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Leisure in the Lifestyles of Dual-Earner Families in the United Kingdom

by

Elizabeth Such

Doctoral Thesis

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ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the work, family and leisure lives of heterosexual dual-earner couples with dependent children in the United Kingdom. The primary aim is to explore, analyse and assess the role played by leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner couples. The thesis looks at how paid and unpaid work, family and leisure interact across the lifecourse and within dual-earner couples.

Part I begins by locating dual-earner families within a social-historical, political and policy context. Firstly, the social history of the family as a productive unit is used to deconstruct the concept of dual-earning and its varying meanings over time. Secondly, large-scale statistical data are drawn on to track the growth of dual-earning since the 1970s in the context of widespread socio-demographic changes in Britain. In addition, the extent to which dual-earner families are the object of political and policy concern is examined in a review of family-related policy-making and political rhetoric in Britain and the European Union.

A theoretical framework for the thesis is established from a review of the social science and leisure studies literature on dual-earner families. A 'gender constructivist' approach, developed from a body of largely second wave feminist work since the 1970s in the social sciences, is adopted as an analytic tool to study dual-earner families.

The fieldwork for the thesis included in-depth interviews and life histories with both partners in 14 dual-earner couples with dependent children. The analyses in Part II of the thesis focus on the work and family histories of partners, the relationships between work, family and leisure for individuals at different stages in the lifecourse and the contextual meanings of leisure, which are shown to be dynamic and mutually dependent both for individuals and between partners.

The results from the empirical work reveal the complex patterns of daily life in dual-earner families. Work, family and leisure was also shown to be highly gendered. Women and men had different lifestyle priorities after the birth of children. The primary difference was women's greater tendency to relinquish leisure in the light of other demands and men's ability to retain relatively autonomous leisure throughout the lifecourse. The findings also uncovered some of the complicated processes of negotiation within the couple unit that acted to construct and reconstruct gendered lifestyles.

The thesis concludes with a discussion of the value of considering leisure as a central component in investigations of lifestyle across the lifecourse and highlights the crucial role it plays in the formation and maintenance of gender relations within the home.
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Introduction

The primary aim of this thesis is to examine, analyse and assess the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families in the United Kingdom (UK). The rationale for choosing this topic of inquiry is manifold and has been informed by several changes in the nature of family and employment structures in the UK in the second half of the twentieth century, particularly since the 1970s, which have not been fully documented in academic research. Leisure as a vital component of everyday life has been particularly overlooked in academic research, despite several scholars uncovering a clear conceptual link between leisure, family and employment (for example Roberts, 1970, 1999; Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975; Kelly, 1983, 1990). Most leisure, for example, is spent in the home and with other household members (Kelly, 1997, p.132), and research has uncovered both the familial and personal importance of leisure in daily life. Leisure in the context of dual-earning has, however, rarely been the focus of attention. Only a few British and American scholars, primarily within the field of leisure studies, have explicitly applied the triad of work, family and leisure to the context of dual-earner families despite their emergence as a significant contemporary family form (for example, Shaw, 1987; Bialeschki and Michener, 1994; Kay, 1996a, 1996b, 1998, 2001; Clough, 2001).

Dual-earner families accounted for 58 per cent of all couple households with dependent children in the UK in 1998 (Office for National Statistics, 1999a), which meant that a total of around 25 per cent of the population were living in dual-earner families. Social scientists in general have shown increasing interest in dual-earner families, and their constituent parts (for example, working mothers) since their period of rapid growth in the 1980s (for example Hochschild, 1989; Brannen and Moss, 1991; Brannen, 1992; Windebank, 2001). Particular attention has been paid to changing family-employment configurations and their relationship to the behaviours and orientations of household members. Studies of dual-earner families have especially focussed on gender because employed women with children have been viewed as the primary locus and mediators of family-employment change. Research on the distribution of domestic labour has, for example, focussed on the extent to which women in dual-earner families continue to fulfil the (gendered) obligations of housework regardless of their employment status (Hochschild, 1989; Scott and Duncombe, 1992; Bagilhole, 1994). This thesis utilises the findings of research on the
family–employment relationship in combination with the contributions made by leisure researchers on the work–family–leisure relationship by examining the role of leisure in the lifestyles of women and men in dual-earner couples in the UK.

Official statistics show that the dual-earner family form has become increasingly characteristic of the UK's socio-demographic profile. The 'male-breadwinner' family form that was still dominant after the Second World War has become less widespread as rates of employment among women with children have substantially increased. Dual-earner families are today the most common family–employment structure among households with dependent children, despite a decline in families headed by couples and an increase in the diversity of family forms. Single-parent families, for example, have emerged as a common family form in the UK since the 1980s. Britain has consistently high levels of lone parenthood in comparison to other European Union (EU) countries (Eurostat, 2000), and their emergence reflects other trends towards family diversification, such as the growth in rates of divorce and teenage parenthood. Debates in the media and policy and political settings focus on the extent to which changes in family structure and the earning behaviour of family members challenge the moral and social fabric. They raise issues about whether or not family diversification should be recognised in public policy and, if so, to what extent. Dual-earner families are of interest for policy since they represent a common family form that has emerged as a consequence of the increase in maternal employment. The growth in women's participation in the workforce in general, and that of women with children in particular, has raised questions about the changing role of women and its consequences for the future of society. Debate in the media and in policy and politics has also centred on the impact of maternal employment on children and the extent to which the provision of services such as childcare should be borne by government, business or families themselves (for example Home Office, 1998; National Family and Parenting Institute, 1999).

Underlying these debates are questions of gender. Academic research has highlighted the ways in which changing family and employment configurations reflect and challenge existing patterns of gender behaviour. 'Second wave' feminism, in particular, has contested 'male-stream' social sciences by placing women at the centre of theory and research and has sought to liberate women from the oppressive forces of patriarchy, or male domination over women. Improved access to employment was viewed as crucial to the emancipation of women throughout the movement of second
wave feminism in the 1960s and 1970s, not least because of women's general dependence on the male or 'family' wage at that time (Oakley, 1974; Crompton and Sanderson, 1990). The growth in rates of female employment and the decline in the 'traditional' male-breadwinner family form brought into question the extent to which female employment challenges the existing gender order. Research in the 1980s and 1990s in the UK and US produced conflicting results. Many feminist or pro-feminist researchers found that women's improved access to employment opportunities was not mirrored by a re-distribution of domestic tasks in the home and that women continued to assume the burden of the majority of housework regardless of their employment status (for example Hochschild, 1989; Kiernan, 1992). Reflecting on family-employment change in the US, Arlie Hochschild (1989) commented:

The exodus of women into the economy has not been accompanied by a cultural understanding of marriage and work that would make this transition smooth. The workforce has changed. Women have changed. But most workplaces have remained inflexible in the face of the family demands of their workers and at home, most men have yet to really adapt to changes in women. This strain between the change in women and the absence of change in much else leads me to speak of a 'stalled revolution'. (Hochschild, 1989, p.12)

This 'stalled revolution' in the actions and attitudes of institutions and men led Hochschild to conclude that women were constrained by a 'second shift' of work in the home in the labour market.

This has been reflected in the findings of other research and a variety of terms of reference, such as 'double burden' (Jurczyk, 1998) the 'double day' (Ferree, 1991), have been used to describe the 'second shift'. Conflicting research results have emerged primarily from large-scale time-budget and attitude surveys (for example Gershuny, 1997, Laurie and Gershuny, 2000). Research findings have indicated that men are not only changing their attitudes towards domestic work, but that their activities in housework has increased and, in the words of Robinson and Godbey (1997), may be laying the foundations for an 'androgynous society'. Debate between feminist researchers has also raised questions about how to accurately represent the 'voices' of women in post-modern society, and how to adequately recognise the various configurations that gender differences may take within family life (Doucet, 1995).

Changes in the work and family lives of individuals, however, not only serve as a context in which to examine gender relations in the home but provide a setting in
which to explore the role of leisure in the construction of gendered relationships. Leisure has been shown to be inextricably linked to the work and family lives of individuals, and research has demonstrated how leisure reflects, reinforces and also challenges existing patterns of gender behaviour. Feminist leisure research, for example, has shown how women's involvement in gendered domestic tasks impacts on their sense of entitlement to and experience of leisure. Several researchers have commented on how women's time is fragmented by the responsibilities of housework, suggesting that a lack of clearly demarcated time and place for work reduces women's opportunities to access leisure and impacts on their experience of leisure (Deem, 1986; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988; Green et al, 1990). In the context of research on the work–family–leisure relationship in dual-earner families, women's leisure has been shown still to be constrained by the responsibilities of housework and childcare, but work in the employment sphere may positively impact on women's sense of entitlement to leisure (Kay, 1998, 2001). In this thesis the theme of the gendered relationships between work, family and leisure behaviour are investigated in more detail.

The thesis also represents a juncture between two broadly separate academic areas of interest in its analyses of leisure in the context of family and employment change. Social research on family life since the 1970s has shifted in its focus from analyses of the institutions of the family and employment as separate spheres to the family–employment relationship. This coincided with substantial alterations in family building patterns and working practices in the UK. At the same time, leisure studies as an distinctive area of the social sciences was emerging in Britain, and one of its initial foci was the relationship between work (as paid employment) and leisure (for example Roberts, 1970; Parker, 1976, 1983). Developments in the field of leisure studies in the UK and US since the 1970s have gradually shifted academic interest towards issues concerning the relationships between family and leisure and between leisure and the lifecourse (for example Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975; Kelly, 1983, 1990) and, crucially, between the work–family–leisure triad (for example Green et al, 1990; Kay, 1998). The concern of the present study is to explore leisure in the context of the family–employment relationship of dual-earning and other family–employment configurations across the lifecourse. The thesis, therefore, attempts to link the research of scholars outside the field of leisure studies, who have concentrated on the family–
Throughout the thesis, the concept of ‘the family’ is not applied as a normative term to describe a nuclear, conjugal family, but is used as an inclusive term that encompasses a variety of family types. Although the family that is the focus of the thesis contains a two-parent heterosexual couple with dependent children, ‘the family’ is recognised as a broad category that includes a variety of nuclear and extended relationships. Family relationships may, for example, exist between households as well as within households. These may include relationships that link parents who have left the ‘family home’, as a consequence of separation or divorce, to dependent children, or relationships that span several family generations. The flow chart in Figure I.1 shows the characteristics of the family group that is the focus of the thesis. The centre column distinguishes the family and employment characteristics of dual-earner families that are the subject of the thesis. Such families are a sub-group of households containing a family unit headed by heterosexual unmarried and married couples with dependent children. They can include step-children and/or adopted children in addition to any biological children of the couple. This family structure is
then combined with a dual-earning structure wherein both adults are employed. The labour market position of each respective partner may vary to produce a range of dual-earner structures; both partners may work full-time or there may be a part-time/full-time mix.

Increasingly complex patterns and trends in family building and household-employment profiles since the 1970s have resulted in most individuals experiencing a variety of transitions throughout the lifecourse. Dual-earning should not be regarded as a permanent family state, but a stage in the family lifecourse that is subject to a variety of transitional phases. Families may not only experience transitions between single-earning, dual-earning and no-earning, but may also experience changes in the form of their employment. Couples may continue to be dual-earner whilst undergoing several internal employment transitions such as the movement from part-time work to full-time work, or the redistribution of working hours from daytime to evening. Other possibilities include 'seasonal' transitions between dual- and single-earning, as individuals (especially women) may seek employment arrangements that enable them, for example, to work in school term time only. Finally, individuals may experience transitions in family structure and related changes in household earning structure. The transition to lone parenthood and/or single income dependency and to family reconstitution, for example, allows for several earning structure configurations throughout the lifecourse. Changes in family structure and household employment structure are, therefore, closely interrelated. The roles and meanings of life domains, including work, family and leisure, thus vary across the lifecourse. Insight into these changes is crucial to an understanding of the roles and meanings of work, family and leisure to the dual-earner families that are the subject of the present study.

The aims and objectives of the thesis can be summarised as follows. The primary aim of the thesis is to explore, analyse and assess the role played by leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner couples. Three research objectives accompany this aim. These are:

1. To identify patterns of employment and family life across the lifecourse and to explore how employment and family transitions are experienced
2. To examine the role of leisure in the lifestyles of individuals across the lifecourse and in the context of the dual-earner family
3. To analyse the relationships between leisure and gender in dual-earner families.
In addressing these aims and objectives, leisure is conceptualised as an area of social life that has multiple meanings, that is not experienced independently of other life domains, such as work and home, and that changes in form, nature and meaning across the lifecourse.

Part I of the thesis constructs and deconstructs dual-earner families by examining their social-historical, socio-demographic, political and policy contexts. It also explores the theorisation of dual-earner families in the social sciences and leisure studies and examines methodological debates in the context of the study of dual-earner families. Chapter 1 tracks the family as a unit of production throughout agrarian, industrial and post-industrial Britain. The topic of the thesis – the post-industrial dual-earner family – is then explored in the context of social, cultural and economic change using the available literatures. Analysis of the different meanings of family ‘earning’ and ‘producing’ over time reveals that dual-earnership is by no means a contemporary phenomenon, although its form and nature are contextually dependent. The chapter also follows the emergence of post-industrial dual-earner families by examining trends in family building and employment patterns since the 1970s using statistical data. Time-series data from large-scale national and cross-national data sets make it possible to establish the location of dual-earner families in the UK’s social, economic and demographic profile.

The third part of Chapter 1 explores the political and policy context of dual-earner families in the UK. The relationship between dual-earner families and public policy is examined in terms of the way in which ‘the family’ has been politicised since the inception of the post-war welfare state. Although ‘family policy’ does not represent a discrete area of policy in the UK, political discourses and policy-making have acted to promote the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker family form and conceptualise dual-earner families as largely self-sufficient and not ‘in need’ of policy intervention (Lister, 1996). Despite a general absence of targeted policy intervention in the lives of dual-earner families, a range of family-related policies impact on their everyday lives. These are examined in the context of the New Labour government’s approach to family affairs which emphasises a moral obligation for parents to engage in paid employment and the importance of family stability for the social fabric. The rhetoric of New Labour and the European Commission (EC) relating to ‘family-friendly’ policies, or measures that help couples with children to reconcile work and home lives, is also explored.
Chapter 2 examines how dual-earner families have been theorised in the social sciences. A range of social scientific approaches to the study of work and family lives are examined, including sociology, micro-economics and (social) psychology. The tenets of feminist approaches to the family-employment relationship are adopted as useful analytical devices for the thesis. Purely structural explanations of the lifestyles of dual-earner families and the gender inequalities inherent in them are, however, regarded as insufficient, and gender constructivist/symbolic interactionist perspectives are fused with structural approaches to account for the notion of individual agency in the construction of everyday realities.

Chapter 3 further develops the theoretical approach outlined in the preceding chapter by examining the contribution of leisure research to the study of dual-earner families. The work–leisure relationship explored by the founding contributors to 'leisure studies' in the UK is combined with an analysis of research within the discipline on leisure, the family and the lifecycle. The contribution of feminist scholars on leisure and gender and the work–family–leisure triad is also reviewed. In particular, the theoretical and empirical advances made in gender and leisure research in the past two decades are examined and adapted to the study of dual-earner families. Critiques made by feminists about the paid employment–leisure relationship and the conceptual development of a holistic approach to 'everyday life' are also critically evaluated and applied to the context of the thesis.

Part I of the thesis concludes with a discussion of the methodological approach adopted in the research. Both philosophical and practical considerations are assessed in a discussion of methods and methodology. Paradigmatic debates are explored as applied to research on dual-earner families. Analysis of the rationale for the methodology is also combined with a discussion of methods of data collection. Life histories and in-depth interviewing are identified as the most appropriate methods for the fieldwork for the thesis. The chapter concludes with details of how the fieldwork was carried out and discusses some of the problems encountered during the research process.

Part II of the thesis presents the results of the empirical stage of the research. The fieldwork consisted of 28 life histories and in-depth interviews with men and women in 14 dual-earner couples with dependent children. Chapter 5 unravels the work and family lives of the couples in the study throughout their lives. Patterns of the lifecourse are examined at an individual and family level. The timing and sequencing
of life events are recorded for both the men and women in the study group. The chapter also explores the lifecourse from a gender constructivist perspective. The life histories of both male and female partners reveal that there are substantial differences in employment and family lives between the men and women interviewees and that life events such as marriage, the birth of children, divorce and family reconstitution are differentially experienced. Gender inequalities in the domestic sphere are also clearly demonstrated throughout the lifecourse of the couple. The history of the division of domestic labour is explored as a key site of intra-couple negotiation and an example of how gender is both challenged and reinforced at an everyday level.

Chapter 6 builds on the lifecourse perspective utilised in the preceding chapter by exploring the ways in which leisure interacts with work and family throughout the lifecourse. The first part of the chapter examines the problem of defining 'leisure' as a distinct area of life. Its multi-dimensional meanings are elucidated by interviewees and several components of the meaning of leisure are unpicked. Notions of leisure as time, activity and experience are explored in particular. The definitions of leisure offered by the interviewees are cross-referred to debates in leisure studies about the roles and meanings of leisure. The relationships between leisure and changes across the lifecourse are examined in detail in the second half of the chapter. Three key stages in the lifecourse are isolated as examples of the complex ways in which leisure interacts with everyday life. Leisure in the pre-children phase of the lifecourse, the parenting stage and the dual-earner phase are examined as relatively distinct stages in the course of life. The transitions to and from family-employment configurations are also examined. The differences between the experiences of leisure throughout the lifecourse for the men and women in the study group are explored in the context of the gender constructivist theoretical framework of the thesis.

The final results chapter examines in detail the relationships between leisure and gender in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. The first half of the chapter focuses on how gender relations are manifested in the leisure behaviours and orientations of partners. The work, family and leisure priorities of individuals are examined in the context of gender relations in the home. The differences between the male and female participants' 'hierarchies' of work, family and leisure are explored along with some of the rationalities used to explain behaviours. The notion that men and women make 'sacrifices' of and for leisure is also examined. The second half of the chapter focuses on how the leisure behaviours and orientations of one partner impact on the
behaviours and orientations of the other. Both reciprocity in negotiations and within-couple conflict are examined as characteristics of the negotiation of the leisure behaviour of partners. The extent to which gender mediates these negotiations and their outcomes is also analysed.

In the concluding section, the aims and objectives of the thesis are revisited, and the results of the study are discussed in the context of the findings of previous research. The overall contribution of the thesis to an understanding of dual-earner family lives in the UK is explored. Discussion centres on the usefulness of a 'gender constructivist' approach to the study of the lifestyles of dual-earner families, and on how the empirical results of the investigation have informed theoretical appraisal. Reflections are also made on the methodological approach of the thesis and how choice of method has impacted on the results of the thesis. The thesis ultimately concludes by endorsing the value of including leisure in analyses of lifestyle across the lifecourse and the potential of analyses of leisure to illuminate the realities of everyday life.
Part I

Dual-earner families: context, theories and methods

The aim of Part I of the thesis is to construct and deconstruct the dual-earner family in historical and contemporary socio-demographic contexts and in policy, political and academic debate. This is explored using the available literatures on the dual-earner family. This deconstruction exercise represents an original contribution to existing bodies of knowledge as the dual-earner family has rarely been explicitly problematised in academic research. Furthermore, the tracking of dual-earner families in a variety of contexts including their social and economic historical settings, their policy and political backgrounds and their academic contexts have not been coordinated in other research.

Chapter 1 focuses on the social and economic historical context of the dual-earner family. Production and/or earning in families in agrarian, proto-industrial and industrial economic and social systems are examined using evidence from socio-historical literatures. The economically productive activities of families since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries are examined to help uncover the changing nature of the interactions between the family, the economy and society, and how this has informed work/employment–family configurations over time. This socio-historical investigation is complemented by an examination of large-scale time-series data that has followed the changing family and employment structures of households in the UK since the 1970s. Statistical data helps locate the dual-earner family in its contemporary context and indicates some of its structural characteristics, such as the employment statuses of men and women and their level of engagement in the labour market. The final part of the chapter examines the dual-earner family in UK and European Union (EU) policy and politics. The growth in the rate of dual-earnership uncovered in statistical data serves as a context in which to examine political and policy interest in the dual-earner family since the 1970s. Family-related policies that have an impact on dual-earner families are also examined to uncover the context in which dual-earner families live their everyday lives and how this is supported or resisted in public policy.

Chapters 2 and 3 complement the deconstruction exercise in Chapter 1 by examining the contributions of mainstream social sciences and leisure studies to the
study of dual-earner families. Chapter 2 particularly explores the theorisation of dual-earner families in sociology, (social) psychology and micro-economics since the 1960s. Particular sociological perspectives including structural functionalism, Marxism and feminism are critically evaluated in the creation of a theoretical framework for the thesis, namely, ‘gender constructivism’. Chapter 3 builds on the theoretical framework set out in the preceding chapter by examining the contribution of leisure studies as a multi-disciplinary field of research to the study of dual-earner families. Feminist leisure research, in particular, is utilised in an examination of the gendered ways in which work, family and leisure interact at an everyday level. The methods and methodology adopted in the fieldwork stage of the research is presented in Chapter 4, in the light of the review of the literatures presented in Chapters 1, 2 and 3.
Chapter 1 Constructing and deconstructing dual-earner families

The dual-earner family has grown in importance in academic and policy debate since the 1980s in the UK. Although families headed by productive heterosexual couples can be identified in a variety of economic and social systems, it is the dual-earner family of the industrial capitalist era of the late twentieth century that have been the main focus of concern in the literature. ‘Production’ in this context refers to the physical production of goods by a family for its own consumption (a characteristic of pre-industrial families); the unpaid (re)production of labour in the home; and the economic production of commodities of exchange value (a characteristic of industrial and post-industrial families). Interest in the dual-earner family has been both explicit and implicit in a variety of academic traditions and policy debates, owing to its emergence as a dominant contemporary family form. These traditions have approached dual-earner families in different ways, reflecting the disparate historical and cultural backgrounds, priorities and research agendas of each discipline.

The aim of this chapter is to place the dual-earner family in context, by examining dual-earner families from three complementary perspectives. Firstly, the historical context of the dual-earner family form is examined. In particular, the family is explored in relation to its economic environment from the pre-industrial to the post-industrial age, together with its changing relationship to productive activity. This places dual-earning in the context of historical change in the UK and demonstrates how the family as a productive unit pre-dates industrial capitalism. Following from this historical analysis, the current characteristics of dual-earner families are then explored from a contemporary statistical perspective. Statistical data is used to track the emergence and growth of the dual-earner family form in the UK from the 1970s and demonstrate its contemporary significance. Finally, dual-earner families are placed in the context of the UK’s political and policy environment. Analysis of the policy and political environment relating to family life in the UK is included to uncover the broad institutional context in which dual-earner families structure and experience everyday life. Social, economic, fiscal and leisure policies have an ideological and practical influence on family and employment life and lifestyle (Kay, 2000). Ideologies of ‘the family’ particularly permeate public policy and political rhetoric.
Notions of the ‘mother as carer’ and the ‘father as breadwinner’ have, for example, characterised the politics and policy of successive UK governments since the Second World War (Lewis, 1992). Practical support, or the lack of it, also impacts on lifestyle. Differences in the level of publicly provided childcare in EU countries has, for example, been cited as strong influencing factor in the variable rates of maternal employment across Europe (Daly, 1998; Kay, 2000). The broad public policy context of dual-earner families, therefore, has implications for the lifestyles and leisure behaviours of individuals. The analysis of UK policy presented in final section of this chapter provides a background against which the everyday lives and lifestyles of dual-earner families can be assessed.

By placing dual-earner families in their historical, statistical, political and policy environments a clearer understanding can be gained of the origins and location of dual-earner families. By constructing and deconstructing the meaning of dual-earner families from historical, statistical and policy perspectives, the aim in this chapter is to provide a context for the fieldwork and to inform the examination of the theorisation of the dual-earner family in Chapter 2.

1.1 Dual-earner families from a historical perspective

Debate among historians about dual-earner families has mostly been of an indirect nature. Historical analysis of the productive and non-productive activities of families and households has rarely been placed in a ‘dual-earner’ framework, and the concept has generally been applied to the most recent phases of industrial capitalism, particularly in developed countries. The origins of dual-worker families can, however, be traced back to pre-industrial economic and social systems, and several researchers have turned their attention to the structure and nature of families, households and working lives in the context of their historical temporal and spatial locations. Of interest here is the evolution of working couple-headed families and households in relation to their economic and social environments from a historical perspective. It is worth noting at this stage that social historians have been the main contributors to the development of the history of the family in relation to its economic and social surroundings. Influential contributors have also emerged from feminist perspectives and feminist sociologists in particular (for
example Oakley, 1974; Tilly and Scott, 1987) have contributed to a 'herstory' of family life that encapsulates the experiences of women in families as well as those of men.

In the context of pre-industrial society, families containing working couples are referred to as 'dual-worker' or, if children were involved in the productive process, 'multi-worker' families. These terms are used in preference to 'dual-' or 'multi-earner' families as, until the onset of widespread industrial capitalism, payment in the form of monetary remuneration was uncommon.

Considerable debate has focused on the social and economic relations of the UK in the pre-industrial, pre-capitalist era and, in particular, the social and economic organisation of the family. In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the population was largely engaged in the agricultural economy and, among the peasant majority, families produced mainly to satisfy their own needs (Rowbotham, 1973). Households worked the land as self-sufficient units, producing food and basic commodities for themselves and for markets of exchange and barter. Men, women and children were all included in this productive process, and joint action was essential to the family economy (Hudson and Lee, 1990). Families can, therefore, be regarded as not only 'dual-worker' but 'multi-worker' from an early stage in the UK's social and economic history. Multi-worker households were also a feature of agrarian society as members of the rural poor worked and often lived in the households of others as servants or labourers (Crompton, 1997). In a peasant economy, tasks were, however, divided along gender lines; for example, women were the main dairy and household workers, tended poultry and pigs and engaged in ancillary work such as sewing and spinning, whereas men were responsible for 'heavy work' such as ploughing and mowing (Hudson and Lee, 1990; Crompton, 1997). These gender divisions were, however, negotiable especially during periods of high work intensity, such as the harvest, when tasks were more equally shared.

Production went beyond the agricultural sphere into artisanal manufacturing, as many households had insufficient land to support a family (Crompton, 1997). The manufacture of shoes, metals and textiles, and the art of brewing and spinning flax and wool are some examples of crafts undertaken by family and/or household members (Chaytor and Lewis, 1982). In Alice Clark's (1982) classic study of the working lives of women in the seventeenth century, wives were seen as virtual partners to their husbands in crafts and
trades in what she called the ‘domestic’ and ‘family industries’. Ann Oakley (1974) supported this thesis by asserting that, ‘in the seventeenth century family, women were not subject to the arbitrary authority of their husbands; they were equal partners. In the home and outside it, and particularly in the market place, female opinion was voiced and respected’ (Oakley, 1974, p. 27). The concept of equal partnership between couples has been questioned in the light of evidence of the division of labour by gender and patriarchal structures in pre-industrial societies (Bradley, 1989), but what is apparent is the active involvement of all family members (beyond a very young age) in productive ‘work’. Although this form of family organisation pre-dates the concept of the dual-earner family of the industrial capitalist era, similar ‘multi-worker’ families and households were an essential feature of earlier social and economic structures. In addition, multi-worker/earner households continue to characterise many societies and economies of countries where family firms are prevalent.

The extension of rural, domestic manufacturing for distant markets in the eighteenth century during the period of proto-industrialisation, strengthened earlier processes of emergent capitalism (Hudson and Lee, 1990). Production was still located in the domestic sphere, but output was exported to external markets for sale or exchange. In textiles, the second largest industry after agriculture in the UK (Oakley, 1974), the proto-industrial family did its spinning and weaving at home; women and children looked after the spinning, and the men did the weaving and delivered the cloth to ‘middlemen’, or merchant clothiers (Collier, 1964; Janes Yeo, 1995). The household remained a major unit of production and an important instrument of recruitment for paid work, thus maintaining its dual- or multi-earner structure. Labour was not independently priced owing to the production of marketable merchandise by the family as a unit, but the economic and social relations of production were crucially altered and favoured a more market-oriented structure of production and consumption (Hudson and Lee, 1990). Concomitantly, agrarian capitalism gained momentum as the use of common land was restricted under the enclosure movement (c. 1760–1820), and private commercial enterprise was strengthened (Levine, 1984). Inputs of capital increased, thereby improving technologies and organisational structures and increasing output, creating a surplus for
trade. In addition, the growth of surplus labour among the landless poor led to the emergence of extensive wage labour.

The onset of rapid and widespread industrialisation in the UK has been identified by many as a turning point in the organisation of families and households and their relation to work (Pinchbeck, 1977; Tilly and Scott, 1978; Clark, 1982). This is not to say that industrialisation was experienced either equally or evenly at the individual, work or family level, but varied along class, regional and gender lines. It would also be inaccurate to characterise the development of industrial capitalism as a sudden transformation in the means and relations of production. The emergence of Britain as the ‘first industrial nation’ (Bradley, 1989, p.36) corresponded more to the concept of industrialisation as a process rather than that of a revolution, as it is more commonly described (Oakley, 1974; Levine, 1984). Throughout this process, the dual- or multi-worker family model of the pre- and proto-industrial age was gradually eroded as the ownership of the means of production shifted from small domestically-based enterprises to large-scale industry. In the case of the textile industry, for example, ‘middlemen’ increasingly controlled the process of manufacture as they began to employ greater amounts of labour and owned more capital (Oakley, 1974). As Wally Seccombe (1995, p.112) has commented, ‘with the decline in opportunities to generate income while working at home, the conception of the family as a group of co-producers faded rapidly’.

Technological improvements and scientific discovery led to the mechanisation of production and, as power-driven machinery became more possible and profitable, factories were built to accommodate it. The expansion of factory-based production varied according to region and trade, but this phase of industrialisation has been defined as critical in the separation of work and family and in the development of a ‘new order’ of family life (Pinchbeck, 1977). Throughout early industrial development and until the end of the nineteenth century, however, the workshop was more common than the factory and ‘there were important carry-overs of the family mode of production even within factories’ (Levine, 1984, p.101). This carry-over was due to the close proximity of factory and worker, the recruitment by male workers from close kin (Harris, 1983) and the practice of subcontracting children’s labour to ‘masters’ by parents (Seccombe, 1993). Furthermore, Michael Anderson (1980) has argued that, although the separation of the work and home
lives was a characteristic of factory industrialisation, 'traditional' occupations such as agricultural labourer, mason and carter also took workers away from the home, sometimes for long periods. In addition, he claimed that women continued to take their children to work as they had done in the fields until the law prohibited the presence of non-working children in factories (Anderson, 1980, p.79). Furthermore, although the Factory Acts of 1819 and 1833 legislated against children aged 12 and under working in factories, this law was contravened by parents for years after its introduction (Pinchbeck and Hewitt, 1973, pp.404–5). Early stages of industrialisation thus continued to utilise the family as a productive, multi-worker unit.

The significance for the thesis on the separation of home from work, however, relates to the impact this had on the economic activity of family members and, especially, the productive and non-productive activity of women and mothers. Hudson and Lee (1990, p.21) contend that: 'theoretically, late eighteenth and nineteenth-century industrialisation should have tended to create additional opportunities for female employment'. A decreased reliance on physical strength for labour in some trades, improved technologies and the deskilling of tasks, and the disappearance of male-dominated guilds are cited as incentives for female employment. Industrial capitalism, however, failed to transform the existing sexual divisions of labour of the pre-industrial era and indeed strengthened them (Bradley, 1989). It also initiated considerable change in the wealth structure of Britain, and a new complex class system combined with gender divisions polarised the work and family experiences of women in poor and wealthy families.

Oakley (1974) has commented that, among the working class majority, married women with children and women who lived in areas where factory employment was not available were the two groups who particularly suffered from the changeover to factory production. Unmarried women and girls and childless married women gained from the exclusion by law of child factory labour and were also heavily employed in the feminised 'industry' of domestic service (Pahl, 1984). The legislation that outlawed child labour was instrumental in the differentiation of adult and child roles, and the child came to be seen as a dependant. The family assumed the sole responsibility for childhood socialisation, adopting a 'moral and spiritual function' (Ariès, 1962, p.412). These changing attitudes towards childhood and the increased tendency for factories to cease employing the labour
of whole families faced many couples with the problem of how to care for children in a
world which spatially divided home and work (Oakley, 1974). This stage of mid- to late
nineteenth century industrial development increased pressure on the economically
productive role of each partner, especially among mothers who traditionally fulfilled an
additional domestic role. The gradual exclusion of women from occupations such as
midwifery and dentistry, together with the decline in home-based artisanship, heralded the
dependence of women in marriage and their restriction to unpaid domestic work (Pahl,
1984). It was the middle-class Victorian doctrine of domesticity, femininity and leisure
that tied married women with children at an ideological level to the family role, and the
dual-earner family model significantly declined.

The sole function of wives and mothers was increasingly perceived by the middle-
classes as based in the home, and the 'family wage' came to mean the man's wage 'rather
than the pooled contributions of the different family members' (Malos, 1995, p.11). The
concept of male 'breadwinning' was born with a special responsibility on behalf of men to
provide a family income (Potuchek, 1997). It remained, however, an ideal rather than a
reality as industrial capitalism required female labour for profit and growth, and men were
paid an insufficient 'social wage' to support their families (Malos, 1995). The
dual-worker family therefore continued to thrive, especially among the labouring poor,
although industrial capitalism transformed the 'worker' into a 'wage earner', thus
heralding the advent of 'dual-earner' families. Women in paid employment in the
nineteenth century were overwhelmingly members of the working and peasant classes,
and most jobs were in the domestic service, garment making and textiles (Scott and Tilly,
1975). Immediate kin would also contribute to household income when they reached a
sufficient age and, among those mothers who were housewives, additional income was
generated, for example by taking laundry and lodgers (Alexander, 1976).

The most significant decline in the dual-earner or multi-earner family was among the
burgeoning Victorian middle class. The aristocracy and landed gentry had an established
history of economic inactivity among wives, and leisure was a mark of status
(Rowbotham, 1973). Diffusion of this bourgeois family model with women as the 'angel
of the house' to an increasingly large and influential middle class was underpinned by
Victorian evangelicalism, and the belief in embodied mental and emotional distinctions
between men and women (Hudson and Lee, 1990). Such beliefs were reinforced through educational provision, legislation against women in certain industries deemed 'inappropriate', such as mining (Hewitt, 1958), and through the trade union movement's pressure for a 'family wage' (Crompton, 1997). Supporting a family with a single wage was regarded as a matter of honour and of masculine pride for working class men (Seccombe, 1995). Furthermore, 'with many men, particularly toiling at tough physical labour, it became a point of pride that they never lifted a finger to help out at home' (Seccombe, 1995, p.124). Although this ideology of gender derived from beliefs and structures that pre-dated industrial capitalism, the ideal of the confinement of women and mothers to the domestic sphere alone was specific to the Victorian era. With the means of production controlled by an influential minority, ideologically bound practices of excluding mothers from the labour market were able to make a significant impact on working-class women. The dual- and multi-earner family, therefore, became increasingly unpopular among the middle classes and increasingly difficult to sustain among the working classes.

By the mid-nineteenth century, 'the roles of working-class and middle-class women were, on the whole, increasingly differentiated' (Oakley, 1974, p.49). This was especially evident among married women with children; for working class mothers employment was a financial necessity, for middle class mothers work outside the home was a 'misfortune and a disgrace' (Oakley, 1974, p.50). As a result of this disparity, working class families were differentiated from middle class families by their dual-earner status, and this was largely sustained until the early twentieth century when middle class ideals began to permeate working class ideology (Oakley, 1974). Housewifery became the occupation of the majority of married women and women's work was placed outside the formal economy. The long history of the family as an economically productive unit with a dual-worker/earner or multi-worker/earner structure was thus virtually ended by the first half of the twentieth century.

The changes in family-employment structure brought about by industrialisation were consolidated and 'naturalised' throughout the inter-war period in the UK. Woman's role as housewife was affirmed 'as the proper use for female energy' and her dependence on the male wage was an accepted fact (Oakley, 1974, p.56). The World Wars did, however,
have a corrosive affect on Victorian attitudes towards women. Female labour was mobilised in large numbers during both World Wars as women were recruited to replace male workers. Middle class women were particularly affected by the increased value of their labour during the First World War, and patriotism served to legitimise challenges to the doctrine of domesticity. The Pre-War Practices Act meant, however, that men had a legal right to claim back their former jobs following the end of the war, and ‘by 1921 the proportion of women in paid employment was actually smaller than before the war’ (Oakley, 1974, p.58). The inter-war period was characterised, not only by the retreat of women back into the home, but by a gradual shift in attitudes towards sex-equality. Legislation was passed in 1919 that gave women the right to be elected to Parliament, and in 1928 women were able to vote. The Second World War heralded another surge in women’s employment and hastened further the impact of economic, demographic and family changes that emerged in the early twentieth century (Tilly and Scott, 1987).

Economic change that acted to increase female employment and therefore household earning structure, included the growth in the tertiary sector and the development of new jobs for women as white collar clerical workers (Tilly and Scott, 1987, p.215). Demographic change also impacted on the number of married women in employment. Two key groups in the employment profile of the UK – young adults and unmarried women – were substantially reduced in the first half of the twentieth century. Declines in the fertility rate in the 1930s reduced the number of young adults available for employment after the Second World War, and an increase in nuptiality rates and a decrease in the average age of marriage among women diminished the number of single women available for employment. As a consequence of these demographic trends, the rate of employment among married women increased, although married women with dependent children remained largely absent from the workforce. Changes in the family also impacted on female employment and family-employment configurations. The eradication of child labour and a an emphasis on child education, for example, meant that ‘children cost families more than they had in the past, and they contributed less toward their upkeep’ (Tilly and Scott, 1987, p.219). Now, when families needed additional income, mothers worked instead of children (Tilly and Scott, 1987, p.219). This phenomenon was, however, largely confined to working-class families and Oakley (1974)
cautioned against overstating the extent to which women’s roles changed during the inter-
war period and as a consequence of the World Wars:

Industrialisation has had these lasting consequences: the separation of man from
the intimate daily routines of domestic life; the economic dependence of women and
children on men; the isolation of housework and childcare from other work …
industrialisation has meant the restriction of the woman–housewife to the home.
(Oakley, 1974, p. 59)

Processes of industrialisation, therefore, had a lasting affect on the family–employment
structure of households, and single-earner male-breadwinner families were the socially
dominant family form into the 1970s in the UK.

In conclusion, the investigation of the history of work and family structures in the
context of their economic and social environments reveals that families with economically
productive couples are by no means exclusive to the industrial capitalist era of the late
twentieth century. The most significant shift in the form, structure and nature of
production at the family level relates to the impact of industrialisation. Processes of
industrialisation transformed production as a collective, home-based activity, to
individualised wage earning and spatially separated the home from the workplace. Tasks
and roles were assigned to these ‘separate spheres’ to overcome the problem of balancing
the needs of the household and the need for an income. These were inextricably linked to
gendered assumptions about the capabilities and roles of men and women that were
reinforced by Victorian middle class doctrines of female domesticity and male
breadwinning. From a background of dual- or multi-working as a necessary and inevitable
part of everyday life in pre-industrial times, by the beginning of the twentieth century,
multi-earning had been restricted by law (i.e. children were prevented from engaging in
economic activity) and a new discourse surrounding childhood, and ideologies of work
and family that emerged from the context of Victorian upper/middle class
authoritarianism resulted in the withdrawal of women from the formal economy, thereby
significantly reducing the number of dual-earner families in the UK. Although dual-
earning was still exercised by some, usually very low income families or families that
worked on the land, for whom dual-earning was a necessity, male breadwinning became
the ideal of late industrial society in Britain.
1.2 Dual-earner families from a statistical perspective

Dual-earner families in their contemporary forms differ significantly from their predecessors in several ways, owing to the influence of a range of different economic, social, cultural and political factors. The emergence of dual-earner families in the UK in the second half of the twentieth century can be traced by examining recent trends in family building and employment patterns using statistical data. The historical analysis carried out above uncovered the social and economic contexts of the family since the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to the early 1970s using social-historical literatures. It is not possible to track the family and employment characteristics of households before the 1970s because of the poor availability of data, the inadequacies of data sets and the problem of comparability. Analysis of statistical data over hundreds of years would also be a lengthy process that would produce large volumes of data. The time-series data used in the following section is taken from large-scale national data sets produced in the UK since the 1970s. It is used to establish the location of dual-earner families in their economic and socio-demographic context in the late industrial period. This section, therefore, builds on the social-historical analysis of dual-earner families presented in the preceding section by exploring the emergence and growth of dual-earner families from a statistical perspective. Statistical data on the dual-earner family is reviewed in three parts. Firstly, definitional and terminological issues are elucidated and problems of using the statistical approach are identified. Secondly, the emergence of dual-earner families is mapped in the context of the changing nature of couple-headed households. Finally, the employment patterns of couples are analysed.

