporate world and became an independent communications consultant. All I wanted to do was to work flexible hours, so that I could concentrate more on my family. I had my own idea of balance, which for me meant less work, but enough to meet our needs, and more time with my husband. My husband had his own views regarding work-family balance and together, we developed personal strategies to balance our work and family life. Although there are times when juggling work and family roles is overwhelming, we are fortunate to strike a balance most of the time. However, I cannot help but wonder if I would be able to achieve a work-family balance once we have children. Through conversations with family friends living in dual-earner relationships with children, I realised that these couples are faced with various challenges, but experience great joy at the same time by combining work and family roles. To balance their multiple life roles, they too have developed personal strategies. My personal experience of work-family balance and those conversations held with dual-earner couple friends motivated me to conduct the present study.

Considering the above reflections, it was important for me to become aware of my personal pre-conceived ideas of work-family balance and how these could potentially affect the various stages of my research. Once noted, I was careful not to let these ideas interfere with those experiences of the dual-earner couples, so that I was able to describe their experiences with as much sensitivity to them as a couple.
3.4.1.2 Professional reflections.

Considering my personal experiences of work-family balance and those conversations held with friends in dual-earner relationships with children, I developed the following research questions: (a) How do dual-earner couples with children, in Cape Town experience work-family balance?; and (b) What strategies do these couples use to manage a balanced work and family life? I began looking for answers in the literature and found a vast amount of literary works on the topic of work-family balance in relation to dual-earner couples. There are two prominent bodies of literature, namely those focusing on the conflict experienced among dual-earner couples, and those focusing on the benefits experienced when holding multiple life roles. Despite their different viewpoints, both traditions accept that work and family are central domains in the lives of employed individuals, and that juggling these roles is an ongoing concern for men and women. It also became evident that researchers are developing a renewed interest in the work-family balance due to the various factors influencing the work-family balance of employed individuals in 21st Century society, namely: (a) the feminisation of the labour market; (b) the rise of dual-earner relationships; (c) the rise of living costs; (d) advancements in telecommunications; (e) the increased intensity of work and the organisation’s interest in the work-family balance of employees. Considering these factors, I realised the importance of conducting research in the current era, as these factors are present in contemporary society. Interested in how dual-earner couples with children try balance their work and family life, I began searching for studies relevant to my research topic and the current era in which dual-earner couples are living. However, I discovered that the bulk of literature focusing on the work-family balance of dual-earner couples has been conducted at individual, rather than couple level.
Work-Family Life Balance in Cape Town

Of those studies which have explored work-family balance experiences with dyads, the majority have been conducted in the North American context. Due to the diversities in the North American and local (South African) context, I began searching for South African studies exploring work-family balance experiences at strategies at couple level. Although various South African studies have explored the work-family balance of dual-earner couples, none have explored these at couple level through conjoint interviews. Consistent with my own belief as well as recommendations in the literature (Barnett & Hyde, 2001; Zhang & Liu, 2011), decisions regarding work and family arrangements among couples should be explored at couple level, rather than with individuals. Based on this realisation, the recommendations of previous research studies, the diversity of couples, the differences between the North American and South African contexts, as well as the subjective nature of the work-family balance phenomenon, I decided to pursue the current qualitative study.

As a qualitative researcher, I believe that reality is constructed intersubjectively as a result of meaning that individuals develop through social interactions and life experiences. Therefore, I believe that multiple realities exist, and that these are dynamic as they are heavily embedded in the individual’s context. I also believe that the only way to gain access to people’s subjective experience is by interacting with them and listening carefully to what they have to tell me. The experiences of work-family balance would therefore vary from couple to couple as they encounter various life stages. For my study, I was interested in discovering each couple’s subjective experience with regard to work-family balance, and to gain a deeper understanding of how these couples pursue this balance.
In addition, it was important that I understand that both the couple and I bring our own values, experiences, and biases to the research, and therefore, together had to acknowledge these to be able to construct reality.

**3.4.1.3 Process-related reflections.**

Realising my research study proved more difficult than I had anticipated, however, with every obstacle I learnt something new, and with every completed task experienced great joy and a sense of accomplishment. Below, I highlight some of the thoughts and feelings that emerged during the research process.

Setting up dates and times for the conjoint interviews was not as easy as I initially thought. At times I felt frustrated and anxious, thinking that I would not be able to carry out the proposed research. However, despite the challenges faced, all ten interviews were conducted successfully and achieving this result motivated my research endeavour further.

During the pilot interviews, I experienced a combination of nerves and excitement. I also noticed that although I had started off with a level of anxiety, I gained a few insights during the pilot interviews, and as a result developed more confidence. For example, I tried following the interview guide so that I would be sure to cover all aspects of the research. However, I discovered that not all the questions were applicable and that I needed to “tailor” my guide to each couple depending on the age of their children, the support structures in place, etcetera.

There was a three week period between my second and third interview. This gave me a chance to think about the pilot interviews. In fact I listened to the recordings repeatedly and tried to pick out the highlights and lowlights. At the same time, I proceeded with transcribing these
Work-Family Life Balance in Cape Town

interviews. Transcribing took longer than first anticipated. In fact, this was probably the most
time-consuming exercise throughout the entire research; however, it added great value. During
this process, I learnt that I may be timing some of the questions poorly, and that I may be
repeating the same words too many times, such as “fantastic” which became a nuisance when
listening to or having to read over the transcript.

I was pleasantly surprised to find I enjoyed data analysis more than I had anticipated. At
first I was overwhelmed by the number of transcript pages and the amount of work ahead of me.
Subsequently, I tried to follow the steps set out for thematic analysis and decided to develop a
system that would help me to understand the data. I worked some ideas repeatedly, and
eventually decided on a template. Once I achieved this, I felt less anxious and more curious
about what each set of data had to offer.

Lastly, I noticed that during my research, I began to hear and see messages about work-
family balance through work conversations, media and social media messages. This experience
made me smile at times, and almost served as a reminder to continue working on my dissertation.
In addition, ideas for the research would surface at the most awkward times, such as when I was
sleeping or in a business meeting. At first, I would wake up and keep on repeating the idea in
my head, but by the morning time, all was forgotten. I then decided to send a text message to
myself every time I woke up during the night, so by the morning my inbox would be filled with
fascinating ideas. I am pleased to say that this worked on two occasions.

3.5 The Participants

In qualitative research, participants are “not selected because they fulfil the representative
requirements of statistical inference but because they can provide substantial contributions to
Work-Family Life Balance in Cape Town

filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation” (Polkinghorne, 2005, p. 139). For this study, the experience of dual-earner couples with children is under investigation. Therefore, by making use of purposeful sampling I was be able to look for particular dual-earner couples who were able to provide me with their subjective experiences of work and family balance (Creswell, 2007; Durrheim & Painter, 2006; Smith & Osborn, 2003). A combination of convenience and snowball sampling techniques were used (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Convenience sampling refers to people which are easy to access, for example, dual-earner couples I already knew of (Creswell, 2007). The snowball sampling technique is used when the researcher approaches members of a specific population who are accessible and then asks those individuals to suggest other subjects whom they know of in that population in order to approach them for an interview (Rubin & Babbie, 2010).

I chose to approach couples in Cape Town as this is where I reside. The decision to select participants from Cape Town was based on available time and resources. The suburbs where they live include Sea Point, Newlands, Pinelands, and Durbanville. As a business owner and consultant to various South African couples in Cape Town, I had an extensive network of prospective participants with contact numbers, whom I approached for the purposes of this research. Dual-earner couples were contacted by me calling them personally and inviting them to participate in the study. I then approached the identified dual-earner couples to refer me to other dual-earner couples whom they knew of who may be interested in participating in the study. Initially, I approached six couples whom I already knew. Couples three, five, and six recommended eight other couples for the study.
Couples were considered to be eligible if they met the following inclusion criteria: a) they are married (including custom marriages) or in a cohabiting heterosexual relationship for at least two years; b) each spouse/cohabitant is engaged in outside, paid employment of at least 30 hours per week; c) each couple is the primary caregiver of at least one child or has a child under the age of 18 residing with them at least half of the time; d) both spouses are fluent in English; e) the couple resides in Cape Town; and (f) both spouses want to participate in the study.

Although relatively small sample sizes are utilised in qualitative studies, selecting a sample size is still of importance; this should be neither too large- as the results are rich and in-depth, nor too small, in which case the researcher would find it challenging to attain information redundancy (Baker & Edwards, 2012; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Informational redundancy means that no new information or themes emerging from data will be accomplished by increasing the sample size (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In addition, literature suggests that the sample size also depends on the amount of detail used in a study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). For example, in interpretive research there are no rules to sampling size, as this is determined by “the degree of commitment to the case study level of analysis and reporting, the richness of the individual cases, and the constraints one is operating under (Smith & Osborn, 2003, p. 56).

Lastly, it is also important to note that sampling size needs to be realistic, meaning that I needed to consider that the sample size would to some extent be defined by those couples who were willing to become part of the study (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

Initially, 14 couples showed interest and verbally communicated their willingness to participate in the study. However, after numerous postponements, two couples advised that they did not have time to spare for the interview, and two other couples did not respond to the
invitation letters. I found that the remaining ten couples constituted a suitable sample size, as this was neither too small to achieve informational redundancy, nor was this too large to manage and pursue a deep analysis.

A biographical summary for every couple appears in Table 3.1 below. This table represents the race, age, marital status, educational level, and occupation of each participant. Table 3.2 represents the number of children that each couple has and the respective age of each child.
Table 3.1

*Biographical summary of dual-earner couples in the study*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Race</th>
<th>Educational level</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple 1</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Bank Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Quality Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 2</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Retail Manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Electronic Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 3</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>Matric</td>
<td>Child carer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>51</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Financial Broker</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 4</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>IT Coordinator</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Retail manager</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>Bookkeeper</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>IT Programmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 6</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Sales person</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Medical Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 7</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Bank Consultant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Coloured</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>Industrial Engineer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 8</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>Child Development</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>White</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>Consultant IT Programmer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 9</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>Tourism Agent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>IT Analyst</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 10</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wife</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>College diploma</td>
<td>Sales Assistant</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Husband</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Black</td>
<td>University degree</td>
<td>IT Product Developer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3.2

Summary of number and age of couple’s children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Number of Children</th>
<th>Child’s Age</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Couple 1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>16 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>17 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>15 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 3</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>17 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>10 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>8 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>18 months old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 5</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>17 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>7 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 6</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>5 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>3 months old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 7</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 8</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>18 months old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 9</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>14 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>16 years old</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Couple 10</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8 years old</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All ten couples in the study are married. Although my goal for this study has been to recruit as racially diverse a sample as possible, the represented race groups of the participants are as follows: (a) 9 white; (b) 7 coloured; (d) 2 black; and (e) 2 Indian. The educational levels attained by the participants are as follows: (a) 11 participants had completed a college diploma; (b) eight had completed a university degree; and (c) one participant had completed matric. The employment sectors in which the participants worked are as follows: (a) five participants were
employed in the IT sector; (b) four in the financial sector; (c) four in the retail sector; (d) two in the childcare sector; (e) three in the industrial sector; (f) one in the medical sector; and (g) one in the tourism sector. The median number of children per couple is 2 and the median age of children is 9 (see Table 3.2 for more details). All the children live with their parents fulltime.

3.6 The Research Site

Research sites are described as the “social and physical settings where ‘subjects’ or ‘cases’ are located” (Devers & Frankel, 2000, p. 264).

I established contact with prospective participants situated in various suburbs (Sea Point, Newlands, Pinelands, and Durbanville) in Cape Town using contact numbers on my contact list and those contact numbers given to me by couples three, five and six. In the telephonic introduction, I presented the title of my dissertation and the aims of the intended research. I explained the importance of their participation in the research and their potential contribution to the study of work and family life balance. They were informed that their participation is strictly voluntary and that the interviews would be audio-recorded. Confidentiality and informed consent was discussed, as well as their right to withdraw from the study at any time. I also requested their spouse/partner’s contact details once they agreed to participate. Both parties needed to provide consent in order to participate in the study. Once both spouses/cohabitants agreed to participate, I sent them invitation letters via e-mail. Four of the wives requested that I send these to their husband’s email addresses as they could not access personal mail at their place of work. Two of the couples requested to receive the invitation letters in person at an annual social gathering I attended. Subsequently, we arranged a convenient date and time to conduct the conjoined interview at an agreed upon location. Five interviews were conducted at
the home of the respective couple, four interviews took place in my own home (located in Fresnaye, Cape Town), and one interview took place in a coffee shop as desired by the couple. For more information on the dual-earner couples in this study, see the section “Research Participants” above. Each interview did not exceed 90 minutes. An example of the invitation letter is available in Appendix B, and the letter of informed consent is set out in Appendix C.

