

## 1. INTRODUCTION

In recent years, dual earner and dual-career couples have become more the rule than the exception (Lesnard, 2008; Wierda-Boer et al., 2008). A dual earner couple can be defined as a couple in which both members earn income to support the family unit, whereas a dual-career couple emphasizes that both partners are psychologically committed to their professions in which they have typically invested heavily as the main source of self-fulfillment (Bird and Schnurman-Crook, 2005). To be successful, a dual-career couple should have a mutual commitment to each other's career as well as to addressing financial issues, and should develop flexibility and coping mechanisms (Larkin and Ragan, 2008). The way in which the partners experience each other's behavior and roles appears to be an essential element of managing such situations.

Sociological views of the responsibilities of men and women in the home and in the workplace have changed to describe more accurately the redefined family roles. In past decades, the functionalist perspective prevailed for describing the division of labor between home and work. According to this model, optimal family functioning occurs when the husband specializes in market labor while the wife is responsible for domestic tasks. More recently, these traditional ideas have given way to more egalitarian viewpoints, which deem it appropriate for both men and women to pursue paid employment outside of the home and also share responsibilities within the home (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). The emergence of dual-career couples in society requires us to re-examine conceptualizations of career development. The presence of two careers in one family results in more complex career development processes, particularly for a family with children (O'Neil et al., 1987; Pixley and Moen, 2003). Decisions made by one individual almost certainly affect the career path of the other. As either member of the couple attempts to build individual-careers, each person must consult the other on issues such as number of hours spent at work, relocations, promotions, and sharing of household tasks. When the couple decides to raise children, the complexity of career decisions is compounded as there is a greater need to coordinate work and family roles within the couple when childcare is involved. For example, if one partner wishes to accept a promotion that requires increased work hours and travel, the other member of the couple may be required to accommodate the promotion by changing his or her availability to work and to care for the children.

## **1.1. Dual-career couples**

Being a dual-career family is a lifestyle which has become more the rule than the exception (Lesnard, 2008; Wierda-Boer et al., 2008) and thus the balancing of lifestyle and career to maintain a satisfactory long-term relationship with a spouse who also has a career, is an increasingly challenging part of many people's life. There has been discussion of whether the dual-career couple model brings happiness. On the one hand, studies have pointed out the pressures brought about by balancing dual-careers within the tightening demands of working life, i.e. the conflicting demands of home and work are exacerbated when both partners strive for career progression (Valcour and Tolbert, 2003). Dual-career couples typically experience more work-family conflict and stress than single career couples (Elloy and Smith, 2003). Young children decrease the probability of a family being a dual earner couple (van Gus and Kraaykamp, 2008) since greater participation in both a career and the relationship is possible without children.

On the other hand, it has been argued that being part of a dual-career or dual income family may create satisfaction in all major parts of life. The occupational careers of both men and women have an impact on their family roles. The role of the spouse has been viewed in connection with work and family reconciliation, however a detailed view of the role from a career perspective has received less attention (Va'lima'ki et al., 2009). A few studies have analyzed specifically the roles of spouses in a career context. These are reviewed next.

## **1.2. Spousal roles**

Recent career studies have encouraged more in-depth efforts at understanding spousal roles. Although such roles have been identified in varying career contexts, e.g. among female managers in domestic career contexts, the resulting frameworks form a useful starting point for analyzing the experiences of dual-career couples in an international context. The spousal roles, which have been identified in earlier research (Va'lima'ki et al., 2009), include the supporting (or sparring) spouse, the flexible (or rubber band) spouse, the instrumental spouse, the determining (or locomotive) spouse and the counterproductive (or hindrance) spouse.

The supporting spouse has a supportive and value-adding impact on the career of the other spouse: the spouse supports a partner's career by helping and discussing, offering new points of view to assist decision making and the planning of the career. The strengths of both spouses are acknowledged and appreciated. Both make their choices individually but they are negotiated together. Spousal support can be seen as consultation, discussion and giving advice (Va'lima'ki et al., 2009). Emotional help, in terms of the career, may be exemplified by understanding, giving advice, and supporting the other's career. Practical help from the spouse may take the form of helping to reconcile work/life balance issues, i.e. when a spouse helps with the work demands of everyday life.

A flexible spouse adopts a flexible role in relation to the other partner's career: a flexible role involves stretching to accommodate the other spouse's career demands. Friedman and Greenhaus (2000) discuss "silent support" which places the spouse in a background support role and creates a safe base from which the partner can build his/her career. If both spouses are committed to their careers, a balance may have to be achieved by sequencing careers or bargaining on the level of each career, especially if the couple has children. The coordination of two careers, negotiation over working strategies, compromise and mutual support are all part of the dual-career setting. If a spouse is willing and able to step back from a career path, the other can focus on work and prioritize it. Such a role may be an easier choice for female spouses since flexible male spouses can face negative stereotypes.

The instrumental spousal role occurs when a careerist utilizes their spouse as an instrument to benefit their career. The instrumental spouse may provide social status, financial security or a comfortable living environment. Such spouses can expect gratitude from the careerist for the career benefits derived from the actions of their spouse (Va'lima'ki et al., 2009). The determining spousal role has a guiding influence on the career of the partner: the career, working place and work situation of this spouse are important to the career decisions of the other partner. Options concerning one's career may be subordinated to the other's career and the more powerful spouse takes advantage of this, while still being grateful for it. The counterproductive spousal role complicates the career of the other spouse: he/she has a negative and dismissive attitude

to the partner's career. The relationship may be marked by difficulty in accepting the partner's higher status and greater career success. Such a spouse is not willing to understand the demands of the partner's career, such as extensive travelling or long working days.

In dual-career couples' research, scholars have mainly focused on work-life balance because of the conundrums that achieving this balance can present to both individuals and organizations (Edwards and Rothbard, 2000). The vast majority of this literature has examined the conflict between work and family roles, although researchers have recently started to consider how one role can enrich the other (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006). Still, in both of these streams, empirical findings focus on the individual level of analysis. Moreover, most of the research to date considers the "problems" of a dual-career couple solely from the woman's perspective (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). Researchers have more recently examined the couple as the unit of analysis, acknowledging that a couple operates not as individuals but as a dyad (Barnett and Hyde, 2001).

In support of this approach, research has demonstrated that couple-level variables are stronger predictors of individual-level outcomes than are the absolute scores of each partner. A measure of partner work-family conflict accounted for significant variance in both males' and females' work-family conflict. The partner-level effects accounted for variance over and above the individual-level effects. These findings strengthen the argument that dual-career couples operate as a dyad.

However, in some subsequent research, Hammer et al. (2005) did not find all of the expected effects on the relationship between couples' use of workplace supports and either work-family conflict or job satisfaction. Their couple-level results provided only mixed support for family systems theory, a theory that suggests that an individual's attitudes and behaviors are significantly affected by other family members' attitudes and behaviors. However, it is possible that the specific behaviors examined by the researchers were not relevant to the outcomes when measured at the level of the couple. Examining the process by which couples arrive at certain strategies and the reasons for this process may provide a better predictor of subsequent attitudes and behaviors.



## 2. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The purpose of this dissertation is:

- To introduce the concept of a couple-level shared identity as forming the basis for the development of dual-career couples' strategies regarding involvement in work and family roles.
- To examine career development at the couple-level to understand how the decisions made by one member of the dyad influence the career of the other.
- To identify how dual career expatriates view their spouses' roles during international assignments.
- To explore the career choices and decisions of young professional couples and the strategies that they use to facilitate successful dual careers while attempting to balance their work and non-work lives.

## 3. LITERATURE REVIEW

**Budworth, Marie-Hélène, Janelle R. Enns, and Kate Rowbotham. "Shared identity and strategic choice in dual-career couples." *Gender in Management: An International Journal* 23.2 (2008): 103-119.**

The purpose of this paper is to introduce the concept of a couple-level shared identity as forming the basis for the development of dual-career couples' strategies regarding involvement in work and family roles. A model is developed that is intended to help researchers in this area conceptualize the relationship between career choices and career progression between members of a dual career couple. Examining career development at the couple-level extends one's understanding of how the decisions made by one member of the dyad influence the career of the other.

**Mäkelä, Liisa, Marja Känsälä, and Vesa Suutari. "The roles of expatriates' spouses among dual career couples." *Cross Cultural Management: An International Journal* 18.2 (2011): 185-197.**

The purpose of this paper is to identify how dual career expatriates view their spouses' roles during international assignments.

**Clarke, Marilyn. "Dual careers: the new norm for Gen Y professionals?." *Career Development International* 20.6 (2015): 562-582.**

The purpose of this paper is to use the kaleidoscope career model as a lens through which to explore the career choices and decisions of young professional couples and the strategies that they use to facilitate successful dual careers while attempting to balance their work and non-work lives.

The dual-career couple, where both partners are pursuing simultaneous careers, is a prevalent and lasting phenomenon that reflects the increasing educational achievements and career aspirations of women worldwide. The dual-career relationship implies a psychological commitment of marital or *de facto* partners to both family relations and their individual careers. This has been hailed the ideal middle-class marital relationship, since it affords both partners an opportunity for maximizing both personal fulfilment and financial rewards.

Despite mutual compensations, however, the demands of careers in tandem can generate conflict and stress, which are compounded when couples have children or other family responsibilities. Juggling an increasingly demanding managerial career and a busy home life inevitably involves compromise, particularly for women. As career and family tensions are thrust into high relief, they have important implications for organizations, since conflicts are inevitably transferred from home to work, and vice versa.

Thus dual careers can give rise to dual loyalties, which may result in negative consequences for personal relationships and the work environment.

More recently, researchers have examined the way in which problems of role conflict and role overload impact upon personal satisfaction, job performance and career development. The attitudes and behavior of dual-career couples have been shown to deviate significantly from established societal norms in careers, marriage, family and gender roles, with important consequences for their employing organizations.