Terminology and definitions

The family from a statistical perspective is not a ‘monolithic and immutable’ concept (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996, p.22). Rather, it is a generic term encapsulating a variety of family forms, of which the dual-earner family is one component. Defining the dual-earner family statistically requires consideration of the statistical definitions of both the family and employment and an understanding of the conventions lying behind statistical measures.
In the UK, the two principal national data sets relevant to the statistical analysis of dual-earner families are the General Household Survey (GHS) and the Labour Force Survey (LFS). The GHS is the primary annual national survey that gauges the family and living arrangements of the population, and the LFS is the main source of data on the employment and economic activity rates of couples and households. In the 1996 GHS, the family was defined as:

(a) a married or opposite sex cohabiting couple on their own, or
(b) a married or opposite sex cohabiting couple/lone parent and their never-married children, providing these children have no children of their own (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, p.237).

In contrast, the LFS defines the ‘family unit’ as one which also includes single-person units (Office for National Statistics, 1999a). This disparity, therefore, has implications for the comparison of data on families across surveys. According to both of these definitions, however, a family that spans more than two generations is not included in statistical measures, unless grandparents can be identified as the guardians of grandchildren. Furthermore, the GHS and LFS define dependent children as either under the age of 16, or 16–18 and in full-time education and include biological, adoptive and step-children but not foster children. An employed cohabiting couple with foster children or an employed cohabiting couple with a 17 year-old working child are two examples that would not be recorded as a dual-earner ‘family’ with dependent children according to statistical definitions.

Heterosexual unmarried cohabitees who consider themselves as living together as a couple are also considered to be a family by the GHS and LFS. According to the GHS, same-sex cohabiting couples are not considered to be ‘families’, but have been recorded as cohabiting couples since 1996, whereas previously they would have been regarded as single people living in the same household. Comparing cohabitation statistics over time is, therefore, problematic. Furthermore, cultural attitudes towards cohabiting couples have shifted since the GHS began collecting data on cohabitation in 1979, and it is possible that, in a contemporary climate, couples are more likely to declare their de facto marital status. This supposition is mediated, however, by the impact, perceived or real, that the declaration may have on tax and social security status (Hantrais an Letablier, 1996).
Gaining accurate statistics on the extent of non-married heterosexual dual-earner cohabitation, a category of interest for this study, is, therefore, especially problematic.

A distinction also needs to be made between data applying to households and those concerned with families. The GHS definition of a household between 1971–80 was:

- a group of people who all live regularly at the [same] address . . . and who are all catered for, for at least one meal a day, by the same person.

In 1981 the definition changed to one that made the GHS results comparable with those from the Census and the LFS. Under the new definition a household is:

- a single person or a group of people who have the address as their only or main residence and who either share one meal a day or share the living accommodation (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, p.237).

Again, these differences in definition make comparisons over time problematic, especially when comparing household size. A notable difference between households and families is that household members do not have to be direct kin to be recorded as being within the household unit. Families from a statistical perspective are, therefore, a sub-unit of households, although it is households that are the main unit of measurement in large-scale data sets such as the GHS, LFS and Census. This problematises the extent to which dual-earner ‘families’ can be identified from statistical data.

Employment rates (the proportion of the population over the minimum school-leaving age and below retirement age who are in paid employment) and economic activity rates (the proportion of the population over the minimum school-leaving age either in paid employment or actively seeking it) can be used to establish the profile of the labour force (Office for National Statistics, 1999c). The LFS measures parental employment in couple families and includes a breakdown of part-time/full-time and average hours for each person. Cohabiting couples were, however, not included in calculations until 1989, again making comparisons over time difficult (Harrop and Moss, 1995). Employment and economic activity rates may also conceal the actual situation of many mothers, who may work outside the formal economy (for example in unregistered childminding) or be excluded from registering as unemployed due to restrictive eligibility criteria (European Commission, 1998, p.31).

To summarise, the main problems and limitations of using statistical data relate to changing conventions for the collection of data and criteria categorisation, as exemplified
by the changing approach to cohabiting couples. Comparisons over time and between surveys must be treated with caution. Secondly, social statistics are drawn up in response to a specific demand and are dependent on political priorities (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996). The regular alteration of unemployment eligibility criteria, for example, reflects differing political priorities and motivations. Definitions and criteria also vary cross-nationally, and so comparisons at the EU level, for example, present difficulties. Although Eurostat (the main body for European statistical data) has paid considerable attention to issues of comparability (Walby, 1994). Eurostat has, for example, laid down criteria for data collection so that the results can be harmonised across member states. Attempts to standardise data collection methods have been mediated by national political priorities and ideologies, the different structures and conventions of organisations responsible for data collection and the reluctance of some governments to accept decisions taken at supranational level (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996, p.5). In addition, definitions of concepts such as households and families differ between countries, and within countries over time.

**Couple-headed households**

Evaluation of the situation of couple-headed households must be considered in the light of the limitations of the statistical approach. This perspective reveals, however, that, even where measuring instruments have changed, couple-headed households have undergone many compositional changes over the last half of the twentieth century. Firstly, the rate of marriage has been declining steadily since the early 1970s, and the rate of divorce has been rising. Figure 1.1 demonstrates this trend.

The rate of divorce per 1,000 of the married population in the UK has exceeded the rate of marriage per 1,000 of the population since 1991 and has risen to the second highest rate in the world behind the USA. In addition, the average duration of marriage is shorter than in the past. For example, for couples married between 1965–69, 14 per cent of men and 15 per cent of women were separated from their partner within 10 years; for those who married between 1980–84, 24 per cent of men\(^1\) and 23 per cent of women were

\(^1\) This figure was calculated using a life table technique whereby account was taken of those who had been widowed
separated within 10 years of marriage (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, table 12.9, p.205). The average age of men and women at first marriage in England and Wales has also increased since the early 1970s (Figure 1.2). Between 1971 and 1996, the average age at marriage increased for both men and women by around four years.

Despite these changes, a large proportion of the population do marry at some point in their lives. In 1996, around 76 per cent of women aged 16 and over, and 68 per cent of men aged 16 and over were either married or had been at some stage (Office for National Statistics, 1999b, table 1.1, pp.1–2). In the same year, among those aged 60 and over, less than 7 per cent of women and 9 per cent of men had never married (Office for National Statistics, 1999b, table 1.2, pp.3–4).

Cohabitation in a consensual union has become increasingly common among couples in the UK. Table 1.1 shows that, as the proportion of married women has declined, the proportion of women in consensual unions has increased. Between 1979 and 1996, the percentage of women in cohabiting relationships increased almost four-fold from 3 to 11 per cent. Over a quarter of non-married women between 18 and 49 were in cohabiting relationships in 1996. Furthermore, it is projected that the number of cohabiting couples will double over the next 25 years (Office for National Statistics, 1999c).
Figure 1.2 Mean age of men and women at first marriage, England and Wales, 1971–96

Unmarried cohabitation statistics also show that it is among the younger cohorts that cohabitation is most likely. In 1996, around a third of all non-married men and women between 20–29 were cohabiting (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, table 12.3, p.203). To extrapolate, the later average age of first marriage may reflect a tendency for young couples to live together before marriage, although increased levels of cohabitation among the population as a whole indicate that consensual unions are being chosen as an alternative to marriage by a significant number of couples.

Of the non-married population, it is divorced men and women who constitute the largest cohabiting group. In 1995–96, 36 per cent of all non-married men and 27 per cent of all non-married women who were cohabiting were divorced from a previous marriage (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, table 12.4, p.203). A significant proportion of divorcees also choose to remarry. Among those spouses who separated between 1967 and
Table 1.1 Legal marital status of women and percentage of women aged 18–49 cohabiting 1979–96, Great Britain²

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<td>74</td>
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1984, between 51 and 70 per cent of women, and between 64 and 74 per cent of men remarried within 10 years of the end of their first marriage³ (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, tables 12.11 and 12.12, pp.206–7). The high likelihood of re-partnership has led to the emergence of reconstituted families and step-families as a significant family form in the UK. In 1996, 8 per cent of families with dependent children where the head of the family was aged under 60 contained one or more step-children (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, table 2.9, p.18).

The trends outlined above indicate that interpersonal relationships between heterosexual couples have become increasingly diverse and that dual-earner families may be headed by couples who are either married, remarried or unmarried. Among those that are unmarried, couples may be never-married, separated, divorced or widowed. Dual-earner couples may also have children of their own, step-children, children from previous relationships or be childless. In Britain, the average number of children per family decreased from 2.0 in 1971 to 1.8 in 1981, and then remained stable into the 1990s (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, table 2.5, p.16). The decline in the number of children per family in the same period has contributed to a general decrease in household size. Other contributory factors to the decline in household size include an increase in one-person households, a decrease in households consisting of couples with dependent children and an increase in the proportion of lone-parent households. The growth in

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² Men and women describing themselves as 'separated' were, strictly speaking, legally married. However, because separated people can cohabit they have been included in the 'non-married' category.
single-occupancy households is largely due an increase in old and elderly people living alone. Figure 1.3 shows changes in household types.

Particularly marked is the decrease in the proportion of households containing married/cohabiting couples with dependent children and the concomitant increase in the proportion of households containing married/cohabiting couples with no children. In addition, the growth in single-person households has reduced the pool from which dual-earner families with dependent children can be drawn. Despite this, households containing a married/cohabiting couple and dependent children still represented the most common living arrangement in Britain in 1996. To establish the extent of the dual-earner family form, the employment status of couples with dependent children needs to be identified.

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1 Figures refer to men and women aged 16-59 who were under 35 years old when their first marriage ended in separation.
Couples and employment

Individual employment patterns have changed substantially since the 1970s, especially among women and mothers. In the UK, the increase in economic activity of women and mothers has been well documented. At the same time, the rate of unemployment among men has increased, being disproportionately affected by the decline in 'heavy' industry and recession. Whilst employment and activity rates are relatively easy to ascertain at the individual level, statistical data on how these individual rates translate into aggregate figures at the couple or family level are more difficult to obtain and extract.

In 1999 The Labour Force Survey produced a series of data sets that analyse economic activity at the family and household level. Data are available for the spring of 1990–94, and the spring and autumn of 1995–98, although similar data can be extracted through a process of manipulation of earlier LFS results. Data relevant to this study are derived from calculations for 'working age households', which are defined as households that include 'at least one person of working age, i.e. a woman aged between 16 and 59 or a man aged between 16 and 64' (Office for National Statistics, 1999a). Information on working age households gives an estimate of the working activity of couples, but because the relationships between working adults in the same household are not fully explicated (for example, whether the adults in the household are spouses, partners or adult children), a clear and accurate picture of the family and employment status of households is not attainable.

Figure 1.4 shows that in 53 per cent of households, all members of working age were in employment in 1998. Between 1990 and 1998, the proportion of working age households with employed and inactive members declined, as did those households with employed and unemployed members. This may reflect the increased rates of economic activity among women who, increasingly, maintain participation in the labour market after marriage and reduce time spent out of the labour force after childbirth. The result of these trends has been a growth in the proportion of households that are dual-earner. Figure 1.4 also shows an increase in the proportion of inactive households among households of working age. This trend is confirmed by statistics which show an increase in the proportion of workless, or 'work poor' households.
Between the spring of 1990 and 1998, the proportion of working age, workless households increased by almost a third, from 9.4 per cent to 12.1 per cent, after peaking at 13.7 per cent in spring 1995 (Office for National Statistics, 1999a, table 3, p.34). These data suggest that during the 1990s there was a widening gap between ‘work-rich’ and ‘work-poor’ households in the UK.

The largest proportion of workless or work-poor households are from lone-parent households, whereas the largest proportion of work-rich households are headed by single persons and couples. In the springs of 1997 and 1998, approximately 54 per cent of households containing a lone parent with dependent children (with no other family units in the household) were workless (Office for National Statistics, 1998a, table 8, p.431; Office for National Statistics, 1999a, table 7, p.38). In contrast, work-rich households contained households with one person and couple-headed households, with or without dependent children (see Figure 1.5). Around 60 per cent of all working-age, couple households living as an independent family unit were in employment in the
Figure 1.5 Economic activity of working-age households by type of household, United Kingdom, 1997–98


Table 1.2 Combined employment status of mothers and fathers, United Kingdom, 1981–89

<table>
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<tr>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Both employed</td>
<td>44.4</td>
<td>44.8</td>
<td>49.1</td>
<td>57.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Father only employed</td>
<td>45.5</td>
<td>41.8</td>
<td>36.8</td>
<td>32.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neither employed</td>
<td>7.1</td>
<td>10.1</td>
<td>10.9</td>
<td>7.6</td>
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spring of 1997 and 1998. The presence of dependent children marginally decreased the likelihood of both couple members being in paid employment.

The dominance of the dual-earner model among couple-headed households is one which has emerged over time (see Table 1.2). Investigating parental employment patterns using the LFS, Anne Harrop and Peter Moss (1995) found that in 1981, 44.4 per cent of

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4 Harrop and Moss (1995) used statistical modelling techniques to manipulate data from the LFS. Logistic regression models were used for the binary response variables and log linear models were used for the categorical response variables.
two-parent families were headed by mothers and fathers who were both employed; by 1989, this figure had increased by around 29 per cent to 57.1 per cent. The growth in the dual-earner model has been largely accommodated by a decline in the single, male-earner model. The proportion of two-parent families with only the father in paid employment fell from 45.5 per cent in 1981 to 32.4 per cent in 1989. The data showing an increase in the incidence of worklessness in households in the 1990s in the UK is also reflected in the data from the mid-1980s, although there was a drop in levels of dual inactivity in couple families in the late 1980s. The LFS Household Dataset does not elaborate on the degree of involvement of couples in the labour market. This means that data on hours worked, full-time and part-time employment, and work histories measuring continuity of employment throughout the lifecourse are not available. Analysis at the individual level demonstrates that women, and mothers in particular, are involved in the labour market to a lesser extent than men and fathers.

Figure 1.6 shows that women of working age without dependent children are less active in the labour market than men of working age. Economic activity is especially affected, however, by women's transition to motherhood. Just over half of mothers with children aged 0–4 were economically active in 1997, compared with over three quarters among mothers with children aged 11–15. The high proportion of mothers with pre-school children who temporarily leave the labour market among mothers and then re-enter the workforce when their youngest child reaches school age, when represented graphically across the lifecourse, produces an ‘M-shaped’ profile of economic activity (Duncan, 1996). The ‘M-shape’ pattern of labour market involvement is, however, becoming less pronounced as more mothers remain economically active throughout the pre-school years of their children's lives than in the past (see Figure 1.6). Fathers with children aged 0–4 still display continuous economic activity; in 1984, 97 per cent were economically active; in 1994, 95 per cent were economically active (Brannen et al, 1997a, table 2a and 2b, pp.262–63).

The number of children in a family does not have such a significant impact on the labour market activity of mothers as the age of the youngest child. When the number of children per family is three or more, however, employment among mothers and, to a lesser extent, fathers, is negatively affected. Fathers are more likely to be unemployed
Figure 1.6 Economic activity rates by sex and age of youngest dependent child, 1984–97, Great Britain


if they have three or more children per family (Brannen et al, 1997a, table 2a, p.262), and mothers are less likely to be in paid employment. In 1996, for example, 45 per cent of women with three or more dependent children were in paid employment, compared with 65 per cent of those with one or two children (Office for National Statistics, 1998c, table 5.4, p.57). This trend is closely correlated with socio-economic status, as those families with three or more children tend to be over-represented in socio-economic groups III (manual), IV and V (Office for National Statistics, 1998d, table 11.1, pp.59–60).

Degree of involvement in the labour market can also be recorded by establishing whether individuals work full-time or part-time. Figure 1.7 shows that married women with dependent children are concentrated in part-time employment, particularly in the service sector, although full-time employment has increased over time: only 15 per cent of married women with dependent children were working full-time between 1977–79, compared with 24 per cent between 1994–96. In contrast, 82 per cent of fathers worked
full-time in 1994\(^5\), a figure which has stayed relatively stable since the 1970s (Brannen et al, 1997a, figure 1a, p.261). From this information, it can be deduced that the most common type of dual-earner family takes the form of one full-time working man and one part-time working woman.

Data from the National Child Development Study (n=5992) in 1991 revealed that over one in three of all couples contained a full-time working father and a part-time working mother. In contrast, less than one in five couples with dependent children were both in full-time paid employment (Ferri and Smith, 1996, figure 2, p.13). Analysis of social class shows that among full-time working couples with dependent children, the majority are in professional/managerial occupations and have high levels of educational attainment (Ferri and Smith, 1996). Data from 1995 revealed that among the 62 per cent of married couples with dependent children that were dual-earner, 22 per cent contained two full-time workers and the remaining 40 per cent were a male full-time/female part-time employment mix (Burges et al, 1997, table 1, p.3). These data confirm the notion that ‘one and a half’ couples are the most common dual earner group in the UK.

\(^5\) This figure is not directly comparable with data for married women with dependent children as it includes lone fathers.
Part-time hours, according to the LFS and GHS definition, means anything between one and 30 hours per week, whereas full-time hours may be upwards of 31 hours (Office for National Statistics, 1998a, p.236). To give a clearer indication of the level of involvement in the labour market, statistics on hours spent in paid work are, therefore, necessary. Ferri and Smith (1996, figure 4, p.18) showed that the mothers in the sample worked substantially shorter hours than fathers. Among mothers, 55 per cent worked 23 hours per week or less, whereas 57 per cent of fathers worked 50 hours or more per week. Furthermore, at an average of 47 hours per week in 1994 (4.3 hours per week longer than the EU average, and the highest in Europe), fathers work slightly longer hours than men without children (Brannen et al, 1997a). Single earner fathers were most likely to work long hours (50+) in the Ferri and Smith sample, and managerial and skilled workers were most likely to continue to work long hours, regardless of their wives’ employment status.

Data from various statistical sources demonstrate that the dual-earner family is the most common family form in the UK, but that, as a group, it is by no means homogenous. Families may be headed by a married couple or a cohabiting couple; partners may be never married, separated, divorced, widowed or remarried; couples may be childless, have children of their own, have step-children, or children from previous relationships. Information that breaks down dual-earner families according to these variables are, however, not available, thus presenting problems in determining what a representative sample would look like.

Statistical data are also hard to find on the composite economic activity status of dual-earner couples (for example, hours worked, the sector worked in and occupational position of the worker). The most common configuration among dual-earner couples with dependent children, however, is one full-time working father and a part-time working mother. A large number of dual-earner families contain two full-time workers; a pattern which is closely correlated to professional, managerial and skilled, non-manual social class.

This information on the growth of dual-earnership in the UK and the form and structure of families has the potential to inform government policy. Statistical data on the behaviour of families (birth rates, fertility rates, divorce rates) and about family forms (size, structure and organisation) are used by governments as an essential component of
the policy-making process (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996, p.7). In addition, the economic behaviour of households is an increasing concern of public policy in the UK. This is partly due to a strong emphasis on the links between workless households and child poverty (for example Department of Social Security, 1999b, 2000). The poor availability of adequate data, however, limits the extent to which the labour market status of families can be established. This could hinder the targeting and effectiveness of policy. Available data suggest, however, that there has been substantial growth in the number of dual-earner families in the socio-demographic profile of the UK since the 1970s and that their structures vary considerably. These basic observations present several challenges to the approach of government to family life.

1.3 Dual-earner families in politics and policy

The final area to be considered in this chapter is the contribution of family-related policy analysis to conceptualisations of the dual-earner family. The literatures on family-related policy in the UK highlights its two-fold contribution to 'social practice'. Firstly, policy impacts on families and individuals at a practical level through the provision of benefits and services, and secondly, policy content and discourse acts as an ideological agent that seeks to influence social practice towards 'preferred' models of family life and household labour market activity. In other words, policies do not only exert influence through their practical effects; in Kay's (2000, p.248) terms, they are also 'a powerful medium for delivering an ideological message about a nation's current consensus on its social institutions'.

The intention of this section is not to provide a comprehensive analysis of family-related policy. This is now a burgeoning field of specialist academic enquiry and a full evaluation of it is neither feasible, nor appropriate to the current research. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge the contextual importance of the political and policy environment to the lifestyles of dual-earner families. This section accordingly reviews the dominant conceptualisations of family life evident in politics and policy. It provides an overview of the development of family-related policy in the UK, illustrating the conceptions of 'the family' that underpin it. The section concludes by identifying the key
characteristics of family-related policy in the UK during the period of the current research, drawing out the implications for the couples under study in the research.

**Dual-earner families and public policy**

'The family' does not constitute a discrete area of policy in the UK (for example Lister, 1996, p.11). Up to the late 1990s, successive British governments approached 'the family' with ambivalence, often entering into discourse on the roles and responsibilities of the family whilst resisting any coherent policy response to family change. Where public policy intervened in family life, it was often in the form of financial assistance to low-income families who needed support in meeting their living costs. This type of intervention has been continued by the New Labour government of Tony Blair which was voted into office in 1997, although some subtle changes in attitudes towards family-related policy is detectable. The extent to which New Labour is willing to match its rhetoric on 'supporting families' (Home Office, 1998) with policy action is, however, questionable (Kay, 1999, p.35). It is also evident that New Labour's family-related policy strategies are clearly linked to the broad goal of 'tackling social exclusion' and poverty. Anti-poverty strategies have particularly promoted the value of gainful employment as the primary route out of poverty, and programmes such as the 'New Deal' have actively encouraged paid work among all family types, even among lone parents. As a consequence, the preferred model of 'the family' in post-1997 politics and policy is one of financial independence from the state — a policy which could potentially encourage the further growth of dual-earner families. Despite these recent changes, dual-earner families still represent a group that receives very little attention from government. This is partly due to the ambivalence in the attitude of governments toward family policy since the Second World War in general, but it also reflects wider institutionalised conceptions of what the family 'is', what it 'does', and the roles of its respective members.

Anette Borchorst (1990, p.161) used the concept of 'political motherhood' to describe 'how different countries shape mothering through their legislation'. This concept is useful as it demonstrates 'how legislation on marriage, benefits, children's rights, maternity/paternity leave, collective childcare and so on shapes how and under what conditions motherhood is carried out, and hence also how it might be combined with
other activities like paid employment’ (Duncan, 1996, p.81). It, therefore, indicates how
government conceptualises motherhood and, by implication, the family. Simon Duncan
(1996) argues that when definitions of political motherhood include paid work, this is
reflected in policies such as the provision of childcare. Denmark and Sweden are cited as
examples of nation states where paid employment is conceptually inclusive of
motherhood. According to Duncan, who was commenting before the advent of the New
Labour government, the UK excludes paid employment from its definitions of political
motherhood. Since 1997, the political emphasis on the personal and social value of
employment per se has largely included mothers, although this is contradicted by the
concern among political commentators about the caring role of women and the potential
problems maternal employment could present to the stability of families.

The role of women as mothers in political discourse has been influential since the
Second World War when welfare legislation became characterised by familism
(Borchorst, 1990, p.170). The post-war Beveridge Plan advocated the differentiation of
roles in the family, with women taking primary responsibility for the domestic sphere and
men being the main breadwinner. This was supported by different social security benefits
going to women and men, and married and unmarried women (Borchorst, 1990). The
‘married women’s option’, for example, allowed married women to pay lower social
insurance contributions and receive less in benefits (Lewis, 1993), whilst caring
responsibilities, which were assumed to be fulfilled by women, did not directly entitle
women to benefits. Rather, ‘carers’ were assumed to be women who were supported by
the breadwinner or ‘family’ wage (Roll, 1991). An example of the woman’s assumed
dependency on the breadwinner wage is the married woman’s pension which entitles
married women of pensionable age to claim 60 per cent of the standard rate basic pension
on the basis of her husband’s contributions (Roll, 1991).

If ‘political motherhood’ in the UK since the Second World War supported
homemaking and financial dependence on men, the ‘political family’ was based on the
homemaker–breadwinner family model. The ‘political family’ refers to the ways in which
legislation on ‘ownership rights, inheritance, taxation, benefits, dependency, sexuality and
so on’ (Duncan, 1996, p.85) shapes how and under what conditions family life is carried
out. The political climate in which family life in the UK was carried out defined the
family as primarily heterosexual, nuclear and single-earner, and the dominance of this ideal has remained resilient to the widespread family and employment changes outlined in the previous section. Dual-earner families since the Beveridgean settlement have been a peripheral concern of public policy and have been viewed as a family form reserved for those families able to reconcile the demands of dual-earning and domestic work themselves. Furthermore, dual-earning has been conceptualised as a ‘choice’ exercised within the family by women who are able to reconcile their responsibilities in the home with paid employment.

The emphasis on private decision-making and problem-solving reflects the rigid division between what government perceives to be public and private responsibility. The family is regarded in public policy as an area of private social life that should be free from legislative interference (Lister, 1996). Only in instances of family dysfunction (such as child abuse) and when minimum needs cannot be met (for example due to low income or unemployment) will the UK government intervene in family life. Childcare provides a good example of how inflexible definitions of what constitutes ‘public’ and ‘private’ have led to minimal public provision. Unlike many EU countries such as France and Sweden, the UK government has consistently considered the responsibility for small children to rest solely with parents, and most especially, mothers. ‘Caring’, unlike education, is perceived as falling within the realm of the family; whereas in other countries such as Denmark and Sweden collective responsibility for caring became part of the welfare state project in the 1960s and 1970s (Borchorst, 1990). The low levels of publicly subsidised childcare in the UK partly explains the high proportion of women in part-time, flexible work and the relatively low levels of female labour market participation among women with pre-school children (see Figure 1.6). The care principle in the UK is also extended to care for elderly, sick and disabled people within the family, as demonstrated by ‘community care’ legislation (Finch, 1989, 1990).

The influence of New Right political philosophy in the 1980s drew tighter divides between what was perceived as public and private responsibility. Birte Siim (1990, p.100), for example, cited the ‘new policies of privatisation, domestification and the revival of the private sector … as part of the general strategy to restructure the welfare state under the Conservative administration led by Margaret Thatcher’, as an attempt to
shift public responsibilities to the market and the family. This shift in emphasis from the public to the private and the market has been, to some extent, continued by the current Labour administration, albeit in a different party-political ideological context (from New Right individualism to New Labour’s ‘communitarianism’). The consultation document, *Supporting Families* (Home Office, 1998), clearly identifies the role of employers in developing and supporting ‘family-friendly’ working policies, whilst the White Paper, *A New Contract for Welfare: children’s rights and parent’s responsibilities* (Department of Social Security, 1999a), expresses parents’ ‘clear responsibility to protect and provide for children’ (Department of Social Security, 1999a, p.1). Family-related policy in the UK in the late 1990s was, therefore, characterised by some degree of ambivalence: whereas a discourse of ‘family policy’ is emerging from central government, actual intervention is limited and the focus remains on private responsibility facilitated by the market.

This ambivalence is also reflected in political rhetoric surrounding ‘the family’ in the UK, especially since the late 1980s. Concern has been especially centred on the ‘breakdown of the family’, or the changes in family life that have been viewed as bringing about social disorder (Lister, 1996; Silva and Smart, 1999). Rhetoric has tended to focus on an idealised conception of the family as standing ‘outside and above economic restructuring, market forces and financial, legal, technological and political change, as a pillar of supposed stability’ (Silva and Smart, 1999, pp.2–3). Concern for ‘the family in crisis’ in the early 1990s became a particularly politically salient topic for right-wing think tanks such as the IEA Health and Welfare Unit (see, for example, Morgan, 1995) which idealised the male breadwinner family over other family forms. The Conservative administration of John Major also sought to politicise family life, especially in the ‘Back to Basics’ campaign which elevated the nuclear family model and vilified lone parenthood (Lister, 1996). Similar political discursive themes have characterised New Labour’s debates on family-related issues, although open criticism of alternative family forms and, in particular, lone parenthood is significantly less common than among the leadership of the previous Conservative administration (Barlow and Duncan, 2000, p.28). This discursive continuity was, however, demonstrated by the first New Labour Home Secretary, Jack Straw, at the launch of the Family and Child Protection Group’s report ‘Family Matters’:
In our Manifesto we committed ourselves to strengthening family life. We promised to 'uphold family life as the most secure means of bringing up our children. Families are the core of our society. They should teach right from wrong. They should be the first defence against anti-social behaviour. The breakdown of family life damaged the fabric of our society'. Although the case for change is strong, Governments must tread carefully in the area of family policy. We must respect the fact that, while the care of children is a public responsibility, families are private institutions (Home Secretary's speech, 23 July, 1998).

This comment is a strong reflection of the present government’s conception of the role of the family in society and the extent to which policy should or should not intervene in family life. It emphasises private responsibility and brings into question the extent to which there are any true differences in approach between the current administration and their Conservative predecessors on matters pertaining to 'the family' and family policy.

To conclude, the relationship between dual-earner families and public policy must be viewed in terms of how 'the family' is conceptualised in public policy and especially how the role of women is approached. The above discussion rarely addresses dual-earner families *per se* because of a conspicuous lack of discourse and policy making surrounding that family type in the UK. Rhetoric and policy-making have typically addressed the 'traditional' nuclear family in a homemaker–breadwinner form, or 'problem' families that have been viewed as seriously challenging the social fabric (such as lone-parent families). Dual-earner families, therefore, represent a marginalized group in an already underdeveloped range of public policies known as 'family policy'.

**Family-related policies and dual-earner families**

Although the UK has not developed an explicit 'family policy', a range of current social and economic policies affect the well-being of dual-earner families. Policies that impact on dual-earner families range from fiscal policies to social security policies to 'reconciliation' policies. The main fiscal and social security measures that impact on dual-earner families are identified in Table 1.3.

Key observations regarding the form and nature of the policies outlined in Table 1.3 relate to the extent to which current Labour initiatives reflect their ideological standpoint and their associated policy objectives. The Working Families' Tax Credit (WFTC), for example, actively promotes employment among parents in lone and couple parent
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<tr>
<th>Policy measure</th>
<th>Eligibility criteria</th>
<th>Details</th>
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<tr>
<td>Children’s Tax Credit (CTC)</td>
<td>1 or 2 parent families with children aged under 16 years</td>
<td>Replaced the Married Couples’ Tax Allowance in April 2001. CTC given as Income Tax relief of up to £442 in the tax year 2001/2. CTC given per family unit, not per child. Higher tax band payers receive reduced credit. If the claimant has an annual income over £41,000, CTC is not given.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child Benefit</td>
<td>Primary carers of dependent children</td>
<td>Weekly amounts: £15.50 for the eldest child, £10 for each other child who qualifies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Working Families’ Tax Credit (WFTC)</td>
<td>1 or 2 parent low-income families with dependent children. Must have savings of £8,000. Must work on average 16 hours per week or more.</td>
<td>Savings of &gt;£3,000 affect how much WFTC received. WFTC increased if one partner works &gt;30 hours per week. Voluntary work does not count towards the 16 hours. WFTC replaced Family Credit in April 2000. For employees, payment is made in the pay packet. WFTC is reduced for those earning a net weekly income of over £92.90. WFTC includes a Childcare Tax Credit which is worth up to 70% of eligible childcare costs. Maximum childcare credit amounts to £135 per week for one child and £200 for two or more children. Families earning up to around £30,000 per year can get WFTC contributions.</td>
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families. Eligibility criteria that stipulate minimum levels of employment reflect two key aims of the social security policies of the New Labour administration: to create incentives to paid employment and to reduce family poverty and thereby strengthen ‘the family’ (Hirsch, 1998). Anne Barlow and Simon Duncan (2000) have argued that the political philosophy of New Labour emphasises the central importance of paid employment and family stability to social morality. The WFTC is an example of New Labour’s combination of the ideas that paid work is a moral duty and that family stability and self-sufficiency should be encouraged in public policies. In addition, initiatives such as the WFTC has emerged in the context of debate on the restructuring of the welfare state, and can be viewed as a mechanism to produce long-term independence of state support (Kay, 1999, p.36). The promotion of paid work as a moral and familial obligation has been publicly criticised by academics, media and non-governmental interest groups, who point to a need to recognise the importance of different types of work, especially caring work in
the home, as well as paid work (Barlow and Duncan, 2000; Gingerbread, 2000). There is an apparent tension in the WFTC and other ‘welfare to work’ policies for low-income couple families between the moral obligation to engage in paid work and to provide care for dependent children. Embedded in the WFTC for low-income families is an implicit expectation that one partner, presumably the female partner, will remain partially detached from the labour market to provide childcare. As a consequence, the ‘one and a half’ model of dual-earnership is being facilitated in policy. Lone-parent families are, however, faced with the apparently irreconcilable challenge of fulfilling a moral obligation to work and to provide care for their children. This paradox in New Labour’s approach has led commentators to conclude that two-parent married households are also promoted in policy, ‘for it is this family form that best facilitates the combination of parenting and paid work’ (Barlow and Duncan, 2000, p.28). These analyses of policy add an extra dimension to the discussion in of the ‘political family’ presented in the preceding section. Recent family-related social security policy changes are clearly more interventionist, and public policy may well be moving towards a model of the ‘one and a half’ earner couple as the ‘ideal’ family form.

Other policies that impact on the lives of dual-earner families have no direct financial implications. Reconciliation policies have emerged on the political agenda in the 1990s in the UK and are designed to enable couples to balance the practical demands of home and employment. Policies that specifically target working parents are still in their infancy and, as mentioned previously, are heavily reliant on the cooperation of the private sector and are viewed as the primary responsibility of families themselves. State supported childcare is an area of policy that has been neglected in the UK, although a few limited moves have been made to improve childcare provision. The ‘National Childcare Strategy’ (Home Office, 1998) aimed to support parents and offer more equality to mothers by providing ‘good quality, affordable childcare for children aged 0 to 14 in every neighbourhood, including both formal childcare and support for informal arrangements’ (Department for Education and Employment, 1998, §1.26). By investing in childcare places, improving information on local services, raising the quality of care and by making childcare more affordable, the government believes childcare for the children of working parents can be improved. These initiatives, however, reinforce the ideological and policy position of the
government described above. Embedded in these childcare policy initiatives is the clear intention of government to encourage self-sufficiency and independence of the welfare state among families. To claim Childcare Tax Credit, for example, parents must receive WFTC and therefore be in paid employment.

European legislation has also made an impression on UK policy, although there is considerable scope within Directives for limiting their impact. EU legislation in the mid to late 1990s particularly focused on the reconciliation between family life and employment and greater sharing in the home (Hantrais, 1999). This has been reflected in the national policy initiatives of the Labour administration who have stated their intention to help parents ‘balance work and home’ (Home Office, 1998, pp.24-29). The 1999 Employment Relations Act contained clauses on ‘leave for family and domestic reasons’, bringing the UK into line with the European Council Directive 96/34/EC on parental leave and Directive 92/85EEC on maternity leave.

The legislation on parental leave, however, provides a good example of how flexible European Directives have allowed the UK government to meet the requirements set out by European law whilst ensuring minimal impact on employers and the labour market. The Directive made no reference to payment during the leave period and left it to member states to decide under what conditions leave should be granted (Hantrais, 1999, p.18). Presented with this option the UK government chose to legislate for unpaid leave, thus limiting the impact of the Directive on the labour market and employers. It is likely, therefore, that only those parents who can ‘afford’ the loss of earnings will claim leave. This brings into question the extent to which government is committed to reconciliation policies and is symptomatic of its continued reluctance to bring the family into public policy.

European legislation has also sought to protect the rights of workers and has addressed reconciliation and flexibility issues in legislation in the late 1990s. Although not directly concerned with the reconciliation of work and home, Council Directive 93/104/EC on working time sought to protect workers’ rights by stipulating that a maximum limit of 48 hours per week should be spent at work in the interest of health and safety. It also has the potential to reduce the long hours worked by many full-time employed men in the UK, although Article 18 of the Directive enables employees to opt-out of this regulation and
work over 48 hours per week if they choose to do so. This is another example of flexibility within European legislation that ultimately limits its impact. It is possible that such flexibility has encouraged the Labour administration to adopt the Directive. Like their Conservative predecessors, New Labour have been cautious not to impose burdens on industry.

Other European Directives such as Council Directive 97/81/EC on part-time work which aims to protect part-time workers, the majority of whom are women, have been instrumental in the subtle shift in UK public policy towards a model of family life which includes dual parental employment. The ways in which these policy initiatives impact on individual or familial behaviour is, however, a complex issue, and beyond the remit of this thesis. Existing evidence suggests that policy has partial and differential impacts on families and individuals. Low-income families are, for example, more heavily influenced by changes in social assistance, whereas high-income families are less affected by changes in welfare policy and depend more heavily on commercial provisions such as childcare. It is not, however, the purpose of the current study to evaluate the impact of policy on behaviour, but to unravel the lifestyles of dual-earner families in the context in which everyday life is carried out. The above discussion has outlined some of the ideological and practical policy and political contexts in which dual-earner families experience everyday life. It has demonstrated how ideologies of the family are embedded in politics and policy, and how these been remarkably resilient to recent changes in the family and employment behaviours of men and women in families. The female-carer/male-breadwinner model of family life has remained particularly influential over time and between administrations. There has, however, been some shifts in political and policy emphasis relating to the family since 1997 and this has been largely motivated by anti-poverty strategies that have focussed on the desirability of familial financial independence and that has arisen as a consequence of binding European Directives.

The issues raised in this chapter are revisited in the fieldwork phase of the thesis particularly in relation to the relatively recent concern in politics and policy for ‘the reconciliation of work and home’ viewed from a leisure perspective. Existing discourses on the ‘work–life’ balance in politics and policy rarely include explicit reference to working parents’ leisure needs. By exploring the work, family and leisure mix in the lives
of dual-earner families, the extent to which leisure plays a role in lifestyles can be examined and inform the 'work–life' debate. Furthermore, an examination of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families across the lifecourse presents an opportunity to consider the cumulative affect of family-related policy change on lifestyle over time. The extent to which lifestyle conforms or works counter to political and policy ideologies of the family and employment can, therefore, be examined in the context of individual life histories. The object of this thesis, therefore, is not to try and measure the effects of policy on behaviour, but to examine the relationships between work, family and leisure in the context of political and policy environments.

1.4 The context of dual-earner family life in the UK

This chapter has explored the historical, socio-demographic, political and policy context of dual-earner families in the UK. The examination of the social and economic historical literatures revealed that dual- and/or multi-earning or working has assumed several forms throughout agrarian, proto-industrial and industrial society. Dual-earner families are, therefore, by no means exclusive to the industrial capitalist era of the late twentieth century, although the forms they have taken have varied across time and space (for example between urban and rural populations and between social classes). The statistical data presented in the second part of the chapter complemented historical analyses of family–employment configurations by showing how dual-earner families have emerged and grown in importance in the UK’s socio-demographic profile since the 1970s. Statistical data revealed that the dual-earner family represented the living arrangements of an increasing number of the UK population over the past two decades and that around 25 per cent of the population lived in a dual-earner family in 1998. Data from large-scale national surveys also provides information on the characteristics of dual-earner families in the UK.