3.7 **Data Collection Method**

The qualitative interview is presumably the most utilised technique for data collection in qualitative research (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). For the interpretive approach, the interview is seen as a means to finding out how individuals experience specific things (Terre Blanche et al., 2006), or “accessing the interpretation of informants in the field” (Walsham, 2006, p. 323). In the literature, a structured interview is a type of interview where the researcher knows beforehand precisely what the required information from the interview is and constructs a rigorous set of questions that will not divert from the present categories (Corbetta, 2003). The interview pace is directed by the interviewer and flexibility is minimal (Smith & Osborn, 2003). Another type of interview is the semi-structured interview in which a set of questions is prepared beforehand by the researcher and serve as a guide to the interview process (Smith & Osborn, 2003). I decided to use a semi-structured interview for data collection as there is greater flexibility to allow the conversation to flow freely between the couples and myself (Smith & Osborn, 2003).

The grounds for selecting semi-structured interviews as my qualitative data collection method are that they (a) facilitate the building of rapport; (b) allow the conversation between me and the dual-earner couples to be more flexible; and (c) allow me sufficient time to talk to and understand each of the participants (Smith & Osborn, 2007). Consistent with the epistemology
and methodology of the interpretive approach, the engaging atmosphere of semi-structured interviews creates an empathetic stance to the interview during the interaction with the participants. This information garnered from the interviews occurs in “real-time” and therefore is easier to interpret or to seek feedback when necessary to verify any data with the couple. It also allows for probing where further in-depth elaboration is needed (Newton, 2010; Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In addition, the face-to-face interaction allows for non-verbal communication to be observed, for example, in cases where a participant does not feel comfortable with the question at hand or does not understand a question.

There are a few limitations to using semi-structured interviews, specifically that these are more difficult to examine and can be time consuming due to the open-ended nature, for both myself as the researcher as well as for the couple to be interviewed (Smith & Osborn, 2003). The couples with children under the age of 10 experienced greater difficulty as their children would become impatient after the first forty minutes. To ease this frustration, I provided snacks and drawing books for the children. Another drawback of this type of interview may occur if the dual-earner couples answered a question in the way they felt would be the right answer, also called demand characteristics (Newton, 2010). To avoid this, at the start of the interview I emphasised the importance of their personal experiences and reassured them that there are no right or wrong answers, except for the ones that best represents them (Newton, 2010). I also noticed that the more I used the words “personal”, “feel” and “experience”, questions were more easily answered, as couples could reflect on their own lives.
3.7.1 Conducting conjoint interviews.

This qualitative study was conducted in the form of conjoint interviews with ten dual-earner couples living in Cape Town. A conjoint interview or a joint interview means that I interviewed the couple (two individuals) together, for the purpose of understanding their perceptions and strategies of work-family balance as a pair. Therefore, each couple consists of “two mutually influencing partners” and to achieve the purpose of my study, I wanted to learn from the “collective shared meanings attributed to the experiences of the couple” (Taylor & de Vocht, 2011, p. 1577). Joint interviews are often utilised when researching married or live-in couples (Arksey, 1996; Racher, 2003; Torgé, 2013). Although in qualitative research one-on-one or individual interviews tend to be the norm (Racher, 2003), my study set out to understand each dual-earner couple as a unit, and thus I have selected the conjoint interview to achieve the aims of my study.

Conjoint interviews with couples permit both partners to mutually create and negotiate their conversations (Racher, 2003; Torgé, 2013). This allows the researcher to obtain comprehension of the “experience of the larger unit and the interdependent perspective of the partners” (Racher, 2003, p. 66). These types of interviews may also “improve the trustworthiness of studies pertaining to couples” (Racher, 2003, p. 66). Examples of qualitative research in which conjoint interviews are utilised are: (a) Haddock et al. (2006); (b) Racher (2003); and (c) Taylor and de Vocht (2011).

Potential drawbacks of this type of interview could occur when one individual may dominate the conversation, or an individual may feel uncomfortable about answering a question in the presence of their spouse (Arksey, 1996). To prevent this as much as possible, researchers
should establish rapport with each couple, listen, and observe for uncomfortable situations or gestures, making sure that the individual is at ease, and possibly move on to a different question.

### 3.7.2 Developing the interview guide.

For the semi-structured interview, I developed an interview schedule or guide with open-ended questions regarding work and family balance, as well as the potential strategies utilised by each couple (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). An example of a question includes: “What does work-family balance mean for you?” The questions included in the interview schedule were developed by reviewing previous literature and research, and finding the most appropriate questions that are closely linked to my research aims and objectives. However, it is acknowledged that other questions emerged, depending on the interview, which aided couples in describing their experiences in greater detail. The developed questions served as a guide only, with the couple’s response as the driver to the next possible question. Questions were not ambiguous or double-barrelled; these were as simple and clear as possible. An interview guide with possible interview questions is set out in Appendix A. Depending on the flow of the questions, each interview was different. Questions were asked in a different order or using different terminology when a couple did not understand a question or word. However, these questions focused on the same two major themes, namely the personal experience of work-family balance and the strategies that the couples used to pursue this balance.

### 3.7.3 Audio-recording of interviews.

The interviews were audio-recorded with permission from each of the couples. The advantages of audio-recording the interviews were: (a) they allowed me to interact more freely in
conversation with each couple without the interruption of having to constantly write down information; (b) they provided a true record of the conversation between the couple and I; (c) they allowed me to go back and check what had been said; and (d) they were useful for providing direct quotes where necessary (Walsham, 2006).

The drawbacks to audio-recording the interview are: (a) transcribing each interview is time consuming; (b) having interviews transcribed by an external company is very expensive; (c) extracting themes is time consuming; (d) it may result in individuals not being fully open or truthful when knowing that they are being recorded; and (e) they do not capture the non-verbal communication during the interview (Walsham, 2006). It was therefore important that I made notes of the non-verbal communication that I observed during each interview. Other supplementary data sources that complement the audio recordings are web-based data from e-mails between the couples and myself (Walsham, 2006).

3.7.4 Pilot interview.

Following suggestions from the literature, I familiarised myself with the interview guide and practised this by conducting a brief pilot interview to ensure that my questions were appropriate to my research study and that I was asking them correctly (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). I conducted two pilot interviews, namely with the first and second dual-earner couple selected for this study. The pilot interviews were a very important checkpoint for me during the research and allowed me to develop new ideas of new ways to pose questions to the remaining couples.
3.8 Fieldwork

3.8.1 Prior to the interview.

Prior to the interview, (a) I familiarised myself with the details of the couple I would be interviewing; (b) ensured that sufficient time was set aside for logistics; and (c) ensured that recording equipment was packed together with consent forms.

The semi-structured interview was conducted at the preferred location of the couples, and the duration was a maximum of 90 minutes.

Only one couple (resulting from snowball sampling) opted to conduct the interview in a coffee shop. I found this unusual and thought that the couple may not be comfortable in inviting me into their home or coming to mine. However, upon meeting the couple, they explained that meeting in the coffee shop was more convenient as the husband collected his wife in the evenings, and that this was located on the same premises as the wife’s work. We sat in a private booth pre-arranged by the wife. At first I found the background music of the coffee shop disturbing, but also realised this made the couple feel more relaxed. To ensure this did not affect the interview, I kept the voice recorder in my hand and almost used it as a microphone when asking questions. This experience was different from that of all the other interviews as I almost felt more like a reporter rather than a researcher. But surprisingly it worked, and I was relieved to later find out almost no music was present in the recordings.

I found that couples with older children preferred to conduct interviews in their homes, while couples with children younger than ten requested to come to my house. The initial reaction of those couples with younger children was that their homes were untidy and therefore
they were not comfortable inviting outside people into their homes. As one husband put it: “You have less crap to put away in your house, in our house there is so much crap, there is no place to put it”. However, these interviews were not as easy to set up. My husband suggested a few techniques to childproof our house before the interviews. Not only from a safety point of view, but also from a mess-proof point of view, such as covering the sofa, removing all fragile objects, and so forth. I remember being quite concerned when I nearly did not recognise my own living room. As I have never been a parent, I did not see the point of this exercise, but this was sound advice offered by my husband.

Upon arrival, I introduced myself and thanked the couple for agreeing and making the time available to participate in my study. I started with light conversation while setting up the interview. Biographical information such as age, education level, occupation and number of children and their ages was obtained from each couple during this conversation and noted in a journal. When setting up the interview, it was necessary I: (a) ensure the interview environment is private; (b) make sure there are no disturbing back-ground noises in the interview room; (c) ensure all recording equipment required for the interview is ready; (d) request the couple’s permission to set up the audio recording equipment; (e) request that they each sign the consent forms); and (f) ensure that the couple has set sufficient time aside to attend the interview (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

3.8.2 During the interview.

The literature suggests that during the interview I must keep reminding myself about the reason for conducting the interview while also developing a conversation rather than a question based interview (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). In addition, certain authors advise against the
following common questioning errors: (a) asking too many questions; (b) asking closed questions; (c) asking leading questions; (d) asking excessively probing questions (these may make the couple feel interrogated and uncomfortable); (e) asking poorly timed questions; and (f) asking “why” questions (Terre Blanche et al., 2006).

The suggested outline during the interview was as follows: (a) get comfortable in the space where the interview will take place and begin with some light conversation about one another; (b) remind interviewees that they are free to withdraw at any point in the study should they no longer want to participate; (c) in a relaxed tone, I would begin by asking open-ended questions to allow conversation to flow freely, that is, “What is your experience of being a in a dual-earner relationship?”; (d) I would avoid yes or no closed questions, leading questions, double-barrel questions, questions which do not relate to my study; and confusing questions; (e) I would keep personal opinions in check while developing rapport with the couple while utilising good listening skills would be important for me as the researcher; and (f) I would give feedback to ensure that I have understood their constructs and conclusions accurately.

Furthermore, during the interview, I was constantly on the lookout for individuals who might dominate the conversation. Much of the literature on conjoint interviews suggests that potential pitfalls may arise when one spouse is more dominant, and these are generally thought to be men (Arksey, 1996). But I did not find this to be the case. In every couple there was one spouse, whether it be the wife or husband, who was more talkative and had more to say. For me, this was not an indication of dominance, but rather a true reflection of the couple’s real life, and allowing the couple to act as they normally would was of essence to my research. I found that couples complemented rather than dominated one another, which made it more evident for me that research regarding work-family balance among dual-earner couples should be conducted
Work-Family Life Balance in Cape Town

with dyads rather than with individuals. Experiencing the couple together creates a co-created reality of how they experience work and family balance.

Children under the age of ten generally occupied themselves for 40 minutes, after which they would become impatient and irritated. This is evident in some of the recordings where toddlers simply begin to voice their babbles at extreme noise levels. However, this was understandable, because after all, I was imposing on the child’s time. One seven year old came to his parents during the 46th minute of the interview and said “come on, when are you going to play with me?” To ease some of these frustrations, children were offered snacks and colouring books.

Some couples took one or more breaks during the interview to attend to children or other household chores. For example, one couple requested three breaks during the interview, firstly to attend to supper, then to hang up the washing, and lastly to sign for a delivery. I believe that by allowing the couple to attend to these everyday tasks made them feel more comfortable with the interview process.

3.8.3 Ending the interview.

The suggested outline for ending the interview was as follows: (a) complete the interview in the time allocation of 90 minutes, but make sure I have covered all I want to discuss; (b) ask the couple if they would like to add anything or if they have any questions; (c) thank the couple again for their time and allowing me into a piece of their world; and (d) explain to the couple that once the interview has been transcribed they will receive the transcript via email, at which time both will need to review the content to ensure the information is accurate and inform me of any
changes that they would like to make. In addition, it is suggested in the literature that I store the audio recordings of the interviews in a safe place and start making process notes soon after each interview (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). Couples were assured by me that their audio recordings as well as the transcripts and any other information relevant to the interview would be stored in a locked cabinet in my home where I will be the only individual in possession of a key.

During the closing of the interview held with Couple Five, the husband asked me for my own experience of work-family balance and a strategy that I used. Once I briefly shared my experience of work-family balance, I realised that the couple looked relieved in the sense that their answers were just as simple as mine, and that there was no correct answer or method out there.

In summary, every interview was different as each couple had their own situations and needs. My job was to make sure that I understood these so that I would be able to create as natural and comfortable a world as possible.

3.9 Data Analysis

Data analysis entails making sense of collected data (Creswell, 2009). For qualitative research, data analysis is an ongoing and interactive process (Bradley, Curry, & Devers, 2007). A description of the analysis approach as well as the process used for making sense of the data in the study follows.

To conduct data analysis of the information collected from the semi-structured conjoint interviews, I utilised the Thematic Analysis approach (Braun & Clarke, 2007). “Thematic Analysis is a method for identifying, analysing and reporting patterns and themes within data”
(Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 79). Braun and Clarke (2006) propose six stages, namely: (a) familiarising yourself with your data; (b) generating initial codes; (c) searching for themes; (d) reviewing themes; (e) defining and naming the themes; and (f) producing the report. A description of each phase is provided below.