In recent years the burgeoning literature on work and family has further emphasized the importance for organizational effectiveness of appropriate employer responses to the interface between work and home. It has long been established that, because families operate as social systems, tensions are unavoidably transmitted from work to home and vice versa, with significant implications for job and life satisfaction, labor productivity and organizational effectiveness. While prescriptions for change have been proffered, organizations still appear reluctant to acknowledge demographic and social changes, and human resource policies and career planning programs appear to be resistant to change.

A career is defined here as a longer term developmental occupation or profession, with a sequence of connections and networks over time, which may include lateral or downward moves or temporary withdrawals. Careers have traditionally provided organizing principles for structuring both private and professional lives, and notions of personal success or failure have been derived largely from work commitments. Career development constitutes a motivating tool to create and sustain competitive advantage, which has become an integral feature of strategic human resource management and employment contracts.

## **4. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

### **4.1. Need of the study**

The need of the study was to understand and analyze in detail the problems dual-career couples face in maintaining a balance between their work and life and the strategies they implement in doing the same.

### **4.2. Scope of the study**

The scope of the study was limited to a detailed analysis of the work-life balance of mixed sex dual-career couples in India.

### **4.3. Data Collection**

The data for the dissertation was secondary in nature and was collected via the research papers already published in the field of dual-career couples' examination of work and life and how they achieve a balance between the two of them.



## 5. DUAL-CAREER COUPLES AND THE INTERNATIONAL CAREER CONTEXT

International assignments in their different forms are becoming an increasingly common part of a professional business career. At the same time, existing research indicates that such assignments are very challenging experiences for expatriates, and at least as challenging for their families (Shaffer and Harrison, 2001). The research also highlights the role of the partner and family in determining a positive or negative work-life balance (Lauring and Selmer, 2010). From that perspective, it is not surprising that spouse and family concerns are among the key challenges during assignments (Ma`kela` and Suutari, 2011). It has even been argued that the international career would be too challenging a choice for most individuals and their families (Forster, 2000).

Research in the international career context suggests that spouses in dual-career couples may be less willing to accept expatriate assignments (Selmer and Leung, 2003). Expatriate studies have also shown that the support from the trailing spouse – a spouse whose partner’s career forces them to live abroad and usually to dedicate themselves to the family – can be essential for successful adjustment to a new environment (Lauring and Selmer, 2010). On the other hand, it is difficult for trailing spouses to continue their careers, and this often leads to increased stress on the couple (Harvey and Buckley, 1998; Harvey et al., 2009). In addition to possible challenges abroad, families often face difficulties when repatriating back to their home country – expatriates are concerned about both short-term, job-related impacts and the more long-term impacts on the spouses’ careers from living abroad (Riusala and Suutari, 2000). Such challenges can lead some dual-career couples to live apart during international assignments (Hardill, 2004; Rabe, 2001). Owing to increased numbers of dual-career couples and the globalization of careers, research concerning dual-career couples in the context of global relocations warrants further attention (Selmer and Leung, 2003; Lauring and Selmer, 2010; Harvey et al., 2009). The present study adopts a spousal role approach that has recently been developed in the domestic career setting from the gender-specific perspective (Va`lima`ki et al., 2009), but has not been applied in an international dual-career context.

The dual-career phenomenon has a great impact on multinational corporations. The amount of both dual-career couples and expatriates has been increasing, and so has thus the importance of dual-career professionals as a potential expatriate talent pool (Selmer and Leung, 2003). As a result, research has emphasized the need to understand the challenges faced by dual-career couples, as well as the roles spouses play (Lauring and Selmer, 2010). Similarly, the need to develop corporate programs which can support such couples in their international careers has been stressed. Couples are often left to address the issues inherent to dual-career relationships themselves with little or no support from the company (Riusala and Suutari, 2000).

## **6. DUAL-CAREERS: THE NEW NORM FOR GEN Y PROFESSIONALS**

More than 30 years ago Hall and Hall (1978) raised the issue of how dual-career couples were managing the challenges of demanding jobs, caring for families and negotiating sometimes competing career goals. Since then much has changed in industrialized societies. As a consequence there are now significantly more dual income households and more dual-career couples, particularly among professionals (Pixley, 2008). Yet, despite major demographic changes dual-careers continue to pose the same question – is it possible for both partners to have meaningful and rewarding careers, bring up a family and still achieve a satisfactory work-life balance (Gatrell et al., 2013)? Furthermore, is it really possible to follow dual-career paths or in reality does one career tend to dominate the other?

A career is “the evolving sequence of a person’s work experiences over time”. While careers may belong to the individual, career decisions are not made in isolation and are not always made freely or without constraints (Powell and Greenhaus, 2010). Recent research has highlighted various strategies used by professionals (primarily women) to manage the work/non-work interface (Sok et al., 2014). Strategies include getting off the fast track or declining promotions (Ibarra, 2003), starting a business (Mallon and Cohen, 2001), shifting to part-time employment (Lovejoy and Stone, 2012) or seeking employment in workplaces that offer flexible conditions (Tomlinson, 2006). Other research has explored the impact of family situations on work decisions (Greenhaus and Powell, 2012), changing career patterns as professionals move through different phases of life such as early career, starting a family (Lovejoy and Stone, 2012), taking on care

of older family members (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005) and the impact of gender on career decisions (Valcour and Tolbert, 2003).

While this provides some understanding of individual-career choices, albeit within the context of the family unit, much less is known about decision making at the couple level and the factors that influence how dual-career couples navigate individual as well as joint careers (Greenhaus and Powell, 2012). In fact, much of the career research continues to focus on how women deal with challenges at different phases of life on the assumption that, “contrary to men, women’s career and job choices are not negotiated independently of personal and family life, but are embedded in a broader life context” (Lee et al., 2011, p. 1534). A number of authors have suggested that we are about to see a convergence of male and female careers as couples deal with the challenges of managing individual and shared career and life goals (e.g. Han and Moen, 1999; Terjeson et al., 2007). That is, rather than careers based primarily on gender, they argue that dual-careers, once described as a “variant pattern”, will become the new norm for Generation Y, the cohort now beginning to enter and dominate the workforce.

This cohort has been selected for three reasons. First, Gen Y has been educated in an environment where they have been encouraged to pursue success regardless of gender or status and where there is an expectation of gender equity (Ng and Wiesner, 2007). Second, they are likely to be employed in demanding roles with the potential for negative spill-over between family roles and work roles and are thus faced with the issue of how to manage dual-careers as well as non-work interests and responsibilities (Sok et al., 2014). While many professional careers have always been demanding, longer working hours and an increase in dual-careers have added to these pressures in developed societies (Mayrhofer et al., 2008; Cha, 2010). Third, although findings have been mixed, there is some evidence for differences between Gen Y and previous generations in terms of work values and career aspirations (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Twenge et al., 2010). A number of studies have suggested that Gen Y is seeking far better work-life balance than their Baby Boomer parents (Callanan and Greenhaus, 2008) and that they are determined to make this a priority.

## 6.1. Generations, gender and careers

Three main cohorts comprise the current workforce: Baby Boomers (born 1946-1961), Generation X (born 1962-1979) and Generation Y (born 1980-2000) (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008). For early Baby Boomers (as for previous generations) traditional organizational careers were shaped by a gendered normative model. Men, as breadwinners, reflected “the ideal worker” whose working life “continues uninterrupted for forty years, taking no time off for child bearing, child rearing, supported by a spouse who takes primary responsibility for family and community” (Bailyn et al., 2001, p. 6). Women on the other hand, due to their support role and family and household responsibilities (Moen and Sweet, 2004), were likely to have fragmented careers characterized by career breaks or part-time work (Mallon and Cohen, 2001). Recent demographic trends in industrialized countries however have resulted in dual income households largely replacing the traditional male breadwinner model across all generational groups while among professionals and managers dual-careers are rapidly becoming the new norm (Sok et al., 2014).

In light of these changes there is increasing interest in two critical issues for careers research – that of the relationship between family factors and work decisions (Greenhaus and Powell, 2012; Radcliffe and Cassell, 2014) and the role of gender in career choices (Cabrera, 2007; Powell and Greenhaus, 2010). For example, there is an emergent literature on the spill-over (both positive and negative) between work and home as couples seek to juggle their various roles (Radcliffe and Cassell, 2014; Wolfram and Gratton, 2014). There is also ongoing interest in how men’s and women’s careers take shape over time and in relation to life events (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011; Greenhaus and Powell, 2012; Gatrell et al., 2013).

The kaleidoscope career model (Mainiero and Sullivan, 2005; Sullivan and Mainiero, 2007; Sullivan et al., 2009) provides a framework for exploring career patterns in relation to gender, work values and generational differences. Like a kaleidoscope, those following this model alter their career focus to fit around their various roles and relationships and to match their values and life choices rather than following a linear, organizational career path (Sullivan et al., 2007). Underpinning this model is the assumption that career decisions are framed by three key parameters – the search for

authenticity (where internal values are aligned with external behaviors and the values of the organization), balance (or equilibrium between work and non-work) and challenge (stimulating work and career advancement) (Sullivan et al., 2009). Although all three parameters co-exist, normally one parameter predominates at a given time but will recede as priorities change and evolve over a typical professional's life span.