The fieldwork carried out for the thesis takes account of the variable structural characteristics of dual-earner families in sample selection and in the presentation of results. As a qualitative project, the thesis makes no attempt to be representative of dual-earner families as a whole. The aim was to explore some of the varieties of dual-earner structure by including dual full-time employed partners in the sample as well as the more
common ‘full-time/part-time mix’. Some variety of family structure was also sought in terms of the number and ages of children, and life history analysis was used to capture the extent to which partners had lived in a variety of family structures. Social class was also explored in terms of levels of education and type of employment. The attempt to represent the social class variable was, however, largely unsuccessful for reasons explained in Chapter 4. The incidence of ‘second jobs’ or multiple employment is also examined as a potential source of dual-earner family variation. Finally, the policy and political environment outlined in the third part of the chapter indicated that family-related policies and politics affects the daily context in which dual-earner families live their lives. The fieldwork of the thesis, therefore examines the relationships between the labour market behaviours and domestic arrangements of couples in the context of the UK government’s largely non-interventionist approach to family life and its rhetorical emphasis on the roles and responsibilities of parents. The empirical work also explores the extent to which leisure can be included in contemporary debates about the ‘work–life’ balance in its examination of the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families.
Chapter 2 Theorising dual-earner families

Research on dual-earner families in the social sciences was initiated in the UK by the pioneering work of the social anthropologists Rhona and Robert Rapoport (1969, 1971, 1976). Their analysis of the dual-career family stimulated interest in the investigation of the interface between two areas of social inquiry that had been traditionally studied in isolation: that of work and family life (Kanter, 1977). Sociological, anthropological, psychological and micro-economic approaches have been adopted in studies of the relationship between work and family life, although, most research on dual-earner families has been conducted in North America. The following review considers the contribution these approaches have made to the theoretical debates on dual-earner families in the social sciences, paying particular attention to the British literature. Where reference is made to North American research, the qualification must be made that it has been carried out in a different social, cultural, political, economic, policy and academic environment which limits its generalisability to the particular context under consideration here (Lewis, 1992; Scott and Duncombe, 1992).

The first section of the chapter focuses on the definitions of dual-earner families used in academic debate. Secondly, the origins of dual-earner families in social theory are examined. Particular attention is given to theories of 'the family' developed by structural-functionalism and the more critical accounts offered by Marxist philosophies. In addition, theories of the family-employment relationship that have emerged in the social sciences in the 1970s, particularly owing to the influence of 'second-wave' feminism, are reviewed and evaluated. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the theoretical approaches described have been adapted to the study of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families in the UK.

2.1 Definitions and terminology

Dual-earner families represent a diverse group that share the single defining characteristic of being headed by two paid workers. Statistical definitions of dual-earner families and households were unpicked in Chapter 1. It was noted that families were considered a sub-category of households for statistical purposes and that there were several definitional
anomalies between surveys and within data sets over time that made statistical comparisons problematic. The following analysis uncovers the definitional accounts of different family-employment configurations offered by social scientists. Definitions of families, ‘work’, earning and careers explored from a social scientific perspective offer a more critical account of the nature of family forms than the statistical perspective which focuses on the precise components of families in preparation for their statistical measurement. In what follows, the broad category ‘dual-earner families’ has been broken down to accommodate some of the diversity it encapsulates. Terms used to deconstruct the collective ‘dual-earner family’ include ‘dual-worker’, ‘dual-earner’ and ‘dual-career’ families.

Rapoport and Rapoport (1969, 1971) defined the ‘dual-worker’ family form as one in which both members of a couple-headed family were involved in any kind of gainful employment. ‘Dual-career’ families were identified as a ‘special type’ of the dual-worker family in which both partners in an employed couple were psychologically committed to a job which had developmental prospects (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1971, p.18). This basic dichotomy, however, has been subject to criticism and change over time.

The American psychologist Joan Aldous (1982) commented that defining families with employed couples as dual workers implicitly excluded the productive work of women in families that was not rewarded by monetary pay. This conforms to a feminist conception of work which stresses the importance of women’s (unpaid) productive activity within the domestic sphere (Oakley, 1985) and, to some extent, a Marxist conception of women’s (re)productive role within the family and the capitalist economy (Zaretsky, 1976; Walby, 1986). Although the Rapoports (1982) welcomed this definitional change, in a counter-argument they asserted that the new term contained its own difficulties. They suggested that an emergent emphasis on earning in ‘an era of high unemployment, early retirement, and the need to think flexibly of the patterning of work in one’s life’ (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1982, p.232) could exclude those outside the formal economy. Nevertheless, they conceded that the variety of family types under the umbrella ‘dual-worker’ had been narrowed as a consequence of the introduction of the term ‘dual-earner’, enabling more accurate differentiation between family forms.
Dual-career families have been the most commonly studied family form within the social sciences. The early definition of careers suggested by the Rapoorts (1969, p.3) as ‘jobs which are highly salient personally, have a developmental sequence and require a high degree of commitment’, remained influential in the 1990s (for example, Gregson and Lowe, 1993; Hammer et al, 1997). Few adaptations have been made to this definition in studies of dual-career families, although a number of criticisms have been made of its conceptual and operational usability and validity. Firstly, establishing what constitutes subjective constructs such as commitment, career-orientation, drive and ambition is problematic, although psychologists frequently use such concepts. Rakha Karambayya and Anne Reilly (1992) identify the problem of the researcher making judgements about jobs as careers based on assumptions of psychological attachment to work and upward mobility. Furthermore, in a labour market characterised by horizontal mobility, competitiveness and fragmented career structures, a ‘continuous developmental’ pattern may be difficult to ascertain. There is also the implicit assumption that, for a job to have a career dimension, it must conform to a pattern of continuous labour market involvement, full-time engagement and be of a managerial or professional status. Studies of dual-career families tend to select samples on the basis of these assumptions (for example, Higgins and Duxbury, 1992; Gregson and Lowe, 1993, 1994) rather than on the basis of personal definitions of career-orientation and activity. These limitations indicate that definitions of dual-career families are more problematic than those of dual-earner families as it requires a series of subjective judgements to be made about the nature and degree of involvement in paid work.

This thesis adopts a relatively broad term to describe the families in the study, namely, dual-earner families. This terminology, therefore, encapsulates all couples with two paid workers, regardless of their hours of work, job status or career orientation. The experiences of a variety of dual-earner families can, therefore, be examined and the need to make subjective judgements about the form and nature of paid work, such as the extent to which it includes a ‘career’ dimension, is avoided. It is the purpose of the thesis to explore the meanings the participants themselves attach to their employment in the context of their family and leisure lives, rather than impose definitions on individuals and
exclude couples that do not fit a prescribed dual-employment structure. It is partly through this ‘open’ definitional approach that the greatest insights in to the lifestyles of dual-earner families can be gained.

2.2 Theoretical frameworks

Since the work of some of the 'founding fathers' of sociology, such as Durkheim, Engels, Le Play and Weber, social theory has conceptualised and re-conceptualised individual behaviour in the context of the structural and institutional surroundings of work and the family. Distinct theoretical disciplines such as the Sociology of Work and the Sociology of the Family, however, did not develop significantly in Western Europe and the US until the 1950s and 1960s. Reappraisal of the assumed division of work and family life, and its concomitant theorisation, has taken place in relatively recent years, owing in part to the influence of second-wave feminism and its emphasis on the interaction of work and family domains in women’s everyday lives. Theories of dual-earner families have been developed in the context of this new interest in the family-employment relationship, and have emanated from a variety of disciplinary and theoretical perspectives. This section outlines key changes in the development of social theory on the family, employment and the family-employment relationship and examines how this has impacted upon theorisations of the dual-earner family. The contributing perspectives and theories reviewed in this section include structural-functionalism, Marxism, micro-economics, (social) psychology and feminism.

The origins of dual-earner families in social theory

Dual-earner families have been on the periphery of the development of social theory on the family, work and employment. Its origins in theory, however, lie in mainstream sociological traditions of the 1950s and 1960s. Influential perspectives, most particularly within the Sociology of the Family evolved from the early work of structural-functionalists and Marxists (see Table 2.1 for a summary of theoretical perspectives on dual-earner families).
Structural-functionalism

Structural-functionalist theories of the family developed most influentially through the seminal works of George Peter Murdock (1949) and Talcott Parsons and R.F. Bales (1956). Murdock provided a definitive account of the form and structure of families and the nature of family life in 250 countries. In a widely used (and criticised) definition of 'the family', Murdock (1949, p.1) states that four functions are common to all; common residence, economic cooperation, reproduction and sexual exclusivity between partners. He goes on to assert that the family also takes a particular form: 'The nuclear family is a universal social grouping. Either as the sole prevailing form of the family or as the basic unit from which more complex familial forms are compounded, it exists as a distinct and strongly functional group in every known society' (Murdock, 1949, p.2). 'The family' is, therefore, referred to as primarily nuclear, thus discounting variation and plurality.

Likewise, American structural-functionalists Parsons and Bales (1956, p.9) suggest that there are 'root functions' of the family that are embodied in the form of the nuclear family. According to Parsons and Bales (1956, p.16) however, these root functions constitute 'the primary socialization of children ... and the stabilization of the adult personalities of the population of the society'. Furthermore, they argue that differentiation of sex roles within the family is an essential component, not just of family structure, but in the complex of the family. According to structural-functionalism, sex role differentiation within the family fulfils the requisite of specialization of private roles within an industrial capitalist society, similar to that of role specialization in the public and employment spheres. The division of tasks and roles between partners, with the man as the primary breadwinner and the woman as homemaker, is not only functional for the social system, but corresponds with the 'natural' skills of men and women by virtue of their biological differences. Murdock (1949), for example, states:

Man, with his superior strength can better undertake more strenuous tasks ... Not handicapped as a woman, by the physiological burdens of pregnancy and nursing, he can range further afield to hunt, to fish, to herd and to trade. Woman is at no disadvantage, however, in lighter tasks which can be performed in or near the home ... The advantage inherent in a division of labour by sex presumably account for its universality. (Murdock, 1949, p.7)
### Table 2.1 Summary of theoretical approaches to dual-earner families in the social sciences

<table>
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<tr>
<th>APPROACH</th>
<th>MAIN PROONENTS/KEY ACTORS</th>
<th>KEY THEORIES</th>
<th>KEY CONCEPTS</th>
<th>KEY TERMS</th>
<th>CRITICISMS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Structural-functionalism</td>
<td>George Peter Murdock (1949) Talcott Parsons and R.F. Bales (1956)</td>
<td>Role theory</td>
<td>Universality</td>
<td>Role differentiation Role specialisation Instrumental Expressive</td>
<td>Social evolutionism Biological determinism</td>
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Parsons and Bales furthered this argument by asserting that role differentiation between men and women could be viewed along an 'instrumental-expressive axis' (Slater, 1974, p.259). The exemption of men from the biological process of child-bearing was seen to prevent them from developing adequate psycho-emotional bonds with their children and so directed them away from the 'expressive' role associated with motherhood, and towards the 'instrumental' role of provider associated with fatherhood. Both of these roles were seen as necessary and functional, and necessarily unequal. The status of women and women's domestic role was regarded as ancillary and was superseded by the provider's occupational role. Parsons (1974) stated that:

The woman's fundamental status is that of husband's wife, the mother of his children, and traditionally the person responsible for a complex of activities in connection with the management of the household care of children, etc... which may be considered a kind of 'pseudo-' occupation. (Parsons, 1974, pp.248-49)

By identifying these roles as grounded in the 'laws' of biology and psychology, differences between the sexes could be labelled as natural and inevitable, therefore legitimising the status quo.

This approach, which has been extensively criticised, is fundamental to our understanding of the roots of a dominant theory of dual-earner family life: role theory (Brannen and Moss, 1991). Although role theory has reconceptualised roles as gender rather than sex based, the assumed rationality of role differentiation within the family based on a 'traditional' model of women as homemakers and men as breadwinners has proven to be dominant throughout subsequent academic and political discourse, even in the light of widespread family diversity and change. Role theory is founded on the notion that the processes of differentiation and specialization that occurred as a requisite of industrialisation, necessarily forced the home and the workplace into 'separate spheres'. This separation, and the process of exclusion of women from (economic) production, resulted in a spatial and ideological division of men and women into clearly defined roles. It is these ideological divisions that structural-functionalists such as Parsons failed to address, owing to theory grounded in biological determinism. Subsequent analyses of gender have furthered the development of a more adequate 'role theory'. This initially came about as a result of a reconceptualisation of 'work' stimulated by Marxist thought.
Marxism

Far removed from Parsons’ concept of domestic labour as a ‘pseudo occupation’, Marxists of the 1960s and 1970s recognised the invaluable role female domestic workers played in the maintenance of the existing economic and social structure. Since Engels’ (1972, p. 81) early commentary on the ‘domestic enslavement of the woman’ in the modern industrial family, Marxists and Marxist/socialist feminists have attempted to develop an understanding of gender inequality as derived from capital (Delphy, 1984; Walby, 1986; Delphy and Leonard, 1992). Taking the capitalist mode of production as the conceptual starting point, Marxists and, more particularly, feminist Marxists, have sought to establish the relations under which domestic work is performed, with the ultimate aim of understanding the roots of gender inequality and how it is manifested in the home. To do this, domestic labour was conceptualised as (re)productive work whereby women undertook the task of reproducing the next generation of workers as well as providing the current generation with sustenance to continue with their economic production (Seccombe, 1974). Within this framework, domestic labour had no direct relation to capital and produced no surplus value as such, but created value through creating and servicing labour power which, once serviced, was sold in the labour market for wages (Zaretsky, 1976; Gittins, 1993).

The most significant problem for Marxists who place domestic labour in this (re)production context relates to the orthodox conception of surplus value as the appropriation of profit by the owners of the means of production from the waged labourer who performs part of their labour unpaid (Gardiner, 1975). As unpaid domestic labour is of indirect value and exists outside the formal economy, a definition of value that includes these concepts seems unorthodox from a Marxist perspective. Substantial disagreement about the true nature of domestic work in terms of production, consumption, reproduction, circulation and (surplus) value surrounds the ‘domestic-labour debate’, owing in part to the ambiguities of Marx’s presentation of the issues and concepts adopted by its protagonists (Walby, 1986). Primarily, however, Marxism’s contribution to the reconceptualisation of work as both paid and unpaid, based in the home and in the formal
economy, signified progress in the analysis of the dynamics of family life and the role and respective statuses of men and women in capitalist society.

The most serious problem with this analysis concerns the reduction of social relations to the economic mode of production. Orthodox Marxism fails to ‘confront the issue of the interests of men in the perpetuation of domestic labour’ (Walby, 1986, p.19). In other words, it fails to account adequately for factors that work outside the relations of production such as patriarchy, thus severely limiting the types of questions and answers that are possible in an examination of gender relations. Socialist/Marxist feminism, however, overcomes this problem by attributing equal importance to the forces of patriarchy and the capitalist mode of production.

As with structural-functionalism, Marxism also fails to provide an adequate explanation of many women’s dual relationship to the economy (that of paid and unpaid worker), as it structures itself on a model of the ‘traditional’ family (Gittins, 1993). Orthodox Marxist approaches contend that this ‘traditional’ model became dominant at the advent of industrial capitalism and that households have become atomised and families nuclear in response to it. Furthermore, the idea that roles have been assigned to domestic and economic environments is confirmed by Marxist theory. In addition to these existing assumptions, Marxism adds to an analysis of roles by focusing on their oppressive nature for both men and women. Men are alienated and oppressed by their economic ‘provider’ role and women by their domestic role. Eli Zaresky (1976), commenting on material history and gender inequality asserts that:

If we can understand the family as part of the development of capitalism this can help establish the specific historical formation of male supremacy... The establishment of private productive property as the basis of the bourgeois household meant that society was organized into separate households each of which was ruled by the father (or grandfather) (Zaresky, 1976, p.34).

A criticism of this materialist conception of gender inequality not only relates to its economic determinism but also in its implicit denial that gender inequality pre-dates capitalism (Walby, 1986).

Ideology has also been used to explain the role of men and women in the family and the role of the family itself in a capitalist society. At an ideological level, the family could
be argued to be part of capitalism's 'ideological state apparatus' (Althusser, 1971), whereby the home provides a refuge from the alienating environment of paid employment. Furthermore, a growing emphasis on romantic love in the institution of marriage, the dependence of childhood and the 'glorification of private life' resulted in the conceptualisation of the family as a 'haven in a heartless world' (Lasch, 1977, pp.6–8). The family and its individual members are, therefore, seen as subject to the ideological forces of bourgeois capitalist values as well as complicit in their maintenance.

Marxist theory also goes some way to offering reasons why the 'traditional' model of family life has declined and is currently favoured by a 'dual-earner' model. Some Marxists have argued that female labour constitutes a readily available source of cheap labour (a 'reserve army' of labour) that can be tapped into in times of economic prosperity and subsequently disposed of when there a reduction in output and profits (see Beechey and Perkins, 1987, pp.123–33). The 'reserve army' thesis does not, however, offer clear explanations on the persistently high and growing levels of female employment in the UK throughout economic peaks and troughs since the 1970s (see Figure 1.7). Neo-Marxist theory somewhat contradicts the 'reserve army' thesis in its attempt to explain this phenomenon; that female labour is less expensive than male labour, thus accounting for the increase in male unemployment and the narrowing of the gender gap in terms of paid employment.

In terms of the theorisation of dual-earner families, Marxism offers an alternative to the structural-functionalist thesis that 'the family' constitutes a solely positive functional role experience for all its members and society as a whole. It suggests that 'the family' is an oppressive force and is structured to meet the needs of capitalism (by being privatised and role-differentiated) and acts to reproduce existing economic and social relations. Although it has been criticised for economic determinism and structural reductionism in its theory and its inability to explain coherently some contemporary phenomena (such as the growth in female employment and dual-earner families in the late twentieth century), it has provided a starting point for much socialist/Marxist feminist theory which counters criticisms of 'gender-blindness' inherent in much orthodox Marxist theory. The details of feminist theorisations are discussed later in the chapter.
The family–employment relationship

Neither functionalist nor orthodox Marxist theories give an adequate explanation of the nature of the relationship between the spheres of family and employment for both men and women in couple-headed households. The influence of mainly second wave feminism and an increasing interest in family diversity among social scientists since the 1970s has prompted a fundamental shift in the conceptualisation of roles in the family and in employment and how they interact to produce the everyday reality of actors. A primary focus has been the relationship between family and employment for women, as the shift to a ‘dual-earner’ model has principally occurred as a result of women’s entry into the labour market. Questions for social scientists and policy makers have primarily focused on how women’s behaviour accommodates the demands of both family and employment and why activity in the domains of employment and the home differs between the sexes. Finding answers to these questions has been approached from a variety of perspectives and several theories of dual-earning have emerged. The following section outlines the contributions made by micro-economics, (social) psychology and second wave feminism to an understanding the family–employment relationship.

Micro-economic theorisations

Micro-economic models of the interaction of employment and family signify movement away from orthodox economic models that represent the household and the individuals in it as a single unit of consumption and/or a supplier of labour. Two key interrelated theories developed by Gary Stanley Becker (1964, 1976), human capital theory and new home economics, attempt to locate the labour market activity and domestic activity of individuals in the context of household dynamics. As in Marxist conceptions, the family is seen as a productive unit that reproduces generations of human capital (labour power) and produces non-market work such as housework. The family/household is also recognised as being an important centre for leisure consumption and production. ‘New household economics’, in particular, explicitly recognises the interaction of employment and family in decision-making and asserts that families and households make rational decisions about the use of limited time with the aim of maximising joint utility (Allsopp, 1995). Decisions are related to their investment value, for example, decisions on family
size are viewed in the context of the requirements of investment in time, effort and resources in children. In terms of investment in human capital, it is suggested that women invest less in their education and training than men owing to their family commitments, and their labour is, therefore, of lower value in the market place. As a result of this, women work for less money in lower skilled jobs in particular segments of industry (for example, the service sector).

This approach constitutes an attempt to explain both horizontal and vertical gender segregation in the workplace in rational economic terms whilst also explaining the reasons for women's domestic role. According to new home economics and human capital theory, rationality at the individual and familial level informs decisions to enter or exit the labour market, at what level of involvement to enter (full/part-time), in what industry to enter (male-/female-dominated) and at what level in the hierarchy to enter. These decisions reflect the needs of the household in the context of the limited resource of time whilst also reflecting the skills of its respective members.

With regard to dual-earner families, micro-economic theory would suggest that couples choose to maximise their joint utility by rationally allocating market and non-market tasks to either partner depending on the resources available to the household. For dual-earners with dependent children, time is a particularly scarce resource and financial constraints may prevent the use of full-time private childcare, so couples have to make rational decisions about balancing the demands of both work and home. In addition, couples collectively decide ways in which household income can be maximised and how quality of life can be raised or maintained by the use of 'free' time and the consumption of leisure. To maximise the utility of human capital, the argument continues, the male partner who is typically more skilled, trained and educated than the female partner takes on the role as the primary breadwinner. The woman adopts a looser attachment to the labour market by working shorter hours and establishing a more fragmented employment profile. In this scenario, the need for additional income is balanced with the demands of the household. This reflects the most common configuration of dual-earner household in the UK whereby the female partner works part-time and the male partner works full-time. Among those households that contain two full-time paid workers, new home economics
and human capital theory would cite evidence suggesting that such households tend to contain partners who both occupy professional/managerial positions and have high educational attainment backgrounds (Ferri and Smith, 1996). In this case, the household is making use of the investment made in human capital and is most likely to be able to afford the opportunity costs of, for example, childcare.

Several arguments have been posited against human capital theory and new home economics particularly with regard to its genderless theoretical stance. The underachievement of women in the economic environment, for example, is analysed in a context where gendered assumptions about the capabilities of men and women are absent. The meritocratic undertones of the theories can, therefore, be called into question. It also fails to recognise the phenomenon of women's high (and rising) levels of educational attainment, the phenomena of underemployment and the fact that women consistently receive lower wages than men in identical occupations (Rees, 1992). This supply-side micro-economic approach, however, contributes to an understanding of how dual-earner families make decisions on the balance between labour market activity and the need for income on the one hand, and the responsibilities and demands of domestic life on the other. The ways in which couples make these decisions and the outcomes they produce are fundamental to the thesis, although the notion of a genderless rationality is conceptually inadequate for the purposes of the research.

(Social) psychological approaches

Theorisations of dual-earner lifestyles from a (social) psychological perspective originate primarily from developmental psychology. In particular, the psychology of child development in relation to maternal care has been analysed with reference to John Bowlby's (1984) influential 'attachment theory'. His theory stipulates that, 'when deprived of maternal care, a child's development is almost always retarded - physically, intellectually, and socially - and the symptoms of physical and mental illness may appear' (Bowlby, 1965, p.21). A state of 'maternal deprivation', the argument continues, may result when mothers withdraw from the 'traditional' role of homemaker and become involved in the labour market. Indeed, Bowlby (1952, p.73) stated that the full-time
employment of the mother was a potential source of deprived children, similar to that of
the death or imprisonment of a parent.

This approach has strong links with Parsonian assumptions about the 'naturalness' of
the nuclear family form, of expressive motherhood and the unique nature of the mother-
child relationship, and is reflective of the discourses surrounding family life in the 1950s
and 1960s. Maternal employment affected a minority of mothers, and was commonly
regarded as 'deviant' activity. It was, hence reported to have a detrimental effect on
children's development. As the incidence of maternal employment grew in the 1970s and
early 1980s, research moved its emphasis away from maternal deprivation and towards a
focus on the effects of maternal employment on child development. This was undertaken
by comparing the development of children whose mothers were employed with those who
were non-employed with little recognition of the heterogeneity of these groups (for
example, Gold and Andres, 1978). In addition, the mother-child relationship was not the
only family subsystem to be analysed in the 1970s, as the father-child relationship began
to be explored (White and Woollett, 1992). Conceptions of family processes were,
therefore, revised to include the influence fathers had on the development of children.

The main body of literature on dual-earner families from a social psychological
perspective in the 1980s and 1990s continued to focus on the impact of maternal
employment on child development, although former theories on its detrimental affect
were revised. Against a background of disagreement and conflicting results in the 1980s,
a growing convergence emerged concerning the attribution of differences in child
development to the employment status of mothers (Gottfried et al, 1994). Maternal
employment or non-employment is currently viewed as only one factor in a complex of
other determinants that impact upon child development, and maternal employment per se
is no longer regarded as being to the detriment of the child (Hoffman, 1989). Indeed,
employment has been reported to elevate the self-esteem and well-being of mothers, and a
working mother's feelings of anxiety towards a child's welfare has been identified as a
potential stimulant to 'more sensitive and compensating care' (Hoffman, 1989, p.290).
Other contributory factors in child development may be socially related, such as socio-
economic status and ethnicity, and/or psychologically oriented, for example perceptions
of marital happiness and parental satisfaction. In reality, a complex interaction of social, cultural and psychological factors contribute to child development.

Psychological and social psychological research in the 1990s, reflect this changing emphasis on the effects of dual-earner lifestyles on children. Furthermore, current research (usually conducted in the US) has extended its focus to incorporate the experiences and interactions of all family members, and the neglected area of parental experience and mother–father/male partner–female partner interaction has started to receive academic attention. In an attempt to unravel the effect of the dual-earner lifestyle on the well-being of its members, researchers in the US have focused on the phenomena of role strain or work-family conflict, that is the way in which work roles and family roles conflict to produce negative psychological outcomes (Higgins and Duxbury, 1992). Stressors investigated include role quality (Barnett et al, 1993), role conflict, role ambiguity and role overload in the work domain and role pressure and parenthood in the family (Parasuraman et al, 1992). Particular stressors related to family role pressure and parenthood may arise when, for example, the role of parent or spouse is perceived as unrewarding and unfulfilling. Commonly, marital and family satisfaction are the two constructs that measure such phenomena in the social psychology literature (for example, Higgins and Duxbury, 1992; Wilke et al, 1998). These have been analysed according to gender and different responses have been reported. Men’s’ identification with the breadwinner role, for example, has been cited as an explanation of their relative maladaptation to the dual-earner model, whereas positive mental health affects have been reported for women (Stanley et al, 1986). Identification with the family role has been cited as a likely source for experiencing parental role strain and psychological distress among mothers, although some evidence suggests that the perceived quality of the parental role among fathers significantly affects levels of psychological distress, owing to an apparent convergence of roles played by men and women in dual-earner families (Barnett et al, 1994). A consensus of the equal psychological importance of both work and family roles to men and women has been reportedly growing (Barnett et al, 1994).

Strategies for dealing with work-family conflict, such as ‘work restructuring’ (Karambayya and Reilly, 1992), have also been examined and the impact these coping
mechanisms have upon marital and familial satisfaction have been investigated. Furthermore, the ‘crossover’ or ‘spillover’ effects of stress or satisfaction experienced in the work domain on the family environment (and vice versa) has been analysed in order to examine the extent to which work and family are perceived and experienced as integrated systems (see Pleck and Staines, 1985; Aryee and Luk, 1996; Hammer et al, 1997). Other factors that have been investigated in terms of their psychological outcomes include changes in job conditions (Barnett and Brennan, 1997), and the effect of non-work family time and leisure on marital and familial satisfaction (for example, Goff et al, 1997, see Chapter 3 for a more detailed discussion of social psychological approaches to leisure).

A social psychological approach to the family-employment relationship offers an insight into the subjective experience of dual-earner lifestyles and has been an area of significant academic interest, especially in the US. Its examinations of the internal mechanisms of family life and the family-employment relationship focus on the conditions under which family life and employment are positively or negatively experienced and the impact of family, employment or couple situations on the behaviours and psychological well-being of individuals. The concentration on within-couple interaction is particularly useful in the context of the thesis which aims to uncover the ways in which everyday life is negotiated within the context of the couple. Social psychological research, however, often adopts an uncritical approach to the gendered nature of family and employment life and, therefore, overlooks the underlying structures and cultures of institutions and how these inform behaviours and psychological orientations.

**Feminist theorisations**

`Second wave' feminism has been the most influential development in the generation of theory on the family and the family-employment relationship since the late 1960s. Although various strands of feminist theory have tackled the family-employment problematic from differing perspectives, all feminisms have sought to establish the cause and nature of gender inequality in the home and in the economic environment in terms of the forces of patriarchy, or male dominance over women. Furthermore, feminism used the concept of patriarchy to demonstrate the ways in which the spheres of paid work and
unpaid home work interrelated, thus eliminating the normative divide of home and employment.

The examination of gender inequality within feminist research began with investigations into the subordinate social position of women in the home. Feminists agreed that the performance of domestic labour was unequivocally 'work', and that its unpaid status was to the primary benefit of men and the subordination of women. Influential studies on housework such as Hannah Gavron's (1966) *The Captive Wife* and Ann Oakley's (1974) *Housewife* opened up the domestic world to the social sciences in a way which fundamentally questioned its previously assumed functionality and 'naturalness'. Studies on the domestic division of labour in the 1960s and 1970s, however, took 'the family' as a universal entity for granted, commenting on the division of gender roles from a nuclear family perspective. Progressively, since the 1970s, however, feminists have been at the forefront of research that challenges the universal concept of 'the (breadwinner) family' (Gittins, 1993). Diversity was recognised as levels of female employment grew, raising questions about the nature of women's relationship to the formal economy and informal economy, and as alternative family forms publicly emerged.

Most sociological research and theorising on the family-employment relationship has been undertaken by feminists in the women's studies or gender studies field, since women are regarded as the main mediators between the two areas (Hantrais and Letablier, 1996, p.102). Women in dual-earner families have been the main subject of inquiry, as movement away from the breadwinner model has been compensated by a movement toward the dual-earner model, although interest in lone mothers has particularly escalated in the 1990s (for example collections by Silva, 1996, and Lewis, 1997). Prominent themes in feminist family-employment sociology relate to the ways in which patriarchy traverses both the domestic and employment environments of women. The gendered nature of employment has been investigated in terms of women's loose attachment to the labour market and their fragmented career structures. The phenomena of part-time and flexible work arrangements have also been analysed in relation to male biased employment
structures and practices (Beechey and Perkins, 1987). Gender segregation between and within employment sectors has also been critically examined.

Feminist commentary on women’s employment position is frequently made with reference to their domestic obligations. Family responsibilities that are structured around gender based ideology are seen as inextricably linked to women’s involvement in and experience of paid employment. The ideology of family life, and more particularly, of motherhood that defines a woman’s role as primarily nurturant, giving and expressive overrides any role she may wish or need to take in the employment sphere (Finch, 1983). The internalisation and normalisation of gender ideologies surrounding family life and motherhood by women, together with their increased levels of labour market activity has led theorists to conceptualise the nature of women’s work as characterised by a ‘dual-burden’ or ‘second shift’ (Hochschild, 1989). The dual-burden of domestic work and paid work has, the argument continues, resulted in the majority of women in dual-earner families taking on a ‘dual-role’ (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Bagilhole, 1994). This dual-role thesis can be viewed as an extension of ‘role theory’ advocated by early family sociologists. From its structural-functionalist roots, roles within a feminist framework and in a dual-earner family context are viewed critically and in need of revision if employment is to have an emancipatory effect on women’s lives. Role allocation is not viewed as equitable or inevitable and not only acts to the detriment of women (who are most burdened by their dual-role), but also to that of men who are practically and ideologically constrained by the constructs of masculinity and fatherhood.

Problems with this revised role theory relate to its deterministic overtones. Individuals, and most particularly women, are portrayed as passive victims in the structural allocation of gender roles, conforming unquestioningly to gender role ideology (Beechey and Perkins, 1987). A gender constructivist/symbolic interactionist perspective counteracts this criticism (Brannen and Moss, 1991; Potuchek, 1997). This approach tackles the issue of agency in women’s everyday realities, in other words the way in which women actively construct, in gendered terms, employment and motherhood and the roles that go with them (Brannen and Moss, 1991). From this perspective, active
interpretations of the social world are seen as shaping the actions of women, rather than structural constraints determining them.

Within a dual-earner family research context, women have been the main focus of gender-based social inquiry. Men have, however, begun to receive some academic attention regarding their response to the dual-earner family form, their engagement with it, and the impact it has on gender relations in the home (for example, Gilbert, 1985, in the US; Brannen et al, 1997b, in the UK). There was also a significant wave of research in the 1980s and 1990s on the ‘new man’ (for example, Beer, 1983; Dench, 1996). A more holistic view of the dynamics of dual-earner family lifestyles could be gained by a more inclusive approach that considers the structure and experiences of men and women (and children) within the same family setting. Notwithstanding these literatures, a feminist perspective on dual-earner families contributes significantly to our understanding of the form, structure and nature of family life by recognising the importance of gender construction and reconstruction in the negotiation of roles within the family. By exploring the concept of gender, feminists have prompted, not only a reconceptualisation of family life, but also placed under scrutiny the family-employment relationship for women, in particular, but also for men.

2.3 Evaluating theories of dual-earner families

A range of disciplines and theoretical perspectives in the social sciences have contributed to the development of theory about dual-earner families, although their respective contributions have rarely been harmonised (to the extent to which this is possible) or evaluated in the literature. The most dominant theory of dual-earner families is ‘role theory’. Its origins can be traced to modernist theories in the Sociology of the Family, most particularly, structural-functionalism and to a lesser extent, Marxism. The overriding theme for theorists in this area is that, through the processes of industrialisation, the family has been required to differentiate tasks between partners and that these specialised tasks have become associated with roles.

Role theory from its structural-functionalist origins has, however, been substantially revised owing mainly to feminism’s introduction of the concepts of patriarchy and gender. Feminism critically analysed the role of women both at home and in the economic
environment in the context of the pervasive and transversal power of patriarchy, thus placing the 'myth of separate worlds' (Kanter, 1977) firmly on the research agenda. A gender perspective has cut across many disciplines and can be identified throughout the literatures on, for example, the history of family forms (see Bradley, 1989; Seccombe, 1993, 1995). Furthermore, feminist sociologists have developed and adapted concepts used by theory that maintained a genderless position, although this has often been achieved inadvertently. An example of this would be the development of the sociological theory of family-employment 'strategies', which display similar characteristics to the economistic theory of rational choice. Ray Pahl (1984) used the concept of household work strategies to describe and explain the process of decision making between spouses on the allocation of time to employment, unpaid work and household production. A key difference in this analysis, however, relates to the inclusion of an understanding of variance in strategies used across the lifecycle and variance that comes about as a result of events such as the unemployment of the breadwinner (Hakim, 1996, p.16). Although the terminology is different, economists and sociologists converge on the notion of rational decision making as part of everyday life. The primary difference between the two approaches, however, relates to the sociological response to the apparent tautology of economic explanations: that, 'whatever happens must have been desired and preferred, otherwise people would have done something else' (Hakim, 1996, p.13). Sociology highlights both the intended and unintended nature of behaviour and outcome and the impact of an unpredictable social environment on the lives of actors. Strategies may be both planned and make-shift, routine and in response to unforeseen circumstances, apparently 'rational' or unexplainable.

Feminist sociology also highlights the gendered nature of strategies, decision-making and all other components of everyday life within a heterosexual family structure. In other words, decisions made by couples and life events occurring across the lifecourse of the couple are influenced by their respective gender roles within the family. Decision-making or strategies, however, are not determined by gender roles, rather they are shaped in an environment where gender is being negotiated and renegotiated, constructed and reconstructed in the practice of everyday life and throughout the lifecycle. Post-modernist,
post-structuralist concerns for a movement beyond structural determinism and towards greater concern for the power of individual agency has, therefore, also contributed to the adaptation of gender role theory.

Another vital element of family life is the emotional response to family situations and the quality of emotional life between family members. Examination of the structure of families and the roles played by their members often neglects the emotional aspects of the everyday, although this plays a central part in the construction and reconstruction of daily life. In an attempt to remedy these shortcomings, the thesis examines how men and women in dual-earner families feel about their everyday experiences and how this informs the behaviours of themselves and their partners. It does not, however, replicate the social psychological approach of many US researcher who have attempted to quantify subjective constructs as measures of, for example, marital satisfaction. Instead, a complex of activities and their associated meanings will be examined holistically and qualitatively so that all aspects of the everyday can be explored.

Each contribution to the theorisation of dual-earner families adds a valuable dimension to its understanding, despite a distinct lack of interdisciplinary coherence. The thesis attempts to overcome interdisciplinary ambivalence by using a combination of different theoretical approaches. Firstly, the concept of gender is considered as central to the construction of the everyday lives of couples; yet gender itself is not regarded as immutable. A gender constructivist perspective is, therefore, used to analyse the actions of family members. Role theory is applied in the context of this gender constructivist approach, whereby gender roles are considered as crucial to the reality of living in dual-earner families and are potentially conflictual and/or changeable in the light of women's relatively recent entry into the labour market. The concept of strategy from a gender perspective is also used to investigate the ways in which couples attempt to organise and reconcile the demands of employment and home life. The term 'strategy' is chosen in preference to 'decision making' or 'rational choice' to account for the unintended dimension of strategy development and outcome. Finally, the emotional responses to role demands and practical outcomes are also considered as part of the everyday experience of the construction and reconstruction of dual-earner lifestyles.
Chapter 3 Dual-earner families in leisure research

Dual-earner families have rarely been an explicit primary focus of leisure research in the UK and leisure has rarely been incorporated in studies of dual-earner families in other areas of social science research. This thesis challenges this omission and adopts a holistic approach to the study of lifestyle by exploring the work–family–leisure triad, by examining the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. ‘Leisure studies’ is the interdisciplinary field that has made the most significant contribution to examining the nature and significance of leisure in contemporary society. The focus of a substantial literature in leisure studies is the ways in which leisure relates to other spheres of life, such as paid and unpaid work and the family. Feminist leisure research, in particular, has highlighted the intricate interweaving of the strands of women’s everyday lives and has challenged conventional notions of ‘leisure’ as a separate sphere of life that is diametrically opposed to paid employment.

This chapter builds on the literatures reviewed in the preceding chapters by examining how leisure research has contributed to academic debates about the family, employment and other forms of work and the relationships between life domains. In particular, this review explores the historic development of areas of enquiry relevant to the study of the lifestyles of dual-earner families. These include theorisations of the work–leisure dynamic and the family–leisure relationship that emerged as dominant discourses in leisure studies in the 1970s. Critiques of dichotomous models of ‘work’ versus ‘leisure’ and normative models of ‘the family’ are included in an examination of the development of theories on the interrelationships between work, family and leisure that have emerged since the 1980s. Theories of leisure and gender that have developed in the UK since the 1980s are then discussed in the context of the theoretical approach adopted in the research project.

3.1 The complexities of defining ‘leisure’

The centrality of the family–employment relationship in social scientific discourse and the relative absence of leisure in analyses of the lifestyles of employed couples with dependent children reflects both the investigative trends and biases of disciplines within the social sciences as well as some of the inherent difficulties of conceptualising and theorising leisure as a component of human experience. These conceptual and theoretical difficulties arise in main from ‘the definitional problem
about leisure that cannot be avoided' (Deem, 1986, p.17). This definitional problem has several components. Firstly, the question is raised of the feasibility of defining 'leisure'. As a subjective experience, 'leisure' has multiple meanings that alter across time and space. These meanings are influenced by broad social and economic historical changes such as industrialisation and globalisation; societal and cultural factors such as social class, ethnicity, gender and sub-culture; and individual factors such as psychological orientation and stage in the lifecourse. The multiplicity of meanings of leisure has diminished the objectivity many leisure scholars have required to attempt its definition (Parker, 1983, p.3). Although 'no generally accepted definition of what leisure is' can be found, there is value in exploring its parameters, not least because it is 'an important ingredient of contemporary life' (Roberts, 1970, p.6) that has economic, psychological, social and political significance (Roberts, 1999, pp.6–16).