The first step in this process entailed transcribing the interview recordings verbatim. I personally transcribed the first two interviews. I discovered that transcribing interviews can be time-consuming, ranging from eight to 11 hours per 60 minutes of recorded interview, and therefore elected to submit the remainder of the transcripts to an independent professional transcribing agency. Contracts were signed with the independent transcription agency for every interview sent, which contained the declaration of confidentiality between the agency and its transcribers. Once received from the agency, I listened to each recording and read through every transcript before sending them to the respective couples. Changes were made to three transcripts, where incorrect words were used by the independent transcribers. During this process, I also removed any names mentioned during the interview to ensure anonymity of the participants. I then listened carefully to each recording and read the respective transcript to ensure these were accurately represented. This was an important step, as it permitted me to immerse myself in the data as well as to expand my understanding of all aspects of its content (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The checked transcripts were subsequently sent to the respective couples to read through, make corrections and amendments where necessary, and provide final approval for me to proceed with the analysis. None of the couples requested any changes to be made. Transcripts were then grouped together in folders with notes made by me during the interview with each couple. The files were saved on a memory stick using the numerical pseudonyms, for example, “Couple 1”. The memory sticks together with any written notes made
during the interviews were stored in a lockable safe.

My next step was to gain a general sense of the data by repeatedly reading the transcripts and notes, while reflecting on ideas and thoughts in my reflexive journal. During this stage, I began to manually code the data by using different colour highlighters and writing initial codes on the texts being analysed. I then extracted the highlighted text and written codes from each interview and collated them according to each colour code (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To document and manage all generated initial codes, I found it easier to separate these into a list of initial codes for perceptions of work-family balance, and a separate list of initial codes for strategies couples use to pursue this balance.

In phase three, once all the data had been coded and collated into lists of different codes, I sorted the different codes into potential themes. I made use of a visual mind-mapping representation to help sort the codes into themes. To make it easier for myself, I created two separate mind maps, namely a mind map for perceptions of work-family balance and another for the strategies that couples use. I then combined the potential themes of all the interviews with the relevant extracts and looked for connections between them. I completed this phase with a collection of potential themes and sub-themes and the relevant extract of data in relation to each theme. At this stage, none of the remaining unused data were discarded (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Phase 4 involves the refinement of the themes. Data within themes must relate very closely and they must be clear and the distinction between themes must be clearly identified. To achieve this, Braun and Clarke (2006) identify two levels of reviewing and refining. The first level involved reviewing at the level of data extracts which will produce a candidate thematic map. The second level refers to the process where I had to validate whether my candidate
thematic map was an accurate representation of the data (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

In phase 5, I reviewed and identified the “essence” (Braun & Clarke, 2006, p. 92) of what each theme is and which component of the data each theme represents. I also wrote a detailed analysis for each theme and the story that each theme tells about the data, ensuring that there would not be too much overlap between the themes.

Subsequently, these themes were illustrated and organised in a coherent manner using a thematic analysis network (Attride-Stirling, 2001). Thematic analysis offers web-like illustrations that summarise the main themes found in a piece of text. Thematic networks synthesise the extraction of (a) basic themes; (b) organising themes; and (c) global themes (Attride-Stirling, 2001). A basic theme represents the lowest-order and simplest theme resulting from the textual data. To make sense of a basic theme, one needs to be read it in the context of other basic themes, as together they form organising themes. An organising theme is a middle-order theme that organises those basic themes into clusters of similar issues. These clusters are more abstract and revealing of what is occurring in the text, thus organising themes to enhance the significance of broader themes that unite several organising themes. Thus a group of organising themes form a global theme. A global theme is a super-ordinate theme that summarises clusters of lower order themes abstracted from and supported by data.

The final phase of thematic analysis (phase 6) involves the analysis in the form of a write-up and together with the relevant data extracts to document a concise, coherent, logical, non-repetitive and interesting analytical narrative (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This step also involved interpreting the results by comparing the themes with previous literature and theories, including personal findings learnt throughout the study.
The advantages of using Thematic Analysis for this study are firstly that the method is flexible and easily managed by novice qualitative researchers, such as myself. Secondly, this approach is consistent with the overall aim of my study, which is to obtain a rich description of perceptions and strategies of work-family balance. The literature suggests that common pitfalls may occur when researchers use thematic analysis incorrectly by: (a) failing to analyse the data set at all; (b) drawing on questions as authentic themes; (c) presenting analysis which is not credible; and (d) providing mismatched data with data statements (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

I found Thematic Analysis as the best suited analysis method for my study as my aim was to obtain a rich and in-depth analysis of the data collected. Therefore, it was essential for me to follow each thematic analysis phase correctly in order to produce authentic themes and provide thick descriptions that reflect within my data.

3.10 Ethical Principles

Ethical review is progressively becoming compulsory for social science research worldwide. All social science research concerning human participants should be reviewed by an independent research ethics committee prior to the commencement of data collection (Israel & Hay, 2006). This study has been granted ethical approval by the research ethics committee at the University of South Africa. The ethical clearance form is set out in Appendix D. In addition, the rules and regulations set out by the University of South Africa for research involving human participants were adopted throughout this study.

All couples were informed regarding the nature of the research and were asked permission (orally and in writing) to be interviewed should they want to participate in the research study before carrying on to the semi-structured interview; their participation was
voluntary and no form of compensation was offered.

Qualitative interviews commenced only once informed consent forms were signed by each participant (Appendix C). All the research participants were made aware that the research is part of the masters coursework and that the information gathered is confidential as well as anonymous. In addition, participants were asked to provide information reflecting the way they felt, therefore, the only right answer to the questions was that which best represented them as a dual-earner couple.

As the information obtained from the participants was subjective in nature, it was important that I ensure that my study did not pose any form of physical, psychological, or emotional harm. The autonomy of the participants has been respected during all stages of research. In addition, confidentiality agreements were signed with the independent transcribing agency. The identities of the couples are protected in the transcripts and I am the only person who can identify these couples. The principle of beneficence and nonmaleficence ensures that harm will not be caused to the research participants and the focus will fall on the benefits they will experience. The element of ethics requires that people receive what is owing to them and also necessitates me to regard the participants used in the study with equality throughout the research (Wassenaar, 2006).

Prior to, during, and post the conjoint interviews, couples were encouraged to ask any questions with respect to the study. Couples were treated with respect and were allowed the opportunity to read their transcripts and inform me of any changes or additions they felt necessary. Each spouse signed their transcripts once approved by them.
From the outset of my contact with each couple, the participants were made aware that throughout the research study they were free to withdraw at anytime they felt they no longer wanted to participate or were uncomfortable with the research process.

It is important to note that although the ethics committee proposes rules and regulations for qualitative studies, researchers are still primarily responsible for the protection of the participants. In addition, these ethical codes and guidelines may not cover all ethical issues that may possibly arise during the research (Orb, Eisenhauer, & Wynaden, 2001). This qualitative study relied on collecting data through conjoint semi-structured interviews, therefore the relationship between myself and each couple facilitated the access to information. Ethical dilemmas may be experienced by researchers once the initial steps of data collection have taken place and certain issues which may not have been anticipated in the research design could arise (Orb et al., 2001). Possible ethical dilemmas arising in interviews are difficult to predict; however, the researcher should still prepare for these. Although interviews are confidential and commence only once informed consent has been received from the participants, these may contain certain private thoughts or experiences that may harm participants when recollecting. In anticipating the possible outcomes of the interview, I carefully observed for any uncomfortable body language or difficulty in answering a question. Should I have noticed a possible dilemma, I would have stopped and asked the participants if they would like to end, take a break, or continue with the interview by possibly moving on to another question. In the event that a participant would have experienced distress, I would possibly have recommended the participant/s seek counselling to work though the hurtful experiences. If they would want to continue, I would have first ensured that they had regained complete control of the situation by talking about it. I would also follow up by telephone or a personal visit to ensure that they are
not feeling harmed in any way as a result of the information shared during our interaction (Orb et al., 2001).

Lastly, all data obtained during my interaction with the couples is stored in a lock-up safe.

### 3.11 Criteria for Establishing Trustworthiness

Due to the qualitative nature of my study, it is important that I discuss in detail the process adopted to ensure that my research is of good quality. In quantitative research, the quality of a research study is determined by the internal validity, external validity, reliability and objectivity of the study (Terre Blanche et al., 2006). However, Lincoln and Guba (1985) propose alternative constructs which are more suitable for qualitative research. These constructs are discussed in the section below.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) have suggested that researchers seek to achieve trustworthiness when evaluating qualitative research. Trustworthiness is evaluated by looking at four criteria, namely: (a) the credibility of the study, (b) the transferability of the study, (c) the dependability of the study, and (d) the confirmability of the study. In Table 3.3, I have summarised Lincoln and Guba’s (1985) criteria for establishing trustworthiness. Lincoln and Guba (1985) further suggested techniques which may be used to achieve each criterion for establishing trustworthiness. These techniques are summarised in Table 3.4.
Table 3.3

Summary of criteria of establishing trustworthiness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Credibility</th>
<th>Truth value of findings</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Transferability</td>
<td>Applicability of finding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependability</td>
<td>Consistency of findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confirmability</td>
<td>Neutrality of findings</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note. Adapted from Lincoln and Guba (1985, p.289-331)

The concept of credibility refers to how accurately and truthfully the findings represent the phenomenon being studied from the perspective of those individuals who participated therein (Trochim, 2006). The credibility in this study was enhanced by prolonged engagement, persistent observation, triangulation, peer debriefing, and member checking techniques.

Prolonged engagement refers to the time invested with each couple. The telephonic conversations, interviews and personal e-mails resulted in the building of trusting and interactive relationships with the couples, as well as developing rapport and obtaining an extensive and accurate scope of the data (Polit & Beck, 2008). In addition, this study was conducted through conjoint interviews, which according to Racher (2003), may improve the trustworthiness of studies pertaining to couples. Couples felt confident and part of the research as they were encouraged to ask questions when unsure of anything during the research process, or asked to provide feedback when I needed to clarify anything with them.
Secondly, in order for me to obtain authentic and accurate in-depth data it was essential to be purposeful and assertive in my investigation. I also recorded all the interviews which were transcribed and subsequently reviewed in detail by me. In addition, couples were asked to check the transcripts themselves and to sign an acceptance thereof if they felt satisfied with these, or to send me requests if they wanted to change or add any new information.

For triangulation, I used interview notes, notes which I personally made in my journal as well as recordings and the transcripts to verify the accuracy of my data.

Peer debriefing may be defined as a “process of exposing oneself to a disinterested peer in a manner paralleling an analytic session for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit within the inquirer’s mind” (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). I made use of formal discussions with my supervisor to explore the development of my design. In addition, discussions were held with fellow research peers with experience in interpretive research studies on research decisions made throughout the study. These discussions served as a sounding board for clarifying thoughts, experiences, theories, and for illuminating situations in the research (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Lastly, member checks were conducted to test that I had understood the interpretations or conclusions of the dual-earner couples during interviews. I continually checked the information during and after the interview. Over and above this, the couples were afforded an opportunity to review the transcripts to make sure that it accurately represented our interview.

Transferability entails the extent to which the results obtained from my data may be applied to other settings or groups (Trochim, 2006). The techniques applied for transferability
are thick descriptions, reflexive journaling, and purposive sampling.

In my reflexive journal, I recorded weekly thick descriptions to support my findings, documenting my decisions and listing decisions for transferability judgements which will allow for a vivid reading of the journal. In addition, purposive sampling was used in the study which also enhances transferability.

Table 3.4

Summary of techniques for establishing trustworthiness

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Techniques for establishing Credibility</th>
<th>Prolonged engagement</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Persistent Observation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Triangulation</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Peer debriefing</td>
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<td>Referential adequacy</td>
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<td>Member checking</td>
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<td>Thick description</td>
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<tr>
<th>Technique for establishing Transferability</th>
<th>Purpose sampling</th>
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<td>Reflexive journal</td>
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<th>Techniques for establishing Dependability</th>
<th>Dependability or inquiry audit</th>
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<td>Reflexive journal</td>
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<th>Techniques for establishing Confirmability</th>
<th>Confirmability audit</th>
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<td>Reflexive journal</td>
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<tr>
<th>Technique for establishing Confirmability</th>
<th>Audit trial</th>
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Note. Adapted from Lincoln and Gruba (1985, pp. 289-331)

The dependability of the study entails accounting for my research decisions, choices and analysis throughout the study. The audit trail is the technique used for enhancing the dependability of the study.

I kept a written and detailed account of my research procedures as well as all interview
recordings, interview notes, interview transcripts, communications with my supervisor, as well as journal entries. This will assist other researchers in understanding my research decisions and perhaps guide them on how such a study may be replicated.