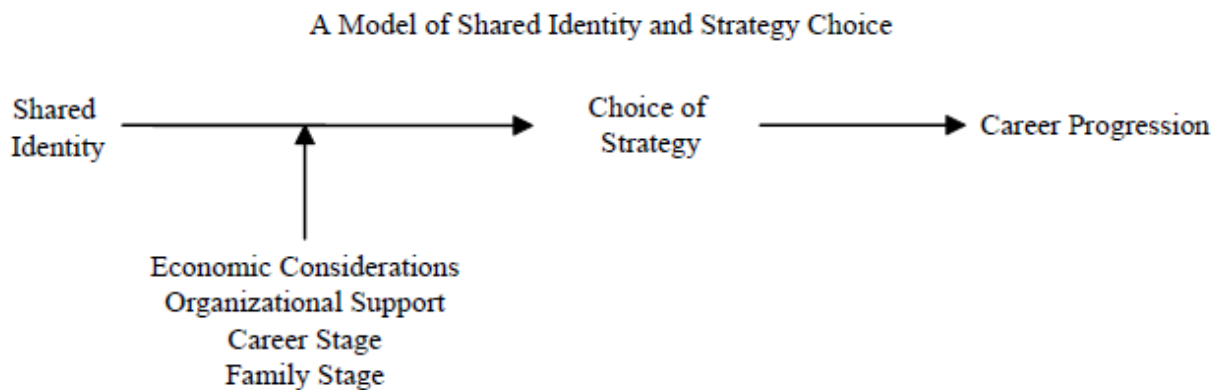
According to Mainiero and Sullivan (2005) although dual income households have become commonplace there are still distinct gender differences in career patterns based on career values and motivation (Sullivan and Mainiero, 2007). Those following an "alpha career pattern" have a strong focus on career (or challenge) while a "beta career pattern" is seen in individuals who make career adjustments in order to have a more balanced work and non-work-life. While not exclusively gender based, traditionally men have been more likely to follow alpha careers while women tend to have beta careers. That is, men are more likely to follow linear careers while professional women tend to have careers characterized by career interruptions associated with their caring roles (Cabrera, 2007). In the early career stage women focus on challenge and goal achievement. In mid-career the focus shifts to balance as they seek to juggle work and family and then in late career they are more concerned with authenticity. The core issue framing career decisions is "I must find the fit that is right for me given my circumstances and context" (Sullivan and Mainiero, 2007, p. 254). Men's careers, however, are more likely to have few interruptions and to follow a challenge – authenticity – balance pattern.

## **7. SHARED IDENTITY**

### **7.1. Individual role identities**

Identity theory, first formulated by Stryker (1968), is an attempt to explain social behavior as a function of the influence of society on the self. In particular, just as society has multiple, organized components, so is the individual thought to have multiple and organized components to the self. These components reflect internalized roles that an individual holds within society. That is, every person has a role identity for each role that he or she occupies in society. In short, the self is "a multifaceted social construct that emerges from people's roles in society". These identities can be categorized into

various types, including social roles (e.g. father, wife, teacher), social attributes (e.g. tall, Hispanic), stigmatizing characteristics (e.g. criminal, drug addict), social biographical categories (e.g. ex-husband, retired carpenter) and social types (e.g. intellectual, runner). These role identities are organized hierarchically based on each identity's salience to the individual, leading individuals to choose behaviors consistent with salient identities (Stets and Burke, 2000). Furthermore, individuals derive multiple role identities through their interactions with others. For instance, a relationship with one's child fosters a role identity as a parent while interaction with others in a working environment develops one's role identity as a coworker or employee.



*Figure 6.1 A model of shared identity and strategy choice.*

As identity theory is concerned with the different roles that individuals enact in society, it is particularly well-suited as a framework for examining the conflict between an individual's work and family roles in the organizational behavior literature, and has been used extensively for that purpose (Greenhaus and Powell, 2003). However, most of this research has focused on individual-level predictors and consequences. When we examine the specific realm of dual-career couples and their experiences of role identities, it is necessary to consider how the role identities of the individuals within the couple may be shaped by their interactions with each other. In other words, when an individual is part of a couple, the role identity of worker may take on a different meaning or position than if the individual were not part of an interdependent relationship. For example, if one member of the couple is ill and unable to work, the other person may have to move the role identity of worker higher in his or her role identity hierarchy. Through role-taking interactions, partners develop a common understanding of the role behaviors of the unit.

## 7.2. Developing a shared identity

Interdependence theory (Thibault and Kelley, 1959) examines interactions between two people, both in terms of each person's needs, cognitions and motives relative to each other and in terms of the context of the interaction (Rusbult and van Lange, 2003). It describes how the interdependence of an outcome can shape behavior in dyads, as the needs, cognitions and motives of the two members of the dyad are to varying degrees dependent on each other. Using interdependence theory, Agnew et al. described cognitive interdependence as a restructuring of mental relationships of the self-in-representation, so that members of a couple will perceive themselves less as individuals and more in terms of a "self-and-partner collective." Cognitive interdependence then becomes a habit of thinking that seeks to maximize the other's outcomes and joint outcomes. Allocation of resources, such as time spent on work or home activities, becomes more communal as a partner is increasingly perceived as part of one's self.

Couple identity is defined as "the extent to which a person views oneself as part of a couple and to which it is considered an important part of the self." Furthermore, this couple identity is developed over time and is based on a couple's extensive interactions. Role-based interactions assist partners in developing a couple-level identity that includes a common understanding of the role behaviors of the unit. We posit that as each member of the couple incorporates the other into the self, there is greater overlap and shared understanding of roles within the partnership. To the extent that, they think in terms of a shared identity, or self-and-partner collective, both members of the couple share resources and role behavior to maximize joint goals.

In role identity theory, the identities that are most important, or have the most meaning to the individual, are said to have greater salience. Salience is also defined in terms of commitment, where the greater the level of commitment, the more salient the identity. An increase in the salience of the identity will also increase the likelihood that an individual will act in a manner confirming that identity. Salient role identities provide individuals with a sense of who they are and how they should behave. Identity salience is important because it is a motivator of behaviors that support identities. Traditionally, role identities are conceived as being organized hierarchically on the basis of salience. Some identities exist on the same plane while others are relatively more or less

important. This hierarchical organization has specific implications for how different identities can interact with one another. To an extent, a certain level of congruence can be expected between both individuals' level of identity salience, which is strengthened as each member of a couple incorporates aspects of the other, including identity salience, into the self. In general, both men and women have been found to rank their roles as spouse and parent at similar levels of importance, or salience; both of these identities are ranked as being more important than their roles as employees.

In some cases, couples may not always have completely overlapping role salience in their shared identity, potentially leading to conflict within the shared identity. Two potential scenarios exist when role salience is not congruent (i.e. where one person may have a salient family identity and one may have a salient career identity). First, mutual acceptance of non-overlapping role salience will reduce the conflict. If the couple views the differing salience of the roles in terms of performing complementary roles, there may be no conflict when determining a shared understanding of acceptable, non-overlapping role behaviors. However, a dual-career couple is by nature required to maintain some dual salience of the work and family roles.

We may examine this condition at the level of the couple as well, leading to the second scenario. Individuals who are members of dual-career couples are required to devote some of their behaviors to fulfilling the roles of both work and family. If one member of a couple places a higher salience on one of the roles, he or she may perform behaviors that confirm the salient identity but neglect the less-salient identity. In a dual-career couple, this may place additional pressure on the other partner, who must compensate for the neglected role behaviors. This conflict between the partners shapes the shared identity and resolving the conflict produces a greater understanding of the relative salience of work and family identities. Although members of a couple with a shared identity increasingly view their role hierarchy within the context of a self-and-partner collective, it does not necessarily follow that both members will engage in identical role behaviors. According to identity theory, individuals may act in counter-roles, that is, reciprocal roles that are related to but distinct from the first individual's roles. For example, the role and identity of manager is understood in relation to the role and identity of subordinate; the role and identity of primary breadwinner in a family is understood in relation to the role and identity of primary family caregiver. Given that the



relationships are reciprocal, some form of interaction or negotiation in role performance is necessary (Stets and Burke, 2000). Often, appropriate role performance can only be done by taking into account the related individual's counter-roles, where the behavior of one individual is seen as reciprocal to the behavior of the other. Roles and counter-roles are derived from negotiations between the partners, so that together they perform unique but interrelated activities (Stets and Burke, 2000). This idea of interrelated roles is echoed in the teamwork literature, which demonstrates that people working together develop an organized understanding of relevant knowledge (Mohammed and Dumville, 2001; Rentsch and Klimoski, 2001). Dual-career couples have a complex relationship because each member of the dyad can perform both a counter-role and an overlapping role. When a couple has children, both members identify with the shared role of parent. Ideally, they work together to perform the parenting function, and this can be understood as an overlapping role. Within the larger parent role, they may also have complementary counter-roles as mother and father.

An illustration of the reciprocal development of roles and counter-roles may be found in model of fathers' behavioral involvement in childcare in dual-career families. Fathers' participation in childcare was determined in part by the corresponding mother's role identities as well as her attitudes regarding participation in childcare. This finding implies that there is reciprocity in the development of a shared identity. Furthermore, a shared understanding that takes into account counter-roles may be considered to have arisen as a result of the negotiation of salient role identities mentioned previously. Conflict may arise when members of a couple have differing definitions of roles, counter-roles, and the behaviors attached to each. Although there is strong evidence that, in general, each member of the couple values parenting as a more salient identity than the employee or worker identity, a discrepancy exists between the role behaviors associated with these identities (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). In general, men associate their responsibilities as a parent with earning an income. Therefore, adequate performance in their parenting role is congruent with adequate performance in their work role. For women, there is less overlap between parenting and work identities, and as a result, the demands of each of these roles are more likely to be incongruent and conflicting. Interestingly, when both parents were asked for their ideal division of childcare responsibilities, both mothers and fathers reported a desire for greater father

participation. At the same time, the ideal division was not considered to be an equal sharing of responsibilities; women still held more responsibility (Ehrenberg et al., 2001).

Other research on differing views of role behaviors found that the different gender roles in marriages resulted in different behaviors for men and for women. A highly salient “mother” identity positively influenced mothers’ reports of jealous feelings when fathers took on the role of nurturer (as opposed to playmate). Therefore, different definitions of roles and behaviors associated with those roles may cause conflict when establishing a couple’s shared identity. Continued interaction between the partners and the resolution of this conflict contributes to a shared understanding of both roles and counter-roles within the shared identity.