The second problem is, therefore, how to define 'leisure'. Several attempts have been made to clarify the definitional content of leisure. Sociological approaches have utilised two main methods of definition: identifying what leisure is (usually in terms of activity, time-use and experience) or what it is not (a residual definition). Residual definitions that portray leisure as 'existing in what is left over; the time that remains when paid work and other obligatory activities have been done' (Roberts, 1999, p.5), incorporates one of the key perceived qualities of leisure: its freedom from obligation. The concept of freedom or, more accurately, relative freedom, is a broadly accepted primary component of leisure (Parker, 1976; Kelly, 1972, 1983, 1990; Iso-Ahola, 1999). The notion of its relativity refers to the philosophical and sociological question of the extent to which absolute freedom is possible. In sociological terms, freedom is dependent on the social context in which 'leisure' is experienced. The leisure context may, for example, be dependent on a variety of social constraints based on dominant social norms and values. In the case of this project, dominant perceptions of the roles and responsibilities of motherhood and fatherhood may impact on the extent to which leisure is 'free' from obligation.

Other components of leisure that have been proposed in the literatures are summarised by Rosemary Deem (1986):

1) Leisure is something (not necessarily an activity) involving choice, not free choice; there are also constraints on that choice
2) Leisure is usually pleasurable
3) Leisure can be defined or marked out in relation to other activities such as paid work, life-obligations (eating, sleeping etc.) and activities done non-voluntarily and without pleasure
4) Leisure is not necessarily to be found in an activity or time or space by themselves, but in the quality of those phenomena or of the person who engaged in it
5) Leisure may be a social space
6) Leisure may be a period of time clearly demarcated from other periods of time
7) Leisure (for women) is connected to aspects of well-being and health (Deem, 1986, pp.17–18)

This list is not exhaustive and many of the ideas are contested in the definitional debate. Concepts of ‘pleasurability’ and ‘well-being’ are, for example, as definitionally problematic as ‘leisure’ and, therefore, add extra layers of complexity to the unravelling of leisure. In addition, definitions of leisure necessarily contain ambiguities and do not provide universal or absolute statements. It ‘may be’ many things and is, thus, ‘highly context dependent’ (Roberts, 1999, p.1). The definitional components of leisure offered above by Deem, however, identify three main aspects of leisure meanings that have dominated academic debate and research: that leisure is time or activity or experience. Leisure may contain all of these three elements and it is therefore important when interviewing dual-earner families to attempt to unravel the extent to which definitions of leisure as time, activity or experience dominate the discourse of partners in dual-earner families.

The contextual dependence of leisure, its multiple components and its definitional complexities render the imposition of meanings of leisure on the subjects in a study both impossible and undesirable. The aim of the thesis is to examine and unravel both the context of leisure as well as its attendant meanings for partners in dual-earner families both in their current life situation and in the past. By examining the contexts, components and meanings of leisure for couples in dual-earner families, the study is intended to contribute to the debate on the definitional problems the concept of ‘leisure’ presents. The thesis rejects the notion that absolute definitions of leisure are attainable but that a clearer understanding of its contextual meanings can uncover new, empirically based dimensions to definitions of leisure, the differential role of leisure in people’s everyday lives and the nature of its relationship to other life domains. In reference to the interconnectedness of work, family and leisure, the thesis utilises the concept of ‘lifestyle’. Susan Glyptis (1981, p.314) referred to lifestyle as ‘the aggregate pattern of day-to-day activities which make up and individual’s way of
life'. This definition of lifestyle is utilised in the context of this research, although the importance of the attitudes and motivations that inform daily activities (or inactivities) are also considered crucial to an understanding of lifestyle. The definition of lifestyle, therefore refers to the parts of daily life that make up the whole, rather than the more common-sense, everyday concept of lifestyle as 'consumption'.

3.2 The work–leisure relationship

Approaches to the definition of leisure are closely tied to the historical development of the study of leisure. Between the late 1960s and late 1970s, when leisure studies in the UK began to grow as an area of academic interest, definitions of leisure were closely related to paid 'work'. Two of the most prominent British leisure theorists in the 1970s – Stanley Parker and Kenneth Roberts – were strong exponents of definitions of leisure that directly contrasted 'work' and leisure. According to Roberts in his early writings, leisure and work are diametrically opposed:

Leisure time can be defined as time that is not obligated, and leisure activities can be defined as activities that are non-obligatory. At work, a man's [sic] time is not his own and his behaviour is not responsive purely to his own whims. Outside work, there are certain duties that men are obliged, either by custom or law, to fulfil, such as the obligations that an individual has towards his family. When these obligations are met, a man has 'free time' in which his behaviour is dictated by his own will and preferences, and it is here that leisure is found (Roberts, 1970, p.6).

This definition reflects the residual notion of leisure outlined above. 'Work', meaning employment, is clearly distinguished from leisure in terms of its obligations. In Parker's terms, work (employment) and leisure are at opposite ends of the constraint–freedom continuum, with leisure most expressive of personal freedom (Parker, 1983, p.10). Whilst this approach has been subject to criticism, its common sense appeal has ensured its longevity in the work–leisure debate. Recent texts continue to introduce work and leisure as opposites and use it as a starting point from which to examine the nature of each domain (Grint, 1998; Slater, 1998).

The dichotomy of work and leisure in the literature is rooted in the thesis of the compartmentalisation of work that emerged as a process of industrialisation (Roberts, 1988). The spatial separation of the workplace from the home and the rigid time structuring of factory production described in Chapter 1 reshaped social space and time. This restructuring impacted on the form and nature of leisure. Employment became clearly demarcated from the domestic sphere and the domain of leisure that
resided outside of the spatial and temporal obligations of the capitalist mode of production. Substantial volumes of leisure theory and research uses this historical dichotomy as a starting point from which to examine the work–leisure relationship. This was particularly characteristic of leisure studies in the 1970s, but it is also a focus of contemporary research. Gilles Pronovost (1998, p.110–13) stated that ‘the question of the relationship between work and leisure constitutes one of the most important sociological concerns of leisure studies’ and identified five broad areas of study in the field of the work–leisure relationship.

The first theme relates to value structures and the way changes in values either concerning work or the relationship between work and leisure impact on the forms, structures and meanings of work and leisure. Pronovost cites this theme of investigation as dominated by an anthropological approach and, in particular, focuses on the ‘work ethic’ and leisure values and their relative importance across time and space (see also Sylvester, 1999). The second theme identified by Pronovost, ‘emphasizes the phenomenon of the “spillover” of work into leisure’ and examines the impact of work on lifestyle and on leisure (Pronovost, 1998, p.112). Examples of this theme of research include the impact of technology on working time and tasks and on leisure (Veal, 1999). Thirdly, leisure has also been conceptualised as ‘compensation’ or ‘reward’ for employment, particularly by Marxist theorists who view leisure as compensation for alienating paid employment. This perspective also questions the extent to which leisure can be ‘free’ in the context of oppressive economic and social relations (Clarke and Critcher, 1985). The fourth approach is linked to the early discourses of Parker (1983) who purported that the domains of work and leisure are almost entirely unrelated so that leisure choices are independent of those of work. Finally, the fifth theme of enquiry, advocated by Joffre Dumazedier (1974), argues that, rather than work being the pole from which leisure assumes meaning, leisure is the new source of values that influence lifestyles and work.

These competing perspectives indicate the rich history of the theorisation of the work–leisure relationship within leisure studies. The relationship between work and leisure has, by far, received the most academic attention throughout the history of the field but it has also been widely criticised. A fundamental problem with examinations of the work–leisure dichotomy, highlighted, in particular, in the 1980s by feminist theorists, relates to monolithic and androcentric definitions of ‘work’ (Deem, 1986; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988). Work is defined as paid employment and, therefore,
excludes 'all those adults who do not work full-time outside the home, for example, the unemployed, the elderly and housewives' (Edgell, 1980, p.73). By conceptualising leisure as inextricably linked to paid employment, the experiences of a large proportion of the population, including those above and below the age of employment, are over-looked. Feminist discourse, in particular, highlighted that narrow definitions of 'work' ignore the value of unpaid labour carried out in the home and hence, cannot come to terms with the experiences of women (and some men) who perform 'working' tasks both inside and outside the formal economy. Eileen Green et al (1990, p.9) in their study of women's leisure, for example, commented that 'almost all the women we interviewed used work as an elastic term which could take in both paid employment and domestic work', but that 'work-like' activities such as gardening, sewing and cooking could also assume 'leisure-like' meanings among some of the women in the study. They also pointed out that definitions of 'work' and 'leisure' were tied to women's activities in the labour market with full-time working women and, in particular, single women with full-time jobs, finding it 'easier to compartmentalise' areas in their lives than women who work in the home' (Green et al, 1990, p.9). This finding particularly highlight 'the inadequacy of seeking to define activities as either “work” or “leisure”. In women's lives such boundaries as do exist are likely to be complex, blurred and shifting' (Green et al, 1990, p.10). This critique of the work–leisure dichotomy demonstrates how and why women's experience of leisure does not comply to normative understandings of leisure as something which occurs in 'time left over' from work. In particular, feminists have sought to highlight the 'blurred boundaries' between 'work' and 'leisure' and have, hence, examined leisure in the context of women's lives as a whole (Wimbush and Talbot, 1988; Green et al, 1990). This focus on 'everyday life' and the exploration of the contextual meanings of leisure underpin the approach adopted in this thesis.

Feminists in the field of leisure studies have also criticised the androcentric evolution of male-dominated theoretical approaches to leisure that have failed to come to terms with crucial changes in the labour market of the UK. During the 1980s, for example, Deem commented that:

The notion of leisure as something different and separable from paid work is very much a legacy of male working class experience in the period since industrialization commenced ... The conventional notion of leisure as particular kinds of activities taking place in clearly demarcated places and spaces and seen as an escape from, an extension of or recuperation from a job is ... applicable to less
and less people now with the continued existence of mass unemployment, early
and other forms of retirement and growth of part-time employment. (Deem, 1986,
p.135)

In the context of the late 1990s and early twentieth century, other changes include the
decline in manufacturing and the growth in service industries which has further
encouraged the expansion of part-time, temporary and other flexible working
arrangements. These changes indicate that the work–leisure relationship is being
complexified and that a polar approach to work and leisure is inadequate in the
context of contemporary working patterns. Furthermore, increases in female and, in
particular, maternal employment have stimulated a growth the body of research on
employed women’s leisure experiences and the extent to which they diverge from or
conform to the orthodox model of a work–leisure dichotomy. Tess Kay, in her
analysis of the leisure implications of women’s changing employment patterns, for
example, comments that:

On the face of it, British women would appear to be moving towards men’s levels
of involvement in the world of paid work – but to what extent do these changes in
gross employment levels really signify fundamental erosion of the differences, and
associated inequalities, in men’s and women’s roles? (Kay, 1996b, p.50)

Results from the body of research on employed women’s leisure indicates that, while
single women with full-time jobs may be more likely to distinguish clearly work as
paid employment from leisure (Green et al, 1990), women with dependent children
with full- or part-time jobs are closely tied to the roles and responsibilities of
motherhood, are the primary providers of childcare and fulfil the majority of domestic
work (Kay, 1998, 2001; Clough, 2001). As a consequence, the domains of ‘work’,
‘family’ and ‘leisure’ are not distinct but interact intricately to inform everyday
realities. The importance of the thesis lies in its fundamental questioning of orthodox
definitions of leisure as inevitably linked to paid employment, its inclusion of gender
in its research questions and analyses and its recognition of vital changes in the labour
market and the impact this may have on leisure orientations and behaviour.

The substantial body of work accumulated throughout the 1970s on the work–
leisure relationship in the context of the criticisms outlined above affords a valuable
framework for the fieldwork of the thesis. A broad and gender-sensitive definition of
work that includes unpaid domestic work, childcare and other forms of ‘family’ or
‘emotional’ work is adopted. Employment is viewed as a vital component of daily life
that, in combination with a range of other factors (for example, family, domestic
work, childcare, transport and public policy), can impact on the structures, qualities, meanings and experiences of leisure. These processes may not, however, be unidirectional. Leisure structures and orientations may impact on other spheres of life such as family, employment and childcare. Furthermore, self-definitions of life domains offered by the participants in the study may reveal a variety of meanings attached to work and leisure and the way the two relate. Capturing these differences and convergences can contribute to the work–leisure debate and avoid the criticisms of androcentrism and over-simplification posited by critics of the work–leisure relationship in the 1980s.

3.3 Leisure, the family and the lifecourse

Leisure and the family received little attention in the leisure research of the 1960s and 1970s in both the UK and US. During this period, leisure was accepted as best explained through its relation to work, and only a minority of research that was carried out within the community study tradition gave priority to the family/household variable (Kelly, 1997). In Noel Parry’s (1983) review of the sociological contributions to the study of leisure, North American community studies research is cited as including examinations of suburbia, the relationship between urbanism and way of life, examinations of subcultures and the interaction between socio-economic class and styles of life. In the UK, community studies was linked to industrial sociology, for example in Dennis et al’s (1969) examination of the life of miners in a ‘relatively isolated community, the segregation and oppression of wives, and the exclusive and male-orientated organization of leisure activities within a class-divided society’ (Parry, 1983, p.62). In addition, Michael Young and Peter Willmott combined community, family, work and leisure in their studies of Family and Kinship in East London (Young and Willmott, 1957), Family and Class in a London Suburb (Willmott and Young, 1967) and The Symmetrical Family (Young and Willmott, 1973). Although community studies has been criticised for theoretical and methodological deficiencies, its strength lies in its holistic approach to behaviour that interrelates a range of variables including family and leisure. By doing so, life domains are not artificially isolated. This holistic approach has been adopted in the thesis to study the lifestyles of couples in dual-earner families, and provides a rigorous theoretical and methodological base.
One of the most substantial and influential studies on leisure and the family in the UK in the 1970s, beyond the community studies tradition, is Rhona and Robert Rapoport’s *Leisure and the Family Life Cycle*. The Rapoports used a combination of sociology, psychology and anthropology to examine leisure in the lifestyles of family members at different phases in the lifecycle using biographical evidence. The inclusion of lifecourse factors in analyses of family and leisure signifies an important innovation in the study of lifestyle that is particularly useful for this research. The Rapoports’ aim to examine an individual’s “life line” of development, and ... the way different spheres of influence interact at different times in the lifecycle’ (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975, p.19), reflects one of the aims of the present project. This commonality is also reflected in the project’s conceptual terminology. The thesis distinguishes work, family and leisure as three key life domains, a distinction the Rapoport’s also utilise in their description of life line ‘planes’. A point of departure from the Rapoport’s model, however, relates to the degree and type of distinction made between the ‘planes’ of work, family and leisure. The holistic approach to lifestyle used in the thesis is an attempt to recognise that while some of the characteristics of life domains may be defined consistently and easily (for example work as paid employment), other elements of social experience may be ill defined and vary both between and within individuals across time and space (such as the extent to which childcare is ‘work’, ‘leisure’ or reflects definitions of what constitutes ‘family’). For the Rapoports work, family and leisure ‘planes’ ‘are conceptually distinct’ (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975, p.19). This conceptual distinctiveness reflects normative assumptions about work as paid employment, family as the nuclear (male-breadwinner) family, and leisure as activity (usually sporting activity). The thesis problematises this purported distinctiveness by probing the understandings of couples in the present and across the lifecourse about how the domains of work, family and leisure interact, whether or not these domains change in content and meaning throughout the lifecourse and, if so, how these changes impact on the interrelation between life domains. In addition, the Rapoport’s contention that the typical lifecycle unravels in four distinctive phases from young adulthood to ‘lifestyles for later years’ is increasingly inappropriate. Its deterministic undertones render the notion of the ‘lifecourse’ preferable. Throughout an individual ‘lifecourse’, family, employment and other life events may vary, the timing of events may vary, the number of life events may differ and life transitions may be differentially experienced. Examples of
these differences include the fact that couples may or may not marry, the timing of the birth of children may vary from one family to another, and individuals may be partnered more than once. A lifecourse approach provides the opportunity to uncover the 'underlying patterns' of lifestyle across the lifecourse, whilst allowing room for individual life stories to diverge. The seminal work of the Rapoports in 1975 has not been replicated in subsequent family–leisure research, although the concept of the lifecycle or lifecourse has been adapted and utilised in other leisure research, particularly in the context of particular phases of the lifecourse such as retirement or pre-retirement (Parry, 1983).

In the early 1980s, social psychological approaches to the family–leisure dynamic originating from the US gained prominence in leisure research. John Kelly recognised that during this period, 'previously ignored but evident facts became accepted: most leisure is at home and with other household members'. He argued that: 'The leisure–family connection in time became almost taken-for-granted, a new consensus' (Kelly, 1997, p.132). The broad view was that the relationship between family and leisure was positive: family and leisure were believed to be good for each other (Kelly, 1997). These themes of enquiry complement those of the (social) psychological research on the family–employment relationship outlined in Chapter 2. They include the 'bonding' function of leisure and the contribution of leisure to family 'solidarity'. The complementary relationship between family and leisure has often been measured in terms of an individual’s marital, familial and/or parental 'satisfaction' (for example, Orthner, 1975, 1976) and some studies in the 1990s in the US have concentrated on dual-earner families and included a leisure dimension (for example, Freysinger, 1994).

The notion that leisure and family are positively related is underscored by an 'attachment hypothesis' in the literature. Partners' shared leisure time is regarded as 'a form of pleasurable interaction that strengthens the attachment between them and helps prevent marital break-up' (Hill, 1988, p.427). This theory of attachment is not only evident in psychology literature. For example Martha Hill's (1988) perspective was primarily an economic one, and sociological interactionist perspectives argue that through face-to-face conversations and interactions, partners construct a reality that provides them with a sense of self (Kingston and Nock, 1987). Time spent together in out-of-work contexts is likely to impact upon the emotional quality of their interaction and hence, familial relationships, although this is dependent on the subjective meaning of those interactions. Research evidence suggests that, although dual-earner couples
spend less time together due to time constraints, it is the quality and the 'kind' of the
time that is spent together that impacts upon feelings of marital satisfaction. For
example, Kingston and Nock (1987), using quantitative data, showed that the more
time spent together in activities such as eating, playing and conversing, the more
satisfying the marriage.

A (social) psychological approach to the family-leisure relationship continues to
be an area of significant academic interest, especially in the US. Non-work time is
considered fundamental to an understanding of family life, suggesting that leisure
should be added to the dyad of work and family if a fuller picture of lifestyles is to be
gained. In a response to the (social) psychological literature on the work-family-
leisure dynamic, the thesis adopts the idea that family leisure time is a crucial
component of everyday life. However, it assumes a more critical approach to the
relationship between family and leisure. In particular, the theoretical framework
outlined in Chapter 2, indicates that gender is a salient factor in the mediation of the
meaning and experience of life domains. Leisure, as a key life domain, interacts with
family and work in the context of existing gender relations. According to the feminist
approaches outlined in the following section, the unequal nature of gender relations
impacts on the extent to which the relationship between family and leisure is positive
for women in particular, but also for men. In the light of these criticisms and the
theoretical framework explained in Chapter 2, the thesis adopts an open stance to the
question of the positive or negative nature of the relationship between family and
leisure. Susan Shaw suggests this approach in her assertion that 'there is a clear need
for research to examine the positive and negative aspects of family leisure' (Shaw,
1997, p.108). This body of literature confirms the need to give interviewees the
opportunity to report on the ways in which leisure and family interact and are
experienced throughout the lifecourse. Their responses can then be analysed in a
gendered framework that accounts for structural constraint and individual agency
making it possible to assess the extent to which experiences are gendered and
constrained or 'free'.

3.4 Gender and the work–family–leisure triad

The mid- to late-1980s and the 1990s signified a shift in focus and approach in the
area of family/work–leisure research. The first indication of significant change came
in the form of serious attention given to gender. In Britain, the work of feminists such
as Deem, Green, Margaret Talbot and Erica Wimbush in the mid- to late-1980s was key in directing leisure studies towards a closer scrutiny of gender relations. The rationale behind placing gender at the centre of leisure research was similar to that of the feminist social scientists in the 1970s, who concentrated on the family and domestic work experiences of women: they challenged ‘male-stream’ social theory and research and exposed ‘women’s subordination to men in society’ seeking ways in which that oppression and subordination may be overcome’ (Deem, 1988, p.5). The challenge to androcentrism in leisure studies in the UK was mirrored in research and theory on leisure in Europe and North America and sought to place ‘women in the foreground whilst recognising them as an oppressed group with certain interests in common’ (Green et al, 1990, p.4). In addition, ‘exploring women’s leisure activities offers a window into the cultural management of gender, an aspect of women’s oppression which is often obscured in other areas of economic and social life’ (Wimbush and Talbot, 1988, p.xvi). The work of feminists in leisure studies, therefore, complements and contributes to feminist research and theory developed since the 1960s which concentrated on the interface between ‘work’ and ‘family’ life (see Chapter 2).

Feminist scholarship in leisure studies questioned many of the fundamental principles of previous leisure research and, in particular, the convention of the paid employment–leisure dichotomy (Deem, 1986; Green et al, 1987; Langhamer, 2000; Clough, 2001). The conceptualisation of leisure as distinct from paid employment was viewed as ignoring and invalidating the experiences of women. In the words of Wimbush and Talbot:

Women’s leisure, particularly that of mothers and wives, tends not to be sharply differentiated from work, but is closely intertwined with kinship relations, the rhythms of domestic and waged labour and the localized contexts of the home, street and neighbourhood. (Wimbush and Talbot, 1988, p.xiv)

The focus of research in leisure studies before the advent of the feminist critique, therefore, did not legitimate the experiences of women by centring research and theory on the paid employment–leisure dichotomy and, hence, the experiences of men. The focus on work and leisure divisions also failed to recognise the extent to which ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ can be experienced simultaneously. Several ‘work-like’ activities may be accompanied by ‘leisure-like’ experiences, such as ironing clothes whilst listening to the radio (Langhamer, 2000), and ‘work-like’ behaviours may be ‘leisure-
like' in different contexts (see above for a detailed critique of the work-leisure dichotomy). The multi-dimensional nature of work, family and leisure continues to be a theme of theoretical and empirical inquiry (Kelly and Kelly, 1994) and is a crucial investigative theme in the thesis.

The feminist contribution to leisure studies has also examined how family roles impact on the leisure experiences and behaviours of family members. The roles and responsibilities of motherhood have been identified as a constraining factor in women’s ability to access leisure. This inclusion of a critical evaluation of family ideology demonstrated how gender role expectations can negatively impact on women’s leisure behaviour and acted as an anti-thesis to the positively correlated relationship between family and leisure assumed by US social psychologists in particular. Leisure and the family were conceptualised as clearly interdependent and by no means necessarily positively related. The interaction of leisure and the family was shown to affect negatively women’s access to and experience of leisure and was reflective of, and instrumental in, the maintenance of oppressive gender relations (Green and Hebron, 1988). Deborah Bialeschki and Sarah Michener (1994, p.59) commented that: ‘Women, particularly those who are mothers, seem to be expected to subordinate their own leisure aspirations and defer to the needs of other family members, often under the guise of the “ethic of care”’. This notion of an ‘ethic of care’ has been raised in other research on the family-employment relationship and refers to the ideological process whereby women ensure that the needs of others in the family take precedence over their own (Wearing, 1998). Leisure, as an area of life that is conceptualised as expressive of personal freedom and focuses on self-satisfaction does not, therefore, fit comfortably with ideologies of motherhood. Feminist studies on the relationships between motherhood and leisure have highlighted the impact of gender-typed expectations on behaviours and the incidence of women sacrificing personal leisure in response to demands from the home and work environments, and/or integrating the leisure preferences of children or partners into their own leisure behaviours to avoid feelings of guilt or selfishness (Bialeschki and Michener, 1994). Research conducted by Jenny Anderson (2001, p.110) has indicated that family holiday experiences are viewed by women as an expansion of parental responsibility rather than a personal leisure preference that is chosen as an activity in its own right. Feelings of guilt have also been identified as an indication of women’s lack of a sense
of entitlement to personal time and, therefore, constitute a ‘psychological barrier to leisure’ (Henderson et al, 1989, p.125).

Other research on women’s leisure in a variety of work and family contexts has been stimulated by academic observations of changes in socio-demographic trends. In the US and the UK, family variations and disruptions, such as divorce, were increasingly evident throughout the 1980s and 1990s. As a consequence, the academic community ‘had to take the unpredictable zigzag of life course seriously’ (Kelly, 1997, p.133). Growing interest in dual-earner families reflected this concern, as the lifecourse of women was increasingly interspersed with extended periods of labour market involvement throughout child-rearing. Hochschild (1989, p.4), in her study of employed mothers in the US, for example, commented that the double shift of paid and unpaid work carried out by the women in her sample resulted in a ‘leisure gap’, a contention that has been partially confirmed by British research (Kay, 1996a, 1996b, 1998). There are several caveats to this contention, however, which relate to the extent to which women’s employment is accompanied by an enhanced sense of entitlement to leisure and the financial independence to pursue it (Kay, 1996b, 1998).

More forceful challenges have emerged from some time-budget research in the US which claims that a genderless, ‘androgynous society’ is emerging whereby ‘time for life’ is equally distributed between men and women (Robinson and Godbey, 1997). The authors, however, also recognise that, for this assertion to be made with adequate confidence, research needs to go beyond the measurement of ‘clock time’ and be supplemented by ‘richer information about the constraints on expectations about how time is spent’ (Robinson and Godbey, 1997, p.204). The value of this work for the thesis is that it points to the interest of how time is allocated to specific activities in family contexts. This thesis does not, however, measure time assigned to specific daily activities but examines how daily life is constructed and the structures and constraints that inform expectations about behaviour. A gender constructivist theoretical approach supports the exploration of the totality of daily life rather than measuring the number of hours dedicated to specific activities, because time is not merely filled with activity but is embedded in experiences and meanings.

Research and theoretical developments within the feminist movement in leisure studies in the 1990s and into the twentieth century, however, have questioned the extent to which leisure is a site of constraint for women and the differential ways in which women actively construct leisure experiences in their everyday lives. While it
has been widely recognised that the responsibilities of childcare, for example, 'constrain women’s leisure not just because of the considerable physical care required by babies and young children, but also because of their social and emotional needs' (Henderson et al, 1989, p.123), the 'ethic of care' may also be seen as an entitlement to leisure because the ethic can be extended to women themselves. Bialeschki and Michener (1994) highlighted this point in their findings from interviews with mothers:

Many women find a need to bring care of self and care of others into a balance that often involves finding a purpose that puts them at the centre of their own lives ... Caring for self may be an important step toward claiming a right to focus on self and to overcoming gender role expectations in other aspects of life that are oppressive and restrictive of women. (Bialeschki and Michener, 1994, p.69)

The feminist–interactionist approach adopted by Bialeschki and Michener and other American feminists such as Susan Shaw and Karla Henderson contrasts with the perspectives of many British feminists who set the "relative freedoms" (Wimbush and Talbot, 1988), of women’s leisure experiences and the meanings they attach to these within a framework of the structural, ideological and hegemonic constraints of patriarchy' (Wearing, 1998, p.45). In the context of this research, the concepts of both freedom and constraint are adopted to examine the role of leisure in the lifestyles of men and women in dual-earner families and the ways in which leisure is constructed as a site of personal expression in the context of patriarchal constraints.

This approach also reflects an emergent trend in leisure studies in the UK since the 1990s; that is, post-structuralist and post-modernist critiques of 'grand theories'. Modernist leisure theories, including feminist theories, have been criticised for their reliance on their structure-based explanations of social and cultural phenomena that fail to account for the complexities and differences between social groups (Green, 1998). In the context of theories of leisure and gender, post-modern and post-structuralist feminisms focus on the ways in which leisure identities and choices are constructed, how they represent and inform differences, and the ways in which leisure can function as resistance to dominant patriarchal structures. Subjectivities are, therefore, central to post-modern/structuralist analyses of leisure, as perceptions of culture, social structure and individual behaviour provide an insight into how actors attach meanings to everyday life and how these understandings act to construct gender (and other identities such as ethnic and class identities). Green (1998, p.171) in her study of 'women's talk' as friendship, for example, revealed how shared humour
between women in leisure contexts 'can be a source of empowerment and resistance to gender stereotypes'.

It is worth noting that analyses of gender in UK leisure studies literature is almost entirely concerned with female experiences. Notable exceptions include social psychological, cultural post-structuralist research on leisure and masculinities. The male response to the feminist agenda in leisure studies during the 1980s was to focus on leisure as a site of the construction of hegemonic masculinity and its reinforcement, and as a place where traditional masculinity may be challenged and validity attributed to alternative forms of masculinities (Wearing, 1998, pp.83–102). A relatively large body of literature exists, however, on the structures, forms and experiences of leisure among women. The emphasis on women's leisure arose in the 1970s and 1980s out of the feminist critique of 'male-stream' leisure research that had failed to account for women's experiences. Deem (1986, p.16) commented that patriarchal modes of control exercised by men in research situations and the imbalance of power between, for example, the female researcher and the male interviewee, may be reasons why gender research has concentrated on the experiences of women alone. Research which is fundamentally concerned with the relationships between leisure and gender, however, cannot only be concerned with women's experiences. In the context of research which centres on the lifestyles of men and women in dual-earner couples and utilises a gender constructivist theoretical framework, the dual role of men and women in the construction and negotiation of gender relations in the home is considered to be crucial.

Developments in research and theory within leisure studies in the past two decades have contributed to the theoretical perspective adopted in this thesis. A gender constructivist approach to the study of the lifestyles of men and women in dual-earner families is fundamentally concerned with the role of leisure in the construction of (gendered) everyday lives. Leisure is conceptualised as a contested domain that is negotiated in the context of familial and cultural surroundings and can be constructed as a site of resistance to dominant ideological discourses. An essential component of enquiry is the way in which men and women actively construct daily life and the role of leisure in that construction. The gender constructivist approach does not, however, entirely depart from the feminist approaches to leisure and gender that were dominant in the 1980s. A balance can usefully be struck between recognising the shared material position of women in capitalist and patriarchal social and cultural settings,
whilst acknowledging the complexity of the relations between men and women and the differential ways these are constructed and perceived. It should also be recognised, however, that this problem of reconciling theories of structure and agency lies at the heart of sociological enquiry and, for this reason, the approach adopted in the thesis represents unresolved theoretical ambitions that are open to criticism.

The critical feminist approaches to leisure that emerged in the mid- to late-1980s have been instrumental in the development of sophisticated research and theory on the work–family–leisure nexus. Similar criticisms to those made about the second wave feminist approaches, outlined in Chapter 2 can, however, also be directed at the feminist leisure scholars of the 1980s and 1990s. In particular, structural determinism and an over-emphasis on gender are substantial problems with feminist approaches to leisure in the modernist era. The combination of structural concerns and the clear influence of gender on the work–family–leisure relationship with an interactionist approach to individual agency, such as the ‘gender constructivist’ perspective (Chapter 2), helps avoid the problem of ‘paradigmatic determinism’ (Shaw, 1997, p.109). By marrying the concepts of structural constraint and individual agency, an attempt is made to present a broader understanding of the work–family–leisure relationship in dual-earner families and across the lifecourse.

3.5 Adapting leisure research to the study of dual-earner families

The review of leisure-related literatures on the relationships between work, family and leisure has revealed that several approaches to the study of leisure in family and work contexts contribute to an understanding of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. The work–leisure relationship has proven to be one of the most enduring features of leisure research and theory and has offered a broad range of explanations on the ways in which work (meaning employment) can impact on leisure behaviour and orientations. Conversely, leisure has also been shown to interact with and shape employment. This dyadic relationship is explored further in the thesis. In addition, the lifecourse adds an extra dimension to the study of lifestyle, particularly in the context of widespread family diversity and family change. Transitions are a key feature of family experience that can provide insight into the ways in which the content of and relationships between life domains change. Family transitions, such as the birth of children and divorce, are not, however, the only lifecourse factors to consider. In the context of this research, the transition to and from dual-earning is a key lifecourse
factor that can impact on and be influenced by orientations towards and activities in other life domains. The ways in which transitions interrelate, and the role leisure plays in the experience of lifecourse change is also considered. The leisure component in lifecourse transitions, particularly changes in earning structures, has rarely been a focal point for research and, therefore, constitutes an original contribution to the study of lifestyle in a contemporary context.

The input of mostly North American studies on the relationship between family and leisure has demonstrated how leisure is a vital contributor to the quality of family life. The relatively uncritical approach to the value of leisure in the family environment has somewhat counterbalanced the critical approaches that have been particularly dominant in British leisure studies since the 1980s. The positive aspect of leisure experience in a family context is, therefore, a topic of enduring interest for the thesis. The lack of consideration given to structural factors such as gender, class and ethnicity, are significant weaknesses of the social psychological approach. In an attempt to remedy these shortcomings the thesis seeks to problematise the value, role and function of leisure and its relationships to work and family in the lifestyles of dual-earner families and across the lifecourse, rather than assuming its positivity.

The problematisation of leisure is influenced by second wave feminist discourse that adopted a critical approach to leisure, work and family and uncovered the constraining influence of unequal gender relations on women’s leisure. In the context of dual-earner families, women have been shown to experience a ‘leisure deficit’ owing to the time and ideological constraints of balancing home life and employment. Other research, however, suggests that gainful employment may have a liberating affect on women, owing, in main, to a greater sense of entitlement. Both these contentions will be explored in the project in the context of the gender constructivist analytical framework outlined in the following section. In addition, the fundamental questioning of the notion of the ‘separate spheres’ of work and leisure made by feminists in the 1980s is applied to the study of dual-earner families. Specifically, the multi-dimensional aspects of the meanings of the ‘domains’ of work, family and leisure are explored. It is anticipated that a lifecourse perspective will reveal the fluid nature of meaning across time and space.
Chapter 4 Fieldwork methodology and techniques

Choice of method when addressing a research problem is not just a question of assessing its technical adequacy but also necessitates a discussion of its philosophical grounding. Intense contestation has characterised the debate on how to gain knowledge about the social world, in other words, what methodology to use, and the procedures and practices best suited to fulfilling the principles of the methodology.

The approach in this thesis can be viewed in the context of these methodological debates. The adequacy of methods from a practical perspective is also considered vital to the validity and reliability of the research project. Both practical and philosophical issues were considered in the choice of methods for the fieldwork phase of the thesis. The aim of fieldwork is to explore, analyse and assess the role played by leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner couples. The research objectives that accompany this aim are:

1. To identify patterns of employment and family life across the lifecourse and to explore how employment and family transitions are experienced
2. To examine the role of leisure in the lifestyles of individuals across the lifecourse and in the context of the dual-earner family
3. To analyse the relationships between leisure and gender in dual-earner families.

Key research questions that are associated with these objectives are:

1. How do patterns of the lifecourse converge/diverge between individuals?
2. How and why do the work and family lives of men and women converge/diverge?
3. How is the lifecourse negotiated within couples and what role does gender play in negotiations?
4. How does leisure interact with changes in the work and family lives of couples/individuals?
5. How and why do the leisure experiences of men and women converge/diverge across the lifecourse?
6. How is gender constructed/negotiated through leisure?
7. How do couples negotiate and renegotiate leisure and how does this reflect, reinforce or challenge gender relations?
With the focus of the study on the roles and meanings of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner couples, methods that collect explanatory data were the most appropriate and adequate. The fieldwork was, therefore, designed to be a small scale qualitative study and a two-phase strategy was utilised to capture the target group of dual-earner heterosexual couples with dependent children. A questionnaire phase was used to identify couples that met the target group criteria and were available for interview, and an interview phase was used and was the primary method of data collection.

The methods chosen for the fieldwork stage of the thesis has been informed by the gender constructivist theoretical framework outlined in Chapter 2, which orients the study towards feminist and constructivist methodologies. The historical development of methodological paradigms provides a context for examining the approach of the thesis and indicates how wider methodological issues are relevant to choice of method.

Methodological debate in the social sciences has primarily centred on what has been referred to by many as a vulgar dichotomy between the 'qualitative' and the 'quantitative' (Kirk and Miller, 1986; Bryman, 1988; Silverman, 1997; Crotty, 1998; Oakley, 1999a; Pawson, 1999). The conventional view is that qualitative research attempts to capture people's meanings, definitions and descriptions of events by studying them in their natural settings (Minichiello et al, 1991; Denzin and Lincoln, 1998a), whereas quantitative research aims to uncover causal relationships in the social world by the manipulation and measurement of quantifiable variables. Fundamentally, these two polar opposites are characterisations of positions which formulate the extreme reference points for a more complex debate about not only the way in which we study the social world, but also what constitutes legitimate inquiry and warrantable knowledge (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1997). These contestations arise from competing 'world views' which are grounded in the historic intellectual cultures of the social sciences. This chapter attempts to explore these competing cultures and evaluate critically their methodological importance to this thesis.

4.1 The importance of paradigms

T. S. Kuhn's (1970) 'history of science' introduced the concept of the 'paradigm'. In the words of Egon Guba and Yvonna Lincoln (1998):
a paradigm may be viewed as a set of basic beliefs (or metaphysics) that deals with ultimates or first principles. It represents a worldview that defines, for its holder, the nature of the 'world', the individual's place in it, and the range of possible relationships to that world and its parts [their emphasis]. (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p.200)

In other words, it constitutes a basic set of beliefs that guide action throughout the research process. The concept of a paradigm has been widely adopted throughout the social sciences and a paradigmatic debate has been particularly pertinent to methodological discussion.

Norman Denzin and Yvonna Lincoln (1998b, p.185) assert that a paradigm encompasses three elements: ontology, epistemology and methodology. Ontology raises basic questions about the nature of reality: what we recognize as 'real', and what can be known about that reality. It refers to our assumptions and what we claim exists. Epistemology is a theory of knowledge: it refers to our justifications for considering what we claim to exist as knowledge. It establishes the guiding principles or rules of inquiry (Pawson, 1999, p.21). Methodology, as defined earlier, is concerned with how the inquirer goes about finding out what s/he believes to be known (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p.201).

Paradigmatic construction within the social sciences has demonstrated that these three elements are inextricably linked. For example, if a tangible universal reality is assumed at an ontological level, then the knower must be objectively detached and value free to observe it. The inquirer must then go on to study this reality objectively, implying that a methodology of control, detachment and rigour is necessary.

**Positivism and postpositivism**

Positivist and postpositive paradigms are the backdrop against which other paradigms have operated (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998b, p.186). Positivism, as a cluster of beliefs and practices in the natural sciences and subsequently in the social sciences, has retained a dominance that has served as a reference point for the development of competing ideological paradigms and perspectives. The positivist paradigm reflects the spirit of Enlightenment, an ethos that emerged in an 'Age of Reason' in England and France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that offered the assurance of unambiguous and accurate knowledge about the world (Crotty, 1998, p.18). The scientist Auguste Comte
(1798–1857) is seen as the founder of positivism, although its philosophical distillation took place early in the twentieth century, owing to the influence of a powerful group of advocates known as the Vienna Circle of Logical Positivists.

It was upon the scientific method that positivism had its greatest impact, providing a new rationale for the 'doing of science' (Lincoln and Guba, 1985, p.19). Although there is no universally accepted version of what constitutes positivist philosophy, several consistent characteristics emerge throughout the literature. In an attempt to summarize these, Alan Bryman (1988, pp.14–15) suggests five fundamental features of the paradigm. Firstly, he refers to a 'methodological naturalism' within positivism, in other words, a belief in the methods and procedures of the natural sciences as appropriate for the social sciences. Secondly, he attributes to positivism an empiricist emphasis that arises from the objectivist epistemological position that reality is 'out there' ready to be discovered. The empiricist implication, therefore, is that only observable phenomena are valid and 'real'. Bryman also contends that positivism promotes the use of the hypothetico-deductive method of inquiry; testing hypotheses by deduction to prove or disprove theory. Theory is not only deductive (i.e. derived from empirical research), but inductive at the stage at which hypotheses are generated. 'Facts' are gathered at preliminary stages of research which are collated to generate knowledge and, inductively, theory. Finally, positivism entails a stance in relation to values, that is, it is considered essential that the researcher should distinguish between normative and scientific statements throughout the research process. Positivism elevates the scientific and, whilst not dismissing the normative, subscribes to the belief that 'we are entitled to express value judgments on the world but we are not entitled to assume that our grounds for making them are scientific' (Kolakowski, 1997, p.7).