The confirmability construct is concerned with the objectivity of the data (Polik, 2006). This entails whether the findings of the study could be confirmed by others. To ensure confirmability I made use of a reflexive journal and conducted two pilot interviews. Practising reflexivity helped me in documenting any thoughts and behaviours, as well as biases during the research. In addition, triangulation was also used to minimise any bias on my part. Lastly, I kept a record of all interactions with the couples, including e-mail communication, interview recordings, interview notes, interview transcripts and personal notes made in my reflexive journal.

3.12 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I discussed the research design and methodology for this study. In keeping with the aim of my study, I chose an interpretive approach to understand the perceptions and strategies of dual-earner’s work-family balance. In addition, I have introduced the ten couples and explained the approach for collecting and analysing the data. The ethical considerations and selected criteria and techniques for establishing trustworthiness for the study were also been discussed.

In the next chapter, I present the results of the study together with a comprehensive discussion of emergent themes.
CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The purpose of the present study was to understand how dual-earner couples in Cape Town experience work-family balance, and what strategies they use to pursue this balance. The sample consisted of ten multi-racial, middle-class, heterosexual dual earner couples who worked in different employment sectors. Drawing on interpretivist assumptions located within the qualitative research paradigm, it is assumed that each couple gives meaning to and experiences work-family balance in different ways. In addition, each couple’s meanings and experiences are shaped by various life experiences which may change over time.

In Chapter 3, I presented two tables containing summaries of the ten dual-earner couples in the study. The first table represents a summary of each couple’s biographical details (see Table 3.1) and the second table represents the number and ages of children that each couple has (see Table 3.2). In this chapter however, my aim is to begin with a brief summary of each couple’s context to better orientate the reader and create a point of reference for them when reading specific extracts from the conjoined interviews.

Following the brief summaries of each couple’s context, I proceed to discuss the findings presented as themes that emerged after careful thematic analysis of how couples experience work-family balance and the strategies they use in pursuance of balance. The said themes reflect my unique point of view and therefore do not constitute the “absolute truth”. Indeed, I am aware that another researcher analysing the same interviews may extract different themes or add to the existing themes.
The naming of themes and the manner in which these are categorised the data in this dissertation are presented as a result of knowledge I acquired from the research literature, previous research studies conducted on the work-family balance of dual-earner couples, as well as knowledge developed during this study.

The themes have been organised into a three-level thematic network: global themes, organising themes, and basic themes. The rationale for presenting the themes in this manner is to provide the reader with a structured breakdown which will enable them to understand the manner in which I extracted and grouped these themes. The themes are defined, discussed, supported by various extracts from the couple’s quotations, and referenced to previous literature and/or previous research studies.

4.1 The Couples

It is important to note that to preserve each couple’s anonymity, pseudonyms have been used. For this purpose, each couple has been allocated a number, in the order in which they were interviewed, from one to ten. Furthermore, quotations of the spouses will be differentiated by “wife” and “husband”.

The ten couples were interviewed over a period of six months (from 11 February 2014 to 8 August 2014). Ten conjoint interviews were conducted: five at the homes of the couple, four at my residence, and one in a coffee shop.

4.1.1 Couple One.

Couple One have been married for 17 years. Both spouses are white, 38 years of age and have obtained college diplomas. The wife occupies a fulltime managerial position as an
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accountant. The husband is employed fulltime as a quality manager. The husband is also involved in some voluntary social work during weekday evenings. They have two children, a boy of 16 years of age and a girl, 17 years of age, who attend high school.

4.1.2 Couple Two.

Couple Two have been married for 19 years and are both originally from Romania. Both spouses are white and hold a college diploma. The wife is 39 years old and her husband is 49 years old. The family first moved to England from their country of origin where had one daughter. Eight years later, they moved to South Africa and decided to permanently reside in Cape Town. The wife is currently employed full-time as a retail manager, while the husband holds a full-time position as an electronics engineer. The couple’s daughter, now 15 years of age attends high school.

4.1.3 Couple Three.

Couple Three have been married for 22 years. The wife is white and 47 years old. The husband is coloured and 51 years old. The wife’s highest qualification is a Matric, while the husband has obtained a college diploma. The wife works 30 hours per week as a nursery school carer while the husband works full-time as a financial broker. The husband is also a Shepherd in a local church, and therefore attends to church related duties during the week and on Sundays. The couple has one 17 year old daughter and a 20 year old daughter living with them.

4.1.4 Couple Four.

Couple Four have been married for 14 years. Both spouses are coloured, 40 years of age and hold a college diploma. The wife works in full-time employment as an Information
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Technology (IT) Coordinator, and the husband is part shareholder and full-time manager in a retail store. The husband is also a priest and attends to family visits in the evenings during the week. The couple has three children, a ten year old son, an eight year old daughter and an 18 month old son.

4.1.5 Couple Five.

Couple Five have been married for 20 years. Both spouses are white, 44 years of age and have obtained university degrees. The wife works as a contractor, 30 hours per week, providing bookkeeping services for two separate organisations. The husband is employed full-time as an IT programmer. The husband is also a priest at a church, and assists with family visits on average three times per month and helps organise several church events. The couple’s first son (17 years old) was born in Johannesburg and now attends high school. The couple located to Cape Town permanently seven years ago where their second son was born; he is now seven years of age and attends primary school. The wife’s parents live in a cottage on the couple’s property.

4.1.6 Couple Six.

Couple Six were co-habiting for more than five years before they got married two years ago. The wife is coloured and 30 years old. Her husband is Indian and 31 years old. Both spouses have obtained college diplomas. The wife works in full-time employment as a sales person, while her husband is employed full-time as a medical assistant and works shifts. The husband is also registered in a two year full-time medical course in order to advance in his field of work. The couple has a five year old daughter and a three month old son.
4.1.7 **Couple Seven.**

Couple Seven have been married for 12 years. Both spouses are coloured. The wife is 36 years old and the husband is 38 years old. The wife holds a college diploma and the husband a university degree. The wife occupies a full-time position as a bank teller, while the husband is an industrial engineer employed full-time in a family-owned business. While the husband attends to some pastoral care during evenings in the week, his wife attends part-time classes to upgrade her work skills. The couple has two children, a nine year old daughter and a four year old son.

4.1.8 **Couple Eight.**

Couple Eight have been married for four years. The wife is 34 years of age and her husband is 33 years old. Both spouses are white and have obtained university degrees. The wife works 30 hours per week as a child development consultant and her husband works full-time as an IT programmer. The couple has an 18 month old daughter.

4.1.9 **Couple Nine.**

Couple Nine have been married for fourteen years. The wife is coloured and 44 years old. The husband is Indian and 43 years old. Both spouses have obtained university degrees. The wife is employed full-time as a tourism agent and the husband occupies a full-time position as an IT analyst. The couple has two daughters, aged 14 and 16.

4.1.10 **Couple Ten.**

Couple Ten have been married for nine years. Both spouses are black and 30 years of age. The wife has obtained a college diploma and her husband a university degree. The wife
works full-time as a sales assistant, while her husband occupies a full-time position in IT as a product developer. The couple has one eight year old daughter.

4.2 Themes

As mentioned previously in Chapter 3, thematic analysis was utilised to identify, analyse and report patterns and themes within data (Braun & Clarke, 2006). The emergent themes were then organised into thematic networks (Attride-Stirling, 2001) consisting of themes on three levels, namely global, organising, and basic themes. These themes are discussed in the sub-sections below. For a graphical illustration of the thematic network representing the global themes, organising themes and basic themes, see Figure 4.1 below.
Figure 4.1. Thematic network representing the work-family balance of dual-earner couples
4.2.1 Global theme: Subjective experiences of work-family balance amongst dual-earner couples.

This sub-section presents the findings of how couples experience and give meaning to their work-family balance, thus answering the first research question posed in this dissertation, namely: “How do dual-earner couples in Cape Town experience work-family balance?” The global (central) theme is “subjective experiences of work-family balance amongst dual-earner couples”. Two organising themes emerged, namely: “work-family balance is a unique experience” and “work-family balance is a dynamic process”. These organising themes are discussed below, along with their basic themes.

4.2.1.1 Work-family balance is a unique experience.

The organising theme “work-family balance is a unique experience” refers to the view that spouses perceive work-family balance differently. This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “every spouse experiences and gives meaning to work-family balance differently” and “couples’ experiences of balance through imbalance” (see Figure 4.2).
Every spouse experiences and gives meaning to work-family balance differently

Couples’ experience of balance through imbalance

Work-family balance is a unique experience

Figure 4.2. Basic themes linked to the organising theme “work-family balance is a unique experience”

4.2.1.2 Every spouse experiences and gives meaning to work-family balance differently.

Each spouse in this study had their unique view of what work-family balance meant for them, as illustrated in the quotations below.

Well I think it’s a matter of balancing your day [...] and to do something with the family to spend some quality time (Husband, Couple One).

Balance for me means that I give them [kids and husband] sufficient time and love and attention that they require (Wife, Couple Four).

But I think the other thing is that when I hit the tired low part, he’s on the upbeat and the balance moves because you balance. As I say because the two people balance each other out (Wife, Couple Five).

Having everything on equal par (Wife, Couple Six).
Considering these quotes, it appears that spouses view work-family balance as involving a complementary fit between partners, being able to compartmentalise work-related and family-related concerns, having equilibrium between work and family life, as well as ensuring some quality time with family. As previously discussed in Chapter 2, the work-family balance phenomenon does not have an agreed upon definition (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007) as it is perceived differently by every individual (Guest, 2002). The views described by the couples are in line with literature presented in Chapter 2. Firstly, the complementary fit between partners is in line with the works of Grzywacz and Carlson (2007) who define work-family balance as an “accomplishment of role-related expectations that are negotiated and shared between an individual and his or her role-related partners in the work and family domains” (Grzywacz & Carlson, 2007, p.458). Secondly, being able to compartmentalise work-related and family-related concerns is in line with the works of Clark (2000) who claim that work-family balance is achieved when individuals have “integrated and separated their responsibilities at work and at home” (p. 24). Thirdly, having equilibrium between work and family life is consistent with theorists (Clarke, Koch, & Hill, 2004; Greenhaus et al., 2003; Voydanoff, 2005) who describe balance as being equally involved in work and family roles. Lastly, ensuring some quality time with family is in line with the works of Kofodimos (1993), who suggests that work-family balance refers to “a satisfying, healthy and productive life that includes work, play, and love [...]” (p. xiii).

This finding is therefore consistent with previous research that suggests every individual experiences and gives meaning to the work-family balance phenomenon differently (Chan, 2008; Saungweme, 2010; Veiga, 2009).
When talking about their work-family balance, couples also juxtaposition their experiences of “balance” with “imbalance”.

*It really becomes imbalanced or unbalanced when you need to continue working when your family need you* (Husband, Couple Five).

*Imbalance is when things are hectic and you are not managing your life, you experience chaos. Whereas, work-family balance is when you have a peace or harmony* (Wife, Couple Ten).

Words used to describe how work-family balance is experienced are “peaceful”, “pretty in place”, “harmony” and “chilled”. In contrast, words that describe work-family imbalance are “encroaching”, “unmanaged”, “pear-shaped”, “hectic”, and “chaos”. Through juxtapositioning balance and imbalance, couples derive meaning of balance and associate balance with peace and harmony, and imbalance with a concern that things are unmanageable and chaotic. In stating what balance is, couples also acknowledge what it is not. Furthermore, couples in this study described “imbalance” as resulting from work commitments during family time. The words used to describe “balance” and “imbalance” are in line with previous literature presented in Chapter 2. In defining work-family balance, Clark (2000) talks about “satisfaction” and “good functioning”, while Clarke et al. (2004) refer to “harmony” in the work and family domains. In contrast, words describing the experience of imbalance are “conflict”, “dissatisfaction”, “distress” (Belsky, 1984; Patterson, 1986), and “withdrawal” (Hughes & Bozionelos, 2007). This
juxtapositioning is in line with findings by Gurney (2010) who also observed that some participants described the experience of imbalance when talking about the balance in their lives, and most often cited their work as being the main cause of imbalance.

4.2.1.4 Work-family balance is a dynamic process.

The organising theme “work-family balance is a dynamic process” refers to the fact that work-family balance is a fluid process, which is influenced by certain life events couples may encounter in the family life cycle, and the additional roles they may occupy in their lives.

This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “life events influence the couple’s work-family balance” and “playing additional roles such as spiritual/student, may impact the couple’s work-family balance” as illustrated in Figure 4.3.

![Figure 4.3](image-url)
4.2.1.5 *Life events influence the couple’s work-family balance.*

Couples spoke about how they create and modify their balance in response to changes in their work and/or family situations, as well as their personal preferences over the life course.

> You need to change houses; you do this, that’s not the end of the world
> 
> [...] You need to make adjustments according to your income needs

(Husband, Couple Five).

> At my previous job, I used to travel a lot. So I had less time for my family, but I would take a day in the week off, normally on the Friday so that I could have a long weekend with them. So it also worked. Now I don’t travel anymore, so I have more time in the evenings and on weekends with my family. I always make it work (Wife, Couple Nine).