The extent to which a couple determines their salient role identities and views roles and counter-roles may be influenced in part by gender role ideology, which explains the extent to which individuals hold traditional or egalitarian views of appropriate social roles for men and women (Barnett and Hyde, 2001). Gender role beliefs may be thought of as occurring along a continuum. At one end of the continuum, couples hold egalitarian views of appropriate gender roles, involving a more equal division of career opportunities for both spouses and shared involvement in the home. At the other end of the continuum lie traditional beliefs regarding gender roles of men and women, involving a heavier emphasis on fulfilling either the work or child-rearing roles, but not both. In accordance with a traditional gender role ideology, a woman’s salient identity as a parent dictates that she be present at home to raise her children, which may preclude involvement in the work world. Research has found that women who hold traditional views of gender roles may not benefit from work involvement because they feel less satisfied with both their work and with their family involvement. Similarly, women who hold these traditional views have been found to experience more guilt than women who hold more egalitarian values after returning to work from a maternity leave. Couples who hold a predominantly traditional view of gender roles are much more likely to place differing emphases on salience of certain roles. Within a couple that conforms to traditional gender roles, the man is likely to place a higher salience on the work role, while the woman places a higher salience on the family role. The discrepancy of salience is incorporated into the shared identity and shapes the development of complementary role behaviors and counter-roles.

When couples hold more egalitarian views of gender roles, as is increasingly the case with dual-career couples, there is a greater need to balance both individuals' careers with their roles as parents. Research indicates that when men hold more egalitarian gender role ideologies, they also hold more progressive views regarding paternal involvement in childcare. In 1997, the number of employed men who endorsed egalitarian gender role beliefs was found to have increased by 23 per cent over the previous decade. Men with egalitarian gender role ideologies and high salience for their role as father are more likely to spend time caring for their child, meaning that women are given an opportunity to invest more heavily in their careers. For a couple holding egalitarian views of gender roles, the discrepancy in salience of work and family roles is not likely to be as large as it is in a traditional context. A more similar emphasis on salience of work and family roles in a shared identity also shapes the development and balance of role behaviors and counter-roles. The combination of each partner's egalitarian or traditional values places them somewhere along a continuum of fulfilling work and family-oriented roles. The placement along this continuum is incorporated into the couple's shared identity and affects the relative salience of roles and behaviors associated with counter-roles.

It should be noted that a shared identity is unlikely to be a static, unchanging construct. Similar to the constructs of individual and social identity, a shared identity is likely to have some enduring characteristics, but may also undergo shifts depending on life events, ongoing negotiations within the couple, and dynamic factors in the couple's environment. However, we may still consider the shared identity to be a foundation for strategies that the couple engages to maintain a satisfactory balance between work and family roles. The strategies in the following section are dependent on both the couple's shared identity and moderating factors, such as economic considerations, family, life, career stage, and organizational support.

## **8. CONSEQUENCES OF THE DUAL-CAREER PHENOMENON**

In recent years, a considerable body of research has developed on dual-career families as a specific type of dual-earner family. Their attitudes and behavior have been shown to deviate significantly from established societal norms in careers, marriage, family and gender roles. The studies that have been carried out on the viability of this particular

lifestyle have identified the stresses and strains inherent in juggling multiple demands of work, career and family, and the implications for satisfaction and performance both at work and at home. More recent research has focused on the dilemmas of role conflict and overload, and their impact upon personal and job satisfaction, and career development of both partners.

Dual-career partners experience dual loyalties to family and career. These may result in negative consequences for personal relationships, and present unique adjustment problems for both the couple and their employing organizations. In recent years the burgeoning literature on work and family has emphasized the importance for organizational effectiveness of appropriate employer responses to the interface between career and domestic management. Work and family cannot be considered separate entities, and what happens to a person in the course of working is determined by the larger setting in which work takes place. Tensions in one domain are inevitably transferred to the other. Thus dual-careers have become a central consideration for human resource practitioners. Nevertheless, the persistent “myth of separate worlds” encourages many employers to act as if the employee’s home domain does not exist.

Despite mutual psychological and financial compensations, the demands of two parallel careers can generate stress, which is compounded when couples have children or other caring responsibilities. Stress experienced by dual-career dyads derives from occupational strains transmitted to partners, and from the interaction between organizational and extra-organizational domains. However, most such sources of stress arise from the social context, especially as a consequence of gender role attitudes which are internalized and reflected in organizational policies.

Studies show that multiple roles generate stress, which in turn may generate strain and work discord, especially when work and family life interfere with each other. Stress commonly results from work overload, role conflict and role ambiguity, which may combine to generate work-family conflict.

### **8.1. Work overload**

Work overload occurs where several demands exceed ones' resources, and may be either qualitative (where a task is too difficult to complete) or quantitative (when there are too many tasks that need to be done). While the two sets of overload may be independent, they are often reciprocally related. Most studies have focused on quantitative overload, with domestic overload experienced when demands for housekeeping tasks exceed the time available to complete them, and overload in the work situation experienced when there is insufficient time for completing set tasks.

Dual-career couples are more susceptible to experiencing overload in both the home and work environment. They are more vulnerable to domestic overload because career demands limit the time available for home and family responsibilities, making tensions more likely. In the paid work environment, careers usually imply significant demands in terms of working hours and study commitment, and other work practices which are "corporate convenient," rather than convenient for normal family schedules. Together, these factors are likely to compound the overload.

## **8.2. Role conflict and role ambiguity**

Role conflict refers to the existence of conflicting demands within a single role or arising from the complexities of multiple roles. Role ambiguity implies a lack of information about a particular role, and hence uncertainty regarding the expectations associated with the role. Both role conflict and role ambiguity can exist in the domestic and the work domain, which may explain why most of the research on dual-career role conflict has focused on work-family conflict as the primary source of role conflict.

However, consideration of only work-family conflict can over-simplify the concept of role conflict, which may consist of *intra*-role and *inter*-role conflict. Intra-role conflict exists when there is a lack of agreement between occupants of complementary roles concerning expectations for a particular role (*ibid*). For example, interstate work commitments may preclude a man from attending his child's birthday celebrations. The work role and family role impose different demands on the man, which in this case are incompatible. Parallel careers involve both partners undertaking multiple roles, and hence dual-career couples are more susceptible to inter-role conflict.

This implies that inter-role conflict is experienced when pressures arising in one's role are incompatible with pressures arising in another role. Role pressure incompatibility exists when participation in one role is made more difficult by participation in another role.

### **8.3. Work-family conflict**

Work-family conflict of dual-career families has been the focus of numerous studies. Such conflict exists under three conditions: the *time* needed for one role makes it difficult to devote sufficient time to other roles; the *strain* from one role makes it difficult to fulfil the requirements of another; and specific *behaviors* of one role make it difficult to fulfil the requirements of another. These three antecedents produce three distinct categories of work-family conflict, which may be time-based; strain-based or behavior-based.

Time-based conflict occurs when multiple roles simultaneously compete for a person's time, and the time spent on one activity precludes proper completion of other activities. Thus time-based conflict is also linked to role overload and role conflict, which the overload may produce. Organizational sources of time-based conflict are factors such as working an excessive number of hours, having an inflexible work schedule, or having to work shifts. Family sources of time-based conflict include having young children or other dependents, large families, or both partners working full-time.

Strain-based conflict may be the product of work or home stressors, which can lead to stress symptoms of tension, anxiety, fatigue, depression, and irritability. When the strain produced by one domain affects performance in another, strain-based conflict results. Sources of strain-based conflict tend to center on the work rather than on the organizational environment, and are linked to role ambiguity, low levels of social support from organizational sources and career development problems.

Behavioral expectations of one source that are incompatible with the expectations of another source can create behavior-based conflict. For example, specific patterns in role behavior may be incompatible with expectations regarding behavior in another role. An illustration of this is the behaviors and expectations required of an individual at work

may be incompatible with behaviors desired at home within the family domain. Work conflict appears to be a more powerful predictor of work-family conflict than family conflict, because people have less control over their work lives than over family lives. Flexible work practices and supportive supervisors have been found to be strongly associated with lower levels of work-family conflict and job dissatisfaction.

Professional work-group cultures and transport preferences, however, create barriers to improved work-life balance, especially for women. Focus is given to men and women in dual-career households, examining the difficulties for these workers in achieving balance between work, travel-to-work, and tasks of social reproduction, as they combine household responsibilities with two separate careers.

The growth in dual-career households has been led by increasing female labor market participation, and the polarization of “work-rich, time-poor”, and “work-poor, time-rich” households. The nature of employment has changed, increasing the emphasis on flexibility, adaptability, team-working and individual responsibility, in both the private and public sectors (Wheatley et al., 2008). Flexibility may entail employee flexibility for the employer or flexible working for the benefit of the employee (as recognized by Costa et al., 2003). The former refers to formal and informal workplace policies driven by customer demands, production goals, and other organizational requirements. The latter refers to flexibility driven by individual employees’ preferences and needs. Conflicting evidence is present in the extant literature, however, as to which form of flexibility organizations prioritize, whether employees and employers can achieve mutual gains, and whether organizations are conflating their interests with those of their employees even where divergent interests are found?

For many, travel-to-work creates mobility and flexibility, acting as a bridge between work and home. However, it is also a potential source of constraint and conflict.

## **9. WORK-LIFE BALANCE, AND THE JOURNEY TO WORK**

Work-life balance refers to the ability of individuals, regardless of age or gender, to combine work and household responsibilities successfully. “Work” in this context can be considered as paid employment (as well as unpaid work carried out for an employer).

This is distinguished from “life” which refers to non-work, comprised of free time spent in leisure activities, and family time (Lowry and Moskos, 2008, p. 170). This distinction between work and life is problematic due to the instance of work-related time, including travel-to-work, which cannot be considered as leisure, but equally cannot be considered work in the sense of paid employment. Problems of distinguishing time-use aside, inherent difficulties also exist in defining the term “balance” vis-a-vis work-life balance. Guest (2002) argues, that in the context of work and life, balance does not refer to an equal weighting of the two, but rather an acceptable, stable relationship. The desired point may differ considerably between individuals. Additionally, balance may be dynamic and changing either through employee need or employer demands. Work-life balance has, in recent years, come to the forefront of discussions regarding improvements in working conditions and increasing the flexibility of paid work.