The combination of these elements provide a basic characterisation of positivism as a philosophy which proclaims the suitability of the scientific method to all forms of knowledge at an ontological, epistemological and methodological level. So how does this contribute to the qualitative versus quantitative debate? To use the words of Bryman (1988):

The key points to note are that: science has invariably been believed to operate according to the tenets of positivism; quantitative researchers have typically sought to
conform to the methods and procedures of the natural sciences and consequently have been considerably influenced by positivism; the critics of quantitative research have viewed it as seeking to follow the precepts of the scientific method and thereby positivism (Bryman, 1988, p.18).

The criticisms to which Bryman refers are manifold and have stimulated the development of alternative paradigms (which are discussed in detail below) and the considerable internal refinement of positivist philosophy. The most substantial criticisms focus on positivist claims about the transferability of the scientific method to the social sciences. Here, the fundamental problem relates to the appropriateness of treating relations between people as if they were between natural phenomena (Cuff et al, 1992). This criticism particularly challenges the claim that social science should be, or even has the capacity to be, objective. Understandings about the social world are subjective. Meanings are interpreted rather than 'discovered' as 'facts' inherent to the object, as the positivist paradigm suggests.

Supporters of the refined postpositivist stance continue to defend the potential of the social sciences to retain its 'scientific' status, although its claims as a philosophy are far more modest. Objectivity, for example, is referred to in relative rather than absolute terms. Certainty and truth are aspired to, but claims are more commonly expressed in terms of probabilities and approximations. Nonetheless, postpositivists continue to subscribe to the central tenets of positivism and its primary methods of study. Reflecting this argument, Kirk and Miller (1986, p.14) comment that, although the goals and practices of the social sciences differ from those of the natural sciences, they are 'in every sense of the word fully as "scientific" as physics, [and have] fully as much need for reliability and validity as any other science'.

Alternative paradigms

Advocates of an alternative paradigm to (post)positivism have, somewhat misleadingly, been referred to as 'qualitative' researchers. Whilst the philosophies of alternative or anti-positivist paradigms make extensive use of qualitative methodologies, it would be inaccurate to suggest that these philosophies are homogenous, or that 'qualitative' or 'quantitative' methodologies are necessarily exclusive to a particular paradigm. Here, it is
suggested that there are two key paradigmatic alternatives to (post)positivism: critical theory and constructivism.

**Critical theory**

For the purpose of this discussion, critical theory is being used as a blanket term denoting a set of several alternative paradigms. These include neo-Marxism, some feminisms and materialism (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p.202). These approaches vary substantially but share a common epistemological position that contrasts sharply with (post)positivism, that is, the investigator and the investigated are considered interactively linked rather than objectively detached. In other words, how we know about the world is subject to the nature of the transaction between the researcher and the researched and findings are consequently value-laden and subjective.

This theory of knowledge is linked to the ontological position of historical realism. In contrast to the immutability of the realism presented by positivism, critical philosophies suggest that reality has been through stages of historical malleability but has since crystallized into a series of structures that are now assumed 'real', or natural and immutable (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p.205). For neo-Marxists, for example, the economic mode of production has changed throughout history, but since the emergence of capitalism, economic, social, political and institutional relations have crystallized and are now assumed 'real' under false consciousness.

At a methodological level, critical theorists suggest that dialectical dialogue is required, owing to the transactional nature of social being. For neo-Marxists this has the purpose of raising levels of class-consciousness to stimulate political action. Similarly for feminists, the political project of challenging and overcoming the pervasive forces of patriarchy is promoted via the use of dialectical dialogue that raises the subjugated and obscured 'voices' of the women it researches (Edwards and Ribbens, 1998; see later for a discussion of feminist methodologies).

**Constructivism**

In this context, constructivism refers to a body of perspectives including phenomenology, symbolic interactionism, ethnography and interpretive anthropology, whose primary point
of departure from (post)positivism and critical theory is at the level of ontology. The constructivist argument is to move away from ontological realism to ontological relativism. The constructivists suggest there are multiple realities that are specific in nature and dependent for their form and content on the persons or groups holding them. Furthermore, constructions of reality are not more or less absolute or ‘true’, just different and varying in level of sophistication. They are also relative in terms of their capacity to be alterable as continual social experiences inform mental constructions of reality (Guba and Lincoln, 1998, p.206; Schwandt, 1998).

At an epistemological level, the interactive link between the investigator and the investigated literally creates ‘findings’ as the investigation proceeds. Theory, therefore, has the potential to be ‘grounded’ in the investigation (cf. Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1990; Glaser, 1992). Knowledge is consequently considered as transactional and subjective. To complement these ontological and epistemological standpoints, methodology is hermeneutic and dialectical. Individual construction can be elicited through the interaction between and among the investigator and respondents, and through the utilization of the principle of Verstehen (understanding), the world of lived reality can be revealed.

These approaches established roots that pre-date the anti-positivist surge of interest of the 1960s. Constructivist approaches, however, have developed considerably under the influence of post-modernist philosophy which points to the pluralization of life worlds that ‘requires a new sensitivity to the empirical study of issues’ (Flick, 1998, p.2). In counter-constructivist arguments, and in defence of postpositivism, others point to the ‘extreme relativism’ of post-modern constructivist philosophies that act to deny that there is an external world at all (Kirk and Miller, 1986, p.15).

The underlying philosophical allegiances of both critical theory and constructivism and their approaches to the investigation of social reality are considered sympathetic to what has been labelled a ‘qualitative’ approach. The qualitative label is often allied with participant observation and in-depth interviewing in the ‘methods’ text book literature. The fundamentals of these methods reflect their ontological, epistemological and methodological underpinnings. Typical characterisations of qualitative methods include
an emphasis on the researcher 'seeing through the eyes of' social actors, and on providing rich descriptions of social settings. In addition, qualitative methods have a preoccupation with contextualization and identifying process rather than providing snap-shots of the social world (Bryman 1988, pp.61–65).

**Overcoming quality versus quantity in methodological debate**

The descriptions offered above are basic characterisations of what is a more complex debate. This has not, however, prevented several commentators from positing arguments in dichotomous terms and identifying 'quality' and 'quantity' as polar opposites. Furthermore, the debate has been portrayed as hostile and combative, with the two camps vying for intellectual superiority. This apparent 'war' has been said to have raged in the literature from the early 1960s to the early 1990s (Pawson, 1999). What seems increasingly apparent in the literature since the early 1990s, however, is a more widespread concern to reconcile quality and quantity in the research process, and to move the debate on from narrow characterisations and unhelpful (and inevitably inaccurate) dichotomies.

Emergent methodological arguments relate to the observations that 'both qualitative and quantitative approaches face identical problems and need to adopt common solutions' (Pawson, 1999, p.32). It notes that much of the sociological research agenda lies outside of the qualitative versus quantitative debate (for example, historical sociology); that much social inquiry combines qualitative and quantitative approaches and methods; and that it is currently more common for methodological dispute to occur within rather than between paradigms. It seems apparent, therefore, that the distinction between quality and quantity in the paradigm debate is outmoded, particularly in the contemporary climate of methodological triangulation (the combination of methods) and methodological pragmatism (matching the appropriateness of the method to the research question, according to Oakley, 1999a).

**4.2 The methodological approach of this thesis**

The methodological approach adopted in the thesis is closely intertwined with the theoretical approach outlined in Chapter 2 and has been chosen bearing in mind
methodological debates. The gender constructivist approach has been informed primarily by the tenets of second-wave feminism as well as by post-modernist, post-structuralist concerns for a movement away from structural determinism towards individual agency. Furthermore, issues of appropriateness and adequacy have to be considered when deciding at a practical level what methods need to be applied. This approach is, therefore, a combination of philosophical and ideological standpoints and practical and pragmatic issues of application.

**Feminist influences**

From the early 1970s, feminist social scientists engaged in sustained criticism of the epistemologies, ontologies and methodologies associated with the ‘quantitative’ or (post)positivist paradigm (Oakley, 1999a, p.160). This criticism emanates from an assertion that attacks the very roots of the social sciences, namely that a pervasive masculine bias exists in the structures and practices of the social sciences and that this has served to distort women’s experiences and silence women’s voices (Fonow and Cook, 1991; Mies, 1997).

In her discussion about interviewing women, Oakley (1999b) points to the normative survey interview as evidence of conspicuous masculinity in the origins and practices of the research process:

> the entire paradigmatic representation of ‘proper’ interviews in the methodology textbooks owe a great deal more to a masculine social and sociological vantage point than a feminine one. For example, the paradigm of the ‘proper’ interview appeals to such values as objectivity, detachment, hierarchy and ‘science’ as an important cultural activity which takes priority over people’s more individualised concerns (Oakley, 1999b, p.49).

This short excerpt clearly identifies an affiliation of a (post)positivist social science with masculinist value systems. In addition to these claims against the (post)positivist tradition, other criticisms include the selection of sexist and elitist research topics that exclude women; the exploitative relationship between the researcher and the subject; the illusion of objectivity; the simplistic and superficial nature of quantitative data; over-generalization; biased research designs that select only male subjects; and inadequate data dissemination and utilization (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991, p.86). Some of these
criticisms cross the boundaries of the (post)positivist tradition into a more general attack on the social sciences as a whole, and some points of departure from the positivist paradigm are shared by those from other critical and/or constructivist approaches.

The feminist debate on methodology has been part of the qualitative versus quantitative ‘false war’ (Jayaratne and Stewart, 1991, p.85) outlined in the previous section. Such false polarization has led many to comment on the inappropriateness of quantitative research methodology to the feminist project. Maria Mies (1997, p.66) clearly demonstrates this in her comment that the philosophy for a feminist methodology grew out of the debate about positivism as the dominant social science theory, and that ‘there is a contradiction between the prevalent theories of social science and methodology and the political aims of the women’s movement’.

On the grounds that quantitative methods are not necessarily exclusively tied to the positivist doctrine and that quantitative methods per se are not automatically counter to the feminist project (for example, few argue against quantitative analysis of social, demographic and economic data which reveal structural gender inequalities), it seems that the qualitative/quantitative distinction can be discarded in the context of feminist methodological debate. This distinction is also dismissed for the purposes of this thesis as the analyses of statistical data in the second section in Chapter 1, for example, clearly demonstrates the growth in mothers’ employment since the 1970s and that a large proportion of this growth has come about because of an expansion of part-time employment. Statistical data can, therefore, make a valuable contribution to an understanding of the structural location of women and families in the UK.

What is clear, however, is that there is a distinct desire among feminist researchers to break away from accepted masculine methodologies and develop an appropriate methodology that is sensitive to the needs of women. Mary Margaret Fonow and Judith Cook (1991) suggest that four themes in feminist epistemology and methodology provide an alternative to its gender-blind contemporaries. These themes are: ‘reflexivity; an action orientation; attention to the affective components of the research; and the use of the situation-at-hand’ (Fonow and Cook, 1991, p.2).
The term ‘reflexivity’ refers to the tendency of feminists to reflect upon, examine critically and explore analytically the nature of the research process, particularly in relation to gender. Janet Finch (1997), reflecting on her studies of clergymen’s wives and playgroups, comments on the methodological, personal, political and moral issues she was faced with throughout the research process as a feminist and a sociologist. Such reflexivity is viewed as an essential component of research because of the political aims of the feminist project. By employing reflection and self-awareness, the researcher is promoting consciousness-raising within herself (as in Finch’s case) as well as among the (usually) female participants. This can raise moral and ethical issues for the researcher who may be revealing lifeworlds that appear ‘hopeless’ to the subject, as was the case among some of the interviewees in Karen Davies’s (1990) study of unemployed women. She commented that, ‘our ordering of their thoughts and probing into their lives and making them put into words their current situation made things worse for some of them. They became aware of just how hopeless and awful their situation was’ (Davies, 1990, p.65). An example such as this raises questions about the ethics of research and the exploitative potential of the researcher.

Consciousness raising and reflexivity are closely tied to the action orientation of feminist research. Topic selection, theoretical orientation, statement of purpose, choice of method, the whole feminist research approach, is oriented towards liberation (Fonow and Cook, 1991, pp.5–6). This emancipatory principle is demonstrated in Maria Mies’s (1991) study of rural women workers in India, who were given a ‘voice’ in their struggle against male violence. This emphasis on sympathy with the subject and an orientation towards female emancipation could be regarded, however, as a weakness of feminist methodologies. Questions of bias, reliability and the pre-determination of conclusions are raised by such an approach.

A further feature of feminist epistemology is ‘a refusal to ignore the emotional dimension of the conduct of inquiry’, or the affective components of research (Fonow and Cook, 1991, p.9). Emotions are recognized as a source of insight in research that is largely ignored by prevailing masculinist discourses of rationality (DeVault, 1999). ‘Caring’ is also viewed as a vital element of the process of inquiry. By displaying sensitivity to
subjects and their feelings and by developing emotional intimacy between respondent and researcher, power inequalities that place the respondent in a potentially exploitative position are eliminated. This is also informed by the feminist emphasis on reflexivity: the reflexive researcher will assess how far the study situation has the potential to be exploitative (see Finch 1997) and the dissemination of material misrepresentative of women's 'true' voices (see Edwards and Ribbens, 1998).

Feminist research is characterized by a tendency to use already-given situations as the focus of investigation (Fonow and Cook, 1991, p.11). The concern for examining women in their everyday lived realities has meant that several 'unconventional' research settings have been utilized. Examples include settings in the home (for example, Oakley, 1974, 1985), playgroups (for example, Finch, 1997), and feminised working environments (for example, Westwood, 1984).

The allegiance between the feminist-influenced theoretical perspective outlined in Chapter 2 and the feminist methodological approach described above has several implications for the methodology of the thesis. Firstly, owing to the concern to uncover everyday realities, it seems appropriate that subjects are studied in their own domestic settings. The workplace is an impractical and a potentially highly constrained environment. People's homes were, therefore, chosen for the fieldwork. This is not to suggest that the home is in no way a constraining or difficult environment in which to carry out research (see subsequent discussions for constraints on collecting data). Secondly, it is essential that the researcher displays reflexivity throughout the research process and is sensitive to the emotions of the respondent, who may find talking about home life and other 'private' topics personally exposing and emotionally uncomfortable. To operationalise this reflexive principle, it is appropriate to give respondents the opportunity to talk freely about their experiences without directing them to potentially difficult subjects. If sufficient self-reflection is exercised, it seems feasible and desirable that moral and ethical responsibility toward the respondent can be demonstrated.

One component of research that requires specific reflexive attention is the potential for divergent dynamics between interviewer and interviewee, because of their respective social positions. Differentiating factors may include social class, education, age, ethnicity,
sexuality and gender. When an approach is used which emphasizes the essential nature of studying both members of a heterosexual partnership in a project carried out by a lone, white, tertiary-educated female researcher in her mid-twenties, it is vital that inquirer-respondent dynamics are taken into account. It is one of the inevitables of social research which attempts to ‘see through the eyes of’ its respondents that the backgrounds of both the informant and the researcher are brought into the research situation and have the potential to affect interaction (Minichiello et al, 1991). Feminist writers have noted the ease with which female informants offer information to a ‘fellow’ female researcher. This idea of the female researcher as an ‘insider’ is graphically demonstrated in Finch’s (1997, p.167) comments: ‘Women are almost always enthusiastic about talking to a woman researcher, even if they have some initial anxieties about the purpose of research or their own “performance” in the interview situation’. This obviously raises the problem of bias and ethics, particularly in terms of respondent manipulation, but it demonstrates the extent to which the ease of woman-to-woman interaction facilitates the research process.

The problem is somewhat reversed, however, when considering the female researcher–male informant relationship. Problems may arise when the respondent is talking about ‘private’ or ‘personal’ issues, with the female researcher coming to the subject as an ‘outsider’, particularly if a hostile agenda is suspected. The argument for reflexivity and self-awareness on behalf of the researcher is crucial in the light of such a possibility or eventuality.

The adoption of a feminist approach to this thesis is not, however, absolute. It is not, for example, explicitly tied to a political agenda, although there is a clear link between this study of between-partner interaction and feminist studies of housework, care-giving and gender inequalities in the labour market. Moreover, to meet the project’s research aims most effectively, a combination of theoretical and methodological approaches has been used.

**Constructivist influences**

The tenets of constructivism, as outlined in previous sections, have also informed the methodological approach of the thesis. This reflects the project’s aim to establish what everyday life is like at the experiential level. There is an ontological assumption,
therefore, that realities are neither fixed nor monolithic and that knowledge is created via the process of subjective transaction. In an attempt to counter claims about the ‘extreme relativity’ of this approach, it should be noted that the thesis subscribes to the position that similar versions of reality can be identified through discourse and that these are mediated by an individual’s position in the social structure. Structural factors that may imply common experiences include gender, class, age, ethnicity, religious affiliation, disability and sexual orientation. These structural positions do not, however, dictate experience, and plurality must be regarded as a common feature of within-group realities. In this sense a constructivist approach, therefore, can be combined usefully with a critical ontology.

This project is primarily concerned with theory building rather than hypothesis testing, and draws on some of the ingredients of analytic induction. Theory is, therefore, not only drawn from previous research, but is also derived from the fieldwork process; it is teased or drawn out, from the data. This approach of theory embedded in the data is based on Glaser and Strauss’s (1967) ‘grounded theory’. Its appeal is that:

- It allows theory to emerge from the data, so that it does not lose touch with its empirical referent; it provides a framework for the qualitative researcher to cope with the unstructured complexity of social reality and so render it manageable; and it allows the development of theories and categories which are meaningful to the subjects of the research (Bryman, 1988, p.84).

Grounded theory seems reconcilable with the feminist approach outlined above, as it uses the subject as its central focus and is concerned that the theories and categories developed are in the subject’s own words and are, thus, meaningful.

The main problem with this approach is its claim that the researcher can suspend awareness of relevant theories and concepts until a relatively late stage. The approach of this thesis obviously does not wholly subscribe to a grounded approach because a theoretical framework has already been proffered. The basic point of departure from grounded theory is the notion that the researcher has the capacity to be theory neutral. It seems inevitable that researchers as social beings cannot divorce themselves from the effects of social and experiential accumulated knowledge. Even basic research decisions such as choice of topic are subject to the investigator’s pre-conceptions and existing
knowledge of or passion for a particular subject matter. If not, how can the researcher select a ‘topic’ decision at all?

Grounded theory in its truest sense, therefore, is not utilised in the thesis. The analysis of data in Part II, however, provides some insight into the contribution of the participants in the study to generating and modifying theory on the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. Existing theory, therefore, can be reflected on and added to through the process of research, as informants offer new meanings, alternative explanations and divergent realities beyond that which is suggested in the existing literatures. Moreover, the overall methodological approach in the thesis is primarily influenced by feminist epistemology and methodology focusing on the study of families in their own setting (the home) and demanding reflexivity on behalf of the researcher, especially when broaching sensitive issues and when considering the potential for power imbalances between the researcher and the researched. The implication of using this feminist influence is that gender is regarded as a vital structural mediator that informs realities. Other structural effects may emanate from social class, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation and religious differences. Aside from these mediating structural factors, divergent individual understandings and meanings are given precedence. Realities are considered multiple and may work counter to any structural variable. To explore these realities, a constructivist approach is utilised so that multiple realities and divergence as well as experiential convergence can be uncovered. The methodological choice of the thesis, therefore, contains both deduction and induction as it adopts both a particular theoretical and methodological standpoint (gender constructivism), whilst attempting to foster new theoretical and methodological insights by allowing theorem to emerge from the data.

4.3 Implications of the choice of methodological approach

The choice of approach has several implications for the methods adopted in the thesis. Choice of method, however, must also combine methodological considerations with pragmatic and practical concerns. Not only must theory, methodology and methods converge at the philosophical level, but solutions to several practical problems must be found. Firstly, the three-year time-scale of a doctoral project limits the choice of method. A longitudinal approach to a project attempting to analyse change in family and individual
behaviour over time would have been desirable but was not an option. The life-history approach described below is therefore not purely a method of choice but a method of necessity.

Secondly, as a lone researcher the number and, therefore, the range of couples that can be studied is limited. A small-scale study with an non-representative sample was inevitable in this context, even though representativeness was not a fundamental concern for the project. Financial resources were also limited, and so methods had to be low cost and the sample, consequently, small in size. These practical considerations and others, such as transport issues and the availability of technical equipment, informed the choice of methods for the thesis in addition to the ideological and philosophical standpoints already described. In addition, careful consideration was given to pragmatic issues surrounding the appropriateness of the method to the research question and the adequacy of its application.

**Life history approach**

Life histories were used to meet the methodological aims and practical requisites of the thesis. In providing a biographical view of the past, the life history narrative can locate the subject’s position in the present, providing context and indicating processual changes across the lifecourse. It places the subjects at the centre of inquiry, giving them a ‘voice’ about their own experiences and realities and provides rich descriptions of events over time. These characteristics are clearly reconcilable with feminist (Fielding, 1993) and constructivist methodologies, from which the project takes much of its influence. By offering the subject an opportunity to describe his/her life history in the context of the family and employment (as well as other institutional settings), the critical emphasis on structure providing meaning is also elucidated. It is possible, therefore, to examine the tensions between the subjective viewpoint of the respondent and his/her perception of the social structure. It also valuable in the context of well-documented evidence that women’s employment histories fluctuate considerably throughout the lifecourse. In the words of Alison MacEwen Scott and Brendan Burchell (1994, p.121): ‘[It] is well known [that] the structure of most women’s labour-force participation is strongly affected by their domestic role and [that] these roles have different effects at different points in the
lifecycle'. A life history approach, therefore, offers insight into how employment and domestic life interweaves, and provides a platform from which to examine the reasons why interaction occurs.

Profound and complex issues of reliability of recall and the validity of using present-day information to study the past are, however, raised by using such a method (Miller, 1999, p.2). In the absence of the possibility of longitudinal study, recall is the best alternative. The problems of recall are not particularly magnified in the case of this study, however, because it is not highly dependent on the exact detail of chronology. Moreover, it is the attachment of meaning to particular situations, such as the transition from employment to full-time homemaking, and the impact this has on perceptions of leisure, as it was remembered at that time and also how it is interpreted in retrospect, that is of central importance. This will reveal how meanings and realities change over time and how they coincide with an individual's changing position within the social structure.

The life history chart in Appendix 2 provides an example of how life histories were recorded in the interviews. The interviewees were given the opportunity to outline their family and employment histories in chronological order. Individuals also included additional information about important life events such as the illness of a child or moving to different parts of the country. These life events were recorded on the life chart by the interviewer and was used as a tool to guide the questions for the rest of the interview. The life history accounts given by the interviewees were also recorded on tape and transcribed to ensure that all the relevant detail about the timing and nature of family and employment transitions was captured.

**In-depth interviews**

The methodological underpinnings of the life history method are closely interlinked with those of the in-depth interview. In-depth interviews and in particular the 'unstructured' interview are closely associated with constructivist and critical theory philosophies. The unstructured interview is principally a 'guided conversation' that allows interviewers to take their own path in the context of certain guidelines. The interviewee is, therefore, relatively free to converse with the interviewer and raise topics and express meaning in their own way. Interview guides, that is a list of topics to cover in the interview, are the
only prompt to the interviewer, who is free to phrase questions themselves and offer opinions (Fielding, 1993, p.136).

To aid the interview process and ensure topic coverage, a semi-structured interview guide was produced for this study, with additional points of inquiry inserted when follow-up or expansion was considered appropriate (see Appendix 2). This method was used in combination with the life-history approach so that meanings, realities and understandings could be elucidated from the informants' standpoint. Similarly to the life-history method, the in-depth interview also provides the participant with a 'voice' and an opportunity to provide description and meaning in their own words and not according to a predetermined typology. The use of in-depth interviews is, therefore, clearly reconcilable with feminist and constructivist methodological perspectives.

The main point of departure from the unstructured in-depth approach relates to the issue of the researcher 'answering back' and especially offering his/her opinion to the interviewee. Although the phraseology of questions and the manner in which they are asked may be interpreted as containing some bias (the researcher is not value-free), an attempt was made to keep this to a minimum by avoiding any attempt to direct respondents to views or beliefs they do not hold as their own. 'Controlled subjectivity' is, therefore, an approach applied to the fieldwork stage of the thesis and serves as a demonstration of how apparently contrasting philosophical approaches (in this case epistemological objectivity and subjectivity) can be combined to present a feasible alternative.

4.4 Methods in practice

The study was designed according to the approach outlined above. At both philosophical and practical levels, in-depth interviews and life histories were the methods chosen. In practice, the fieldwork stage of the research raised several personal and practical challenges. The first test for the fieldwork was access to dual-earner couples for interview and how to reach a study group with a broad range of social, economic and cultural characteristics. The following section describes the methods employed and the problems raised throughout the process of accessing the study group. In addition, details of the interviews and some of the challenges that emerged throughout the interview process,
such as an inability to control the spatial environment in which the interviews took place and the interference of partners and family during interviews, are examined. Finally, the tools used for analysing the data are described and assessed.

Accessing the study group

The target group for the fieldwork was dual-earner heterosexual couples with dependent children. The research strategy aimed to split this dual-earner group into two separate groups of different family-employment configurations: one half of the group would be ‘one and a half’ earners and the other would be dual full-time employed parents. The division of the study group into two halves was used as a strategy to access a broad range of socio-economic groups, although this proved ineffective in practice (see subsequent discussions). The fieldwork was designed as a small scale qualitative study and a two-stage strategy was employed to generate a study group. The two stages included:

1. A questionnaire phase (see Appendix 1), and;
2. An interview phase (see Appendix 2).

The questionnaires were distributed to two primary schools in ‘packs’ that contained two questionnaires (one for each partner to complete), a letter describing the project and a stamped, addressed envelope. The schools were state schools in Loughborough in the East Midlands, and they were chosen on the basis of their quite different socio-economic catchment areas. OFSTED reports identified School A as having a mainly middle-class catchment area, whereas School B contained pupils with largely working-class backgrounds.

The purpose of the questionnaire was twofold. Primarily, the questionnaire was a means of accessing a sample for interview, as the respondents were given the opportunity to provide contact details if they were willing to take part in the second phase of the project. Secondly, the responses were intended to provide valuable basic information about the work, family and leisure characteristics of the respondents which would be useful when visiting the couples for interview. Also, the questionnaires were distributed to children in school years five and six (ages 10 to 11). These years were chosen to increase the likelihood of reaching couples with two incomes. As the age of the youngest child increases, so too does the rate of employment among mothers.
Of the 100 packs distributed to School A 32 were returned. Of these 32, 12 provided contact details and 11 couples were interviewed. The response from School B, however, was relatively poor. Of the 100 packs that were distributed, nine were returned and only one couple indicated willingness to be interviewed. To try to prompt more responses, reminders were posted around the school and extra questionnaires were placed in the reception areas of the school and outside the after-school club. This approach yielded one further couple for interview.

The strategy adopted appeared to be failing to reach a broad range of socio-economic groups, with middle-class families being disproportionately over-represented. Alternative approaches were, therefore, put into place. These were more focussed methods of targeting individuals in low-skilled, manual occupations, and included:

1. Distributing questionnaire packs to employees of a branch of J Sainsbury plc in the Loughborough area. Packs were placed in the staff area and promotional material particularly encouraged cashiers, cleaners and shelf-stackers to respond.

2. Involving the Sainsbury store manager in distributing packs to employees whom she thought would fit the sample criteria.

3. Making informal approaches to catering and cleaning staff working at Loughborough Town Hall.

All of these approaches produced no further interviewees. Problems experienced included:

1. The unwillingness of women approached for interview to commit their partner to the project.

2. The poor level of response to the questionnaire from people with low-skilled and/or manual occupations. The smaller number of returned questionnaires from Primary School 2 negatively impacted on the number of interviews that were derived from families with working class backgrounds. The low response rate may reflect several factors such as the lower incidence of dual-earning among working class families and an unfamiliarity with and wariness about the research process.

3. The cancellation of interviews owing to long and/or unsociable hours of shift work, which meant that couples could rarely find a time to be in the same place at the same
time for interview. Attempts were made to reschedule interviews at a later date, but some couples insisted on dropping out of the research process entirely at this stage. At the end of this lengthy process of approaching schools and other institutions (mid-July 2000), the sample profile was decidedly middle-class: 12 couples had been interviewed and almost all of them had post-secondary education and skilled, non-manual occupations. In an attempt to recruit further couples for interview, regardless of their educational and occupational backgrounds, questionnaire packs were distributed to clerical workers at Loughborough Town Hall and Charnwood Borough Council and an advert was placed on the Council’s intranet bulletin website. Two additional couples were recruited and interviewed as a direct result of this strategy.

After the completion of these two interviews, time was clearly becoming a pressing issue, and the completion of the project in the given time-scale (three years) was under threat. Any further attempts to recruit interviewees would have resulted in a substantial extension of the fieldwork phase of the project. It was decided that the data collected on middle-class families was sufficient, and that although a more diverse socio-economic profile of the study group was desirable, it was no longer within the remit of the project to pursue it further. Given the opportunity to repeat the project, it would be strongly advisable to commence the data collection phase earlier on in the project (in the middle of year one, rather than the beginning of year two) in order to capture a broad range of socio-economic groups.

The failure of all the methods employed to attract couples with anything other than (mostly) highly-educated, non-manual occupational backgrounds led to the under-representation of an important sub-group of dual-earner families. It was anticipated at the beginning of the project that, by aiming for a mix of two full-time earning couples and ‘one-and-a-half’ earner couples (typically a full-time working man and a part-time working woman, although this is sometimes reversed), a mix of socio-economic groups would be represented. This was not, however, the outcome. Couples that included two full-time workers were generally in skilled occupations and had tertiary education, and so confirmed preliminary expectations. The one-and-a-half earner couples interviewed, however, also tend to have high levels of educational attainment and work in non-manual
skilled occupations. The result of the imbalance is a skewed sample that is mainly middle-class.

The socio-economic imbalance in the study group was an unintended outcome of the research design. Its implication is that the results of the study are applicable to the experiences of a small group of broadly middle-class dual-earner families. The conclusions that emerge from the fieldwork, therefore, refer to middle-class experiences, although generalisations across large groups of people are not possible or desirable given the small size of the study group. Although the design of the fieldwork failed to reach a variety range of socio-economic groups, the people that took part in the interviews were a heterogeneous group. The group incorporated individuals who had been separated, divorced, remarried, a step-parent, unemployed or made redundant at various stages in the lifecourse. The diversity embedded in the characteristics of the study group is, therefore, an unintended outcome of the research strategy that adds to, rather than limits, the value of the current study.

The interview

The interview was directed by an interview guide which covered several topics including paid work, domestic responsibilities, childcare and leisure, and was especially concerned with tracking changes across the lifecourse (Appendix 2). Each interview was carried out in the home of the interviewees and participants were questioned separately. Partners were interviewed in direct succession to avoid any communication between the two, and an average session lasted approximately two hours. Interviews began with a plot of the life history of each participant, with a particular focus on employment and family histories. The life stories of interviewees were then used as a reference tool for the interview, with questions often relating back to work and/or family transitions. The interviews were recorded with the permission of the interviewees.

The rationale for interviewing both men and women in couples was manifold. Firstly, the experiences of men and women have often been studied in isolation, particularly in leisure studies in the UK. This is partly an outcome of the feminist challenge to leisure research in the 1970s and 1980s which contested androcentric social scientific orthodoxies and focussed research efforts on the lived experiences of women. The
fieldwork for the thesis, therefore, represents a juncture between bodies of research that are divided by gender. The two-sex study group was also comprised of male and female partners in cohabiting relationships. This incorporation of the stories of men and women in the same relationship was considered crucial to an understanding of the co-dependency of behaviour in couples. The fieldwork, therefore, included the notion that the behaviour of one partner would inevitably impact on the other. It was also considered important that the fieldwork should not only capture experiential convergence and divergence between partners, but it should also examine perceptual and attitudinal similarities and differences. Understandings of or attitudes towards family life could provide information about the foundations for behaviour and go some way to explain the actions of the interviewees.

Challenges that emerged throughout the process of interviewing mostly related to the problem of interviewing couples in the family home when both partners were in the same place at the same time. Although participants were interviewed separately from their partners, this did not prevent some interference by the men and women in some of the couples. In a few instances, partners would pass through the room where interviews were taking place, bring in food or drink or pass on messages to their partners while they were being interviewed. In one instance, the male partner 'sat in' on the early part of his partner's interview and contributed to her recollection of her life history. In another case, the female partner of the couple was being interviewed in a conservatory area of the house and her partner was sitting behind her in the lounge which directly neighboured the conservatory with only a pane of glass partitioning the two. Writing from a feminist perspective, Deem (1986, p.16) states that such occurrences are 'an important part of our data because they provide another indicator of the extent to which women are controlled by men'. While this is partially accepted, the interviews of the male participants were also similarly 'policed' by their partners. It was clear that both the men and women in the study group were constrained to a greater or lesser extent by the presence of their partners.

In addition, the busy lifestyles of the couples often resulted in problems with negotiating a time at which both partners would be available and often date changes had to be made. Time constraints also impacted on some of the interviews as partners had to arrange other commitments, such as childcare, around the hour during which they were
being interviewed. Fortunately, none of the interviews was substantially cut short, but sometimes work and family responsibilities meant that interviews had to be interrupted and/or slightly shortened. Phone calls, visitors to the home and interruptions by the children in the home were common. Problems in arranging and undertaking interviews were inevitable, however, given the family groups chosen for the study, and they represent some of the issues of interest (for example, how patterns of behaviour are negotiated and ‘timetabled’). The challenges met during the process of setting-up and participating in interviews thus provide added insight into the lifestyles of dual-earner families.

Transcription and managing the data

A full transcript of each interview was typed and managed with the aid of NUD*IST, the computer software package. Full transcripts were chosen as preferable to selective transcription for methodological rather than a practical reasons. By producing a full transcript, several significant factors were revealed that otherwise would have been hidden. An example of one element of full transcription that proved analytically useful was the length of responses given to questions regarding the reasons for changes in employment. Preliminary stages of transcription revealed that male respondents in particular spoke at length about change in terms of career progression, and this would regularly be referred to throughout subsequent discourse. When answering the same type of questions, female respondents tended to speak only briefly of career advancement and focussed more on family change. The substantial volume of transcribed text relating to career progression provided by some of the male participants, and the relative (or sometimes complete) absence of similar responses by women was an important difference which was captured through the use of full transcription. Selective transcription may well have omitted much ‘irrelevant’ detail regarding career progression and a valuable finding would have been missed if respondents had not been recorded in their own ‘voice’.

The computer software package, NUD*IST, was used as an aid to manage the large volume of complex data elicited in the interviews. The advantages of using NUD*IST rather than manual methods of data management are described by one of its designers, Lyn Richards (1999, p.100): ‘The advantages of qualitative software … include efficiency of managing messy data and information about it, coding and retrieving data reliably,
searching text and asking questions about patterns of coding'. In practice, NUD*IST was a sophisticated way of storing detailed data that was easy to access. It aided the process of breaking-down transcripts from the interviews into thematic sections whilst providing the technology to keep the ‘stories’ of the participants intact. It supported the need for systematic and rigorous analysis of the data and controlled the complexity of the data through the use of coding. NUD*IST was not, however, used to code small, fragmented sections of data (several paragraphs of data constituted the average size of the coded data ‘unit’), and most of the responses were coded with their accompanying question. The software was also not used in the quantitative analysis of keyword frequencies as this was incompatible with the search for the context of meanings of work, family and leisure. In short, NUD*IST was primarily used as a means of electronically managing data, rather than an analytical tool.

Throughout the process of data analysis and the reporting of the research results, both the reading and rereading of life histories and transcripts were used in combination with the coding and retrieval of sections of thematic data from NUD*IST. This proved to be the most appropriate and thorough approach to the reporting of results.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the methodological approach of the thesis and the methods it has employed for data gathering. Decisions were based on a combination of practical, pragmatic and philosophical criteria, and a fit between ideological, theoretical issues and methodology has been attempted. Feminism, constructivism and critical theory all have a part to play in the choice of methodology and arguments have been presented in support of methodological fusion. Furthermore, an attempt has been made to move beyond the polarization and over-simplification of methodological debate which has tended to focus on an outmoded distinction between the ‘qualitative’ and the ‘quantitative’, towards a multi-faceted approach that recognizes the potential for, and value of, the combination of elements from several perspectives.

The fieldwork for the thesis was designed to account for methodological debates and two main methods of data collection were utilised: life histories and in-depth interviews. The first stage of the fieldwork (a questionnaire phase) identified couples available for
interview, although the success of this method of access was limited. Firstly, there were a small number of couples that responded to the request for interviewees, thus limiting the size and scope of the results. The study was designed to be a small-scale qualitative study and so the limited number of interviewees was not a problem *per se*, but it limits the generalisability of the results to a wider population of dual-earner families. The study group was also self-selecting, which raises issues of the subjects establishing a personal agenda for the research by the time of interview. Their interest in the research topic implied by their response to the request for interviewees, raises questions about the extent to which the experiences of the couples are atypical. Their interest, for example, may have been stimulated by exceptional personal circumstances and a desire to ‘tell their stories’. The problem of self-selection could not have been avoided, however, because of the poor responses to the calls for interviewees. It also presented an opportunity in the sense that the respondents were willing to invest time in the interviews and, therefore, provide the study with rich data.

The problem of the narrow socio-economic profile of the study group has been discussed above and this could inform the research designs of future studies on dual-earner families. More informal methods of approach may stimulate the interest of those that may be wary of filling out forms or are unfamiliar with the research process. Snowballing could also be used as a way of accessing networks of individuals with a similar socio-economic background. Given more time and resources, similar research would be able to capture a broader representation of socio-economic groups. If the research were to be repeated, it would be advisable to begin looking for interviewees much earlier on in the research process. In the case of the current project, the search for interviewees in the second of three years of research was too late, and the project would have undoubtedly benefited from a call for interviewees in the first year.

The problem of recall in life history studies have also been raised, and aside from longitudinal research, this human reality cannot be avoided in research that attempts to come to terms with a temporal dimension. The results of the empirical work presented in the following chapters must be viewed in the context of these limitations.
Part II

Results and analysis

Part II reports the results of the fieldwork and analyses the findings in the context of the aims, objectives and theoretical approach set out in the first part of the thesis. The overall aim of the project – to explore the role of leisure in the lives of couples in dual-earner families with dependent children, is examined in three sections, structured to reflect the objectives of the thesis and the sequence of issues raised in the interviews.

Chapter 5 examines the question: How is work and family life patterned across the lifecourse and how are work and family transitions experienced? This is explored in an analysis of the life histories of the 14 dual-earner couples in the study group. Patterns of the family lifecourse, including the timing of marriage and the birth of children, and the incidence of life events, such as divorce, repartnership and family reconstitution, are combined with chronologies of the employment histories of partners. This chapter also explores the gendered nature and experience of the lifecourse. Patterns of behaviour throughout family and employment histories are unpicked to determine the extent to which the experiences of men and women in dual-earner couples, and across couples, display similar or different characteristics and how trajectories of the lifecourse are negotiated between partners. Crucially, the employment and family histories of couples in dual-earner families provides a setting for the examination of leisure.

Chapter 6 asks the question: how does leisure interact with work and family throughout the lifecourse? The first part of the chapter examines the problem of defining 'leisure' as a distinct area of life. Several dimensions of the meanings of leisure are elucidated including leisure as a residual component of lifestyle, leisure as distinct from paid work, leisure as activity, leisure as non-obligation, leisure as self-fulfillment, leisure as time and leisure as experience. The fluidity of leisure as a concept and the problems associated with defining an area of life that is chameleon in nature is described. In addition, the definitions of leisure offered by the interviewees are cross-referred to debates in leisure studies about the roles and meanings and leisure. The relationships between leisure and changes across the lifecourse are examined in detail in the second half of the chapter. Three key stages in the lifecourse...
are isolated as examples of the complex ways in which leisure interacts with everyday life. Leisure in the pre-children phase of the lifecourse, the parenting stage and the dual-earner phase are examined as relatively distinct stages in the course of life. The transitions to and from family–employment configurations are also examined. The differences between the experiences of leisure throughout the lifecourse for the men and women in the study group are explored in the context of the theoretical framework of gender constructivism.