> Also with the baby, we needed to make new decisions on how to cope with everything (Wife, Couple Eight).

From these quotes, it appears that couples actively adapt and adjust in response to economic needs, changing work circumstances, and natural transitions within the family life cycle. The literature suggests that certain life events such as having children or starting a new job may influence how individuals experience work-family balance, which renders it a dynamic rather than static process (Molloy, 2005). According to Price, Price and McKenry (2010), families are faced with several positive and negative events during the family life cycle. Furthermore, all families
experience change, whether it be positive or negative, which may result in stress. How a family copes with the changes they are facing is dependent on their perception of the situation as well as their coping abilities (Price et al., 2010). This finding is in line with previous research that claims that the work-family balance experience varies over time and across different situations encountered throughout the life cycle (Veiga, 2009).

4.2.1.6 Playing additional roles such as pastoral and student may impact the couple’s work-family balance.

Couples also spoke about the additional roles they performed such as the voluntary pastoral care role and the student role.

*The [work] hours, for me it’s okay. I don’t have an issue with the hours that much, it’s just that with the studying it throws everything out* (Husband, Couple Five).

*I’m doing a certificate in banking. [...] so I’ve now got to balance putting them to bed so that I can sit in the evenings after work* (Wife, Couple Seven).

*Because if we’re having a braai and somebody’s phoning, you’re not going to say oh, it’s the district elder, or the bishop or the apostle, I’m having a braai. You’re not going to ignore the call* (Wife, Couple Three).

*Sometimes, I feel like we living past each other. I wish he could be [home] in the evening but I mean, we’ve been...he’s been a priest since we got married*
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(Wife, Couple Four).

From these quotes, it appears that involvement of the spouses in additional roles consumes their available time for family, and may also impact on the relationship with their children and spouses, which may lead to distress. Furthermore, research suggests that there are various impacts on family life as a result of volunteer work, for example, greater household demands being placed on the volunteer’s spouse, changes in the volunteer’s behaviour, and conflict within the family (Cowlishaw, Evans, & McLennan, 2010; Cowlishaw, McLennan, & Evans, 2008). The comments of the spouses regarding the student role, indicates that their family life and work life are impacted by their studies. In a 2013 MBA life impact survey (Finweek MBAconnect.net, 2013), pursuing an MBA degree was found to negatively affect the personal lives of some individuals in the following areas: marriage/romantic relationship; relationship with friends and family, stress levels, health, diet, exercise, amount of sleep, participation in recreation or hobbies, and financial situation. The finding that additional roles may impact the work-family balance of dual-earner couples is consistent with literature that suggests that there are upper limits to the benefits of multiple roles an individual may play. The reason for this is that the number of roles becomes too great for individuals to manage, or the demands of some of these roles may be become excessive and result in overload and distress (Barnett & Hyde, 2001).
4.2.2 Global theme: Strategies dual-earner couples use to pursue a work-family balance

In this section, I present the emergent themes for understanding what strategies dual-earner couples use to pursue work-family balance. This sub-section therefore aims to answer the second research question posed in this thesis, namely “what strategies do dual-earner couples use to pursue a work-family balance?” It should be noted that the strategies below are not necessarily all used at the same time or implemented by couples on a daily basis. I have learnt from the previous global theme (subjective experiences of work-family balance amongst dual-earner couples) that the work-family balance process is a dynamic one, therefore the couples may use only one or a variety of these strategies to guide their behaviours, depending on the situations or circumstances they face.

Ten organising (main) themes emerged around the global theme “strategies dual-earner couples use to pursue a work-family balance”, namely: (a) striving towards an egalitarian marital relationship helps to promote couples’ experience of work-family balance; (b) proactively structuring opportunities for time with family contributes to a balanced work and family life; (c) accessing familial and paid support promotes feelings of being successful in balancing work and family roles; (d) shared planning and organisation facilitates a better balance of work and family roles; (e) living within their means relieves couples of unnecessary financial stress; (f) creating opportunities for “alone time” supports couples’ work-family balance; (g) work validation and satisfaction encourages greater experiences of work-family balance; (h) having the ability to control one’s schedule ensures greater freedom to transition between work and family domains;
(i) setting boundaries around work and family domains helps couples maintain their balance; and (j) relying on faith to cope with work and family stressors leads to a more balanced life. These organising themes, along with their basic themes are discussed below.

4.2.2.1 Striving towards an egalitarian marital relationship helps to promote couples’ experience of work-family balance.

The organising theme “striving towards an egalitarian relationship helps to promote couples’ experience of work-family balance” refers to the couple’s ability to share household chores and childcare responsibilities, jointly make important work and family decisions, and value the relationship they have with one another. This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “share housework and childcare responsibilities”, “make joint decisions regarding important work and family matters”, and “value the spousal relationship” (Figure 4.4).
Figure 4.4. Basic themes linked to the organising theme “striving towards an egalitarian marital relationship helps to promote couples’ experience of work-family balance”

4.2.2.2 Share housework and childcare responsibilities.

Couples spoke of sharing housework and childcare responsibilities, as reflected in the quotes below.

For us it’s a case of, well it’s both our families, it’s our family, it’s our house. You have to do what you have to do and we do it (Wife, Couple Five).

So basically I get home about five o’clock, then the child comes out of school, then we sort her [five-year-old] out. We make [...] supper, and we’ll eat, [when] the wife comes home [...] everything is done already.

Both kids is bathed and everything (Husband, Couple Six).

Yes, look I am very thankful, he helps with everything. Even with the baby (Wife, Couple Eight).
Husbands in the study spoke of how they help their wives with household chores such as cleaning, washing dishes, washing and ironing clothes, and preparing meals. In addition, husbands also assisted their spouses with helping their children with homework, dropping them off and collecting them from school, as well as bathing and feeding. Overall, the couples in this study demonstrate a degree of equality through the sharing of housework and childcare responsibilities. In Chapter 2, I mentioned that a vast amount of the literature concentrates on how women still carry the bulk of domestic and childcare work (Bianchi et al., 2006; Craig, 2006; Saxbe, Repetti, & Graesch, 2011); however, in this study, the findings suggest that the couples appear to be challenging this view with respect to housework and childcare responsibilities. Therefore, this study supports the findings by Sayer (2005) who suggests that several recent studies demonstrate that the allocation of time by both men and women to family responsibilities and paid work have become more egalitarian. This finding therefore also concurs with previous research (Haddock et al., 2001; Singh, 2013; Tengimfene, 2009; Veiga, 2009; Zimmerman, Haddock, Current & Ziemba, 2003) that suggests helping one another out or spousal support regarding housework and childcare is regarded as important for achieving a more balanced work and family life.

4.2.2.3 Make joint decisions regarding important work and family matters.

Couples also stated the importance of making joint decisions regarding family and work related matters, as illustrated in the excerpts below.

But if it’s something to do with the children or it’s got to be a decision made or a choice made for our family we will sit down and talk about it
together [...] as a family or as partners (Husband, Couple One).

We both decided that one of us would be prominently more involved with the children. And that’s why I’ve said I don’t see myself going back to a strictly corporate environment (Wife, Couple Five).

Ah, we always consult each other on stuff. [...] we make decisions when it comes to the baby (Wife, Couple Eight).

It’s important to decide together, after all, how can the other person support you if they were not part of a decision? Even small things, like finding a new suitable car for the family (Husband, Couple Eight).

I am not comfortable if my husband is not part of a decision I make relating to work or our child, or just our home (Wife, Couple Ten).

These quotes suggest that couples make joint decisions on matters such as raising children, scaling back on work hours, purchasing family assets, and home-related decisions. The literature suggests that “a couple’s decision-making on an issue is said to be egalitarian when each partner consults the other before making a final decision” (Oduro, Boakye-Yiodom, & Baah-Boateng, 2012, p. 5). This finding is in line with previous research that suggests that dual-earner couples who perceive themselves as successful in balancing work and family roles “make decisions together as partners who have equal input into the process and outcome of decisions” (Haddock et al., 2001, p. 451).
4.2.2.4 Value the spousal relationship.

Couples in the study also stressed the importance of having a close relationship with one’s spouse on an intrapersonal level.

*I have got a very good relationship, we respect one another, we love one another, we look after one another* (Wife, Couple Two).

*I think our relationship is based on, we’re each other’s best friends...I don’t need a girls’ night out so that I can talk about all the problems with my husband* (Wife, Couple Five).

*I’ll hear her out. It’s important to show your partner that you are there for them. Cause at the end of the day your relationship is built on love. It’s built on trust. It’s built on commitment* (Husband, Couple Seven).

These quotes suggest that couples talk and share their thoughts with one another, develop a friendship, love one another, respect one another, are committed to one another, look out for one another, and value companionship with one another. This finding concurs with previous research that suggests that couples are partners at an interpersonal level (Haddock et al., 2001), and sometimes describe each other as being best friends (Schwartz, 1994). This finding is also supported by research findings suggesting that respecting, supporting and appreciating one another, is instrumental to their work-family balance (Haddock et al., 2001).

The couples in this study also mentioned romantic gestures that enhance their spousal relationship.
[My husband] always looks after me, buys me presents, or a bouquet of flowers and on is his birthday I always buy him present (Wife, Couple Two).

He gives me his own homemade massage, yes, yes. I love it (Wife, Couple Four).

He colors my hair for me...Ja, he colors my hair for me. He will tell me when I’m due, I’m due now (Wife, Couple Seven).

Considering these quotes, it appears that spouses describe various romantic gestures or rituals that they practice, which helps them to connect with one another as partners. This finding is in agreement with previous research conducted by Haddock, Zimmerman, Current, & Harvey (2002) whereby couples discussed “the importance of ensuring they had time together to nurture the couple relationship” or the commitment to having time together as a couple, as a strategy for balancing work and family life (p. 48).

4.2.2.5  **Proactively structuring opportunities for time with family contributes to a balanced work and family life.**

The organising theme “proactively structuring opportunities for time with family contributes to a balanced work and family life” refers to the opportunities couples create to connect with one another on a daily basis. They also schedule weekly, monthly and annual events for family get-togethers. This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “use specific opportunities to re-connect with the family on a daily basis” and “schedule events for family get-togethers regularly”
(see Figure 4.5).

Figure 4.5. Basic themes linked to the organizing theme “proactively structuring opportunities for time with family contributes to a balanced work and family life”

4.2.2.6 Use specific opportunities to re-connect with the family on a daily basis.

Couples stressed the importance for connecting with one another on a daily basis, whether it is around the family dinner table or while driving in the car.

*We sit together around the table and have our supper...And then we talk and the kids talk, they say what they’ve got [...] little worries, big worries, what’s good what’s not so good, and what happened the day* (Wife, Couple One).

*We always sit together. We always sit for dinner together* (Wife, Couple Four).
We spend that time that time in the car when we travel. It’s like 25 minutes of travelling there and then back. So we are in each other’s company. [...] we are talking or moaning or whatever the case might be; or talking about plans or planning (Wife, Couple Three).  

We often have a lot of our discussions about things in the car...A lot of times in transit travelling, and you know [...]. [...] often we’ve spent some of our best times, when we’re driving home from somewhere (Husband, Couple Four).

These quotes indicate that re-connecting with family on a daily basis around the family dinner table, and/or in the car en route to and from school or work, is an opportunity to regroup and catch up on each other’s successes and shortcomings of the day. These opportunities were also viewed by couples as quality time spent with the family. Research suggests the way parents feel about whether they spend enough time with their children matters for their well-being and that creating sufficient quality time with their children may be especially important to dual-earner couples’ sense on work-family balance (Nomaguchi, Milkie, & Bianchi, 2005). This finding is consistent with that of Haddock et al. (2001) who suggest that couples stress the importance of maintaining family as the highest priority by making decisions about daily life behaviour and creating opportunities for family time, often involving rituals or routines with family.
4.2.2.7 *Schedule events for family get-togethers regularly.*

Couples also shared how they try to create opportunities for family get-togethers on a regular basis where they can relax, enjoy fun-activities, or simply re-connect with one another.

*Okay Fridays is braai day[...] I think that’s our maybe our best quality time is a Friday night* (Wife, Couple Three).

*Friday evenings we like good movies; that’s the one thing we do like...And of course, that’s what we try and do, have a movie night* (Husband, Couple Four).

*Pizza and movie night, play games with the kids, on Saturday. Actually any takeaway, but the kids love pizza* (Wife, Couple Nine).

*Yes, sometimes what we do is we try and go out every...about once a month [...] And then we go out and eat somewhere, we see a show, or we will go and eat together and that’s mostly what we do* (Husband, Couple One).

*We do tend to go away weekends* (Husband, Couple Three).

*We break away maybe from a Thursday to a Sunday that type of thing. The kids like Goudini Spa* (Wife, Couple Seven).