However, work-life balance does not, necessarily, reflect a commitment by employers to improve the welfare of workers. Difficulties may exist for careerists due to increasing demands from employers for mobility and flexibility, increased work intensity as workforces are rationalized and workloads increased, and a blurring of work-life boundaries as work is conducted away from the office, at home, and on the move (Wheatley et al., 2008, p. 231). Indeed, while the ideals of the work-life balance concept are acknowledged, scholars have begun to question work-life balance in practice (see Fleetwood, 2007). Key to debates is whether current work-life balance policy perpetuates work-life imbalance, or whether other factors create barriers to improved work-life balance.

### **9.1. Work-life balance: conflicting perspectives**

Appropriate design and implementation of work-life balance policies can enable workers to gain greater autonomy in combining work and non-work spheres (Felstead et al., 2002, pp. 55-66). A range of possible benefits exists for both employer and employee, potentially delivering a “win-win” outcome. Employers benefit from greater productivity, improved recruitment and retention, reduced accommodation costs (through hot-desking for example), lower absenteeism, and improved customer services and employee motivation (Woodland et al., 2003). Benefits for employees include increased flexibility over work-time, enabling it to be molded around household and



caring responsibilities (Tietze and Musson, 2005). Reductions are also possible in stress commonly associated with managing work and home (McDowell et al., 2005). Meanwhile, those using flexible working arrangements may be able to alleviate the pressures of the “school run” by avoiding peak journey times, and home-workers can circumvent the commute entirely (Hill et al., 2003). Evidence suggests positive impacts; for example, higher levels of satisfaction with work, indicative of perceived improvement, have been reported among those using flexible working arrangements (Kelliher and Anderson, 2008; Hyman and Summers, 2004), women working part-time (Gregory and Connolly, 2008), and among teleworkers (Fonner and Roloff, 2010, p. 353). Findings on the latter, though, are somewhat conflicting (see Tietze and Musson, 2005). It has also been asserted that outcomes vary between different groups of workers, by gender, age and other demographics (Lewis, 2003, p. 11).

A range of flexible working arrangements exists, including flexi-time, home-based teleworking, job-sharing and compressed hours. The regulations place a duty on employers to consider requests seriously. However, requests for flexible working can be refused on grounds of “business need”. It has been argued that any potential negative career implications associated with flexibility are likely to be less severe in managerial and professional occupations (Cam et al., 2003). For example, the growth in part-time working in the professions has been argued as improving the status attached to non-standard employment, potentially creating a “win-win” outcome for employer and employee (Lawrence and Corwin, 2003, p. 924). Moreover, flexibility is less likely to be met with reductions in pay or levels of human capital in these occupations (Cam et al., 2003).

Requests for flexible working can be rejected by employers on grounds of “business need”, raising concerns in respect to whether flexibility is primarily being increased for the benefit of the employee, or the employer. If the latter is the case, the result will be increased work intensity for employees, and negative career implications for those working flexibly, as reported by Atkinson and Hall (2009, p. 663). Significant compromise is often required by the employee, when working flexibly. Reduced opportunities may be encountered, as employers continue to equate flexible working with a lack of commitment.

Meanwhile, in seeking to build and advance their careers many employees accept professional work-group norms such as long hours. In doing so they create an unsatisfactory relationship between home and work, thus sacrificing desired work-life balance (Sturges and Guest, 2004, p. 17). Recent research suggests that difficulties are faced by professionals (Dick and Hyde, 2006), and managers (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010, p. 630) when making the transition to part-time working. Marginalization is encountered, but is accepted as a consequence of the “choice” to work flexibly (Dick and Hyde, 2006). This is especially evident among working mothers. Non-standard employment enables working mothers to maintain professional identity and challenge norms of presenteeism while acting as primary care givers. Many, though, continue to engage in other norms including not taking breaks and completing full-time workloads (Dick and Hyde, 2006, pp. 554-555).

Hoque and Kirkpatrick (2003) found important negative impacts for managers and professionals on non-standard employment contracts. Poor implementation and management practice reduce opportunities for promotion and training. Moreover, the use of non-standard and flexible working continues to be perceived as reflecting lack of commitment. High-performance and high-commitment managerial practices, put in place to increase levels of discretionary work effort, form barriers to the successful adoption of work-life balance policy (White et al., 2003). Some managers continue to promote cultures of long hours and presenteeism, while opportunity for promotion was often limited to those who work full-time throughout their careers (Sirianni and Negrey, 2000, p. 72). Hoque and Kirkpatrick (200, p. 674) find that problems are more pronounced among women, due to the greater likelihood of them moving into non-standard employment. Work-life balance aims to improve conditions for all workers by altering work practices (Atkinson and Hall, 2009, p. 652). However, as Shorthose (2004, p. 3) identifies, current implementation of work-life balance fails to address many of the core issues surrounding work, including long hours. It only seeks to redesign work within the current structures of the workplace. Professional work-group practices form significant barriers to improved work-life balance. In addition, further potential conflicts exist with respect to travel-to-work.

## **9.2. The journey to work**

One of the key potential areas of conflict associated with work-life balance relates to travel-to-work. Work-related activity of this nature, as well as linked household responsibilities including the “school run”, impact transport preferences. These activities represent significant areas of “spillover” between paid work and life. Spillover may be positive which reflects the potential for “win-win”. However, difficulties are also encountered by dual-career households as they attempt to combine paid work and household responsibilities, at the same time as congestion and the availability of car parking render the commute more problematic.

At the employer level, too, policies are being implemented in an attempt to reduce reliance on the car. These include car-sharing, promotion of public transport through voucher systems, and facilities for cyclists. The car has, so far, remained dominant due to perceived lack of reliability, inconvenience, and the escalating cost of public transport (Pooley et al., 2005, p. 135). Meanwhile, complex schedules within some dual-career households render use of other methods of transport impractical.

In particular, those that have to fit the “school run” into their daily commute, have severe difficulties obtaining car parking, which is often provided on a first-come-first-served basis. Spillover between activities can create real time allocation challenges for dual-career households. It increases stress, especially where difficulties are faced in combining work, unpaid housework, and work-related travel (MacDonald et al., 2005). Reducing the number of car parking spaces available, or reducing access to them, is likely to cause significant disharmony. When combined with employer demands and household responsibilities, added complexity in travel-to-work – due to uncertainty surrounding car parking – may result in severe difficulties for households balancing work and life.

The discussion presented here suggests that significant difficulties are associated with balancing work and non-work (life), and that, to an extent, this is perpetuated by work-life balance policies. However, the extant literature, though conflicting in places, does suggest that it is not necessarily work-life balance policy per se which perpetuates work-life imbalance. A range of obstacles may act to limit the potential for “win-win”, including employer attitudes, workplace cultures, and current transport policy.

## **10. CHALLENGES FACED BY COUPLES DURING INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS**

The challenges faced by dual-career couples on international assignment have been found to be quite different compared to those brought about by job changes in the home country. First, dual-career couples have to think about the career of the spouse more carefully when considering work abroad. Here, research has shown that the choices of expatriate candidates are made more arduous by the career orientation of the expatriate's spouse, and that career-oriented spouses maybe less willing to accept expatriate assignments (Harvey, 1995; Selmer and Leung, 2003). Expatriates feel that their spouses' reluctance to give up their own career was a major constraint on their international relocation (Harvey and Buckley, 1998). This result is not unexpected, since spouses have to think of how to withdraw from their domestic job for several years, and how to secure a job in the host country – all in a context characterized by extreme uncertainty caused by unfamiliarity with the local environment and job market situation (Riusala and Suutari, 2000). There can also be direct hindrances to the employability of the spouse, such as the unavailability of work permits.

When starting an assignment, the challenges faced by dual-career families are similar to those faced by any other families, in that they all have to adjust to living in a new host country. Such adjustment challenges are widely discussed in the literature and thus these basic adjustment challenges fall outside the scope of the present paper. In addition, dual-career couples have been found to have a set of particular needs that are accentuated by relocation (Elloy and Smith, 2003). An example of such needs relates to finding work for the spouse that adds value to their career, countering the negative impact of a long absence away from the job market. The spouse may need help with work-permits and other work-related arrangements. If it is not possible to find a job, other options such as opportunities for further education can be considered. Some companies offer support services in these areas or provide spouses with general career and life counselling in order to support the dual-career couple (Riusala and Suutari, 2000).

Since expatriate jobs are typically found to be challenging, the assignees may use all their resources and energy to deal with job-related issues. As an outcome, there is an increased pressure on spouses to take on a bigger role in family affairs. This, in turn,

makes it difficult for spouses to maintain their own career. Career-related challenges faced by dual-career couples typically continue into the repatriation phase. The career challenges faced by expatriates during repatriation are already widely reported. The situation cannot be expected to be any easier when one partner does not have the benefit of a repatriation agreement, still often offered to expatriates. It is thus not surprising that spousal career concerns appear among the main repatriate concerns, and similarly future job concerns are listed as among the main concerns for spouses (Riusala and Suutari, 2000).

The challenges of the dual-career situation are sometimes resolved by spouses living in different locations (Elloy and Smith, 2003; Bird and Schnurman-Crook, 2005). In the international context, the distance between partners is often greater and time spent together less regular. Thus, the typical reasons for adopting such arrangements relate to the career of one partner (Hardill, 2004). It has been argued that living separately may cause personal, psychological, social, work- and career-related and situational dilemmas. Research has shown that it is not an ideal situation but couples try to make the best of it, as both partners feel they have an equal right to a career or the situation may otherwise lead to a separation (Rabe, 2001).

## **11. WORK VALUES AND GENERATION Y**

There is growing evidence that for Generation Y freedom is a core work value. That is, Gen Y values autonomy, leisure and work-life balance (Cennamo and Gardner, 2008; Twenge, 2010; Twenge et al., 2010) and see work as less central to their lives when compared with Baby Boomers and Generation X (Dries et al., 2008). A significant finding is that the desire for better work-life balance is not confined to those with children but is evident among younger employees without children (Twenge et al., 2010).