The final results chapter examines in detail the relationships between leisure and gender in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. The chapter begins with an examination of how gender relations are manifested in the leisure behaviours and orientations of partners. The work, family and leisure priorities of individuals are examined in the context of gender relations in the home. The differences between the male and female participants, ‘hierarchies’ of work, family and leisure are explored, along with some of the rationalisations used to explain behaviours. These rationalisations are explored in the context of a gender constructivist framework so that the extent to which gender is being challenged or reinforced through leisure can be revealed. The notion that men and women make ‘sacrifices’ of and for leisure is also examined. The second half of the chapter focuses on how the leisure behaviours and orientations of one partner impacted on the behaviours and orientations of the other. Both reciprocity in negotiations and within-couple conflicts are examined as characteristics of the negotiation of the leisure behaviour of partners. The extent to which gender mediates these negotiations and their outcomes is also analysed.

The conclusion draws together the findings from Parts I and II of the thesis. Analysis focuses on the similarities and differences between the thesis’ findings and the results of other research, and the usefulness of a gender constructivist approach to the analysis of the lifestyles of dual-earner families. In addition, the value of including the component of leisure in research on the lifestyles of different family forms is critically appraised, and directions for future research are suggested.

Application of the ‘gender constructivist’ perspective

Part II of the thesis applies the theoretical devices derived from Part I to the results of the fieldwork. The theoretical model used is referred to as ‘gender constructivism’ and its key characteristics are a concern for the centrality of gender in analyses of relations in the home and the importance of individual agency in the (often different) ways in
which individuals actively construct everyday life and identity. This approach is an attempt to synthesise seemingly contradictory philosophical standpoints. Its primary referent is gender-sensitive theories on ‘everyday life’ and the family-employment-leisure relationship developed by ‘second wave’ feminists. The concept of patriarchy, or male domination over women is employed in an analysis of the different ways in which the everyday lives of men and women in dual-earner families are constructed and experienced. Leisure, for example, is explored in the context of existing evidence suggests that there are significant gender inequalities in men’s and women’s access to and experience of leisure (Deem, 1986; Wimbush and Talbot, 1988; Green et al, 1990; Kay, 1996b). In addition, work, family and leisure are explored in the light of well documented evidence that women in dual-earner families experience a ‘double burden’ of work in the home and in the formal economy (Hochschild, 1989).

This approach, however, challenges the deterministic overtones of some feminist discourse that presents women (and sometimes, men) as passive victims to the structural allocation of gender roles. Women’s experience may be structured by patriarchal power but it is not determined by it. As actors in social processes, women actively construct their everyday lives. Gender is, therefore, negotiated within the context of work, family and leisure and, while this may produce outcomes that closely conform to expected patterns of behaviour, gender may also be constructed in ways that challenge existing societal norms and values. In one sense, the women in the study are already challenging dominant assumptions about the role of women in society by engaging in employment in the child-rearing stage of their family lifecourse. As such, dual earnership is a potential source of emancipation for women in terms of access to employment, although existing evidence suggests that egalitarianism in terms of sharing domestic work and childcare and more equal access to leisure has not transpired for the majority of women in dual-earner families (for example, Kay, 1998, 2001).

The extent to which men and women in dual-earner families challenge and renegotiate gender roles is, therefore, a central concern of the thesis. This is explored in the context of dual-earning and across the lifecourse so that even subtle changes in behaviour can be identified. Changes in the distribution of domestic work between partners and shifts in the attitudes and behaviours of partners towards their access to and experience of leisure are examples of potential sites for the renegotiation of gender or shifts in the ways in which gender is constructed within the context of the
couple. By examining everyday life in this theoretical context gender is, therefore, viewed as a site of contestation as well as a significant structural constraint which informs attitudes and behaviours.

The gender constructivist approach also recognises that there is no single category of 'woman' (Crompton, 1997, p.21). Women may share common experiences because of their shared position in the social structure, but other social and individual differences intervene to produce a variety of experience and meaning. Orthodox categories of social stratification such as ethnicity, age, sexual orientation and social class are commonly cited sources of experiential divergence, but post-structuralist feminist theory suggests that individual differences between women are vital to an understanding of the process of gendered experience. Gender is constructed in social interaction and adopts a variety of meanings in a variety of contexts; discourses of 'motherhood' and 'breadwinning', for example, do not take the same form and meaning for all women or all men. The thesis attempts to operationalise this concept by avoiding over-generalisations about the experience of 'all men' and 'all women' in dual-earner families. Uncovering similarity and difference within the previously identified heterogeneous group known as dual-earner families, and the men and women in those families, is one of the key aims of the analysis. The ways in which individual men and women in dual-earner families actively construct and make sense of their everyday lives in gendered terms is, therefore, a crucial component of the thesis.

The thesis, therefore, attempts to establish a 'middle ground' throughout its application of theory to analyses of the lifestyles of dual-earner families. Rosemary Crompton (1997) represents these understandings in her comments in her text on women and work:

We ... have to be careful to remember that although our understandings may have been enhanced by recognizing the importance of discourse in shaping our view of reality, nevertheless there is also a world of institutional structure and constraints and these have real effects. (Crompton, 1997, p.111)

Although the theoretical framework of the thesis is primarily informed by 'standpoint' feminist theory which focuses on the importance of structural explanations of gender inequalities, it also applies the concept of within-group 'difference' (both between dual-earner families, between men and women and, crucially, between men and between women) to analyses of everyday life, and the notion of gender
'(re)negotiation' as actors actively participate in the construction and reconstruction of gender relations in the home throughout the lifecourse. These concepts and theories are applied to all aspects of everyday life including the construction, negotiation and meanings of paid and unpaid work, childcare and leisure.
Chapter 5 The lifecourse of family and work

The results presented in this chapter report the family and work histories of the men and women in the study group. The life history accounts of the participants are explored to uncover the patterns and experiences of paid and unpaid work and family life across the lifecourse. These work and family histories provide a context in which to examine leisure (Chapter 6) and are crucial to an understanding of the processes through which individuals structure their lives as dual earners. The life histories described by the participants also provide essential detail on the ways in which couples construct daily life and the extent to which these reflect gender ideologies. Chapters 2 and 3 clearly showed that gender plays a central role in the construction of lifestyle across the lifecourse and that the roles of motherhood and breadwinning are particularly salient factors in the structure of daily life among men and women with children. The results reported in this chapter examine the role of gender in the work and family behaviours of the men and women in the study group and how it was constructed throughout the lifecourse. Primarily, the aim of the chapter is to establish a context for leisure by exploring the structures and experiences of family and work for individuals in couples over time.

The findings are reported in three main sections. The first section explores the lifecourse at individual and family levels and establishes some of the patterns of work and family life over time. Gendered patterns and experiences of the lifecourse are explored in the second section. In particular, the disjointed careers of the women in the study are examined along with the differential ways in which gender was negotiated between couples. Finally, within-couple experiences are explored to reveal some of the divergent ways men and women in cohabiting relationships perceive lifestyle and the negotiation of lifestyle. The analysis of employment and family histories at individual and family levels and between and within couples provide a rich background against which leisure can be examined.

The results presented here have been obtained from a study group of 14 dual-earner couples. The work and family characteristics of the couples are identified in Table 5.1. The table shows the participants' job status and hours of work at the time of
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Couple</th>
<th>Pseudonym</th>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Age</th>
<th>Job/occupation</th>
<th>Hours</th>
<th>Education</th>
<th>Marital history</th>
<th>No. of children (ages)</th>
<th>Additional information</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Andrew</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Self-employed computer consultant</td>
<td>30–50</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>1 (11)</td>
<td>Sarah lived with two step-children in first marriage</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Sarah</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>Acquisitions librarian (British Gas) + unpaid assistant to husband’s business</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>2nd marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Fiona</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Senior Manager (NHS)</td>
<td>27.5</td>
<td>GCSE</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>2 (13, 10)</td>
<td>Couple experienced a 5 year separation that did not lead to divorce. Couple of British Asian origin. Male partner a practising Sikh</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Charlie</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Photographer (University)</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>A level</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>Claire</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Computer Teacher (University)</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>3 (10, 12 and 14)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Jon</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Firefighter + part-time removals</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>2nd marriage</td>
<td>2 (11, 9)</td>
<td>Jennie 5 months pregnant. Child from Jennie’s previous relationship lives in the household. Jon’s child from his first marriage lives with his former partner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Jennie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>Senior researcher (University) + GCSE maths tutor</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>3 (18, 14, 12)</td>
<td>Suzanne’s 2 children (18, 14) from her first marriage live in the same household as Suzanne and Geoff’s only child (12)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Geoff</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Self-employed advertising and marketing consultant</td>
<td>wide range</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>Suzanne</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Secretary to the family company</td>
<td>wide range</td>
<td>O Level</td>
<td>2nd marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Peter</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>Modern languages teacher</td>
<td>40+</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage, currently in consensual union</td>
<td>4 (22, 21, 13, 11)</td>
<td>1 child (21) from first marriage at University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>E</td>
<td>Heather</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Project Co-ordinator (local charity) + Youth worker</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>Secretarial qualification</td>
<td>2 marriages, currently in consensual union</td>
<td></td>
<td>1 child (22) from first marriage, 2 children (13, 11) from second marriage in household</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>David</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Researcher (University)</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>2 (13, 11)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>Eva</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Government advisor</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>G</td>
<td>Trevor</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Landscape architect</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>2 (10, 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>H</td>
<td>Anne</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Health promotion specialist + OU lecturer</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Nigel</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Town planner</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Postgraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>2 (10, 8)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I</td>
<td>Kelly</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>Library ass + SEN worker + lunchtime supervisor</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>O level</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Richard</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>Self-employed automotive styling designer</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree (NZ equivalent)</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>3 (12, 11, 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>J</td>
<td>Mary</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>Nursery nurse</td>
<td>35.5</td>
<td>BTEC diploma</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Guy</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>2 (7, 1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>K</td>
<td>Jean</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>Librarian</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Scott</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Lecturer</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>3 (13, 11, 9)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L</td>
<td>Tracy</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>Special school assistant + respite foster carer</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Barry</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Consultant engineer</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>1 (13)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>Barbara</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>Teacher</td>
<td>35+</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Tom</td>
<td>Male</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>Insurance broker</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>BTEC diploma</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td>1 (4)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>Debbie</td>
<td>Female</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>Environmental health officer</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>Undergraduate degree</td>
<td>1st marriage</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
interview; the age of the interviewee and the number and ages of children in the household; the marital history of partners and their current living arrangements. It also provides additional information on the family histories of the interviewees where appropriate. For example, several of the participants had experienced divorce and had repartnered. Some also had lived in reconstituted or ‘step’ families, some had experienced lone parenthood and some had children living away from home. In addition, all of the couples were of White European ethnicity apart from couple C who were of British Asian origin and Sikh religion. It is worth noting that neither the questionnaire nor the interview enabled participants to self-define their ethnicity or religious affiliation and that this represents a limitation of the fieldwork.

5.1 The lifecourse of the individual and the family

The recollection of life histories by the interviewees revealed the often complex paths by which individuals came to be part of a dual-earner family. Individual accounts, combined with the history recorded by their partners, revealed a picture of the lifecourse that was characterised by a variety of family–employment configurations. This section explores these individual and combined life histories in more detail. The first main aim of the section is to reveal some of the general patterns of life events identified in the individual histories reported by the interviewees. In addition, a number of observed differences in the lifecourses of individuals are identified. The second key aim is to establish how individual histories combine to produce the lifecourse of families. Cross-referencing the life histories of partners provides an impression of the extent to which behaviour is interdependent, thereby avoiding a false dichotomy of independent individual behaviour and the behaviours and lifestages of other family members. Cross-referencing partners’ life histories can also reveal how life events have differential impacts on couple members.

Individual life histories

Individuals reported that they had often experienced a wide range of work/family configurations throughout the lifecourse. At the family level, all of the interviewees had experienced transitions from a single person status to partnership and marriage, and the transition to childrearing. These family statuses were often combined with a variety of employment statuses. Only a few of the interviewees had jobs that had remained the same throughout their employment history. Most had changed jobs or
careers several times and had altered their degree of involvement in the labour market in terms of the number of hours worked per week at various stages in their life histories.

The similar socio-economic backgrounds and ages of the study group predisposed the subjects to record similar life histories. While this was true to some extent, considerable variation was found in the timing and meaning of life events. Many of the interviewees, for example, had undergraduate degrees and, while the majority attained them in their early twenties after further education, two had achieved Open University degrees at later stages in the lifecourse and two had worked towards postgraduate qualifications in their thirties. Similarly, many of the interviewees had established secure employment and some had embarked on careers before having children, although areas of disparity were also recorded, for example, for Jennie (31, university researcher), who had her first child as a single parent in her early twenties and had been unemployed for three years.

In terms of employment histories, two broad distinctive patterns emerged that could be divided along gender lines. Men generally had a continuous attachment to the labour market and generally worked full-time throughout the lifecourse. The women in the study, without exception, had less continuous patterns of employment and had periods of economic inactivity. Half of the women worked part-time and most had done so at some stage in the lifecourse (usually when their children were of pre-school age). These general trends mask the variety of individual employment patterns that included cases of almost continuous full-time engagement in the labour market among women, and examples of extended periods of male economic inactivity and unemployment. Other variations to this 'standard' pattern of employment included redundancy, working from home, the transition from employee to self-employed, and managing multiple jobs, all of which impacted on lifestyle at various stages in the lifecourse.

Individual family histories also revealed that the timing of some life events converged. The age of first marriage occurred, on average, in the mid-twenties and men were generally two or three years older than their partners. This reflects national data that show that the age of first marriage for those married in the late 1970s and early 1980s averaged at around the age of 25 for men and 23 for women (see Figure 1.2). This average, however, masks individual variations. Jon (39, fire fighter), for example, was first married at the age of 19, divorced 11 years later and married again
at the age of 37. Furthermore, his second wife Jennie (31, university researcher) had experienced single parenthood as a never-married mother, re-partnered and married Jon at the age of 29. These intricacies are important lifecourse variations that may have implications for work, family and leisure experiences (see Chapter 6).

Child-bearing commonly occurred within two or three years of marriage, a pattern replicated in official statistics (Office for National Statistics, 2000a, table 5.1. p.25). Of the eight couples that had more than one child in the same marital partnership, all but one had had their second child within three years of the first. Several of the interviewees, however, had children from previous relationships and seven were living in, or had lived in, households that contained one or more step-children, or were partnered with people with non-resident children from previous relationships. Of the five people who had experienced divorce, all but one had re-married and had done so within two to seven years of their first divorce (Heather, 45, project co-ordinator, had been divorced twice and was currently in a consensual union).

The wide variety of individual family and work life histories produced a broad range of individual work-family mixes throughout the lifecourse. Sarah, for example, had experienced both home-making and employment as a step-parent then, after divorce and re-marriage, as a parent. These different statuses had, according to Sarah, been accompanied with very different experiences and feelings:

My step-children were teenagers and because they weren't my own children and because I'd been used to working full-time, because I worked nearly 15, 20 miles away from where we lived, I didn't feel the same compulsion to care for them that I do with Claire because of Claire being my own daughter ... I feel about her completely differently than I do with my step-children who were much older and ... hadn't been my responsibility for the whole of their lives. (Sarah, 46, librarian)

In her comments, Sarah demonstrates how lifecourse events are accompanied with different orientations, feelings and meanings. Her status as a step-parent, combined with her employment status and distance from work impacted on her sense of a 'compulsion to care'. An examination of the patterning of life events is, therefore, insufficient in an analysis of the lifecourse. Although general patterns and trends can be established and variations uncovered, the meanings associated with different family and work statuses can offer greater insight into the experience of the lifecourse. This theme of inquiry is incorporated in subsequent analyses in this chapter.
The lifecourse of the family

This section explores how individual lifecourses interrelate in the context of the family. Dual-earner families are examined as dynamic units that shift in form and structure throughout the lifecourse. These shifts are explored over time and are contrasted between families to examine the extent to which couples experience similar or different family and work processes. Where possible, the meanings men and women in couples attach to these processes, such as shifts in employment status for themselves or their partner, are also compared and contrasted to establish experiential similarities and differences.

The couple is the primary unit of analysis as the experiences of children were not recorded in the data collection phase. An analysis of the lifecourse of couples adds an extra dimension to the study of dual-earner family lifestyles. Firstly, by using such an approach it is recognised that behaviour takes place at a collective (couple) level as well as at an individual level. In other words, it accounts for the 'we' element of the life stories described by the interviewees. Secondly, it serves to acknowledge the possibility that, although couples may share a common family structure (dual-earnership), the processes through which that shared status was attained is by no means commonly structured or experienced.

The life histories recorded by the couples in the study revealed that dual-earning is by no means a stable family state. Common patterns in couple family and work structures included dual-earnership and full-time engagement in the labour market by both partners during the pre-children phase of partnership; single-earnership of the male partner during periods when children were pre-school age; dual-earnership with the male partner working full time and the female partner working part time during the primary school years of children’s lives; and a gradual return to the full-time engagement of both partners in employment after the youngest child reached secondary school age. This ‘typical’ model of earning transitions according to family life stage was not, however, recorded by all the couples. Variety was the over-riding characteristic of the lifecourses of the couples and subtle shifts in the family and/or work circumstances of either partner could impact heavily on lifecourse trajectories. These changes could be the outcome of a variety of factors. Some of the less obvious influences mentioned by the couples in the study group included the illness and/or disability of family members and the pursuit of a 'serious' leisure activity by someone
in the family unit. The lifecourses of families were, however, primarily influenced by a combination of micro (family) factors, macro (structural) effects and actors at the meso level.

Firstly, intra-familial dynamics produced a variety of combined work and family outcomes for the couple. Transference from single to dual earning, for example, may be the outcome of a variety of combined familial factors. The age and number of children, the employment status and earning power of the in-work partner, the availability of personal transport, the physical health of children and partners, the spatial location(s) of paid work in relation to home and each respective partner's orientation towards domestic work, childcare and leisure were some of the influencing factors mentioned by the interviewees at the familial or micro level.

Intra-familial dynamics and, hence, the lifecourse of the couple, were also influenced by broader, macro factors. Transference from single to dual earning was, for example, informed by demand for workers in the labour market, the supply of childcarers, the intake age of primary schools, public policy assistance for working parents (including fiscal and social support), public moral discourses on the benefits and disbenefits of combining dual earning and home life, and socially ascribed gender roles. Although these macro, structural factors were rarely cited directly in the interviews, they were often alluded to in the respondents' comments made about childcare, combining work and home life and divisions of domestic labour. Trevor, for example, recognised some of the social barriers to assuming a role as primary carer and reducing his involvement in the labour market:

If I'd had the opportunity to work three days a week, or four days a week, I would have looked at it very seriously. It would have been probably in a way more lonely for me because you know it still is a very female dominated area but I've got friends who have done that, you know the wives are earning very high salaries, I've got one friend who has given up totally, his wife earns enough money to keep all of them as a family, and he looks after everything ... But ... it would be far more difficult for men to sort of socialise on a daily basis. (Trevor, 44, landscape architect)

In this comment Trevor recognises the salience of gender as a vital component of social experience that has consequences for his behaviour and aspirations. As a partnered man, his broad conception of gender relations in the social structure impacted not only on his own patterns of behaviour but that of his partner, Anne, who also felt the pressure of conventional social norms:
I felt when I was working, particularly when I was working full-time, that I actually had to justify my actions, mainly to other women disappointingly, because, you know, sometimes you'd get like a bit of friction I think between, you know, full-time like 'proper' home mums, and working mums. (Anne, 40, health promotion specialist)

Anne eventually reduced her hours from full-time to half-time after the birth of her second child.

External influences that were more commonly cited by the interviewees as impacting on the lifecourse of the couple as well as the individual were at the meso level. The peculiarities of the local labour market, the working practices and personalities of line managers, the availability of local child-minding facilities and the spatial location of members of extended family members were some of the factors that were cited as having an influence on the pattern of the lifecourse of the couple. Scott cites some of these factors when referring to the family's childcare decisions:

One of the influencing factors of Tracy not wanting to go back to work, which I supported ... was that we wanted to be the main influence on the children and therefore [for Tracy] to have gone back to work as in terms of paid employment, would have required us to give our children to a childminder in those first four or five years ... [Wanting to be the main influence on the children] would have led us away from sort of formal childcare options ... We didn’t have family, we don’t have family living local so that wasn’t an option anyway. If we had it might have been different. (Scott, 41, lecturer)

Scott, in his comment, not only refers to family decisions based on meso level factors (the availability of extended family) but also indicates that intra-familial factors (the desire for the parents to be the main influence of the children) also played a role. In addition, the exit of Tracy from the labour market indicates that gender role assumptions (structural factors) also impacted on the lifecourse of the family.

In practice, micro, meso and macro intricately combined to affect the form and nature of couple lifecourses. While many couples reported a similar chain of life events that were the outcome of the combination of similar influencing factors, there was no universal common experience and often similar combinations of influences could produce divergent couple trajectories. These differences emerged mostly as an outcome of contrasting intra-couple dynamics, some of which are deconstructed in the following section.
5.2 Gendered lifecourses

Although many of the study group encountered similar events throughout the lifecourse, patterns of behaviour and the rationality used to explain it, were often highly gendered. The impact of children was especially profound for women whose transference to motherhood significantly affected their activity in, and orientations towards, paid and unpaid work. Children also impacted on men’s lifestyles and some of the differences between the behaviours of men and women are explored in this section. In addition, other life events such as those mentioned above are examined in terms of their differential impact on men and women. A revised ‘role theory’ that accounts for the social construct of gender, is particularly helpful when analysing the differences between the lifecourses of men and women in dual-earner families (see Chapter 3). Gender role theory provides a context in which to examine and explain the different behaviours, experiences and meanings of transitions for men and women in dual-earner families. It can act as a tool for understanding the transitions within the boundaries of work, family and leisure, as well as the interrelationships between them. Furthermore, behaviours and attitudes that challenge existing gender roles and alter the lifecourse can be examined as sites for the renegotiation of gender, a phenomenon that was common to several of the interviewees in the study.

Disjointed careers: elective or expected?

A striking feature of the life histories recorded by the couples was the almost universal complexity of women’s employment patterns compared to men’s. The most common pattern of female employment was a relatively permanent and full-time engagement in the labour force before children were born, a period of maternity, extended leave or loose attachment to the labour market when the youngest child was pre-school age, and a gradual re-establishment of more fixed employment as children grew older. In contrast, men’s employment was characterised by long-term involvement, full-time engagement, and fewer transitions that coincided with the number and ages of their children. Examples of the extremes of these patterns include: Peter (49, teacher) who had been teaching full-time at the same school for 26 years despite marriage, the birth of a son, divorce and re-partnership; and Barbara (43, teacher) who had attained an undergraduate degree and worked full-time throughout almost all of her working life up to having her son, whereupon she took five years out of the labour market. She returned to employment in a part-time position when her son reached school age and
gradually increased her hours of work, until 1998 when she returned to full-time employment. Although there were variations to this pattern, not least in the case of Chris (40, fitter) who exited the labour market to look after his two children and thereby enabled his partner to work full-time, the employment patterns of the women and men in the study reflect those suggested by statistical data that show a dip in the employment rates of women with children aged 0–5 (see Figure 1.6).

For some of the women, breaks in employment to look after children meant a suspension, and sometimes cessation of their career. For those women such as Claire (44, photographer) who said that she ‘cut her career prospects’ so that she could provide childcare, decisions to reduce hours and/or remain out of the labour market had clear implications for their future employment opportunities. Exceptional cases such as Fiona (39, NHS manager) who described her short-term exit from the labour market as an ‘elective break’, was able to continue broadening her career prospects when her partner withdrew from employment to provide full-time care for their children. In Fiona’s case, her ability and potential to earn significantly more than her partner in combination with her acute discontent as a full-time homemaker, determined her ability to ‘elect’ a career break, whereas the majority of women were not in such a strong negotiating position.

In the absence of any clear advantage to employment such as an earning power that substantially exceeded their partner’s, many women adopted a full-time homemaker role after the birth of child(ren). The role assumption that women as mothers should be the primary providers of care was implicit in much of the discourse on the reasons why women exited and re-entered the labour market at particular times. When asked why she had decided to stop working full-time after the birth of her son, Mary for example, said:

Before I had him, I wasn’t going to stop, I was going to go straight back, because I loved my job and the people I worked with and I couldn’t bear to stop. But then as soon as I’d had him and I started looking round at childminders, I knew I, in my heart of hearts, I couldn’t leave this little, you know, person with anybody else … and we didn’t need the money, that wasn’t the problem; it was I thought I would want to go back, but after I got him, I didn’t, so, it was just all the maternal feelings, I suppose. (Mary, 39, nursery nurse),

The implicit assumption that Mary would be the provider of care if a childminder could not be found is clear, and is explained in terms of an exclusively female ‘maternal instinct’. This exclusivity was something identified by some of the
interviewees that particularly applied to the early years of their children's lives. Scott felt that a 'mother's advantage' was particularly difficult to challenge during the early years:

Simple things like she breast fed ... at times I'd be quite frustrated about it ... I can remember our middle child Samuel, who used to wake in the middle of the night and apparently want feeding but he didn't really want feeding and he'd actually developed a sleep association where he was sucking to sleep ... and I felt sorry for Tracy so I decided I would get up in the middle of the night and try and put this child to sleep, but I couldn't actually physically do it because he wanted to suckle. He didn't want to feed, he wanted to suckle, and I can remember at the time feeling very, very useless as a man, because I couldn't actually do anything. (Scott, 41, lecturer)

Physical advantage, however, was rarely cited as a reason for women's primary responsibility for childcare, but Scott's comment provides some insight into how definitions of the unique roles and responsibilities of mothers can take shape at early stages of parenthood and provide a framework for gendered behaviour throughout the lifecourse.

At later stages of their children's lives, childcare was still highly dependent on the co-operation of women as the primary carers and, hence, on the internalisation of notions of motherhood. Although childcare was not explicitly identified as an exclusively female task ('quite strongly I feel we both have responsibilities to the children', Scott, 41, lecturer), and the 'doing' of childcare was shared, the ascription and acceptance of childcare as the primary responsibility of women was expressed subtly in the actions and understandings of the men and women in the study. Many of the women were, for example, responsible for the day-to-day planning of childcare and would be most likely to take time off work to look after children during illness. Although, by themselves, these responsibilities were practically manageable, the implications this had on, for example, activities in the labour market were profound. Flexibility was a key component of employment for many of the women, and part-time work was the only viable option for many women who returned to the labour market after an extended break as a full-time carer. Childcare responsibilities, including its spatial and temporal planning, continued to rely on women's availability, something which many women did not object to. Indeed, many women 'controlled' the family timetable; patterning and planning the activities of other family members around themselves. Many women expressed the acceptance of this gendered role in terms of 'being there for the children': 'I still wanted to be around for him [her son],
because he still comes ... even now though I'm full time, he still comes before my job — whenever that’s necessary' (Barbara, 43, teacher); ‘they had a good sound upbringing and I was there for them, I didn’t really want to leave them with anybody, so, you know, they had me there’ (Claire, 44, photographer). The expression of a mother’s desire to ‘be there’ for their children reflects the findings of Jane Ribbens (1994) and reflects ideologies of motherhood that are exclusive of paid employment if it is perceived to have a deleterious impact on the well-being of children. It also had an almost determining influence on the lifecourse, although some women and men sought to counteract its assumption and effects.

The differential impact of life events

Similar to parenthood, life events such as marriage, divorce and job changes were experienced differently by the men and women in the study. Three women and two men had previously been through the process of divorce, and while some felt that their behaviour and attitudes had changed very little as a consequence, two of the women made explicit comments about the impact of divorce on their lives. The quest for financial independence was something that both women aspired to after their relationships broke down. Suzanne (41, secretary), for example, commenting on her decision to return to work after having children, said: ‘I’d had a failed marriage and I thought I wanted to be more independent, so that no matter what happened if I did meet somebody else and it didn’t work out I wouldn’t be financially dependent upon that person’. Heather (45, project worker) also felt that the ‘financial aspect’ of divorce impacted on her employment in that, ‘being sole carer you feel as though you have to work as much as you can’.

Both Suzanne and Heather are commenting on what has been documented in other research; that women are usually faced with greater financial hardship than men after divorce owing to their dependence on the male wage during marriage (for example, Rake, 2000). Suzanne, in particular, recognised her reliance on her first partner for an income and felt that, although she had already re-partnered, employment was a route to greater independence. This was despite her belief that she had not ‘ever imagined working and having children’ until her divorce caused her to reassess the income structure of her household. Furthermore, Suzanne believed that subsequent to her re-engagement in the labour market she ‘couldn’t imagine not working at all’. This
shows how a lifecourse event such as divorce can be a catalyst to the creation of dual-earner families in subsequent partnerships.

Comments made by the men who had experienced divorce indicated that factors such as employment or income had little bearing on their decisions after divorce. Other factors such as the division of childcare and the financial maintenance of children from first marriages were raised by the male interviewees, but not in the context of events that had a significant impact on their employment. The male interviewees were more likely to comment on the impact marriage had on their lifestyles and their activities in the labour market. Many of the men in the study referred to marriage as a time when life became more 'settled' and 'routine' and a time of 'responsibilities' (Geoff, 40, self-employed). The expectation that they would be the primary breadwinner at some time in the family lifecourse was something that was also felt by some of the men in the study, and marriage was a preparation for this. Nigel articulated this in his explanation of why he began training as a town planner after several changes in employment:

eventually of course getting married and having a mortgage, it starts to apply different pressures so ... the actual stability of a progressive career, that had more significance and part of the motivation of studying was that it had, it opened, erm, higher potential earnings. (Nigel, 44, town planner)

The breadwinner role was one which was highly salient for many men in the study, although it varied throughout the lifecourse. Many of the male interviewees felt the responsibility of breadwinning most keenly during single-earner phases of the lifecycle and transitions to dual-earning were often accompanied with greater financial stability and a partial breakdown of the breadwinner role. Few men in the study spoke of this directly, but several referred to the tangible benefits dual-earning had to their lifestyles. Nigel, for example, pointed to the financial benefits of dual-earning in terms of how it had contained his need to progress further in his career:

There comes a point when you're in a certain line of work that it, it's, you know, your motivation for wanting to try something different, you know, the stakes are higher so therefore there's a bit of inertia sets in. But ... it provides enough income, with Kelly's income, for us to have what I feel is a perfectly comfortable lifestyle, in terms of shelter, food, and all that sort of stuff. (Nigel, 44, town planner)

Others, such as Andrew (39, self-employed) spoke of how a second wage redistributed financial responsibilities in the family: 'the income she earns is very useful because I'll be paying for Claire's [his daughter's] education so that takes some responsibility
off me’. In this case, Andrew appears still to assume the responsibility of the breadwinner of the family although his partner works 20 hours per week. His partner’s employment is, therefore, clearly viewed as a second income and one which does not wholly relieve Andrew of his primary responsibility of breadwinner.

The notion of male breadwinning as a relatively stable state across the lifecourse was replicated by the discourse of many of the men and women in the study. The role of ‘provider’ was one which many of the men associated themselves with throughout the lifecourse, regardless of their partner’s labour market activity, but particularly if their partner worked part-time. This traditional role behaviour is complementary to the ‘mothering’ role demonstrated by many of the women in the study and forms the basis for behaviour throughout the lifecourse of the family.

Re-negotiating gender

The results discussed so far present a picture of the lifecourse that is dictated by the ideologies that underpin gender role behaviour. A gender constructivist approach, as outlined in Chapter 2, suggests that, although gender ideology is a potent structural force that shapes the lifecourse, it does not determine it. Individuals actively construct their everyday realities and, hence, participate in the negotiation and re-negotiation of gender. The experience of ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ is, for example, subject to an individuals’ interpretation of the role and meaning of each domain in the context of their current lifestyle, the lifestyles of other family members and in the context of their understanding of social, cultural and economic structures. The dialectical and connected nature of daily life informs interpretation and this was evident in some of the interviewees’ attitudes and behaviours towards ‘traditional’ gender roles. Some attitudes and behaviours had the effect of radically changing the lifecourse, so that the gendered nature of work, care and leisure was the site of constant renegotiation. Others, however, wished to maintain ‘traditional roles’:

After the children … I felt that two careers in the household would be, you know, quite chaotic really … With me, the children were more important than my career … I wanted to stop work and look after them … so the traditional role I suppose (Tracy, 40, special school assistant).

Tracy decided to curtail her career as a civil engineer to care for her children and returned to part-time work as a special school assistant 10 years after exiting the labour market. The description of her activities in the domestic and employment
spheres reflected this 'traditional role', a role with which she also expressed feelings of satisfaction.

While Tracy's example reinforces the gendered lifecourse thesis, other interviewees actively challenged gender role expectations, particularly through their activities in the labour market. Eva (42, government advisor), for example, expressed a strong orientation towards her career and pursued continuous employment throughout the child-rearing phase of the lifecourse and sought successive full-time jobs immediately after her children reached school age. She commented that she 'didn't want to stop work altogether' after having children, because she felt her career depended on being 'in the network' of her occupational choice. She stated that after having children, 'there was always the option to carry on working – it was never suggested that wouldn't be the case and everything would stop', but that the question of returning to full-time work was an issue for discussion within the family. The need for negotiation was particularly acute when Eva was offered a post in London: 'the major discussion had to be when I took up the full-time work in London, because it's not just full time but it's a long time away from home ... those things had to be discussed because they did have major implications for David's working pattern as well'.

Eva's concern for being removed from the close spatial proximity of her home and the temporal impact of commuting were repeatedly cited as a site of conflict between her career orientation and her role as a mother, and were factors in the negotiation of a split pattern of three days work in London and two days working from home. These patterns of negotiation with her employers and her partner reflect attempts both to challenge gender relations as well as act in accordance with her socially ascribed role as a mother. While Eva's lifecourse was influenced by her social and emotional attachment to the motherhood role, she was also engaged in an active redefinition of her status within the home and the workplace by negotiating the inclusion of a career in her lifestyle. Her lifecourse was, therefore, determined not only by her role as a mother but also as a worker. The importance of each of these roles varied in salience throughout the lifecourse. The motherhood role was particularly dominant throughout her children's pre-school years, although this always accommodated employment, even though it meant working 'for a long time at night'. The permanent relative importance of a career was a clear factor in Eva's atypical lifecourse, although the conflict this presented with the motherhood role was a site of emotional anguish.
A further factor that enabled Eva’s career decision-making was her ability to negotiate her conditions of work with her employers owing to her educational status and specialised skills. Many of the other interviewees were not in such a strong negotiating position and even though Eva was able to negotiate her existing working practices, her family position still restricted her career options, as her description of a denied job opportunity demonstrates:

They were wanting somebody to work in their Number 10 policy units on rural affairs and I would have really have liked to have done it. But I just said, well, that I would want to continue this working arrangement and was it even worth me applying and the answer was ‘no’ … so I didn’t go for it. I think it was the right decision, I’m not … I don’t feel resentful about the decision, but it would have been a nice job. (Eva, 42, government advisor)

This example illustrates how the restrictive working practices of organisations can negatively affect the career paths of adults with dependent children and, in particular, mothers. Other examples of how working structures and cultures restricted job choices for women with dependent children included Anne who felt her pregnancy negatively affected her working time options:

I had the interview for the job, which was like at a senior level, when I was pregnant, and I asked the human resources people whether I should declare that I was pregnant or what have you, although I was about 7 months pregnant at the time. But the interview panel didn’t actually notice, and one of the ... interviewers was a consultant ... she was a woman, but she was very sort of in a way quite anti-working mums and when she found out I was pregnant and I would be going on maternity leave, she was really horrible about it, and so there was absolutely no way I could negotiate part-time at that stage. So I felt that I had to return to work in that new job and work full-time. (Anne, 40, health promotion specialist)

Anne felt that her new status as a mother placed her in a weaker negotiating position in her new job. As a result she felt she could not challenge existing working structures until several years later. The negotiation of part-time hours that took place after the birth of her second child was, according to Anne, enabled by changing institutional cultures and structures: ‘I think it’s only recently, you know, that perhaps the health service has been slightly more flexible towards working mums’. Although Anne was challenging the motherhood role by working full-time throughout the first two years of her first child’s life, this was not a working pattern that was based on personal choice but one that was determined by the negative attitudes of a senior member of staff towards working mothers. She commented that being a full-time working mum was ‘really hard work’ and indicated that working shorter hours presented less conflict
between her role as a mother and a worker. In Anne’s case, the negotiation of part-time work was regarded as an empowering experience, although it reinforced rather than challenged the gendered assumption that mothers should be the primary carers of children.

The work and family histories of both Eva and Anne demonstrate how the motherhood role has a strong influence on the lifecourse of women with children. Both, however, challenged gender assumptions at work and in the home and actively renegotiated gender in both spheres. Institutional conceptions of motherhood were challenged by maintaining economic activity throughout the pre-school years of their children’s lives and renegotiating working practices to accommodate family lives. By challenging the model of the ‘stay-at-home’ mum, Anne and Eva were personally redefining the motherhood role as one inclusive of paid employment. This was restricted by inflexible working cultures and practices and negotiation processes with employers met resistance. Their success in negotiating different working arrangements were influenced by their strong positions in the labour market owing to their high level of education and occupational experience. Some of the other women in the sample were not placed in such a strong position and so were less likely to have sufficient power to negotiate flexible contracts in a career-oriented occupation. As a result, many of the women in the sample had fewer options in the labour market and took employment in lower status jobs that were often in feminised occupations. Gender relations in the workplace were, therefore, often maintained rather than challenged. The relatively low status of women’s paid work, its poor pay and its flexibilised nature often contributed to the maintenance of gender relations in the home by prioritising the contribution of the male income to the household over women’s contribution. Gendered lifecourses were often the outcome.

5.3 Intra-couple dynamics and the lifecourse

This section analyses the lifecourses of the 14 couples in the study. It examines the responses given by partners on the work and family transitions experienced within the couple and identifies and explains intra-couple sites of experiential convergence and divergence. It looks at the processes through which couples negotiate work and family life throughout the lifecourse and contrasts the opinions and understandings of the male partners with female partners. Decision-making processes and behaviour patterns are unravelled, and the perceptions of life events are contrasted between partners.
These processes and understandings are analysed in a gender constructivist framework. Perceptions and practices are, therefore, examined in the context of the combination of structural constraint (gender roles) and individual agency.

**Negotiating and re-negotiating the lifecourse**

The discourses of couples revealed that the lifecourse of the family was the subject of intra-couple negotiation. Partners often referred to the mutuality of family- and work-based decision-making, although not all transitional phases were discussed in the interviews (for example, decisions on the number and timing of children). The reporting of co-decision making was, however, sometimes coupled with divergent experiences of negotiation within the couple, and decision-making processes often reflected the gendered organisation of households. An example of a transitional event in the lifecourse of the family, which was experienced by all of the couples, was the negotiation and re-negotiation of the employment status of the female partner. These negotiations often took place in the context of a return to the labour market by the female partner after a period of inactivity during childrearing (often the transition from single- to dual-earning), and a renegotiation of the number of hours worked.