*We try go on a nice holiday once a year. Normally, Mauritius is our favorite place, for value for money* (Wife, Couple Ten).
These quotes suggest that couples and their families schedule family leisure time, which includes get-togethers on a weekly, monthly, and quarterly or yearly basis. The most common weekly family events were “braai day”, “movie night” and “pizza night”. Common monthly family outings included going to a restaurant, show, school event, and walks on the beach. Finally, couples also scheduled family holidays at various resorts, beach villages, and overseas, on a quarterly or annual basis. Leisure may be described as “time not committed to market work, domestic care giving, or personal care” (Mattingly & Bianchi, 2003, p. 1000). Family leisure time may be defined as “the times parents and children spend together in free time or recreational activities” (Shaw, 1997, p. 98). Lastly, this finding is in line with the study conducted by Haddock et al. (2001) who found that “prioritising family fun” whereby couples plan family fun excursions, outings, and events as a “means of relaxing, enjoying life, and staying emotionally connected and creating a balance against the stress of managing many responsibilities”, is a strategy which dual-earner couples consider to be successful for balancing work and family life (p. 453).

4.2.2.8 Accessing familial and paid support promotes feelings of being successful in balancing work and family roles.

The organising theme “accessing familial and paid support promotes feelings of being successful in balancing work and family roles” refers to the help couples may receive from their older children, extended family members and domestic helper and/or nannies with respect to household chores and childcare responsibilities. This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “encourage children’s
involvement in age-appropriate chores”, “reach out to extended family members to help with house chores and child-related responsibilities”, and “employ the services of a nanny and/or domestic worker to help with house chores and/or child-related responsibilities” (see Figure 4.6).

Figure 4.6. Basic themes linked to organising theme “accessing familial and paid support promotes feelings of being successful in balancing work and family roles”

### 4.2.2.9 Encourage children’s involvement in age-appropriate chores.

Couples expressed that they received help from their children as they become older and more independent. The help couples receive from their children is illustrated in the quotations below.

*my youngest daughter [does the] washing [...]. [...] when the youngest daughter puts on the big pot we going to have spaghetti Bolognase and she’ll cook the spaghetti by the time I get home, my eldest daughter is cutting [the onion]* (Wife, Couple Three).
The 10 year-old baths himself, he irons his own clothes. The eight year-old is pretty much getting there. [...] even with the baby, they help. My wife can literally go into the toilet without the baby because the eight and 10 year old can look after him (Husband, Couple Four).

The other thing that's obviously a big advantage for us, my eldest son is turning 17 [...] he's an adult, he can do everything for himself [...] and he's willing to take care of my youngest son (Wife, Couple Five).

Considering these quotes, it appears that children as young as eight years of age are able to assist with small household chores and with babysitting younger siblings for short periods at a time. Children aged sixteen and older are more independent and are able to offer more help to their parents with domestic tasks and by getting involved with supervising younger siblings. Older children also assist their parents with the preparation of meals, washing dishes, ironing, tidying up their rooms, and even helping younger siblings with homework. Scholars suggest that first born children are given more responsibilities by parents such as babysitting younger siblings and household tasks compared with those who are second or third born (Blakemore, Berenbaum, & Liben, 2009). Previous research suggests small contributions to household chores by children may benefit them later in life and that by involving children in age-appropriate domestic tasks, parents are teaching children a sense of independence, responsibility, and competence (Rossmann, 2002). Support received from older children is in agreement with previous research that suggests that dual-earner couples regard it as important to teach children responsibilities such as expecting them to help with age-appropriate chores.
and regarded this as a parenting strategy for achieving a balanced work and family life (Haddock et al., 2002).

4.2.2.10 Reach out to extended family members to help with household chores and child-related responsibilities.

Couples in the study also reached out to extended family members for help with household and childcare responsibilities.

Recently even ma [granny] had to chip in and help them with some homework (Husband, Couple Four).

My mom does the washing and ironing because she loves doing it (Wife, Couple Five).

My mom will pick my daughter up from school, yes (Wife, Couple Six).

I sometimes drop her at my mother’s house or my sister’s house because she [my sister] also has two young children. I don’t even worry. I know they take care of her which makes me feel more relaxed, knowing she is safe and in good hands (Wife, Couple Ten).

The mothers of couples were most often viewed as crucial in helping out with dropping off and collecting children from school, helping out with homework, as well as attending to the children’s needs while the parents were at work. As previously mentioned, the parents of Couple Five live in a granny flat on the couple’s property, and in addition to helping out with childcare responsibilities, the wife’s mother would do all the washing and ironing for the family. Couples in the study also reached out to their
siblings for help with childcare responsibilities. Overall, it appears that the couples believed that the help received from extended family members provided them with greater relief in knowing that their children were in the presence of family members, making them feel more at ease. This finding is consistent with prior research that suggests dual-earner couples rely heavily on the support offered by extended family members (such as their parents) in coping with family demands (Kalliath, Kalliath, & Singh, 2011; Tengimfene, 2009). Furthermore, this finding is aligned with the findings of Haddock et al. (2002), Kalliath et al. (2011), and Veiga (2009) who suggest that the childcare support received from extended family members is regarded as instrumental to working parents’ experience of work-family balance.

**4.2.2.11 Employ the services of a nanny and/or domestic worker to help with house chores and/or child-related responsibilities.**

Couples revealed that they received support with childcare and day-to-day domestic tasks (such as cleaning, washing and ironing) by employing the services of domestic workers and nannies. In some cases the domestic workers took on the dual role of cleaner and child minder.

*I do have a domestic that comes in twice a week to clean....And iron...That helps a lot* (Wife, Couple One).

*the three month old has a nanny. She comes before I leave for work and then she leaves when we come home* (Wife, Couple Six).

*We have a domestic that comes in from 9 till whoever gets home*
Work-Family Life Balance in Cape Town

... (Wife, Couple Seven).

*I have a domestic twice a week [...] instead of spending my free time cleaning, I can do something with my family* (Wife, Couple Ten).

Couples considered that paid help allowed them to spend more time doing things with their family instead of having to attend to household chores. For those couples who also made use of paid help for childcare, nannies were regarded as crucial support for supervising, feeding and bathing children while parents were at work. Smit (2001) asserts that domestic help services are prevalent in South Africa, and that dual-earner couples should consider these as they may serve two purposes, firstly to a large extent, they relieve them of the responsibilities of domestic tasks, and secondly, help by being involved with childcare responsibilities, thus alleviating the experience of role overload. Research suggests that women in dual-earner relationships benefit from more income, which may permit them to employ domestic and childcare services (Tengimfene, 2009). Lastly, paid support utilised by couples in this study concurs with previous research which indicates that many South African dual-earner families employ the services of domestic workers, nannies, or baby-sitters (Carrim, 2012; Easton, 2007; Naidoo & Jano, 2002; Singh, 2013; Smit, 2001; Tengimfene, 2009; Veiga, 2009).

**4.2.2.12 Shared planning and organisation facilitates a better balance of work and family roles.**

The organising theme “shared planning and organisation facilitates a better balance of work and family roles” refers to how couples organise and plan their
families’ daily week activities. This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “develop a pre-defined weekly activities program with the family” and “plan meals and grocery shopping in advance” (see Figure 4.7).

![Diagram showing themes linked to organizing theme “shared planning and organisation facilitates a better balance of work and family roles”]

**Figure 4.7.** Basic themes linked to organizing theme “shared planning and organisation facilitates a better balance of work and family roles”

### 4.2.2.13 Develop a pre-defined weekly activities program with the family.

Couples stress that during the week, their focus falls on getting things done such as dropping children off at school, taking them to after school activities, going to work, and in some cases, going to church. To avoid stress, couples plan these activities in advance to make travel plans easier.

> generally we would know exactly what is happening, where everybody would be at what time[...]We sort of... now, we’ve already got a routine (Wife, Couple Three).

> So it’s kind of a program of the week is that...almost everybody’s got something on every evening, which I suppose makes it easier. Because we, each have got something to do. His got sport, I’ve got choir practice, the
little one has other activities[...]. [...] from Friday to Sunday is relax time (Wife, Couple Five).

during the week we all know the schedule. Work and school (Husband, Couple Nine).

It appears that during the week couples accord priority to work and school and in some cases church activities, often developing a routine that the whole family participates in. Little planning is done on the weekend as the couples view this as a time for relaxation. The finding that couples plan a weekly schedule by prioritising work and family activities, and developing a routine is consistent with the findings by Koekemoer and Mostert (2010) and Ruth (2009) who suggest that working women who are organised and prioritise work and family duties are able to achieve a work-family balance and experience less conflict.

4.2.2.14 Plan meals and grocery shopping in advance.

Couples in this study stated that in order to avoid unnecessary stress related to cooking family meals and grocery shopping, these tasks were planned in advance.

We make a list once a week and go grocery shopping together (Husband, Couple One).

Or make it [supper] the night before, so there’s no rush (Wife, Couple Four).

And we’ve got also like a list also, you must see our fridge. Whatever you take out of the cupboard, you write down. So by the time you take out the list and then you go (Wife, Couple Five).
So everything takes planning, almost daily it’s a plan. Literally a plan everyday, especially supper (Husband, Couple Four).

What we do, and we do have a bit of a system there, is that we work out whatever needs to be, menu wise, we work out for the week (Wife, Couple Five).

Yes, I plan the food menu at least a day or two in advance (Wife, Couple Ten).

I do a shopping list in advance (Wife, Couple Eight).

Firstly, these quotes indicate that couples plan meals in advance, part-preparing meals in advance, and/or arranged a weekly menu in advance. It is important that by stating “in advance” does not necessarily mean a week before, while some couples plan meals on a daily basis, they nonetheless still plan. This planning action of family meals is performed to make life easier for the couples. Secondly, couples also planned their grocery shopping in advance. To ease their experience of grocery shopping, they made shopping lists in advance, in some cases, leaving these on the fridge where any item that would be removed from the cupboard would be written down to be replaced. The literature suggests that by planning meals and grocery shopping in advance couples not only save time, but also make healthier food choices which can combat physical stress resulting from a poor diet (Blake et al., 2009). The finding that couples plan meals and shopping in advance as a strategy for work-family balance is consistent with the research findings of Blake et al. (2009) and Devine et al. (2006) who suggest that those
participants who managed work and family domains successfully described planning meals in advance and managing their time for grocery shopping. Research also suggests that parents who planned meals in advance experience fewer pressures during the day (Blake et al., 2009).

4.2.2.15 Living within means relieves couples of unnecessary financial stress.

The organising theme titled “living within means relieves couples of unnecessary financial stress” refers to how dual-earner couples control their finances by not overspending on unnecessary expenses which helps them stay balanced. This organising theme comprises of the following basic theme: “manage finances by staying within budget” (see Figure 4.8).

![Diagram showing the relationship between Managing finances by staying within budget and Living within means relieves couples of unnecessary financial stress.]

Figure 4.8. Basic theme linked to organising theme “Living within means relieves couples of unnecessary financial stress”
4.2.2.16 Manage finances by staying within budget.

Couples spoke about the importance of controlling their finances, by ensuring they did not spend more money than they made and being accepting of what they have.

*We are home a lot because we can’t afford going out […].*

*Financially […] a little bit would go a far way, sure, but I accept […] what we have* (Wife, Couple Three).

*Yes, it’s very nice [eating out at favorite seafood restaurant], but also a little bit expensive. So we don’t go there often [because it is expensive]* (Husband, Couple Four).

*If you can eat oats for a month, then eat oats for a month but you do what you need to do. […] you can never spend more than you have or what you earn… you adjust your life according to your income* (Husband, Couple Five).

*We used to [go eat out] before we bought the house, now that we’ve bought the house we don’t* (Wife, Couple Six).

These quotes indicate that couples are careful to not spend more than they can afford by limiting activities such as going to restaurants or other outings which may incur additional costs. Furthermore, it appears that despite the financial difficulties
they may face, the couples are accepting and grateful for what they have. The finding that couples live within their means is consistent with findings by Haddock et al. (2001) who suggest that dual-earner couples who successfully manage work-family balance use “living simply” as one of their balancing strategies. Haddock et al. (2001) explain that these couples live simply by: (a) limiting certain activities; (b) controlling their finances; (c) adopting realistic expectations for simplifying household responsibilities; and (d) creating time-saving strategies by planning activities in advance.

4.2.2.17 Creating opportunities for “alone time” supports couples’ work-family balance.

Some couples explained the importance of having time alone as a strategy for achieving work-family balance. This organising theme comprises the following basic theme: “give each other space to enjoy personal hobbies and/or interests” (see Figure 4.9).
4.2.2.18 Give each other space to pursue personal hobbies and/or interests.

Some couples explained that it is important to give one another space to spend time alone enjoying relaxing rituals, hobbies and/or interests.

*Yes as husband says, we also give each other space. I mean if I want to go and sit and read my book for an hour or two he would leave me to read my book and if he wants and listen to his music, for an hour or two...then I let him do that* (Wife, Couple One).