The critical issue for Gen Y professional couples is whether it is possible to achieve career goals while satisfying the desire for work-life balance. Work-life balance is concerned with three main overlapping influences – developments at work that may impact on non-work activities and responsibilities, the non-work consequences of work-life imbalance and the relationship between individuals and their lives outside of work

that necessitate work-life balance policies (Litzky and Greenhaus, 2007). Approaches to work-life balance range from the segmentation model (which presents work and non-work as separate and distinct domains) to the conflict model (which sees inherent conflict between different life spheres and thus requires difficult choices to be made) (Guest, 2002).

Importantly the quest for work-life balance appears to be a core work value for both women and men (Greenhaus et al., 2003; Greenhaus and Powell, 2012) although there is some evidence that it ranks more highly for women in relation to other job attributes (Ng et al., 2010).

## **12. DUAL-CAREER STRATEGIES**

The career development processes for partners in a dual-career couple are likely to be complex and different from each other, and strategies developed by the couple reflect this complex process. Research has found that, in dual-career marriages, career decisions and job changes for one partner often fundamentally alter the career path of the other partner (Eby, 2001). Therefore, we can expect interdependency between the careers of the partners in a dual-career couple and the negotiation of strategies to accommodate or balance the career path of each individual within the couple. We propose that, it is the existence of a shared identity that provides the context for negotiating and developing these strategies. Decisions within a couple are, at an elementary level, made by individuals. However, a couple's strategies are more than just the sum of decisions of the two individuals; they are a product of interactions and agreements between the two people. Within the context of strategic management, strategy is "a pattern in a stream of decisions." By this definition, strategy can be understood as consistencies in behaviors over time. We propose that couples' strategies for accommodating work and family roles may be similarly understood as a stream of decisions that reflect a certain pattern over time and are informed by the couple's shared identity. At times, what couples intend are not often what emerges in term of overall strategy.

### **12.1. Types of dual-career strategies**

Few studies investigate the specific strategies developed by dual-career couples to accommodate careers and family responsibilities. The studies that exist are mainly qualitative and often found in a counselling psychology framework focused on coping strategies (Bird and Schnurman-Crook, 2005; Haddock et al., 2001). Another body of research approaches the issue from a sociological framework, focusing on adaptive strategies in the context of social systems (Voydanoff, 2002). There are three broad strategies that dual-career couples used in making decisions about their careers and home life. These couples implemented one of three scaling back strategies: placing limits, trading off or job versus career. Scaling back is described as a process where both members of the couple purposefully questioned their values and built a hierarchy that valued family over work. Becker and Moen specifically used couples as the unit of analysis and conceptualized the couples as decision-making units, yielding relevant findings for the current model.

In the first strategy, placing limits, couples placed limits on the numbers of hours worked and reduced long-term expectations for career advancement in order to spend more time with their families. Couples with young families refused to take a new job or promotion that would involve too much travel or a relocation that would disrupt their partner's career. The placing limits strategy was often adopted as a couple-level strategy where both partners would place limits on their work hours and responsibilities. This strategy is a logical consequence of a shared identity where both partners have highly congruent and predominant family identities, reflecting a more egalitarian gender role ideology. Therefore, this strategy indicates that both members of the couple will participate in progressive employment and will have opportunities to develop and fulfil both work and family identities.

Another strategy, trading off, also reflects more egalitarian roles within a shared identity. In this strategy, members of the couple take turns placing limits on their careers. This allows each member to alternate between concentrating on the family role and focusing on career progression. Both partners are given the opportunity to develop a career over the course of their lives and to focus on child-rearing, but not simultaneously. This strategy is likely to be implemented when a shared identity includes highly congruent and predominant work identities, with certain negotiations taking place to determine a trading pattern.

Even in egalitarian couples, there are limitations placed on the extent of the equality. Women are still responsible for more tasks around the home, including childcare (even if it is simply managing the childcare service) (Frisco and Williams, 2003). Women experience higher levels of conflict between work and family than do their male partners, perhaps because of their biological responsibility of bearing children. Therefore, although employment gaps or slowdowns can have negative effects on long-term and short-term career outcomes for both men and women (Eby, 2001; Martell, 2002), when even ostensibly egalitarian strategies are used, the career of the woman in a family with young children may lag behind that of her partner's. Another complication arises when there is disparity in incomes. Although espousing an egalitarian perspective, decisions made by the couple may benefit the primary earner in the couple. Men continue to earn more than do their female counterparts and therefore may have more decision-making power in some situations, as the member of the couple who earns more is often able to make unilateral decisions that will benefit his or her career.

A third strategy, job versus career, involved one person having a job and the second person having a career. In this case, the partner with the career would take advantage of any career opportunity, including relocation, and the other partner would follow and accommodate. This strategy allows the individual with the job to drop in and out of the workforce to care for children as necessary. Although a career or a job could theoretically be allocated to either partner, in the study conducted by Becker and Moen, two-thirds of the individuals with careers (versus jobs) were the men in the couples. This indicates that, the strategy of job versus career reflects a more traditional gender role ideology, where taking time off to care for children is believed to be the most significant contribution for women to society over and above any potential involvement in the workforce. In more traditional couples, the male's career will often take precedence over the female's career. In the "good provider" role, fatherhood tends to increase men's work effort, as they work to support their family (Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 2000). The mother will be responsible for caring for the child until a time when childcare is no longer needed. At that point, she might be able to pursue paid employment. Interestingly, some of the women in this group had started out with more egalitarian views of roles within marriage and with major career expectations, but these expectations shifted as situations such as the birth of a child placed unforeseen



restrictions on the time they could spend furthering their careers. While most existing models of career progression are virtually uninterrupted, the actual model for females with biological children entails some interruption. According to Canadian legislation, mothers are able to take a one-year paid leave from work. More specifically, 15 weeks of maternal leave are granted, plus an additional 35 weeks of parental leave. This means that, the mother can take a one-year leave or the time can be split between the two parents to a maximum of one year. Mothers continue to take the bulk of leave from employment in order to care for newborn children (Marshall, 2003). In 2001, men accounted for only 10 per cent of the parental leave taken in Canada (Marshall, 2003). Therefore, this particular strategy is indicative of a shared identity where family and work identities may not be congruent for both partners, but through negotiations have reached an arrangement where work and family roles are fulfilled by different members of the couple.

### **13. WORK-LIFE BALANCE AND FLEXIBLE WORKING**

Public sector organizations generally have formal flexi-time available to employees, although not always for senior managers, and allow home-based teleworking at least on odd days each week. In some cases the lack of formal policy in private sector organizations may simply reflect the nature of the business: customer-facing environments do not offer significant opportunities to work at home. However, this also reflects that some organizations within the private sector are “lagging behind”, and are suffering from the sort of “limiting managerialism” described by Shorthose (2004).

Flexi-time aims to empower the employee as they can decide when they undertake their specific hours of work, though there are often a number of mandatory core hours. In some cases HRMs reported this had significant positive effects in terms of both recruitment and retention of workers. Evidence further signal that flexible working arrangements do have the potential to provide successful outcomes for both employees and employers, in some cases producing a “win-win” outcome. Flexible working, though, is too often employer, not employee, driven. While it provides flexibility often this will be driven by “business need” resulting in many workers not truly being flexible as per their preferences. Instead, being flexible entails flexibility for their employer.

These two perspectives are not necessarily in opposition because it is possible that there are mutually beneficial gains from specific practices. Employers can reduce overheads (e.g. reducing office space through hot-desking). Meanwhile some employees will arrive earlier at work, and others leave later, resulting in office hours longer than previously possible.

However, in some cases increased flexibility was reported as being ineffective due to heavy workloads, as workforce rationalization and increasing demands from employers result in a lengthening of the working day. Employees may experience long hours as a result of professional work-group cultures. Senior managers equate commitment with presenteeism (White et al., 2003). For those with substantial household responsibilities, often women, this will be particularly problematic.

### **13.1. Travel-to-work conflicts**

Transport policy also plays a key role in relation to households achieving an improved balance between work and home. Blurring the boundaries between work and family by performing multi-activity journeys including the “school run”, however, often requires that one partner in dual-career households works non-standard hours, perhaps starting later and finishing earlier. Many households share responsibilities between partners, but some do not (Hardill, 2002). Where inequality is found in the distribution of activities it is usually the female partner that combines these tasks with their journey to work, even within dual-career households (Hardill and Wheatley, 2009, p. 250).

Flexible working arrangements can be used to enable workers to fit the “school run” into their commute, particularly flexi-time. Unfortunately, evidence has been reported of a conflict between flexi-time and travel-to-work, resulting from the lack of available car parking at many workplace locations. Limited car parking can make the journey to work more stressful and complicated, as employees cannot rely on a regular space at their place-of-work. This forces many individuals to arrive at their place of work early in order to obtain parking for the day, further limiting the potential benefits of flexible working arrangements.

Conflict over car parking particularly affects those whose work and non-work lives are subject to significant spillover. This is particularly the case for those with caring responsibilities, especially those that must timetable the “school run” into their daily schedules. In many cases this is the responsibility of the female partner within a household. It adds further stress to an already stress inducing journey to work, and forms a barrier to improvements in work-life balance. However, these difficulties are not recognized in employers’ parking policies, which are often driven by seniority and the first-come-first-served norm.

The positive impacts of flexible working arrangements may, therefore, be eroded. Employee flexibility for the employer may be the key driver of flexible working. Rather than workers using these tools for their benefit, implementation and availability are subject to “business need”. Real tensions exist in the successful use of flexible working arrangements, due to conflicts with workplace timetabling of meetings and deadlines, and with workplace car parking. Cultures of long working hours reported among careerists exacerbate these conflicts within many workplaces, and result in uncertainty over the length of the working day (see Wheatley, 2009). These issues should be dealt with by policymakers if progress is to be made in improving work-life balance. However, as Shorthose (2004) suggests, solutions that benefit both the organization and the individual are not easily found. Meanwhile, it is the employer who ultimately determines what they consider an effective solution, not the employee.

### **13.2. Redressing the balance**

Home-based teleworking offers one potential solution for those with the most demanding household schedules, as well as resolving some of the conflicts related to car parking.