When partners were asked independently if they discussed changes in the employment status of the female partner, a variety of individual responses were given. Many agreed that they had discussed it, or that they ‘must have’ at some stage whereas others stated that they had not talked about it or thought they had not. Of those couples that negotiated changes and could recall it, few couples were united about the co-dependency of this negotiation process. It was often one person, usually the female partner, that was most emphatic about the inevitability of negotiation when her employment status was likely to change. Couples such as Fiona (39, NHS manager) and Chris (40, fitter) demonstrate this trend. In the following, Fiona uncovers her recollection of the negotiation of her return to full-time employment:

**ES:** When you decided to change your employment status ... did you discuss this with your partner?

**Fiona:** Oh yes, yes (emphatic). He could see that I was getting very fed up at home ... I’d always intended to be a full-time mother and thought that was it for a while, you know, and I’d do sort of [do] part-time work and return back in time, but I wasn’t ever so good at home and, er, I got very fed up and I think he knew that and really we started talking about it. (Fiona, 39, NHS manager)
A clear recollection of negotiation was not met with similar understandings by her partner, who (unusually) adopted the position of a full-time 'house-husband' as a consequence of Fiona's move to full-time work. When asked about whether or not he could recount the renegotiation of household working patterns, he commented: 'I can't remember us discussing it a lot. I think to be fair, she wasn't happy at home, she found it mindless and boring and tedious and just wanted to get back to work basically'.

These divergent recollections were also similarly evident in Mary's (39, nursery nurse) and Richard's (44, self-employed) separate discussions of the negotiation of Mary's employment status. Mary viewed the process as highly important:

ES: What do you think has enabled you to increase your hours?
Mary: ... At the time when I thought about the job it was knowing that my children, they were sorted out, that was the main thing. Could I do both things? You know, could the children get to school and back? ... The whole family, we had to sit down and talk about it.
ES: Right, so you discussed all these changes with your family?
Mary: Yeah, oh yeah (emphatic).
ES: What was the decision based around?
Mary: Well, we had to think for each individual person, how it's going to affect their lives and how each individual person could help, you know, to 'cos things were going to change, you know, not just for them but as a family as well, you know, we all had to pour in a bit more and help each other. (Mary, 39, nursery nurse)

In contrast, when her partner Richard was asked if Mary had discussed her changes in employment status with him, he viewed the process as more a sole decision made by Mary:

ES: [Mary] intended to go back full-time but decided to stay at home. Did she discuss that when it was ...
Richard: I'm sure we probably did. I don't remember a particular discussion about it but I'm sure we would have discussed it to a point. It was always her decision and we never ... that was probably the other reason with being self-employed, we had, we didn't have to have her going back to work ... if she went back to work doing part-time then it was because she wanted to.
ES: What about the change from going from part-time to full-time, was that discussed as well?
Richard: Yeah, but that's always been her choice ... we would have discussed it but we would never have been, you know, 'you can't do this, or you can do that', it would have been her decision entirely. (Mary, 39, nursery nurse)

These comments are worth quoting at length because they provide an insight into some possible explanations for the differential recall of the negotiation process and the importance attached to it by partners. Intra-couple negotiation was recalled by the female partners as a key component in the decision-making process that contributed to
changes in their employment status. In contrast, the men generally attributed less
importance to the negotiation process. This was indicated by two typical responses.
Firstly, that discussions were sometimes not clearly remembered and secondly, that
changes in employment status were not so much a question of within-couple
negociation but of the individual agency of the female partner. The ‘decision’ to
change employment patterns was, according to many of the men, primarily one made
by their partners. This decision was then reported to be supported by the male
partners. The discourse of male support was common among the couples. Sarah (46,
librarian) commented that her husband ‘encouraged her a great deal’ when she wanted
to return to work, and Barbara (43, teacher) reported that in relation to her
employment and family decisions: ‘They’ve all been joint decisions, he’s been
incredibly supportive every time I’ve wanted to change directions, he’s said if that’s
what you’re happy doing, do it’.

A gender constructivist approach helps unravel these interconnected phenomena.
Firstly, the relative importance of intra-couple negotiation among some of the female
partners indicates that these women are attempting to renegotiate gender roles in the
home and that men support this renegotiation, at least at an attitudinal level. One
aspect of the behavioural level – domestic work – is explored in the next section. Male
discourses of women’s ‘choice’ and personal decision-making, the support of
women’s choices and decisions by their partners and the lack of any explicitly
negative or obstructive attitudes to the female partners’ employment activity is
evidence of the gender renegotiation process. Secondly, the relative importance of the
negociation of employment ‘choices’ among some of the women in comparison with
their male partners indicates how changes in female employment patterns are
perceived by women to have wider implications for family members. From a gender
role perspective, the recognition of the broader family impact of personal choices is
indicative of the motherhood role placing constraints on personal agency. For many
women, re-entry into the labour market after long periods of absence and/or increasing
work commitments signifies a partial withdrawal from the full-time fulfilment of
caring activities; a vital behavioural and emotional component of the motherhood role.
The extent to which roles are viewed as conflicting by the women may influence
whether negotiation is perceived as necessary and important. The limited size of the
study, however, renders this suggestion speculative.
The negotiation of the lifecourse of the couple in terms of the labour market activities of its members is, therefore, often perceived and experienced differently by partners. Perceptions and experiences also reflect gender assumptions, although these assumptions are malleable and change over time. ‘Choices’ in the employment sphere were undoubtedly being exercised by the women in the study and these were being supported by their partners. These choices were, however, made within the context of the hegemony of the motherhood role. The negotiation process that acted to withdraw women partially from the roles and responsibilities of mothering were also reflective of gendered behaviour associated with the motherhood role, indicating how structural constraints limit the renegotiation of gender within households.

Unpaid work in the lifecourse of the couple

The distribution of unpaid work in the home is consistently cited as a socially reproductive activity that is highly gender segregated (Oakley, 1974; 1985; Hochschild, 1989). Studies on household divisions of labour in couple households indicate that women assume responsibility for the majority of routine household tasks such as cooking, cleaning and laundry. The resilience of gendered domestic arrangements has been confirmed by recent studies, although attitude surveys in the 1980s and 1990s showed incremental changes in the views of men and women towards a more egalitarian model of the division of unpaid work (Keirnan, 1992). The project was consistent with previous research on divisions of labour throughout the lifecourse of the couple. Ten of the 14 couples agreed that the female partner assumed the main responsibility for household labour and had done so throughout the lifecourse. Of the remaining four couples, two agreed that domestic work was shared, and two disagreed on the way household labour was divided, with the male partners suggesting greater equity than the female partners.

Rather than rehearse well documented findings on the gender inequalities of domestic labour in terms of ‘who-does-what’, the aim of this section is to examine how the dynamics of housework divisions within the couple unit across the lifecourse are perceived by its respective members and how this reflects or challenges gender role assumptions. Men’s and women’s descriptions and understandings of processes of change in the organisation of housework, and/or discourses of an absence of change are explored to uncover intra-couple perceptual convergence and divergence. The similarities and differences in the viewpoints of couples and the rationalities used to
explain between-partner behaviour are then analysed in a gender constructivist framework. By doing so, there is an attempt to uncover how gender inequalities in the home are maintained across the lifecourse and the extent to which the domestic sphere is being used as a site for the construction of gender.

Three scenarios were commonly reported about the organisation of domestic labour throughout the lifecourse: change had occurred incrementally, sporadically or not at all. This applied to households with ‘traditional’ divisions of labour, those that shared household tasks and those who did not agree on how housework was shared. Although change or the lack of change was rarely perceived or experienced the same within couples, some partners had very similar perceptions. Charlie (44, computer manager) and Claire (44, photographer), for example, agreed that housework arrangements had not substantially changed throughout their partnership, with Claire assuming primary responsibility. Incremental change was generally acknowledged by couples in terms of the male partner’s gradual greater involvement in domestic work throughout the history of the couple and sometimes at particular transitional phases of the lifecourse. The nature and extent of change was, however, commonly perceived differently between partners, as was the degree of involvement of the male partner. Nigel (44, town planner) and Kelly (42, library assistant), for example, had fundamentally different understandings of the level of involvement of each respective partner in domestic work, although both agreed about the lack of change throughout the lifecourse. The divergent stories regarding degree of involvement, however, meant that lack of change was also differently perceived, as the following extracts demonstrate:

ES: So who has the main responsibility for domestic work in your family?
Nigel: Well, I would say it’s shared fairly evenly, that’s my story.
ES: And how do you divide tasks between yourselves?
Nigel: Erm, there are certain things that she always does like ironing and there are certain things that I always do like, erm, basically dealing with the pots and I do erm, I tend to do, I do the kid’s sandwiches; do their breakfasts and I don’t know I probably, well probably less than half of them, because the children want their tea early, but I possibly, roughly 40, 50 per cent of the cooking, so, so certain things that we always do. Kelly does tend to do more cleaning than I do, mainly because I’ve got a far greater tolerance of dirt than she has, but you know, we both spend a fairly significant amount of time dealing with day-to-day domestic chores. She tends to deal with the paperwork because I’m just too disorganised and lazy to do it. Erm, but yeah, I would say, again, my perception but I think it’s probably half and half.
ES: Okay and has it always been shared this way?
Nigel: Erm, pretty well, yes, yes, yes (emphatic). (Nigel. 44, town planner)
In contrast, when faced with the same line of questioning, Kelly’s comments represented a rather different experience:

ES: Who has the main responsibility for housework in your family?
Kelly: Me.
ES: And what sort of tasks does that involve?
Kelly: Hoovering, dusting, tidying, picking-up; picking-up is the most annoying thing, picking-up, you know. Erm, cleaning the toilet, is another one that would you know, I’m the toilet fairy, that’s a standing joke. It would never get cleaned if I didn’t do it. Erm, yeah, I do all the household chores. Nigel will wash up anything that doesn’t go in the dishwasher ‘cos I hate washing up. He makes the sandwiches every night, not just when I work, I hate making sandwiches. packed lunches, so he does that every night for the children and for himself. Erm, any organising I do, really. Paperwork, I do all the paperwork, all the bills and everything. I enjoy doing that anyway.
ES: Has it always been organised this way?
Kelly: Yes, yes. (Kelly, 42, library assistant)

These two extracts illustrate how perceptions of responsibility and equity can vary considerably between partners. The disparity uncovered in the example of Kelly and Nigel was not at the level of actual behaviour and practical tasks (for example, they both agreed that Nigel washed up and made packed lunches), but at the level of interpretation. Nigel interpreted his contribution to the load of domestic tasks as accounting for around half of the full amount, whereas Kelly judged her pattern of work to exceed Nigel’s contribution. These perceptions had endured across the lifecourse as both agreed that housework had always been similarly organised. Research by Kathleen Kiernan (1992, pp.101-06) on the attitudes of men and women towards gender roles revealed that there was a clear lack of confluence in the attitudes of men towards domestic work and their activities in the domestic sphere. Whereas a high proportion of men believed that they equally shared domestic duties in the home and that this was desirable, the engagement of men in housework was remarkably low. She also suggested that reasons for the over-estimation of engagement in domestic work among men may lie in an unfamiliarity with how much work is done in the home, ‘or more likely because perceptions are coloured by stereotypes or even by guilt’ (Kiernan, 1992, p.101). The unequal perceptions of Kelly and Nigel do not provide definitive answers to this contention, but they provide a good example of how individuals in the same family unit hold disparate understandings of their family lives.

More common perceptions of divisions of labour in the home related to gradual increases in the male partners’ involvement in housework throughout the lifecourse.
This often occurred at some stage after childbearing, particularly when the female partner returned to work or increased her hours. The renegotiation of the paid work of the female partner outlined in the previous section often included the discussion and reorganisation of domestic work and childcare arrangements in the household. Eva (42, government advisor), for example, stated that herself and her partner had made a 'conscious decision' to reorganise household tasks and that 'since the children were born', a system had evolved that incorporated a more equal division of domestic work: 'so I do the shopping and the cooking, that's my little bit, and David does all the washing and the ironing'. Although David did not recall a similar renegotiation and 'evolution' (the renegotiation of gender roles is, again, more salient for the female partner), he did recognise that there was a 'rigid' division of household tasks and that there had always been 'some room for sharing'.

Despite most couples including discourses of 'sharing' in their accounts of divisions of domestic labour throughout the lifecourse, the overwhelming characteristic of housework was its resilience as a gendered task. Active and long-term renegotiation was not a common theme among the interviewees. Short-term adjustments and the sporadic involvement of the male partners in domestic work was much more common and this did little to restructure household gender relations. Fiona (39, NHS manager) was exceptional in her recognition of the role of gender in the distribution of domestic labour in her household:

ES: Okay. And have you ever tried to change the housework arrangements and if so what was the outcome?
Fiona: It's only temporary, you know, just at times when I've specifically asked and said 'I need you to do this' ... and I will get the help then. But it doesn't often sort of then become a permanent thing ... I know once or twice when I have said 'can you do something for me?' and he's done it, I always feel tempted to say 'well, thanks for doing that', and then I think 'hold on', I'm not going to say thank you, 'cos you know, it's not a favour to me, it's his house too ... I mean that's not to say there's any animosity particularly but sometimes I've though, well, I don't get thanks, I'm not sure that it, it makes it feel as if he's done a very big thing just for cleaning the lounge. (Fiona, 39, NHS manager)

This comment illustrates the way gendered divisions of labour in the home are normalised to the extent that behaviour not closely associated with a given gender role may be considered exceptional. Fiona, however, challenged the preconception that domestic work is not closely associated with male roles by commenting that 'it's his house too', thereby equalising the status of herself and her partner within the household.
Apart from in Fiona's case, divisions of housework and the lack of long-term significant change in the behaviours of the male partners were not generally problematised. Substantial changes in the organisation of domestic work across the lifecourse appeared to have taken place in only one couple and this had been the outcome of long-term negotiation and renegotiation between partners. Among the other couples, including one other couple that agreed they had an equitable share of responsibility, domestic work appeared to a topic that was rarely discussed and long-term change was difficult to establish. Certain lifecourse events such as the birth of children and the engagement of the female partners in the labour market after childbearing, however, could act as a catalyst to short term change, although this was not often maintained: 'I think when we first had the children generally thought I shall be a new man ... we will do things in this particular way, and it just didn't happen like that. And it hasn't happened like that' (Scott, 41, lecturer). Some of the men thought they 'ought' to do more but committing to change and discussions of 'ideal' situations revealed a preference for 'contracting in' cleaners or housekeepers to assist their partners.

These factors, and others, indicate that gendered divisions of domestic labour are highly resilient throughout the lifecourse. A factor that may contribute its hardiness include its general lack of problematisation within the couple. This was reflected in couples' general lack of perceptual convergence on the level of involvement of the male partner throughout the lifecourse.

5.4 Divergences and convergences across the lifecourse

This chapter has uncovered some of the lifecourse patterns of individuals and families in dual-earner families. Individual lifecourses have been shown to be share some commonalties, for example, most of the sample experienced marriage and the birth of their first child in their mid to late twenties. The lifecourse of individuals can also not be divorced from the behaviours and orientations of other family members and intra-couple dynamics examined here have been shown to impact on the work and family behaviours of partners. The lifecourses of families also exhibited some commonalties but the most outstanding feature of both family and individual lifecourses was their variety and complexity. The paths to and from dual-earning and the forms dual-earning took varied considerably, along with the meanings couples attached to work and family at different lifestages.
The examples of women’s disjointed careers and the differential impact of life events demonstrated how lifecourses are gendered. Women’s pattern of paid work after the birth of children, for example, were closely aligned with the roles and responsibilities of motherhood, although there were indications that women were actively renegotiating the role of paid work in their lifestyles after children. Analyses of intra-couple dynamics revealed that the process of negotiation was relatively important for female partners and that their partners were generally a ‘supportive’ agent. Male partners tended to place women’s involvement in the labour market in the context of personal choice, although personal autonomy was rarely thoroughly exercised owing to the close association many of the women felt towards the motherhood role. Clear ideological and practical constraints were placed on many women’s ability to ‘choose’ how to balance work and family by the constancy of domestic work as a gendered responsibility throughout the lifecourse.

Three key aspects emerging form the data presented in this chapter are:

- **The meanings associated with lifecourse events are vital to their understanding**
  The data revealed that events such as family reconstitution and divorce and the presence of step-children impacted on the feelings, orientations and meanings associated with work and family life.

- **Gender is crucial to an understanding of the lifecourse**
  Understanding the meanings associated with the lifecourse necessitates an examination of gender relations in the home. Gender was shown to be a powerful structural force in the patterning of the lifecourse for both men and women but it was also interpreted differently between individuals.

- **Understanding the lifecourse is enhanced by explorations of between-partner negotiation**
  The men and women in the study group were actively constructing the lifecourse and, by implication, gender through negotiation. Negotiations were interpreted and valued differently. These differences both reflected, reinforced and sometimes challenged existing gender relations.

In the following chapters the extent to which highly gendered family and employment contexts had implications for individuals’ and couples’ leisure experiences across the lifecourse is examined in more detail.
Chapter 6 Leisure across the lifecourse

The employment and family histories of the dual-earner couples in the study group provides a context in which to examine the leisure histories of partners. The preceding chapter has shown how the family and employment lives of couples evolve over time, how life transitions are experienced and the role of gender in the structure and negotiation of events across the lifecourse. This chapter also uses a lifecourse perspective to examine the roles, meanings and experiences of leisure over time. As previously noted, the leisure dimension of lifestyle has rarely been examined in studies of the lifecourse. It is one of the aims of the thesis to provide an insight into the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families and to show how patterns of behaviour develop and change over time. This exploration of the leisure dimension of lifestyle across the lifecourse represents an original contribution to existing bodies of knowledge.

The first part of the chapter focuses on the definitions and meanings the study group attached to the word 'leisure'. The variability of the meanings attached to leisure underlines its contested nature and provides insight into how personal definitions of leisure change over time and differ between individuals. Several aspects of leisure meaning are unravelled, and some of the problems of defining leisure already considered in Chapter 3 are raised.

The second half of the chapter centres on the form, structures and experiences of leisure throughout the lifecourse. Leisure is viewed in the context of family and employment change, and three phases of the lifecourse are isolated for examination, namely the pre-children phase, the childrearing stage and the dual-earner stage. Both the similarities and differences in the experiences of the individuals in the study group are examined to establish some of the common features of leisure throughout the lifecourse as well as the different ways in which individuals actively construct and reconstruct leisure to provide meaning over time.

6.1 The personal and varying meanings of leisure

This section examines some of the meanings the interviewees attributed to leisure and some of the problems they experienced when attempting to define it. Several dimensions of leisure are explored including notions of leisure as activity, time and experience. In general, when the subjects in the study were asked to describe what the
word 'leisure' meant to them, a variety of responses were elicited. Many of the interviewees offered a response that focused on leisure as an experience embedded in time rather than as particular activities. These experiences varied across the lifecourse and were strongly influenced by family life stage, household employment structure and gender.

**The multi-dimensional nature of meanings**

Absolute meanings of leisure were refuted by leisure researchers in the 1980s and 1990s in the UK. Leisure means different things to different people and also varies across time and space for the individual. It is, thus, 'highly context dependent' (Roberts, 1999, p.1). The comments from respondents in the fieldwork confirm the notion of context dependency: leisure experiences and meanings varied across the lifecourses of the individuals in the study group and the interviewees offered a variety of responses to questions about the meanings of leisure. The definitional components of leisure suggested by leisure scholars in Chapter 3 were reflected in the discourses of the interviewees, and eight of these are examined in detail in this section: residual definitions of leisure; the work/non-work dichotomy; leisure as activity; leisure as non-obligation; leisure as self-fulfilment; leisure as time; leisure as recuperation/relaxation; and leisure as a fluid concept.

**Residual definitions of leisure**

Some of the participants in the study offered residual definitions of leisure similar to those presented by Roberts (1999, p.5), who stated that leisure exists in 'what is left over'. David (42, researcher), for example, when asked what he understood by the word 'leisure' responded: 'I think primarily ... it rules out as far as I am concerned, work and housework. After that I guess it's leisure time, which can be either doing things with the family or entertainments for yourself on your own'. Similarly, Trevor (44, landscape architect), commented that 'leisure' was, 'any time when you're not working'. The concept of leisure as 'time left over' from work and other obligations has been strongly supported in the literature, and represents a 'common sense' approach to definitions of leisure. It was also one which many of the interviewees adopted.
The work/non-work dichotomy

Residual definitions of leisure are closely associated with the work/non-work dichotomy outlined in Chapter 3. In the above example, David, differentiated work and housework from leisure. Others, such as Geoff, reinforced this notion:

ES: I'd just like you to describe to me in your own words what the word leisure means to you.
Geoff: Er, not working, not doing housework, and not doing DIY, not necessarily being away from the house, I could be in the house enjoying leisure, but basically not doing any of those things. (Geoff, 40, self-employed)

Geoff clearly distinguished both paid and unpaid work from his definition of leisure. This broad definition of work was not, however, shared by all the participants in the study. Richard, for example, considered only paid employment as work:

Richard: To me I have either work or not work, so when I’ve finished work, and that’s it, then I’ve finished, that’s it, finished. So that’s that part of my life then gets switched off and then when I come home I do the things, whether it’s, er, hoovering the carpet or washing the clothes or mowing the lawn, whatever, taking the kids somewhere or just sitting in the kitchen talking to Mary [his wife] when she’s finished work or whatever.
ES: So you’d even consider what some people might think was just domestic chores as leisure time?
Richard: Yeah, because you’re not working. (Richard, 44, self-employed)

Richard went on to say that the drive home from work was also leisure-like:

because it’s a wind-down period ... I can just wind down completely, I can switch work off, and think about what I’m going to do when I get home, but I don’t have any interruptions ... it is like leisure, yeah, I suppose, really, it’s sort of time to sort of start relaxing. (Richard, 44, self-employed)

This very broad definition of leisure is contrasted by a very narrow definition of work. According to Richard, work almost exclusively means paid employment and leisure incorporates many activities that other interviewees considered ‘work’, in particular, housework. This stark contrast between work and leisure was unusual among the study group, but it demonstrates the differential meanings of work and leisure between individuals. It is also evidence in support of the arguments of leisure scholars in the UK in the 1970s: that paid work is time that is not one’s own and that outside of work, time is ‘free’ for leisure. Richard’s response, which supports this thesis, was, however, exceptional in the context of this study. More common were broad definitions of ‘work’ that had a family as well as a paid employment component. This was apparent in both men’s and women’s responses, but women, in particular, were more sensitive
to the family component of work due to their greater general responsibility in the domestic sphere.

One of the possible reasons for Richard’s broad definition of leisure that included housework could be that he engaged in less of the household chores than his partner, or that the housework he did was less labour intensive and ‘everyday’ (for example, cooking, cleaning and ironing). Evidence from research on the distribution of household labour shows that men over-estimate their engagement in housework and are more discriminatory in their task selection (Kiernan, 1992). Men, for example, are more likely to engage in activities such as gardening and car maintenance than be involved in day-to-day tasks. While Richard reported that there was ‘no main responsibility’ for housework in his family and that he possibly did more than his partner, this was not a shared perception. Richard’s partner believed that she had main responsibility for housework and had assumed primary responsibility throughout their partnership. Explaining Richard’s broad definition of leisure that included housework may lie somewhere in this disparity, but evidence is inconclusive.

Leisure as activity

In accordance with definitions of leisure in the literature, some of the participants in the study defined leisure as ‘activity’. Placing activity at the centre of definitions of leisure was, on the whole, uncommon, but activity was often incorporated into people’s descriptions of their leisure, particularly in the context of ‘family leisure’ or ‘doing things with the children’. Peter, however, placed activity at the centre of his interpretation of what constituted leisure:

ES: I’d just like you to describe to me in your own words what the word ‘leisure’ means to you.
Peter: Er it means some relaxing activity away from the normal.
ES: Okay, and when do you have this personal leisure? And what do you prefer to do or experience during it?
Peter: I guess its sporty, going off to watch sport or playing tennis these days, and watching football. They are the two main areas that take me out of the house to relax and get away from it all. (Peter, 49, teacher)

More of the male partners described leisure in terms of activity outside the home than female partners. This was often a continuation of leisure behaviours established in early adulthood and although some reduced or disposed of their out-of-home commitments after children were born, others continued to engage in active.
formalised leisure. This phenomenon is explored further in terms of the problems it caused in the couple unit in Chapter 7.

Leisure as non-obligation

The idea that leisure is expressive of personal freedom was well represented by the participants in the study. This seemed particularly pertinent in the context of dual-earning and during the child-rearing phase of the lifecourse as employment and family life presented a series of obligations that placed a strain on family and personal resources. Barbara (43, teacher), reflected this in her comment that: 'I suppose my own leisure is things that I do purely for me that don’t have to be done for anybody else'. Similarly, participants often responded that leisure was 'doing things you want to do' (Tom, 41, insurance broker), and in places where there were 'no children' (Kelly, 42, library assistant). These uninterrupted times of non-obligation were, however, reportedly rare and so were often 'snatched' in occasional times and places. Barbara went on to describe the nature of these 'snatched' moments as:

sitting in bed with a book for half an hour every night, just switch off time. I do like photography. I’d like to do more but I do as much as I can and sticking photographs in my photograph album are very sort of mindless therapeutic sort of things. That’s as far as it goes at the moment. (Barbara, 43, teacher)

Given the constraints on time and energy, it was apparent that, although 'freedom' or non-obligation was an essential component of leisure, it was not often attainable. In addition, many women were constrained by a strong sense of obligation towards their children, thus reducing their opportunities to express their own 'freedom' further (see Chapter 7).

Leisure as self-fulfilment

Some of the interviewees offered definitions of leisure that focussed on the qualities of self-fulfilment and personal satisfaction. For some of the participants this meant 'do[ing] things that are fairly personal', such as 'running, cycling, being on my own' (David, 42, researcher) and other similar leisure activities. For others, more unorthodox activities were defined as leisure-like and self-satisfying. For a minority of the interviewees, for example, paid work could be 'leisure-like'. This was particularly the case for some of the female subjects who felt that work enabled them to 'be themselves' and control their own time, as the following example demonstrates:
I know I said earlier on that leisure was doing something for me but sometimes, quite often along the line, doing work has been something for me as well because it’s something I’ve really wanted to do, for my own personal fulfilment if you like (Barbara, 43, teacher).

**Leisure as time**

‘Time’ was also identified as an important definitional component of leisure. Nigel (44, town planner), for example, described leisure in the following way: ‘I suppose it’s a time, or a chunk of time where you can indulge your own interests and relaxation’. Similarly, Chris (44, fitter), said leisure was: ‘Free time. Doing things you wanna do’. Chris’s expression of leisure as time, again, incorporates a notion of leisure as ‘free’. This example demonstrates the multiple definitional components of leisure whereby ‘time’ and ‘freedom’ are vital and integral to the meaning of leisure. The constraints on time in the context of dual-earning during child-rearing were frequently raised as a barrier to leisure and the couples’ ability to express ‘freedom’. David (42, researcher) and Eva (42, government advisor) reflected this in their comments that a lack of time was the main obstacle to leisure, as did many of the other interviewees. The concept of ‘time’ was, however, closely aligned with family and working roles and the obligations associated with them. As such, ‘free time’, like work time, was gendered. Time was structured and experienced in different ways by the men and women in the study and some of these structures and experiences are examined in more detail in Chapter 7.

**Leisure as experience**

Many of the interviewees included an affective dimension to their definitions of leisure. Most common was a discourse of leisure as relaxation and/or recuperation from the activities and responsibilities of work and family. Richard (44, self-employed) reflected this in his comment that: ‘Leisure to me means, erm, not work, nothing to do with work, having an enjoyable time, relaxing, unwinding, something like that’. Many of the interviewees felt that this dimension of leisure was crucial to their own personal definitions of what leisure meant to them.

Some of the other interviewees indicated that the experience of ‘being together as a family’ was a valuable dimension to leisure. Several interviewees mentioned the ‘bonding’ qualities of leisure as a family. Charlie (44, computer manager), for example, said that leisure ‘is your family bond’ and Suzanne (41, secretary). said that...
leisure in the context of the family helped her ‘know’ her children: ‘[family leisure is] very important ... it helps you know each other and read them’. The examples of leisure as relaxation, recuperation and ‘family bonding’ demonstrates how the experiential component of leisure is a vital aspect of meaning.

**Leisure as a fluid concept**

Some of the interviewees raised the problem of defining leisure as a distinct life domain. Many felt that there were significant crossovers between leisure and other areas of everyday life. Two examples of this ‘blurring of boundaries’ included the problem of the work/leisure dichotomy and the extent to which leisure and family were separable. Firstly, Tracy raised the problem of assuming ‘work’ and ‘leisure’ are opposites:

ES: Could you first describe to me what the word ‘leisure’ means to you.
Tracy: Hmm, I suppose it’s things you do when you’re not at work. But if you work partly at home when does that happen? So it’s a bit vague isn’t it really.
(Tracy, 40, special school assistant)

With a second job as a respite foster carer, Tracy experienced first-hand the problem of compartmentalising work and leisure as two separate spheres of life, thereby confirming that: ‘the notion of time being set aside only for leisure is very difficult to achieve for those outside full-time paid employment’ (Deem, 1988, p.6). In addition, several of the study group worked from home, thus further complicating the separation of spheres. Heather (45, project coordinator) reflected Tracy’s feelings in her comment that: ‘it isn’t perfect working from home because you sometimes feel as though you are always at work’, and Andrew felt that it was not only his leisure that was affected by the home as his workplace:

because I work from home, when I’m not out on site, I don’t concentrate as well when Claire’s [his daughter] in the house ... she’ll watch telly for a while and I can be upstairs working but I know if I don’t see her every hour then she’ll get ratty because she’s bored – be she on holiday or be she unwell – so it does affect the way I work. (Andrew, 39, self-employed)

These comments show the complex ways in which areas of life interrelate and how interactions impact on the meaning and experience of work, family and leisure.

A further example of the ‘blurring of boundaries’ is the extent to which family and leisure are separable. For many of the couples, and particularly the men in the study group, ‘family time’ was leisure-like, although a sense of parental obligation was
often hinted at. The obligations of family life often required a reassessment of what constituted leisure and there seemed to be a trade-off between personal freedom and 'time with the family'. This often resulted in ambiguous responses to questions of 'family leisure':

Again, I wouldn't have initially described it as leisure, but it doesn't mean it's not enjoyable ... If 'leisurely' means laid back and relaxed and sort of dreamy, which in my mind perhaps it does a little, then our lifestyle isn't like that and I think most of our friends would ... see our lifestyle as crazily hectic (Scott, 41, lecturer).

Even in the context of family obligations, 'family time' was 'enjoyable', if not 'pure' leisure. This example shows how leisure is a fluid life domain that is dependent on life stage and intricately interacts with work and family throughout the lifecourse. This section has also demonstrated some of the definitional components of leisure that may include a residual notion of non-work time, activity, self-fulfilment, non-obligation and leisure as an 'experience'. In practice, however, the participants in the study incorporated a variety of dimensions into their definitions of leisure and provided highly individualised accounts of leisure meanings across the lifecourse.

**Problematising the meaning of leisure and definitional difficulty**

Defining the personal meaning of leisure proved a sometimes difficult and contradictory task for many of the interviewees. Some of the subjects had never considered what 'leisure' meant to them in any depth before and struggled to articulate what 'leisure' was. This did not, however, seem to diminish its value as a concept, and many attached a high level of importance to personal and family leisure. The following exchange with Scott demonstrates the difficulty many of the interviewees experienced when trying to define the meaning of leisure. He is quoted at length to show his struggle for meaning and the extent to which his attempts to articulate his understandings of leisure were sometimes contradictory:

ES: I'd like you to describe to me what the word leisure means to you.
Scott: Erm, if I was to try and do a brainstorm, sort of first word type of thing, it would be falling asleep probably, in that the concept of leisure is relaxing, almost sedentary relaxing. And actually not that appealing as a term, it wouldn't be a term that I would tend to use.
ES: So when do you feel you're at your own leisure rather than just relaxing or being sedentary or ... 
Scott: Erm, difficult question, I think erm I tend to relax or wind down or whatever other word you might use for it, often by doing things ... it partly depends on my tiredness partly depends on stress ... so I will either crash in front of the television which I suppose you could consider to be leisure, and that's often
... when my brain has had too much and I don’t want either physical or mental stimulation. I mean my leisure in terms of something that I’m choosing to do which I find enjoyable tends to be either sport or quite often sort of activities. DIY-type things. Another thing I suppose falls into leisure time as opposed to work time are things associated with family – doing things together, going out and so forth or with the church. It’s just that I wouldn’t – leisure wouldn’t be the first word that would come into my mind to describe them that’s all, I mean they are things that I do out of work that are very important to me and the different things provide different benefits, different opportunities for physical recreation, physical exertion, you know change of mental scene and anything else.

ES: So leisure is definitely separate from work, more based on activities than maybe relaxation …
Scott: I would guess so. I mean I would struggle to define it but if I took the view that, you know, work is work and leisure is everything else then there is a whole gamut of things which could fall into that. If I took the phrase, or took the words slightly differently then I would take it as leisure being leisurely and I’m actually very rarely leisurely out of work hours. So, you know, I would have to have a much tighter definition of when I sit down in front of the television and watch the football. (Scott, 41, lecturer)

Scott’s above comments show how he struggles to find meaning in the word ‘leisure’ and how it relates to his everyday life. He begins by almost rejecting ‘leisure’ as a concept because of his perception that it means ‘sedentary relaxing’ and this does not represent his perception of his everyday life. He then goes on to describe activities that he ‘chooses’ and are ‘enjoyable’ and begins to develop a work/non-work divide. On further consideration of the meaning(s) of leisure he adopts a two-pronged approach: that leisure can either mean ‘everything else’ outside of work or that leisure means ‘being leisurely’. Scott felt that the existential state of ‘being leisurely’ did not really represent his lifestyle. Primarily, Scott communicated the idea that leisure had no fixed meaning and it was highly dependent on his life situation and his state of body and mind. Again, the notion that leisure is ‘highly context dependent’, reappears.

6.2 The interaction between leisure and the lifecourse

This section examines how leisure interacts with the lifecourse. The previous discussion, whilst illuminating the different meanings of leisure did not unravel in detail how leisure altered in its role, structure and experience over time. The Rapoport’s seminal work in the 1970s on Leisure and the Family Life Cycle clearly demonstrated how leisure behaviour changed during key stages in family life. This section builds on the analysis of the work and family histories of the interviewees described in Chapter 5 by exploring how the roles, meanings, structures and
experience of leisure changed during key family and family–employment transitions. Three stages in the family and employment histories of the couples are examined in this section: the pre-children phase of the lifecourse, the transition to parenting and the childrearing stage of the lifecourse and the dual-earner phase. This separation of stages of the lifecourse is, to some extent, artificial, as the course of events over the lifetime were largely fluid and seamless. The participants did, however, distinguish between certain times in their lives and, in particular, compared their lifestyles before and after having children. Many also reflected on the differences in their experience of work, family and leisure during stages of single and dual earning and during times when both partners worked full-time and when there was a full-time/part-time employment mix within the couple.

Leisure and the pre-children phase of the lifecourse

As Chapter 5 identified, full-time engagement in the labour market by both partners was the most common working arrangement in the pre-children years of the lifecourse. These intra-couple employment patterns were complementary in the context of the childless family as resources were not being challenged by the competing demands of childcare, other family work and paid employment. The financial, physical and emotional independence of the two adults members of the household also influenced the form, nature and experience of leisure. This section examines how these factors interacted and attempts to uncover the role of leisure in the construction of the lifestyles of individuals before children were born. This is also examined in the context of a gender constructivist analytical framework so that the role of gender as a structurally mediating factor in lifestyle can be unravelled.

Firstly, there was a clear distinction between work in the employment sphere and 'leisure' by the study group in their references to the pre-children phase of the lifecourse. Many of the study group converged on the notion that the pre-children stage of the family lifecycle was characterised by a strong orientation towards and engagement in paid employment and/or a 'career'. Kelly (42, library assistant), for example, commented that, 'pre children it was work, work, work'. Non-work time was largely time for leisure and there was a distinct work/leisure division. This reflects the findings of Green et al (1990) who commented that women in pre-children phases of the lifecourse were more able to 'compartmentalise' life domains compared to women in the childrearing stage. It is important to note, however, that this
work/leisure dichotomy in the pre-children years is a simplification of the current project's findings. The notion that work solely consisted of paid employment, for example, is misleading, as the interviewees referred to several aspects of their lives as work-like. Other meanings attributed to work included housework, voluntary work, working as an unpaid assistant in the family business and emotional work such as 'working at a marriage' (Suzanne, 41, secretary). Sarah (46, librarian), for example, identified that she did, 'work that I wasn't being paid for. I did lots of voluntary jobs in charity, erm, for the National Childbirth Trust and for our church'. These variable definitions of work reflect those made by feminists and Marxist sociologists who conceptualised 'work' as both paid and unpaid; formal and informal (see Chapter 3). The work/leisure dichotomy is further complicated by the discourses of some of the interviewees who did not isolate work and leisure as polar opposites but as 'one of the same thing'. Sarah, for example, went on to describe how her 'church activities', which were described in her previous comments as 'work', were also subsumed under 'leisure'. Others indicated that paid work, childcare and domestic work sometimes incorporated some of the qualities of 'leisure'. These findings confirm the complexities in defining both 'work' and 'leisure' and bring into question the work/leisure dualism. The work/leisure dichotomy is, however, of value in reference to the pre-children phase of the couples' life histories when viewed in relative terms to their experiences in the childrearing phase of the lifecourse.

Secondly, non-work in the pre-children phase of the lifecourse was generally characterised by active leisure that was financially enabled by activities in paid employment. Heather (45, project co-ordinator), for example, commented that: 'when I was younger without children, you know, my wages were holiday money, you know, spending money and what have you'. Nigel also reflected this in his comments that:

When I was younger my idea of leisure was to go to the pub with my friends and drink huge amounts of beer and that was really the leisure of the time ... I used to do a bit of motor sport which I could afford to do when I was a young single man on a good income, er, but again, all that is really of no relevance to my current lifestyle (Nigel, 44, town planner).

Others, such as Trevor commented that 'leisure' before children tended to be more active, based outside the home and social, compared to the childrearing phase:

Obviously before we had children we went out a lot more ... a lot of the things revolve around how much money you've got available to spend on leisure. And time. So before we had the children we used to go out perhaps three or four times a week, do various things, but, you know, for a long time now leisure has become
much more home-based or going out as a family at the weekends (Trevor, 44, landscape architect).

This theme of leisure as active, social, out-of-home and financially enabled by relatively high levels of independent income was a common topic of discourse for both the men and the women in the study group when they referred to the pre-children phase of the lifecourse.

In terms of gender differences, there appeared to be a convergence in the lifestyles of men and women in the pre-children years of the lifecourse in relation to the highly gendered life trajectories once children were born. Both men and women had clear recollections of leisure as relatively free of constraint and obligation and as a largely social, active and out-of-home experience, although the form of leisure and the activities they engaged in differed. The interviews did not, however, seek to identify the exact details of the activities of the interviewees and examine gender differences. This information was considered secondary for several reasons. Firstly, the collation of information about leisure activities represents a normative and andocentric approach to the study of leisure. Secondly, the convergences and differences in the leisure behaviours of men and women has been well documented in other research, and, finally, the aim of the thesis was to explore the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families across the lifecourse, rather than focus on the specific forms of leisure, although this does provide valuable additional data.

Other characteristics of leisure in the pre-children years according to the interviewees were its autonomy and spontaneity, as the following comment demonstrates:

One of the biggest shocks I think I found was that prior to having children you could just turn round and say 'oh let's go out', whether it was just for a walk or whether it was down the pub, whether it was going to meet friends, you could just drop everything and go out the door. For the last 19 years I've not been able to do that, so that changes you a lot, but I don't mind it (Suzanne, 41, secretary).