*I found the guitar very relaxing to play. So sometimes I will just get caught up in that, I will pick up the violin and I get caught up in it, and it’s literally five minutes. I literally call that my evening leisure* (Husband, Couple Four).

*Ah, I feel people should have sometime for themselves to do something they enjoy. Even just an hour a week. You know, go for a walk, massage or whatever. I like to go for a walk* (Wife, Couple Nine).
Even though finding time for oneself when being in a dual-earner relationship with children may seem difficult, couples still believe that setting some time for individual rejuvenation is important. Giving one another space to enjoy personal hobbies, pampering treatments, or simply enjoying a hot bath, is regarded as important by couples. Popular hobbies were reading books, listening to music, and playing a musical instrument. The literature suggests that by giving one another space to pursue personal hobbies, interests, or relaxation is essential for a healthy and happy marriage (Veroff, Douvan, Orbuch, & Acitelli, 1998). This finding concurs with previous research which found that couples mentioned that they needed to allow time for individual rejuvenation as part of successfully balancing work and family life (Haddock, et al., 2002).

4.2.2.19 Work validation and satisfaction encourages greater experiences of work-family balance.

Couples also spoke about the importance of deriving meaning from their work as being important to the experience of work-family balance. The organising theme “work validation and satisfaction encourages greater experiences of work-family balance” comprises the following basic theme: “derive pleasure from work” (see Figure 4.10).
Figure 4.10. Basic themes linked to the organising theme “work validation and satisfaction encourages greater experiences of work-family balance”

4.2.2.20 Deriving pleasure from work.

Couples spoke of enjoying one’s work and the benefits derived from it.

*Yes it keeps your mind [busy], because we got the ability [...] I am the manager. [...] if I stay [at home] and am not working then I do not feel good about myself* (Wife, Couple Two).

*We are happy because we are both working. Also we can afford to go on holidays because we both have jobs* (Husband, Couple Two).

*I need the mental stimulation. I think I would be bored at home being a house wife. I like challenges. I like to work hard so...* (Wife, Couple Four).

*It’s rather the choice of working because that partly defines you and you enjoy it, and it adds value* (Husband, Couple Five).

*I am proud being in a dual-earner relationship firstly for myself. I feel I have financial freedom and access to more things that I would if I was at...*
It appears that by being involved in paid employment, couples feel they have more energy, that work partly defines their professional identity, and that they enjoyed work challenges. In addition, couples also identified the financial benefits derived from both spouses being engaged in paid work. The literature suggests that couples engaging in work and family roles with children are able to benefit from role modelling an egalitarian relationship, increased self-identity and well-being, increased financial resources and flexibility, (time away from children leads to) better parenting, development of social networks in the workplace, and improved social and intellectual skills to use with one’s children (Haddock & Rattenborg, 2003). This finding is consistent with the study carried out by Haddock et al. (2001) who found that couples who successfully balance work and family life described enjoyment and purpose as a consequence of their professional pursuits which brought enjoyment and enthusiasm to their lives, experienced limited work-related burnout, and felt that being in a dual-earner relationship was positive for all members of their family.

4.2.2.21 Having the ability to control one’s work schedule ensures greater freedom to transition between work and family domains.

The organising theme “having the ability to control one’s work schedule ensures greater freedom to transition between work and family domains” refers to the ability of the couples to have control and flexibility in their work-schedules, which contributes to the experience of a balanced work and family life. Couples in the study shared that flexi-time, engaging in part-time employment and the ability to work from

home (Wife, Couple Nine).
home allowed them flexibility in their work schedule. This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “work for organisations offering flexible work schedules”, “working with supervisors who display sensitivity to employee’s family responsibilities” and “seek part-time employment opportunities” (see Figure 4.11).

![Diagram](image)

**Figure 4.11.** Basic themes linked to the organising theme “having the ability to control one’s work schedule ensures greater freedom to transition between work and family domains”

4.2.2.22 **Work for organisations offering flexible work schedules.**

Flexible work schedules occur when traditional working hours (eight hour work day, nine-to-five job) become variable. Couples spoke of how their work allowed them to enjoy flexi-time, and/or telecommuting, or working from home.

*I must say centre of town, corporates have got a [flexi-time schedule], their hours are only 07:00 to 16:00, 08:00 to 17:00 and then 9:00 to 18:00. You can choose [...] which one, so that’s why you get this traffic pattern so* (Wife, Couple Five).
I start work at 7:00 and I finish at 16:00. It helps get out of the traffic rush (Husband, Couple Ten).

Yes I do. I can work from home as well. That’s the whole nice thing about it (Husband, Couple Three).

Yes I work from home at least once a week […]. Especially if we have to produce a product very quickly, I work from home to avoid wasting time on the road and things like that and on some days it’s not so bad, just some Skype meetings and the rest is just reading emails, but I like the option. […] I work from home to avoid wasting time on the road (Husband, Couple Ten).

These quotes suggest that the couples are able to work flexible hours and/or are able to work from home. In both instances they are able to avoid rush-hour traffic that may consume time available for family. In addition, couples spoke about completing work more efficiently when working from home. Flexi-time “usually requires employees to be physically present at their work premises during ‘core’ hours” (Saungweme, 2010, p. 33). Core hours are usually between 11 am and 3 pm or as requested by the employer. In the study conducted by Haddock et al. (2006), findings suggest that some dual-earner couples completed at least a portion of their work from home. Furthermore, working from home is a workplace strategy for work-family balance that allowed these couples to remain involved in their family life without feeling trapped in their work life, and appeared closely linked to the dual earner couples overall level of autonomy (Haddock et al., 2006).
The literature suggests that flexible work scheduling has benefits for both employees and their employers (Glass & Finley, 2002). Firstly, flexible working hours for employees has been associated with a decrease in somatic complaints, improvement in mental and physical stress, and reduced feelings of work-related stress and role strain (Glass & Finley, 2002). Secondly, from an organisational perspective, offering employees flexible work scheduling has been linked to employee productivity, organisational commitment, retention, morale, job satisfaction, and reduction in absenteeism (Glass & Finley, 2002). This finding is in agreement with the findings by Haddock et al. (2006) who found that flexible work scheduling was the most prominent workplace theme among dual-earner couples who reported being successful in balancing work and family life. Lastly, Tengimfene (2009) found that working mothers constantly searched for control over their time and preferred flexible work hours that would allow them to juggle work and family responsibilities.

**4.2.2.23 Working with supervisors who display sensitivity to employee’s family responsibilities.**

Couples also spoke about the support they received in the workplace from their superiors as instrumental to gaining flexibility in their work life, and for balancing their work and family roles.

*My manager is a good guy. He has a family too with young children so he understands if I am running late or need to go do something with my wife and our daughter. He never questioned anything. As long as I let him know I think we have an understanding* (Husband, Couple Eight).
If there is ever anything wrong where the children are concerned the managers are very understanding (Wife, Couple Nine).

I have never had any problem from my supervisors whether I needed to go to the doctor, or fetch my child from school. They are very understanding and that is important to me and my family (Wife, Couple Ten).

These quotes suggest that working with supervisors who understand the employee’s family responsibilities, helps couples attend to important or urgent family related matters during working hours, which helps them feel more at ease. The literature suggests that supportive supervisors play a crucial role in providing emotional and work support for employees, which helps reduce experiences of work-family conflict (Chan, 2009; Hammer, Kossek, Yragui, Bodner, & Hansen, 2009). This finding is consistent with previous research conducted by Haddock et al. (2006), who suggest that dual-earner couples regard supportive supervisors to be a workplace strategy for managing a successful work-family balance. Supervisor support was also found to enhance the participants’ feeling of work satisfaction. Overall, participants described supportive supervisors or managers as supervisors who “communicate respect through the value place on employees’ work and also through a willingness to accommodate to the employees’ individual needs” (Haddock et al., 2006, p. 222).

4.2.2.24 Seek part-time employment opportunities.

Part-time work refers to a form of employment which entails fewer working hours per week than full-time employment.
I drop the kids [at school]. [...] go to [the office] for the day...Mostly mornings if it works out to be just mornings [...] And then I would pick them up at 15:00 so that would be from school (Wife, Couple Five).

I feel I have a lot more freedom as a contractor. Like being your own boss, you know? (Wife, Couple Eight).

I would love to work part-time because I think I would have more time to be involved in my child’s school activities (Wife, Couple Ten).

It should be noted that only wives reported pursuing or wanting to pursue part-time or contract work in this study. These women explained how they preferred this type of work as it allowed them to prioritise their children. In addition, these wives believed that contract work afforded them a degree of control over their work schedule and gave them the flexibility they desired to attend to family-related matters during the day such as picking up and dropping off children at school. For example, in a survey conducted by Banerjee and Sachdeva (2008), 60 per cent of Indian working mothers suggested that being involved in part-time work would be their ideal option for employment. In a European survey, the following positive aspects of part-time employment were highlighted: (a) part-time may be used as a strategy for managing work-life balance; (b) facilitates progressive entrance or withdrawal from labour market over life course; and (c) may increase life satisfaction (Sandor, 2001). This finding is supported in the literature that suggests part-time work offers female employees the flexibility they need to manage family responsibilities (Fourie, 2008). Evidence suggests that part-time work or reducing the number of hours spent on paid
employment is desired by many working mothers for achieving work-family balance (Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development [OECD], 2011).

4.2.2.25 Setting boundaries around work and family domains helps couples maintain their balance.

The organising theme “setting boundaries around work and family domains helps couples maintain their balance” refers to how couples consciously try to compartmentalise their work life from their family life and vice versa. This organising theme comprises the following basic theme: “consciously try to keep work and family life separate from one another” (see Figure 4.11).

![Diagram](https://via.placeholder.com/150)

*Figure 4.12. Basic theme linked to the organising theme “setting boundaries around work and family domains helps couples maintain their balance”*

4.2.2.26 Consciously try and keep work and family life separate from one another.

Couples in the study also mentioned how they made efforts to consciously set limits around their work and family life.
I am focused on work, when I come home I focus on my home, with my relationship with my husband and my daughter (Wife, Couple Two).

I don’t want the one [work or family] overlapping the other. So when I am at work I’m working [...] and when I get home I only concentrate on the family (Wife, Couple Four).

Although couples acknowledge that maintaining boundaries around the work and family domains is not an easy task, they try to make conscious decisions to not let their work interfere during family times or family to interfere during work time, which helps them stay balanced. Couples also spoke about separating family from their work. In Chapter 2, Clark (2000) refers to “borders” as lines that separate the work and family domains. These borders may be physical (where), temporal (when), and psychological (emotions, thinking patterns, relevant behaviours). To achieve work-family balance, Clark (2000) suggests that borders should not be too strong, because strong borders do not allow permeability, flexibility, or the blending process to occur. Borders should also not allow very high levels of permeability, flexibility and blending effects, as these are considered weak borders. Therefore, for work-family balance to occur, borders should consist of a moderate or a balanced amount of blending, flexibility, and permeability. This finding is consistent with the findings by Haddock et al. (2001), who suggest that couples were committed to maintaining control over work by making conscious efforts to set limits around it. Overall, in the study conducted by Haddock et al. (2001), findings show that couples did not want their personal and professional lives to overlap.
4.2.2.27 *Relying on faith to cope with work and family related stressors leads to a more balanced life.*

The organising theme “relying on faith to cope with work and family related stressors leads to a more balanced life” refers to how couples perceive their faith life as a strategy for balancing work and family life. This organising theme comprises the following basic themes: “use of religion as an anchor and motivator” (see Figure 4.13).

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**Figure 4.13.** Basic theme linked to the organising theme “relying on faith to cope with work and family related stressors leads to a more balanced life”

4.2.2.28 *Use of religion as an anchor and motivator.*

Couples shared that it is important to turn to religion for managing conflict experienced from juggling work and family roles.

*Yes, I suppose not everybody gets I was fortunate that I have faith and It’s my anchor if there’s problems [...]. [...] just to have that anchor in your life to also say a little prayer and say help me through this* (Wife, Couple One).
Well, I can tell you I do use prayer to balance. It’s played an enormous part in my life. I think sometimes that’s the reason I am coping (Husband, Couple Four).

I am very happy when I read Joyce Meyer books [...] as it teaches me a lot and keeps me positive to press forward in my life (Wife, Couple Two).

Sometimes in the car, listen to a gospel song, just motivates you to try achieve your best in life you know (Husband, Couple Nine).

Prayer and access to religious media such as books and gospel music, seem to bring joy to the life of the couples, motivates them to achieve in their life, and are regarded as tools for coping with work and family stresses, which makes it easier for them to achieve a balanced life. Using faith and prayer, as a strategy for balancing work and family life is consistent with previous research (Brink & de La Rey, 2001; Krymis, 2011). Brink and de La Rey (2001) reported that several participants described “prayer” as a method for coping with work and family demands, and found that “religion was used on a daily basis to guide a number of the participants in coping with work and family responsibilities” (p. 60). Furthermore, findings by Krymis (2011) suggest that, those participants who had elements of faith in their lives, connected faith to their purpose of working and derived meaning from their work, as well as valued relationships reflecting their own faith and values as part of their coping strategies.
4.3 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, the findings of ten semi-structured interviews with dual-earner couples were presented and articulated with emergent themes. These themes are interrelated and demonstrate how the couples in this study experience work-family balance and the strategies they use to pursue this balance. In addition, each theme emerging from the findings was also presented in terms of existing literature and/or prior research studies.