As such it is clear that there remains discontinuity between the workplace policies of some organizations and the effective improvement of work-life balance for their employees. Greater efforts need to be made to increase formalization of home-based teleworking as evidence from the case study suggest the potential for “win-win” in the use of this form of flexible working arrangement. Meanwhile, other evidence suggests

increased satisfaction with work among teleworking employees (see Fonner and Roloff, 2010). Employees should be offered greater opportunities to engage with this form of working, especially as technological changes make remote working an increasingly practical option for certain workers.

Another suggestion focusses specifically on altering managerial conduct. Current managerial practice, workplace cultures, and policy implementation result in career stagnation and reduced opportunities if the “choice” is made to work flexibly. Dissolving gender imbalance in managerial roles could have positive impacts in reducing long hours, the negative career implications associated with working flexibly, and improving work-life balance. Women’s greater household responsibilities make them better equipped to monitor and enforce the working practices of others.

Car parking could be allocated to enable certain workers greater access to flexible working arrangements. However, a key problem would have to be addressed by employers in identifying those in the greatest need. Employees with explicit need, for example those with a personal disability, are easier to identify than employees with implicit need who, for example, may have two children and care for an elderly relative. Employers may also be concerned about negative reactions from other employees, possibly preventing a “win-win” outcome. Nevertheless, positive discrimination should equate to an ethical obligation among employers, to ensure employees with caring responsibilities are able to balance work and life.

#### **14. SPOUSE’S ROLES DURING INTERNATIONAL ASSIGNMENTS**

Overall, partners in dual-career couples face several challenges when trying to reconcile both partners’ ambitions for their work and family lives. The dual-career situation is especially challenging in an international context. Although the challenges faced by expatriate families are already widely documented, more in-depth research on spousal roles is absent in the international context.

However, it is deemed necessary to introduce two new spousal roles. The first is similar to the role of the counterproductive spouse, and we label it here as the restricting spouse

role. The restrictive practices referred to are on a practical level, e.g. the spouse is unwilling to move to a certain location due to issues with infrastructure or due to a lack of language skills. This contrasts with a counterproductive spousal role, which is formed at a more attitudinal level. Second, the equal partner spousal role is identified.

Next, we discuss in more depth how these roles appear in the international career context. The supporting spousal role emerges very strongly in the international career context. Different types of spousal support are found, particularly support on emotional and practical levels. Expatriates report that spousal support during all phases of the assignment has been very important. Many of them feel that it would have been impossible to accept international assignments if the spouse had been against the idea. The supporting spousal role also continues on the emotional level later on. Spouses are also important to expatriates as friends and companions in a new environment. Supporting spousal roles also relate to the expatriates' work and career. The expatriates often discuss their career plans with their spouses and share their concerns about everyday issues and problems in the workplace.

On a practical level, supporting spouses are mostly responsible for housework and children, though in many countries housekeepers are commonly employed and some expatriates' families had au pairs or nannies. The supporting spouse role is also referred to in expatriates' accounts of their wife or husband having been very active in the relocation phase, looking for accommodation and schools for the children, and helping with the bureaucracy associated with a move to a new country.

Expatriates are typically in high positions in their organizations, travel a lot, and work long hours. Therefore, no matter whether the spouses are working themselves or not, they are accustomed to a life where their partner is often absent and they are very much responsible for the home and children. Sometimes spouses suffer from loneliness and feel redundant. Expatriates also talk of their spouses as "risk takers" since they follow them abroad. The use of these kinds of expressions most often relates to spouses' work and their financial situation, but also hints at the risks of divorce. The sacrifice the partner has made for the career of the other person then becomes a challenge.

The supporting spousal role appears to be an important element in general when expatriates talk about how they and their families have managed when living and working abroad.

The flexible spousal role is revealed to be very common. Most often, when expatriates define their spouses' role in a way that can be interpreted as being "flexible", they describe a situation in which the spouse gave up their job and stayed at home temporarily or permanently during the assignment. Though staying at home is sometimes presented as being a positive opportunity which expatriation provided to the family, the spouse's flexible role is very often described as a sacrifice.

In a few cases, a situation where a spouse stayed at home is presented as a form of idleness and the expatriate does not consider it an optimal solution. This may also reflect traditional social gender roles, where the man is the breadwinner of the family and the woman a homemaker.

Furthermore, the flexible spousal role is also identified when spouses are described as active and capable of coping with the new situation, even though they do not have the opportunity to continue their own careers. Flexible spouses are active in charity work, study abroad, and participate in many different activities. They also support other newcomers and create their own social networks.

When expatriates define their spouse's role as "determining", referred to here as the determining spousal role, two different viewpoints are found. First, the work situation of a spouse sometimes leads an expatriate to seek the opportunity to work abroad and the (usually self-initiated) expatriation thus begins after (or together with) that of their spouse. In other words, if the spouse has an opportunity to work abroad, the other person looked for a job in the same country in order to follow the spouse.

Another kind of determining spousal role can also be seen in what might be termed the "magnet spouse". There are couples who have originally lived in different countries when they met, and have later sought out an international assignment to have the opportunity to live together. These international assignments mostly consisted of self-initiated expatriation.

In general, the traditional way to think of international assignees and their spouses has been to see the expatriate him/herself as the leading partner in the marriage in terms of work-related issues. Thus, decisions are made based on the expatriates' work and spouses follow their partners.

Sometimes spouses provide easier entry to some social circles in the host country, especially if the couple is living in the home country of the spouse. The first new spousal role which is identified is that of the restricting spouse. Spouses' roles are sometimes defined as restricting – a role which appears when the spouse restricts in some way an expatriate's opportunity to make choices concerning work and career. Sometimes, the spouse is unwilling to move to a particular region or country, e.g. due to inadequate local infrastructure, unstable political situation or the lack of local language skills. The restricting spousal role also emerged when the work of the spouse led to an unwillingness to repatriate.

The equal partner spousal role is identified when the decisions concerning both partners' careers are made in a way that it does not disturb or interrupt the work of either of the partners. Both partners are thus working and successful in their careers.

In many cases, if the careers of both partners in the dual-career couple are given the same level of priority, the couple lived in different locations. All in all, six different spousal roles are present in how expatriates define their spouse's roles during international assignments.

## **15. DUAL-CAREER STRATEGIES FOR GEN Y COUPLES**

Dominant career patterns are not always associated with career stage (early or mid-career) and the desire for balance did not only emerge after having Children for Gen Y. There are also indications that the role of gender is changing. For example, it would seem that young professional women's careers reflect their desire for career rewards and success and that they are less likely than their mothers or grandmothers to let family prevent them achieving their goals (Ng and Sears, 2010).

Significantly, it appears that Gen Y professional couples are grappling with dual-career issues early in their relationships. They are making career decisions designed to accommodate future phases of life (Tiedje, 2004) and, instead of waiting until they have children, are thinking about how career and family intersect when planning their careers. While these findings provide support for the claim by Terjeson et al. (2007) that male and female careers are beginning to converge, there are also indications that new career patterns are emerging. Women are not simply becoming like men, nor men like women. They are not automatically accepting gendered social norms or organizational cultures when making career decisions (Broadbridge and Simpson, 2011). Instead couples are finding ways to meet individual work values and needs through a blend of give-and-take and pragmatic choices, choices which appear to be associated with individual-career patterns as well as dual-careers.

Examples of strategies to facilitate dual-careers are particularly evident among beta-beta career couples. This is being achieved through part-time employment, compressed work weeks and changes in professional direction, approaches that are constantly renegotiated as circumstances change. It was interesting to note that a number of couples with a beta career pattern (men and women) appear to be following a challenge→balance path that is not linked to current family responsibilities such as child-care or elder-care. It is a pattern seen equally in men and women. This is noticeably evident among those who have worked in high-pressure environments (such as medicine, accounting, and law) but have changed direction after recognizing the impact on their lives as well as observing the cost of success among colleagues. This suggests that dual-career couples recognize that professional and organizational constraints may limit what is possible, for both men and women (Sok et al., 2014), but they are prepared to change career direction or employer if this will lead to job and life satisfaction. For alpha-beta couples (female alpha/male beta or male alpha/female beta), one strategy to facilitate career and non-work priorities is the idea of taking a back seat with the alpha partner's career taking precedence over the beta partner's career. Unlike previous studies (Cabrera, 2007; Lovejoy and Stone, 2012) this is not based on gender but was often related to current earnings or earning potential.

Authenticity does not emerge as a dominant focus but this can perhaps be explained in terms of life and career stage. In keeping with the kaleidoscope career model it is



evident that career choices are continually underpinned by the search for an alignment between internal values and external behaviors, and the desire for meaningful work with the potential to make a difference to those around them.

It is important to note that professionals have advantages not shared by everyone in the labor market. Their skills and qualifications facilitate career opportunities and job mobility and, although they may be required to work long hours, their earning power means that they have discretion over work and career choices, such as working part-time. Thus individual agency, as seen in other “new” career models such as the boundary-less career (Tams and Arthur, 2010), plays a role in the evolving career patterns of young, well-educated professionals. The extent to which individual agency can overcome institutional boundaries has been disputed (Inkson et al., 2012) although professional couples have the added advantage of above average incomes which further supports work choices. This means that while Gen Y work values appear to differ from previous generations, within the cohort subgroups are likely to exhibit different behaviors in keeping with their career and work options.

## **16. MODERATORS OF THE IDENTITY-STRATEGY RELATIONSHIP**

### **16.1. Economic considerations**

Economic considerations of the couple that influence a shared identity may take several forms. First, the income of only one partner may not provide sufficient resources for the family’s existence needs, forcing both partners to participate in the labor force regardless of personal and couple preferences for participation in work and family roles. Individuals choose to pursue paid employment for many reasons, including economic necessity and personal satisfaction. Many working-class women with families have participated in the paid labor force because of economic necessity, not necessarily for the meaning found in a work identity. For this group of women, part of the salient identity for their role of mother includes work, so that work is a means to better care for her children rather than a means for personal fulfilment. Often these dual-career couples will make employment arrangements that allow them to maximize the amount of time they spend with their children. If possible, the couple may choose to work shifts or engage in alternative work arrangements (e.g. part-time work) that allow their partners

to be home when they are working. A couple's strategy would include simultaneously minimizing economic difficulties and fulfilling salient identities as parents and/or workers.

The economic environment may also influence a couple's strategy. In couples where one individual is underemployed, there is a greater focus on that parent's involvement in childcare activities. When economic times make it difficult for one partner to find full-time work, the couple might decide to assign the responsibility of childcare to that individual, regardless of previous strategies for work-family involvement. Therefore, even in couples where work involvement is highly salient for both individuals, lack of work may cause a shift in role-salient behaviors.

## **16.2. Organizational support**

There are organizational forces that affect parental leave and flexibility in work-life balance. Organizations can respond to the multiplicity of responsibilities of individuals in a number of different ways. Workplaces can be characterized along a continuum. At one end of the continuum exist employers who do not consider employees' non-work activities; at the other, employers who acknowledge and value non-work activities and are committed to providing support to the worker.

In dual-career couples there is usually more than one organization involved, and the work environment of both individuals should be considered. In supportive organizations, employers are found to support mothers in traditional patterns with non-work commitments more than they support fathers (Brandth and Kvande, 2002). Women are allowed to take advantage of work-life programs while men are still expected to commit the bulk of their time to the organizations. The differential application of this support means that men are not always able to share in organizationally-granted privileges. Even in egalitarian households where the emphasis is on sharing home involvement, fathers can sometimes be restricted by the formal policies that exist within their organizations. On an informal basis, fathers may have to deal with certain stigmas attached to taking advantage of work-life programs in the organization. Therefore, the level to which an organization supports its workers (both males and females) in non-work activities will influence the strategies couples have available to them.

## **17. FINDINGS**

In accordance with the objectives, the findings are as follows:

- Review of the extant literature revealed that career decisions in dual career couples are made at the level of the dyad.
- Organizations cannot view their employees in isolation, but that important transitions such as relocation, and taking on more responsibility are decisions that increasingly are made at the couple level. Employers may need to consider

the dyad when offering career advancement opportunities and when implementing work-life balance programs.

- The importance of spousal support increases among dual career couples during international assignments. Expatriates report their spouses as having supporting, flexible, determining, instrumental, restricting and equal partner spousal roles.
- Gender-based patterns appear to be giving way to different patterns based on individual career aspirations, earning capacity and motivation within a dual career (as opposed to simply dual income) household. For some young professionals challenge and balance are equally important and their careers reflect dual priorities not challenge followed by balance as their careers evolve. Changing demographic profiles and emerging social norms are changing the way Gen Y approach work and careers. Organizations and professional bodies need to respond to these changes through implementation of appropriate HR policies within supportive organizational cultures if they are to attract and retain young professionals.

## **18. CONCLUSION**

It is proposed that dual-career couples develop a set of values that are consistent with and basic to the understanding of how the unit operates in the world. The construct of shared identity as formed by the level of cognitive interdependence in the couple is introduced in order to represent these shared values.

Decisions that are made by either member of the dyad are measured against the shared identity of the couple. In this way, the shared identity of negotiated roles and counter-roles informs the development of a strategy for balancing the demands of career and family. Finally, the choice of strategy may depend on certain extraneous variables in addition to the shared identity, including economic considerations and organizational support.

Dual-career couples may have different needs from those of the more traditional single-career couple. There is, therefore, a need for organizations to develop policies and practices that provide support for the demands of both work and family. In the work environment, dual-career employee status implies the need for greater employer sensitivity and awareness of the conflicting demands of simultaneous careers, so that employees may become more effective both at work and at home. What is needed is policies and programs to help employees reduce the amount of conflict and the resulting stress they experience when they try to juggle the demands of work and home responsibilities. Conflict between work and family roles reduce employees' perceptions of quality of work-life and the quality of family life which, in turn, can impact productivity, absenteeism and turnover. Supportive work practices like flexible work options (e.g. flexitime, compressed work weeks, home telecommuting) as well as assistance with child and dependent care, employee support programme (e.g. counselling) and career path alternatives are therefore vital to minimize stress, maximize employees' sense of control over their lives, sustain manageable career progression, and at the same time balance career and family demands. Such practices have been found to be associated with lower levels of work-family conflict and job dissatisfaction as well as higher organization commitment and job satisfaction for those having family responsibilities. Mentoring could also contribute to alleviating the work-family conflict. Individuals with mentors reported significantly less work-family conflict, particularly family-work conflict than those individuals who did not have mentors.

However, developing and implementing strategies that address work-family conflict has limited value unless a strategic business approach is taken. In other words, it is important for both employees and companies to connect work-family issues with the strategic business needs.

Flexibility is a necessity often driven by complex patterns of time-use, which blur work, work-related, and non-work activity. The evidence from the case study reveals the presence of significant negative spillover between work and life among dual-career households. This is especially prevalent among workers with caring responsibilities (usually women). A specific conflict was reported between the use of flexible working arrangements, and non-work-family responsibilities such as the "school-run", which created problems with obtaining workplace car parking. As a result the opportunity for

many workers to work flexibly, and perform certain household tasks, is restricted by the need to arrive at work early to secure a parking space.

Increased use and formalization of home-based teleworking, although suffering from limitations, offers one potential solution to some of these problems. Improving the gender balance in management could, further, reduce the negative career implications for workers who use flexible working arrangements. The use of positive discrimination is a suitable solution for those with significant work and household responsibilities. Identifying those in the greatest need is, however, easier said than done. Employers may be concerned about negative reactions from other employees, but nevertheless have an ethical obligation to ensure employees with caring responsibilities are able to balance work and life. However, entrusting employers with this task may not currently represent a suitable solution given their focus on retaining existing workplace practice, and flexibility for the employer.

Transport issues (e.g. prioritizing of car parking), considered largely external from the employer perspective, have central relevance in the planning and development of employers' work-life balance policies. The findings highlight the need for a more holistic consideration of work-life balance, flexible working, and travel-to-work policies. Meanwhile, employers need to reconsider their approach to flexible working as professional work-group cultures currently necessarily create negative repercussions for the careers of highly skilled workers, especially working mothers. Certain practices presently adopted by employers implicitly discriminate against those with complex work, travel, and household arrangements. Failure to redress these policy obstacles perpetuates work-life imbalance.

One of the purposes of this dissertation was to explore dual-careers from the perspective of Gen Y professional couples and to identify the career choices and decisions that enable them to pursue successful careers as individuals and as a couple. Dual-careers, in the purest sense, would still appear to be elusive. Even among highly qualified professionals there is recognition that it is difficult to “have it all” but rather than giving up, they are looking for careers that match their needs, values and professional aspirations and exploring ways to have these things on their terms. In other words, it would appear that within this generation and this particular cohort “new” career patterns

are to reflect changes at a societal and demographic level as well as individual agency in how careers are enacted for “lifestyle and family” reasons as well as work and career reasons.

A number of significant findings emerged from their study. First, a certain number of women demonstrate an alpha career pattern. They articulate clear career goals, often describe themselves as “driven”, and are determined to be successful in their chosen profession. Their partners acknowledge this career focus and express a willingness to support them in their aspirations, both before and after starting a family. This marks a shift in thinking and practice from previous generations where it was more likely that women would experience career interruptions due to family responsibilities while men’s careers continued relatively unimpeded. That is, rather than following a challenge, balance, authenticity career pattern, some younger women may be mirroring the more typical male career (challenge, authenticity, and balance) or retaining a challenge focus for a much longer period, including after having children. The reason for this shift is unclear but may be linked to the fact that among Gen Y there are more tertiary educated women who have greater opportunities to pursue professional careers.

Second, and perhaps to some extent a reflection of the emergence of a more dominant female alpha career, an unexpected number of men are following a beta career. In some cases this is the result of a deliberate decision to forgo highly pressured jobs in organizations with long work-hours cultures but for others it is a focus that has shaped career decisions from the start. Previous research shows an increase in the number of men taking on the “house-husband” role but suggests that this is associated with child-care rather than career motivation and ambition. Male careers, some authors claim, are still dominated by the gendered nature of organizational structures, ongoing social norms and pressure for men to maintain the role of “breadwinner”. There are signs, however, that this is beginning to change and that men are actively choosing beta careers in line with work and family values.

Third, rather than having a single dominant focus, some couples appear to have both an alpha and a beta focus. That is, many of their career choices reflect priorities associated with goal achievement and challenge but at the same time career decisions are being shaped by the desire for balance. This dual concern emerges as a key driver shaping both

initial career choices and subsequent shifts in career direction, such as the decision to become a medical doctor and then decisions around which specialization to pursue or taking turns in where and how individual-careers progressed within the partnership. Previous research has suggested that individuals tend to have one main focus at any given time although during periods of transition (such as starting a family) two parameters may have similar intensity. This does not however explain the career patterns of the alpha/beta couples. Decisions about career and balance have evolved, and are continuing to evolve, in relation to professional identity, career aspirations and the relationship between career and personal life, not just at a point of significant transition.

## **19. LIMITATIONS**

Issues relevant to other populations may not be captured. Other populations, such as low-income employees, may have unique characteristics that would influence their ability or willingness to engage in certain strategies or consider certain role-based behaviors. Also, this dissertation is limited to studies of mixed-sex couples. Some generalization to same-sex couples might be possible, but the work and family dynamics among gay and lesbian couples may be qualitatively different when compared to heterosexual couples. The scarcity of research on dual-career same-sex couples makes it difficult to theorize as to how this research might be modified to fit this population. Finally, the definition of “dual-career couple” is inconsistent in the literature. The definitions differ based on the number of hours worked by each individual as well as by their respective commitment to the labor market. However, differences in terms of commitment and work identity salience may preclude generalization from certain definitions of dual-career couple to all couples who are gainfully employed. These nuances bear further investigation.

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