A summary of these findings is presented in the following chapter. In addition, in Chapter 5 I proceed to present the conclusions of the study, identify limitations within the study, and offer recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER 5

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

The purpose of this chapter is to present the reader with a summary of the overall findings of this thesis, address the limitations of this study, and to identify areas of focus for future research. This chapter will conclude with a sub-section on my personal reflections of how the study has influenced me and my personal growth.

Although various studies have explored the work-family balance phenomenon amongst dual-earner couples, few have explored the phenomenon within the South African context. Furthermore, according to my knowledge, no known South African studies have explored the work-family balance phenomenon at couple level, through conjoint interviews. The aim of this research study is to capture the dual-earner couple’s subjective experiences and strategies of work and family life balance in Cape Town, South Africa. In doing so, this dissertation aims to build on the existing multiple discourses in the field as well as literature documenting how dual-earner couples manage a balance between work and family life. This thesis also aims to raise awareness of work-family balance in dual-earner relationships for occupational and organisational psychologists in South Africa. Finally, it is hoped that the findings of this thesis will enhance the profile of South African research in the field of, and stimulate debates on key issues in relation to, work-family balance.
5.1 Summary of Research Findings

From the conjoint interviews held with ten heterosexual, middle-class, multi-racial dual-earner couples with children (under the ages of 18), living in Cape Town South Africa, this dissertation identified organising themes for the global theme “subjective experiences of work-family balance amongst dual-earner couples” as: (a) work-family balance is a unique experience; and (b) work-family balance is a dynamic process, and the organising themes for the global theme of “strategies dual-earner couples use to pursue a work-family balance as: (a) striving towards an egalitarian marital relationship helps to promote couples’ experience of work-family balance; (b) proactively structuring opportunities for time with family contributes to a balanced work and family life; (c) accessing familial and paid support promotes feelings of being successful in balancing work and family roles; (d) shared planning and organisation facilitates a better balance of work and family roles; (e) living within means relieves couples of unnecessary financial stress; (f) creating opportunities for “alone time” supports couples’ work-family balance; (g) work validation and satisfaction encourages greater experiences of work-family balance; (h) having the ability to control one’s schedule ensures greater freedom to make a transition between work and family domains; (i) setting boundaries around work and family domains helps couples maintain their balance; and (j) relying on faith to cope with work and family stressors leads to a more balanced life.

My thematic network analysis revealed a central storyline about the experience that couples have and the strategies they use to manage work-family balance. The experience of the couple was two-fold in that they each experience and give meaning to the
phenomenon in different ways. They understood work-family to be a dynamic process and actively adjusted in response to various changes in the family life cycle, as well as additional life roles that they may have to play.

The analysis identified that the couples use a number of strategies to balance their work and family life. Couples develop a relationship where house chores, childcare responsibilities, and making decisions are shared; and further to this, value their spousal relationship. Couples structure time with their family by using daily opportunities to reconnect and regularly schedule family get-togethers. Couples also receive assistance from their children and extended family members, and possibly employ the services of a nanny or domestic worker to help with household chores or child-related responsibilities. Planning and organisation is used to develop programmes for pre-defined weekly activities with the family, as well as a plan for meals and grocery shopping. Living within their means helps couples to avoid unnecessary financial stress. Couples also create opportunities for time alone by giving one another the space to pursue personal hobbies and/or interests. With regards to work specifically, couples identified strategies which influenced their work-family balance. One of these strategies is work validation and satisfaction which is achieved by deriving meaning from their work. Furthermore, couples have control over their work schedules by working for organisations offering flexible work schedules, supervisor support, and further to that, they may engage in part-time work. Couples also try to set boundaries around their work and family and so consciously make an effort to keep work and family separate. Finally, couples believe that relying on faith by using religion as an anchor and motivator helps them cope with work and family related stressors.
5.2 Limitations

The findings of this study should be addressed within the context of the study’s limitations. The limitations presented below are to some degree inherent in all qualitative research.

A limitation of the study is research bias in that husbands may have responded differently to, or may have withheld certain information from, a female researcher, or that some of the participants knew me and may have responded to questions in ways that would please me. A social desirability effect, whereby couples answered questions in a way that may be viewed as favourable by others, may have been present in the conjoint interviews. Combining data from both conjoint and individual interviews with couples, may result in a broader picture (Taylor & de Vocht, 2011) of the work-family balance phenomenon.

An additional limitation is that data was collected using only the couples. Furthermore, data was collected at one point in time during the conjoint interview. From this study, we have learnt that work-family balance is a dynamic process, thus re-interviewing the couples may have yielded additional information, or even the possibility to ask new questions. Future research including the couple’s children or even parents may lead to additional information about their work-family balance.

Considering the above mentioned limitation, it is clear from this study that further research is needed in the field of work-family balance amongst dual-earner couples living within the South African context. It is therefore my hope that this study may be viewed
5.3 Recommendations

Although a number of recommendations for future research have been presented in the sub-section above (“Limitations”), additional recommendations are discussed here.

I believe that this study has enhanced the understanding of work-family family amongst dual-earner couples living within the South African context. Future studies could further explicate and refine each of the emergent themes proposed in this study. In addition, by using quantitative analysis, future research could also discover which or how many of the strategies are most common amongst couples to pursue a balance in their work and family life.

Counsellors working with dual-earner couples could use the findings of this study to guide them in empathising with the multiple pressures and demands such couples face, appreciate the unique and dynamic nature of work-family balance, and possibly suggest some of the strategies proposed in this dissertation for achieving a work-family balance.

Finally, it is recommended that the public be educated to demystify the idea the of work-family balance from the perspective of dual-earner couples. Such information may reduce gender inequality experience in societies and workplaces, as well as encourage the development of support systems to help these types of marital or cohabiting relationships achieve a balanced work and family life.
5.4 Concluding Reflections

Reading through the previous chapters developed during this study, I could not help but notice the many shifts that have occurred for me personally while on this research journey. Since writing chapter 3, I have fallen pregnant with my first child. Although delighted with this divine intervention, I cannot help but notice the difference in my energy levels and how I cope with handling multiple tasks. The morning sickness I experience coupled with the constant fatigue slowed me down immensely in my work, studies, as well as housekeeping. Although in Chapter 1 I share with the reader how content I am with the amount of housekeeping assistance I receive from my husband, and that when I may have children I may want to hire a domestic worker, this view has however changed, in that I have recently communicated to my husband about how he should contribute more to housework, cooking, and cleaning. Although, we have not employed a domestic worker at present, we have discussed the possibilities of hiring one in the new year. I have also had to cut back on the number of hours of work and travelling due to the nausea and fatigue of the pregnancy, and to be able to complete my studies. Although these changes are difficult to adjust to quickly, I am aware that we are beginning a new chapter in our family life cycle and making adjustments to be able to balance our work and family life not only as a couple, but as parents too, is an important but necessary change in our lives. I am therefore amazed to be experiencing the uniqueness and dynamic of this phenomenon called “work-family balance” and how as a couple, my husband and I have implemented additional strategies to our life to accommodate changes. I am once again forever grateful to the couples who have shed
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light on this phenomenon and I sincerely hope that the reader will also enjoy some change gained from this insight.
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APPENDIX A

INTERVIEW GUIDE

Possible Questions

(These questions serve only as a guide and are not fixed. It is important to allow the participants to lead the way, as new unexpected topics may emerge.)

1. What is the first thought that comes to mind for the concept of “balance”?
2. What does work-family balance mean for you?
3. How many hours do you work weekly?
4. What are your roles in the workplace?
5. Does your job require you to travel?
6. Do you run family errands during working hours?
7. Do you bring some of your work at home?
8. What happens when a child is sick and both of you have to be at work?
9. On average, how many hours a day do you spend at home with your family?
10. What are your roles at home?
11. Who cooks and prepares family meals?
12. Who takes and collects your child/children from school?
13. Do you take turns for family chores in the home?
14. Who helps your child/children with their homework?
15. How many times a week do you go out as a family for entertainment?
16. How often do you go on vacations as a family?
17. How often do you feel stressed or burn-out?

18. How do you manage feeling stressed or burned-out?

19. How much balance do you feel in your work and family life?

20. What strategy or techniques are you using to balance your work and family life?

21. Which strategy is your works best for you?

22. Which strategy do you use on a daily basis?

23. What is your experience of being in a dual-earner relationship?

24. What would you attribute as advantages to being in a dual-earner relationship?

25. What disadvantages are there for you as a couple in being a dual-earner?

26. How would you describe you average week day starting in the morning and ending at bedtime?

27. What would you say your highest priority is in your life as a dual-earner couple?

28. Do you plan your daily activities in advance?

29. Do you make decisions together as a couple?
APPENDIX B

INVITATION LETTER

Cristina Seeley

Avenue St. Charles • Cape Town, 8005 • Phone: 0725726435 • E-Mail: cristina.seeley@gmail.com

Date: [Insert Date]

[Recipient]
[Address 1]

RE: Research Study: Work-Family Balance: An Interpretive Approach to Understanding Perceptions and Strategies of Dual-Earner Couples in Cape Town, South Africa

Dear:

As discussed recently in our telephonic conversation, I am currently enrolled for the Psychology Dissertation module of the Masters Programme at the University of South Africa. The topic I am researching is “Work-Family Balance: An interpretive approach to understanding perceptions and strategies of dual-earner couples in Cape Town, South Africa”.

I am grateful for you accepting the invitation of participating in the study. Your participation in this study will consist of a conjoined interview lasting approximately 90 minutes. You will be asked a series of questions about your work and family life balance, as well as personal strategies. You are not required to answer all questions. You may
pass on any question that makes you feel uncomfortable.

Any personal information gathered in the conjoined interview will remain fully confidential and anonymity will be maintained throughout the study. You have the right not to take part or to withdraw from the study at any time you no longer want to participate without penalty.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter. And I look forward to meeting with you on

____________ [Date] _________ [Time] at ___________________________

[Place].

Should you have any further questions kindly contact me on the details set out above.

Sincerely,

Cristina Seeley

Researcher
APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM

Consent Form (To be signed by each spouse)

I _____________________ have read and understand the letter of invitation to take part in the research study: *Work-Family Balance: An interpretive approach to understanding perceptions and strategies of dual-earner couples in Cape Town, South Africa.*

I have received adequate information regarding the nature of the study from Mrs. Cristina Seeley and understand what will be requested of me.

I am aware that:

1. My participation in this study is entirely voluntary;
2. I have the right to withdraw at any point during the study should I no longer want to participate, without penalty;
3. My anonymity will be protected;
4. I understand the interview consists of semi-structured questions, and that I do not have to answer all questions, or questions which are uncomfortable;
5. I will receive a copy of the transcribed interview to check for correctness of information. I am aware that I will sign the transcript when I am satisfied with fair representation; and should I want any changes made, I will inform Mrs. Cristina Seeley via e-mail.
6. The interview will be recorded, and Mrs. Cristina Seeley will keep the audio recording in a safe storage.

7. The results of this study will be published, but Mrs. Cristina Seeley will make every attempt to preserve my anonymity.

I hereby consent to participate in this research study.

Participant’s Signature: ______________________ Date: __________

Researcher’s Signature: ______________________ Date: __________
APPENDIX D

ETHICAL CLEARANCE FORM

Ethical Clearance for M/D students: Research on human participants

The Ethics Committee of the Department of Psychology at Unisa have evaluated this research proposal for a Higher Degree in Psychology in light of appropriate ethical requirements, with special reference to the requirements of the Code of Conduct for Psychologists of the HPCSA.

Student Name: Ana-Cristina Seeley       Student no. 35404876

Supervisor/promoter: Jacques Livingston       Affiliation: External supervisor

Title of project:

Work-Family Balance: an Interpretative Approach to Understanding Perceptions and Strategies of Dual-earner Couples in Cape Town, South Africa

Ethical clearance is given to this project without any further conditions

Ethical clearance is given on conditions that certain requirements are met (as appended)

Ethical clearance is deferred as the matter was referred to the Ethics Committee of the CHS, Unisa

Ethical clearance is deferred until additional information is supplied (see the appended list)

Ethical clearance cannot be granted on the basis of the information as presented (for reasons as listed in an appendix)

Signed: [Signature]

Date: 24 October 2013

Prof P Kruger
[For the Ethics Committee]
[Department of Psychology, Unisa]
APPENDIX E

TRANSCRIPTS

Transcripts from all the interviews are saved onto a compact disc. The compact disc is located inside the back cover.