This notion as leisure as an often spontaneous experience was mirrored in Claire's (44, photographer) comments: 'Before the children I could literally do what I wanted to, you know, I could enjoy myself, or if I felt like going out ... you can just do it. And then it became that you had to consider them, so you didn't do things that you wanted to'. The idea that leisure lost its spontaneity after children were born can be analysed from a gender perspective. Existing evidence suggests that women, in particular, are constrained by the responsibilities of children, care and domestic work.
and that this impacts on the extent to which leisure can be easily accessed. Furthermore, discourses of an 'ethic of care' which were manifest in many of the women's comments described in Chapter 5 about 'being there for the children', provided a source of identity for many of the women during motherhood, and this often resulted in restrictions on their freedom to choose when, where and how to spend their leisure. The following section describes these (gendered) processes in more detail.

A final characteristic of leisure in the pre-children years of the lifecourse was its interdependence at the level of the couple. For many of the couples in the study, 'leisure' meant doing things together. When children were born, 'leisure' had a rather different complexion. Trevor spoke of this when reflecting on the leisure time himself and his partner enjoyed together:

'It's quite a rare occasion for the two of us to go out now ... I'm happy with it, you know, it's just one of those things ... It's something that came as a – really I'll be honest and say – a terrible shock in the first few weeks being a parent, you know, it's a terrible shock. But ... we've lived with it for 11 years now and it's just a different way of life and you just adapt to it. (Trevor, 44, landscape architect)

The interrelation between men and women in couples before children were born was, therefore, often characterised by co-dependency in leisure, although individual, active pursuits were also commonly reported. Clearly, not all couples represented this trend of dual full-time employment and active co-dependent leisure that was distinct from 'work', but relative to the post-children phase, these intra-couple relationships between work and leisure were commonly cited.

Parenting: a defining moment

As Chapter 5 identified, parenthood had a differential impact on the paid employment histories of men and women, with women's labour market patterns being more disjointed and complex than their partners. This section explores how parenthood impacted on the leisure behaviours and orientations of partners. In particular, it examines the changing role of leisure and how gender relations influenced the negotiation of leisure and lifestyle.

For both men and women, the onset of parenthood symbolised a significant shift in the form, structure, meaning and experience of leisure. Changes in leisure were, however, different for the men and women in the study group and, although some similar experiences were reported, it was more common that parenting represented a
point of divergence in the lifestyles of the respondents. In particular, whilst both the male and female participants spoke of a different approach to leisure after children were born, these approaches varied considerably between men and women. Some areas of difference between men and between women also emerged, and these are also reported here.

For the men in the study group the freedom associated with leisure in the pre-children phase of the lifecourse was largely reported to have declined since children entered the family. Charlie (44, computer manager), for example, commented that his commitments to active sport had reduced over the years: ‘[Sport] used to take up just about every evening at one time. So, when I was single and that used to be every evening and weekends as well. [But now] obviously you can’t be out every evening, you can’t do all those things and stay with a family’. This loss of freedom, however, was accompanied by a significant shift in the complexion of leisure that meant that although personal leisure was often (although not always) reduced, it was not entirely curtailed. This occurred because children became closely tied to meanings of leisure so that ‘time spent with the children’ was, for the most part, time that resembled leisure. This contrasted sharply with the experiences of many of the women in the study group who were generally engaged in more of the ‘work-like’ day-to-day childcare and domestic tasks. Tony captures this theme of the confluence of ‘time with the children’ and leisure in his comments about the importance of ‘family leisure’:

Work out how many days your kids have. 10 000 days or whatever they have before they’re 18 and I just think that that really isn’t a lot. There will come a time that they will be gone and I do find that it is a very high priority to spend time with them ... I don’t get despondent because it’s not all quality time, as I say, it is actually the time that I’ve decided to give them because I think to not give the family that time can only be a source of regret later, I suppose. I think it was Foster, the White House lawyer, who said, ‘nobody ever said on their deathbed, I wish I’d spent more time in the office’. I go along with that. (Tony, 37, town planner)

The boundaries between family and leisure, therefore, became somewhat blurred for many men in the childrearing phase of the lifecourse. Leisure became child-centred and while this was often referred to in ambiguous terms as being ‘leisure-like’ rather than ‘pure’ leisure (i.e. something which was personal chosen and relatively ‘free’), it was often highly valued and positively experienced. An example of the way in which men’s ‘time with the children’ maintained its leisure-like qualities includes the
adoption of activities with the children that reflected their own leisure interests. Geoff reflected this in his comments about his children’s leisure activities:

The youngest one plays cricket, so I take him to cricket club, that gets me out again onto the cricket field, although it’s only coaching, helping the kids play, it’s a leisure opportunity. He plays rugby, I used to play a lot of rugby, and I haven’t done that, I stopped when I was 20 so it’s a long, long time ago. There again that’s another opportunity. (Geoff, 40, self-employed)

This notion of harmonising the leisure interests of male partners and children was not, however, universal and supporting the leisure activities of children was not always viewed as leisure-like. Peter (49, teacher), for example, viewed the leisure activities of his children as bestowing ‘work-like’ responsibilities on him: ‘I think everybody goes through watching children on touchlines, tennis courts and all that sort of thing. But that’s just being taxi driver and chief supporter. That’s their opportunity really rather than mine’.

Work in the employment sphere remained a rather distinct life sphere for the men in the study and it was viewed as separate from this new family/leisure configuration throughout the childrearing stage of the lifecourse. Men reported very little change in their employment patterns after children were born. Peter (49, teacher), for example, stated that after children, work ‘went on as normal’, and Charlie (44, computer manager) said that ‘having children didn’t really affect [work] in any way’. Some men, however, commented on a change in their orientations towards work after children were born. This change in the family–work relationship manifested itself in an insistence that they should be home at certain times and have some sort of ‘quality time’ (time that resembled leisure) with their children most days during the ‘dependent’ years. Andrew indicated that he was influenced by these factors when his daughter (Claire) was growing up:

As Claire got older she noticed more and more my absences from home ... I would be away two or three nights a week and I would be away before she got up in the morning and then be back after she’d gone to bed at night, so I’d see her at weekends. And each weekend I would do something and [my wife] would say, ‘oh, she doesn’t do that anymore’. During the week, the routine would change so much that I’d missed, that I’d be behind the times, and I always was behind the times. But when she was one and two she didn’t notice me not being there at night but as she got older she started to realise I wasn’t there a lot of the time, erm, so one of my motivations for starting my own business was a better quality of life, particularly for Claire so that we would see more of each another. (Andrew, 39, self-employed)
The men in the study commonly expressed this desire to experience their child(ren) growing up and that they tried to minimise the impact paid work had on their opportunities to do so. Although many men recognised that their working patterns 'carried on as normal', particularly in comparison to their partner's experiences, they wanted to foster a new family–work relationship. The development of a new interface between family and work was informed by the same motivations as the development of a new orientation towards leisure. These motivations were child-centred and incorporated notions of fatherhood that meant both providing for and spending time with the children and being active in the developmental years of their children's lives. This was contradicted, however, by some of the men in the study group maintaining high levels of autonomous leisure after children were born (see Chapter 7).

These new orientations towards work, family and leisure contrasted sharply with the experiences of many women in the study group. Women's complex employment patterns were similarly matched by intricate changes in their activity in and orientation towards leisure. Patterns of employment have already been shown, in this and other research, to interrelate closely with the number and, in particular the broad ages of children in the family. The change in family structure prompted by the birth of children brought about a radical restructuring of the roles and responsibilities of the female partner. Activity in and attitudes towards leisure was part of this restructuring.

The research confirmed the findings of other research that showed the close interaction between women's leisure and family, care and domestic responsibilities (Green et al, 1990; Kay, 1998, 2001). The distinction between work and leisure, which characterised the pre-children phase of the lifecourse, was eroded by shifts in the character of work and the emergence of new family responsibilities. 'Work' shifted in meaning after children were born from paid/formal before children, to unpaid/informal during the pre-school years of their children's lives, and then to a delicately (and sometimes, precariously) balanced mix of paid and unpaid work on their return to the labour market (see next section for a discussion of the dual-earner phase of the lifecourse). This 'model' of meanings associated with 'work' is, however, an over-simplification of the narratives of the women in the study. In many cases, women subtly shifted their activities in and orientations towards different aspects of their 'working' lives throughout the lifecourse. Also, in support of Rosalind Edwards and Jane Ribbens McCarthy's (1999 pp.97–98) argument that 'work' constitutes a narrow definition of what motherhood means to women at an everyday level, the
women in the study often spoke of their time as full-time carers or 'housewives' as one which went beyond what could be defined as 'work'. At an everyday, experiential level, many of the women spoke of their mothering in terms of its unique and 'non-work-like' qualities. Barbara for example, when asked about her five years spent as a full-time home-maker, responded:

I loved it. Some days I would spend the whole day just sitting on the carpet in here with him with a pile of toys, and we would have a smashing time, and I'd do nothing else and it was wonderful. To me that's what having kids is all about, there's no point in having kids if you're not going to spend time with them. I've really enjoyed it. It was lovely. (Barbara, 43, teacher)

Barbara’s description of her time at home as a full-time carer, therefore, went beyond a 'work-like' experience to include what could be described as 'leisure’. In practice, this ‘blurring of boundaries’ between work, family and leisure after children were born, was a common experience among the women in the study.

Similar to the male interviewees, women commonly reported a reassessment of the role of leisure in lifestyle once children were born. Changes in leisure were similar to those of the male participants: leisure became more child-centred and less personally 'free'. The women in the study group, however, reported a greater curtailment in leisure than their partners, and opportunities for leisure were particularly constrained by the gendered tasks of childcare and housework. Fiona (39, NHS manager), for example, when asked how she felt about her leisure when her children were young commented: ‘Leisure isn’t a word that you really think of much’. Claire explained this curtailment of leisure during the childrearing, single-earner phase of the lifecourse in the following way:

I didn’t have any [leisure] basically. I mean like I said it is, you know, because [there is] three of them [children] it’s their needs ... there were days ... when you seem to be doing your housework and whatever, and maybe a bit of television, but I didn’t watch a lot of television and I didn’t get a lot of reading done either ... as the youngest one was born the oldest one was almost ready to go to school, just a year after. You know, there was all sort of school picking up and that sort of thing ... so you don’t have any time to yourself ... I was dissatisfied when I was home with the children, I didn’t have any [leisure/time] to myself. (Claire, 44, photographer)

Many of the women in the study group not only indicated that opportunities for leisure reduced, but that the form, nature and meaning of leisure changed. Many women spoke of how leisure had shifted from meaning activity and sociability in the pre-children years to passivity and relaxation/recuperation during the early child-rearing
stage. Heather (45, project co-ordinator) reflected this by saying: 'I think sometimes when children are little it's just a luxury to be able to have a bath for an hour by yourself, or to watch a film uninterrupted'. Although many referred to the pre-school years of their child's life as a particularly difficult time to access leisure, some women felt that children impacted on their leisure even when they reached school age and were becoming more independent:

It's not 'oh, I'll pick up a book and I'll read it', and put it down when you feel like it, but you feel, 'oh maybe there's a meal to get ready or a uniform to iron', I don't know, anything. So you don't read as I would like to. Erm, the same with you sit and watch something and then you feel guilty: 'oh, I shouldn't have watched that because I could have got on with such and such' ... So even at this stage I don't really have time to enjoy the leisure time I have if that makes sense. It sounds like a weird thing to say, but, you know ... (Claire, 44, photographer).

The comments made by Claire (who had three children aged 10, 12 and 14) clearly show how the demands of the home impact on women's experience of and access to leisure. As such, leisure was a site of the construction and maintenance of gender roles. Definitions of leisure reformulated as the onset of motherhood shifted 'work' to mean unpaid domestic work and childcare and the family became the focal point for personal identification. The blurring of boundaries between work in the home and leisure; a reduced opportunity to engage in leisure; and, its altered form and content were manifestations of the instrumentality of leisure in the formation and maintenance of gender roles.

**Leisure and dual earning**

The dual-earner phase of the lifecourse is less distinct than the two stages described above. Chapter 5 identified that, although dual-earnership was common after a period of time that varied from months to years after children were born, the re-entry of typically the female partner into the labour market after a period of full-time caring in the home varied in terms of the form, nature and level of engagement in employment. In many cases the female partner did short-term or 'one-off' jobs during their time as a full-time carer and the return to employment was often gradual, although some women returned to full-time work. In addition, the transition to dual-earning occurred at different times in the lifecourse, although many of the women returned to more permanent or long-term jobs as their youngest child reached primary school age. Despite the variability of the timing and nature of the transition to dual earning, the
couples reported similar leisure experiences at this time in the lifecourse. Patterns of change in the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner couples with dependent children are examined here. The similarities and differences in the leisure experiences of the men and women in the study group are also of particular interest.

Firstly, the accounts of the study group indicated that the leisure behaviours of themselves and their partners had altered only slightly since the onset of dual earnership. In particular, the behaviours and orientations of the male partners remained remarkably stable throughout the post-children stage of the lifecourse, almost regardless of the labour market activities of their partners. The changes that took place in the male participant’s leisure in the early childrearing years, such as the shift to child-centred leisure and the close association between family and leisure time, remained the outstanding features. Personal employment status often remained stable and activities in the domestic sphere, such as engagement in housework, were resilient to change. Only slight differences in the family associated with the changing ages and stages of children’s lives appeared to have any impact on the leisure behaviours of the male partners. Scott (41, lecturer), for example, commented that his leisure had gone almost ‘full-circle’ from being independent before children, to child-centred and then more independent as the children aged: ‘Certainly for the first 5, 6, 7 years or so of the children we probably did very little individually outside of the children. As they have got older and more independent then you know we’ve started to do more individually’.

The transition to dual-earning had a greater effect on the leisure of the female partners in the study than on the male participants. Leisure was particularly constrained by not only the demands of the home and children but by the additional demands of paid work. As such, the thesis of a ‘leisure deficit’ was confirmed by the results of the fieldwork owing to the dual burden of paid and unpaid work. The ‘double shift’ (Hochschild, 1989) especially reduced the time available for leisure to the extent that some women felt they ‘disposed of’ leisure. Sarah (46, librarian), for example, described some of her busiest times, in terms of paid work and looking after her daughter who had medical problems, as a time when she ‘gave up’ on leisure: ‘I think [I’ve] largely just given up on it ... If I’ve had ten minutes to read to myself in a day then I’ve felt that at least I’ve had some time to myself’. Fiona described her leisure after returning to work after having children in a similar way:
When I first went back to work I was up at four in the morning with her [daughter] ...
... We’d fight with her to go to get her to sleep by about half eight and then when she was finally asleep, you breathe a big sigh of relief and it’d be like, right, let’s have a beer and a bar of chocolate and anything else you could lay your hands on because you’d got about two hours and then you were gonna be asleep yourself. (Fiona, 39, NHS manager)

The above comment is reflective of many of the women’s comments that leisure continued to be ‘snatched’ infrequently and was largely recuperative in its qualities throughout the childrearing and dual-earning phases. The further curtailment of time for leisure was, however, experienced differently by the women in the study group and was dealt with in a variety of ways. Kelly (42, library assistant), for example, was atypical in her response to the experience of ‘time squeeze’: ‘Now I fit in so much ... but now it’s a luxury ... I used to have more free time possibly but didn’t do as much’. In Kelly’s case, the combination of part-time employment, work in the home and leisure was complimentary and she commented that she had the ‘best of both worlds’ and was highly satisfied with the balance of her life.

Other women, and in particular those who worked full-time, found the demands of paid and unpaid work highly demanding and were unable to satisfactorily meet their leisure needs. For Mary (39, nursery nurse), for example, the transference from part-time to full-time employment placed unbearable strain on her daily life and her inability to claim personal leisure time was instrumental in her feelings of dissatisfaction with her work–life balance. Barbara also found the transition to full-time employment impacted on her ability to access personal leisure:

When I was part-time I could quite easily do the photography course, which wasn’t just two or three hours a week whatever it was, it was also going out for half a day here and there taking photographs to use for the course. And I had time to do that and do all the other family things that I wanted to do, I mean, don’t get me wrong, I really love my family and ... the family unit is the most important thing there is, but now I’m full-time it is more difficult. I couldn’t have done that course now; I spend too much time doing school stuff. (Barbara, 43, teacher)

In practice, there was a general distinction between the experience of leisure during periods of part-time and full-time employment. Constraints on leisure were magnified for those working full-time and many women who had experienced part- and full-time work felt that their lives were more balanced during the part-time phase. Eva indicated some of the reasons for this when she spoke of her leisure experiences as a full-time employee who worked an average of 50 hours per week:
Inevitably, I think the thing is it's not [just] a function of the amount of time, but it’s what you have left after you've done those sort of hours. You're just actually physically and mentally exhausted often. Not exhausted, that's an overstatement, but just tired, you just want to stop. And I suppose the other thing which actually does impact on it just a little bit is actually your breadth of vision about what to do really ... you become quite, sort of, single minded and I think that’s worse when you work more. You just don’t step outside what you’re doing. (Eva, 42, government advisor)

This magnification of the problem of ‘time squeeze’ during periods of full-time work seemed to increase further the ‘leisure deficit’ and, for some, this prompted a renegotiation of the roles and responsibilities of the female partner of the couple so that personal leisure time could be reclaimed. This is discussed in detail in Chapter 7.

For most of the women in the study, however, leisure was a site of struggle throughout childrearing, and the transition to dual-earning further deepened the problem. The absence of change in the behaviours of the both partners in relation to childcare and, in particular, housework when the female partner re-entered the labour market after children were born was a key factor in curtailment of female leisure. This absence of change has been reported in other research (Hochschild, 1989; Kiernan, 1992; Kay, 1998) and represents resilient gendered behaviour in the home. This contrasts with the relatively recent phenomenon of mothers engaging in paid employment that contradicts the ‘traditional’ and gendered notion of motherhood as solely nurturant, caring and dependent.

6.3 Leisure, the lifecourse and the differential impact of life transitions

This chapter has explored the role of leisure in the lifestyles of individuals across the lifecourse. The employment and family histories described in Chapter 5 have been used as a context in which to examine leisure behaviours and orientations and how these change over time and space (i.e. in different employment and family contexts). The exploration of leisure definitions and meanings has contributed to the debates in leisure studies and has underlined the variable and highly personal nature of leisure meanings and their context dependency. These contexts have also been unravelled to uncover the differential role of leisure throughout the lifecourse and the disparate structures and experiences of leisure by men and women. The pre-children phase of the lifecourse has been identified as a time of convergence in the men’s and women’s access to and experience of leisure. During this time, leisure was characterised by personal autonomy, relative ‘freedom’, active, social and out-of-home leisure and
often spontaneity and couple co-dependency. These characteristics of leisure changed considerably for both men and women in the context of the family with dependent children. Leisure became child-centred for both the men and women in the study group and for the men ‘family time’ was often time that resembled leisure. Women’s leisure was, however, more constrained by the demands of housework and childcare, although some of the women recognised the leisure-like qualities of being with children on a day-to-day basis and the leisure opportunities it offered. In the dual-earner phase of the lifecourse, women’s leisure was further constrained by the dual burden of paid and unpaid work, and many women, particularly those in full-time employment, struggled to access leisure and tended to ‘snatch’ leisure time to relax and recuperate.

This summary is an oversimplification and over-generalisation of the project’s findings. Key points, however, relate to:

- **The differences in the experiences of leisure across the lifecourse**
  Leisure has been shown to be a nebulous concept that changes in meaning, form and structure across the lifecourse and between individuals. This does not, however, diminish its value as a life domain and as a subject of analysis.

- **Leisure interacts closely with the employment and family lives of individuals in dual-earner families**
  Parenthood, in particular, has a significant impact on the leisure behaviours and orientations of partners, and these are highly gendered.

- **Leisure has been shown to be central to the construction of gendered lifestyles throughout the lifecourse**

The following chapter goes on to explore this final point in more detail.
Chapter 7 The relationships between leisure and gender

The relationships between leisure and gender within family contexts have been examined, in particular, by feminists in the field of leisure studies in the UK since the 1980s. Gender has been revealed to be a structurally mediating factor that impacts on men's and women's access to, orientations towards and experience of leisure. Gender relations in the home have been shown, in particular, to contribute to leisure inequalities between men and women. According to much feminist research, women are constrained by the responsibilities of motherhood, and the combination of employment and motherhood further amplifies gender inequalities in leisure. The gendered relationships between leisure, work and family are the focus of this chapter.

The first half of the chapter examines how gender relations are manifested in the leisure behaviours and orientations of the partners in the study group. The relationships between leisure and gender are unravelled in the context of the everyday lives of the couples in the project, that is, leisure is related to partners' activities in and attitudes in other life domains such as housework, childcare and employment. The notion of work, family and leisure 'hierarchies' (Kay, 1998) is used to examine the ways in which individuals in the context of the dual-earner family prioritise areas of life. The differences between the male and female participant's 'hierarchies' of work, family and leisure are examined and some of the different ways men and women rationalise these hierarchies are uncovered. In addition, the idea that men and women make 'sacrifices' for, and of, leisure is examined from a gendered perspective. This is combined with an exploration of some of the strategies used by the men and women in the study to access leisure and legitimise their activities in the leisure sphere.

The second half of the chapter examines ways in which couples in dual-earner families negotiate leisure and the extent to which gender is reinforced, maintained or challenged through negotiation. The principle of reciprocity is revealed as a key aspect of everyday life that includes the notion that partners should support each others' leisure. The adoption of this principle in practice is, however, shown to be dependent on the perceptions of individuals in relation to their own and their partner's leisure. Examples of the ways in which perceptions can conflict are also examined in the chapter. Finally, the extent to which leisure is a site for the negotiation and renegotiation of gender is examined in the context of the dual-earner family.
7.1 Gendered leisure in dual-earner families

Chapter 6 outlined some of the ways in which the meanings of leisure change across the lifecourse. The onset of parenthood was identified as a key transition that impacted on the relationships between work, family and leisure. In addition, these relationships were highly gendered and structured around role differentiation within the family. Mothers, for example, often experienced the curtailment of leisure during childrearing, and particularly in the context of dual earning, when the ‘double burden’ of work and home impacted on the time available for leisure. Many of their partners, however, developed a close association between their family and leisure lives so that ‘family time’ was time that resembled leisure.

This section explores further the role of gender in the everyday construction of leisure. Analysis is carried out in the context of the findings of Chapters 5 and 6 and considers, in particular, the extent to which gender is a significant factor in the everyday structure and experience of leisure in dual-earner families is considered. Firstly, leisure is explored in terms of the extent to which it is prioritised in the context of work and family responsibilities for both the men and women in the study group. Secondly, the concepts of ‘sacrifices’ and ‘strategies’ are examined as a source of potential leisure constraint for the female participants as well as a possible emancipatory force.

Work, family and leisure ‘hierarchies’ and the sacrifice of leisure

This section examines some of the ways in partners in dual-earner families construct work, family and leisure and the processes whereby areas of lifestyle are prioritised. These processes are examined critically in the context of gender relations in the home and in view of the lifecourse accounts given by the participants in the study. It has already been noted that dual earning in a household with dependent children places a strain on resources and that women, in particular, experience ‘time squeeze’ (see Chapter 6). Furthermore, some of the female interviewees commented that this contraction of time impacted on their leisure orientations and their experience of leisure. The following dialogue clearly demonstrates this point:

ES: Is there anything that stops you from doing the things you want to do in terms of leisure?
Jean: Time. Just haven’t got enough hours in the day really to do other things let alone have leisure and I think leisure probably comes towards the bottom of the pile really. Whereas I have to get everything sorted out and I have to get all their
clothes out for the next day and think about, I don’t know, washing the pots and whatever, Guy [her husband] can just quite usually just sit there and relax and watch the television whereas I can’t. I can only relax when I’ve done all the odd jobs really. So it comes as a lower priority to me because otherwise I keep thinking I can’t relax, there’s a mountain of pots, a mountain of ironing to do or something and I think that’s one of our big differences, and ... he finds it frustrating sometimes because he can’t understand why I can’t just sit there, you know, and relax when there’s all these things to do. And equally I find it frustrating that he can just sit there and relax while I’m tearing round (Jean, 38, librarian).

In these comments, Jean is expressing the sentiments of many of the women in the study: that the responsibilities of being an earner and a mother allowed them little time or space to satisfy their leisure needs. Jean also provides insight into the gendered processes through which leisure is curtailed. Domestic work was a source of constraint for Jean, who felt that she could not ‘relax’ and, therefore, experience leisure, when there were ‘odd jobs’ to do around the house. In Jean’s case, housework was a ‘priority’ and leisure came ‘towards the bottom of the pile’. This notion of there being a female ‘hierarchy’ of orientations and activity whereby leisure is relegated to any time ‘left over’ has been discussed in other research (Kay, 1998). Jean’s frustration with her partner’s ability to claim leisure while she was ‘tearing around’ doing domestic chores is a clear example of the process of gender construction and reinforcement. The behaviours and orientations of both partners support the underlying assumption that the female partner should assume the main responsibility for housework and that entitlement to leisure is linked to her ability to fulfil her obligations to both paid and unpaid work. Other research indicates that men’s entitlement to leisure is derived largely from their paid employment (Deem, 1986; Kay, 1998, 2001), and this research supports the notion that men in dual-earner families maintain a more distinct work/non-work divide throughout the lifecourse than their partners.

An explanation offered by one of the female participants in the study about her own personal hierarchy of work, family and leisure and the different experiences and attitudes of her male partner was that it was a ‘woman’s thing’ and that the curtailment of her own personal leisure was ‘part and parcel’ of being a mother:

Ultimately, when it actually boils down to it, I think it’s more important for Jon to get his game of squash than it would be for me because – there’s a number of reasons why – as a vent of adrenaline or aggression or whatever. It’s important that he gets out on the squash court which I don’t have so badly ... whereas it wouldn’t bother me whether I played or not. So I think it’s just maybe a woman’s
thing. I think you just do. So there are times when I don't do things because something has come up, but I accept that as part and parcel of it, however it's not very often (Jennie, 31, researcher).

Jennie's comments indicate that, although there is little conflict between herself and her partner about accessing leisure, she 'accepted' that her responsibilities as a mother were different from those of her partner and that this inevitably affected her access to and orientation towards leisure. This was not, however, the only factor that Jennie felt was important in the construction of relations within her family home. Having been a young single mother and as part of a reconstituted family, relationships between household members were complicated. Jennie felt that these family factors impacted on the extent to which leisure was disposable:

I think if we were honest we'd have to say that I would sacrifice before Jon [her husband] would on things, but that's a product of the way that our relationship has grown, because she [Laurie, her daughter] was mine and we'd been together on our own and I didn't make it particularly easy for him to take any responsibility for her because I was quite possessive, very possessive, and plus Laurie was very clinging to me so that was how things started in as much that if there was a sort of clash then I wouldn't go and Jon could go. Now, I didn't resent that because that's the way I wanted it. And now that things have changed because they know each other a lot better now, I can't then turn round and expect him to change because that's the way I made things. Do you know what I mean? It would be very unfair of me, so I still say at the moment that if there was a real clash and there was a problem like Laurie had to be somewhere but there was squash organised, Jon wouldn't ring and cancel his squash match, I'd alter maybe what I was planning to do to make sure she went where she was going to go. But I suppose maybe I'm just old fashioned, I see it as my responsibility anyway, and I'll probably do the same for this one [referring to her unborn child]. (Jennie, 31, researcher).

This example indicates that it is not only Jennie's sense of being a mother that impacts on her access to leisure, but that her responsibility to her daughter supersedes her husband's obligations due to his status as step-parent. Jennie felt that she had played a crucial role in the construction of relationships in the home and because of her initial possessiveness towards her daughter, she then could not alter her expectations of her partner when relationships in the home changed. In these circumstances, her responsibilities towards her daughter were heightened and her own personal leisure curtailed when caring requirements overrode her leisure needs. Her concluding reference to her unborn child, that she will 'probably do the same for this one', indicates, however, that the motherhood role is the primary influencing factor in her prioritisation of other life domains over leisure. In addition, Jennie's example shows
how her partner’s leisure was facilitated by her assumption of the role of primary carer.

Sacrificing leisure because of family obligations was not, however, an exclusively female phenomenon. Many of the men in the study felt that the demands of work and home placed restrictions on their ability to claim personal leisure, although ‘time with the family’ was often leisure-like. Andrew in particular, reflected on his obligations to his family and the impact this had on his own leisure when asked if anything prevented him from doing the things he wanted to do in terms of leisure:

Yes, childcare responsibilities in a wider sense in that – like me not going for a swim – it’s not because there’s nobody here to care for Claire [his daughter], it’s because I feel an emotional responsibility to be here as well ... The evenings are about the only time – or, not true, the early evenings, 4 ‘til 7, 4 ‘til 8 – are the only times on a daily basis when there’s any chance of us being together and that doesn’t happen every day, other than breakfast. (Andrew, 39, self-employed)

In these comments, Andrew expresses a sense of parental obligation towards his daughter that goes beyond providing childcare. His sense of ‘emotional responsibility’ towards his daughter reoriented his approach to leisure in a way that reflects many of the female participants discourse of wanting to ‘be there’ for their children (see Chapter 5). Andrew’s explicit recognition of his emotional role in the family was rare among the male participants in the study and indicates how behaviour can diverge from ‘traditional’ role expectations. In the main, however, the female participants indicated that their roles as mothers and responsibilities as earners placed a ‘double burden’ on their access to leisure: leisure was an area of life that was the most easily curtailed and was relegated to the bottom of the work–family–leisure hierarchy. While some of the men felt that their own personal leisure was also sacrificed for work and family, their role as fathers rather than mothers altered the nature of their obligation. Sacrificing personal leisure appeared to be more related to individual choice and agency for the men in the study, whereas constraints in the form of fulfilling role expectations played a bigger part in the leisure lives of their female partners.

Leisure ‘strategies’

Relinquishing leisure was a strategy frequently adopted by most of the women in the study group and, to a lesser extent, the men, to reconcile the demands of work and home. This was not, however, the only lifestyle strategy utilised by men and women in dual-earner couples. A variety of means of accessing leisure were described by the
interviewees, some of which occasionally challenged, as well as reinforced, gender assumptions. Almost all of the men and women in the study group expressed the view that leisure was important in their everyday life (although this was not universal), and that both personal and family leisure played crucial individual, psychological and ‘family bonding’ functions. As a consequence, individual strategies were developed to access leisure and these often included making sacrifices in other spheres of life. ‘Making room’ for personal leisure, for example, often required the renegotiation of housework, family and/or paid work.

Housework was the most commonly identified area of everyday life that was ‘set aside’ so that leisure could be accessed. This prioritisation of leisure over housework was accompanied by a discourse of changing attitudes towards domestic work and a sense that it was part of ‘getting one’s priorities right’. Suzanne explained her rationalities in the following way:

I’m quite good, I suppose, from the point of view that I will not do housework if I would prefer to do something else. I’ve always seen it as – housework’s something that it will still be there tomorrow, regardless of whether you do it or not. So I think ... [if] I don’t get stuff done today then I would either get it done tomorrow or I would think ‘no, I’ll go and do the garden because the sun’s come out’ ... I wouldn’t say ‘oh no, I’ve missed out on this that and the other’, no. (Suzanne, 41, secretary)

Jon expressed similar sentiments to Suzanne:

[We sacrifice] housework if we want to go and have a game of squash we’d do that rather than clean the floors and if it’s a sunny day we’ll go for a 20 or 30 mile bike ride sooner than doing the washing up ... You’ve got to prioritise haven’t you? That is one of our fairly high priorities. (Jon, 39, fire fighter)

These two examples demonstrate how leisure is prioritised over housework so that leisure experiences do not have to be disposed of and can be integrated into everyday life. Many of the women expressed this reprioritisation as an outcome of the ‘double burden’. They suggested that working for an income may have the potential to reduce engagement in the domestic sphere and, hence, challenge the distribution of household labour. Indications from this research were, however, that renegotiations of domestic work between partners was negligible.

Some of the interviewees felt that paid work was also sometimes reprioritised so that leisure could be accessed. Sacrificing paid work for leisure was, however, not commonly cited by the interviewees and was only often commented upon by those in more autonomous working environments and particularly those in self-employment.
although not all had discretion over working hours. Peter (49, teacher), for example, worked within a fixed working hours framework in school, but felt that outside of his timetable commitments he had some degree of flexibility within which he could negotiate his leisure time: ‘I will happily push my pile of marking to one side and say I’ll mark it tomorrow. Or mark it early sometimes, so I can go to a football match tonight or so I can play my tennis match tonight.’ Most of the interviewees, however, had fixed hours of work and so could not negotiate their time to meet their personal leisure needs. This included some of the women who worked part-time who felt that time for personal leisure was restricted by obligations other than employment. Anne (40, health promotion specialist), for example, commented that, although she felt she had ‘more leisure’ when she was working part-time, this was mostly ‘spent with other women in the same position’ and that she ‘had more childcare commitments’. Her responsibilities as a mother and primary carer, therefore, impacted both on her access to leisure and the form it took.

In terms of sacrificing ‘family time’ for personal leisure, few of the study group accepted it as a personal strategy that was used or that was legitimate. ‘Family time’ often assumed a high level of importance and was embedded in a discourse of ‘family comes first’:

There are things I would like to do ... but I, you know, realise that I’m in a position where I accept ... for the time being, life is gearing around, basically geared around these kids ... I’ve got a fairly long-term view of life and erm I don’t sort of get impatient or frustrated because I’m not able to do just what I personally like to do ... I guess if anything it’s sacrificing things I’d like to more so I can be at home rather than sacrificing home life and work life so I can do certain things that I’m probably not really that fussed about anyway (Nigel, 44, town planner).

Some of the interviewees, however, such as Eva (42, government advisor) felt able to reduce family time to ‘make room’ for personal time: ‘I think I do sacrifice time with the children and time with David [her husband] too in order to do the things that I like doing’. Sarah (46, acquisitions librarian), who was active in the church, felt similarly to Eva: ‘I do sacrifice time with Andrew [her husband] and with Claire [her daughter] if I go off and do church things, because Andrew isn’t a Christian and Claire doesn’t very often come out with me to church things in the evening’. The ‘sacrifice’ of time with the family for some of the women in the study, however, were rarely reported as having a deleterious effect on family life. This was directly contrasted with the experiences of a few of the couples who reported that the leisure activities of some of
the male partners impinged on family life. Geoff felt that established patterns of leisure behaviour were unsustainable after his children were born:

ES: Have you ever sacrificed other things so that you can have your own personal leisure?
Geoff: I did to start off with, but that soon stopped. Well, the cricket for instance. I would sacrifice being at home with Suzanne [his wife] and the boys to go and be out with a group of blokes hitting a ball around. You can’t, if you sit back and look at that, you can’t make it right ... It wasn’t appreciated, being away [but] it wasn’t stopped. Suzanne wasn’t going to stop me but she wasn’t happy about it, and, of course, the boys would want to spend time with me and I wasn’t there for them. So ... it had to come to a halt. (Geoff, 40, self-employed)

In this example, Geoff expresses the feeling that a regular and formal commitment to a specific leisure activity was not reconcilable with the demands of home life and, after a time, had to end. Many of the men in the study felt that ‘prioritising’ and ‘compromising’ were invaluable when balancing work, family and leisure: ‘You’ve got to prioritise whether it be for work or spending time here [at home]. A compromise, yeah.’ (Tom, 41, insurance broker). Others ‘timetabled’ personal leisure. For example, David (42, researcher) had established a pattern over a period of around 20 years of going running ‘at least two times a week’, and said that he would be ‘prepared to go to long lengths to make sure I could manage to get it in’; Charlie (44, computer manager) worked as a volunteer ‘maybe once or twice a week’ for around 15 years; Chris (40, fitter) played snooker with his dad once a week and had done so for a number of years; and Barry (45, consultant engineer) belonged to an organisation that met twice a month on a weekday evening. This formalisation process seemed to reinforce the male partner’s entitlement to leisure and ‘fixed’ it in a way that was similar to the non-negotiable timetable of paid work. This theme of men ‘timetabling’ formal leisure activities is examined in subsequent analyses in the context of ‘leisure conflicts’, as not all of the male partners who engaged in formal leisure activities before having children, gave them up during the childrearing phase.

In contrast, the women in the study rarely ‘timetabled’ leisure in an entirely stringent manner. Some women such as Mary (39, nursery nurse) did timetable a Saturday slot of personal time after reaching a crisis point with work and family pressures, but this level of formal arrangement was uncommon among the female interviewees. More usual was a flexible approach to leisure whereby personal time would be taken when opportunities arose and obligations had been met. Furthermore, a flexible approach to leisure was part of a broader life strategy among the female
interviewees. Life was styled flexibly around the fulcrum of children and family. Heather reflects on her flexible approach to life and leisure in her following comments:

ES: And how different do you feel your leisure is to your partner's?
Heather: Well I feel because his is sort of timetabled, you know there is never actually the pull for him as to, 'will I go this football match?' or, 'gosh the gardening really needs doing!', because the football match is at a certain time. But, I mean, you can't really do much about that. And maybe that's why I have sort of chosen something like the gym because it can be flexible. And I mean there's a link there with my job, I have chosen jobs that are flexible, and I've chosen leisure time that's flexible. But I think women generally tend to do that. I mean very often I've been doing something like reading a book or what have you and if one of the children says will you come and do this with me then I will always put down the book and go and do it, but you know I think when you have got children, and when you have got three and they are varying ages like mine are you've got to learn to juggle really. (Heather, 45, project co-ordinator)

Heather expanded on this notion of 'juggling' elements of lifestyle and underlined the idea that there was a hierarchy of leisure, family and work by saying that: 'I'm very careful that I don't ever go to the gym at tea time or evening times when they are about. I always do it in the day time and if anything has to be juggled I juggle my work to fit that in, I don't juggle them to fit it in'. Heather's example reveals the contrast between her own and her partner's leisure and the significant role played by 'timetabling' and flexibility in the leisure behaviours of her partner and herself respectively. These comments also provide insight into gender relations in the home and how leisure in the context of everyday life is instrumental in the reinforcement of existing gender ideologies. In dual-earner families the notion of 'flexibility' is gendered. A flexible lifestyle is primarily a female phenomenon. Paid and unpaid work and leisure are patterned around the primary responsibility of the motherhood role, namely, the care of children. The men in the study tended not to display the same degree of lifestyle flexibility and their arrangements for leisure largely reflected this.

This section has uncovered the patterning of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner couples and the gendered nature of behaviour and the strategies used to access leisure. The disposable nature of leisure in the lifestyles of many of the women in the study reflects the residual status of leisure in the orientations and priorities of the female partners. This finding was reflected in Kay's (1998) study of professional female workers in dual-income households with dependent children. She commented that 'working mothers described their parenting role as the most important dimension of
their lives … Leisure was a desired but residual category, an experience that was needed but rarely had’ (Kay, 1998, p.445). This research revealed, however, that work, family and leisure was sometimes reprioritised. Housework was the most commonly relinquished everyday task, but both family time and paid work time were set aside by some of the interviewees to satisfy their leisure needs. Establishing flexible patterns of leisure behaviour among the female participants directly contrasted with the actions of many of their partners who tended to claim more ‘timetabled’ leisure slots. This reflected gender relations in the home and acted to reinforce existing balances of power and patterns of behaviour.

7.2 Negotiating leisure and gender within couples

This section builds on the discussion of the gendered nature of leisure in the lifestyles of the couples in the study by exploring the between-partner processes through which leisure is negotiated. This constitutes an original approach to research on the leisure lives of men and women in cohabiting relationships and provides rare insight into how leisure and gender are constructed and reconstructed through processes of intra-couple negotiation. The section begins by examining the ways in which couples structure their leisure, family and work lives around the principle of reciprocity. The need for the behaviour and attitudes of partners to be complimentary is examined and the role of leisure in the negotiation of lifestyle is explored. In addition, the perceptions of personal leisure and the leisure behaviour of partners is examined. Examples of differing perceptions and/or attitudes regarding the balance of leisure and lifestyle between partners are used to demonstrate how leisure is a site of conflict within the family. The extent to which these conflicts reflect or challenge gender role expectations is also analysed. Finally, examples of how leisure was used by some of the participants in the study as a site for the negotiation and renegotiation of everyday life and, to some extent, the gender roles associated with it are examined.

The principle of reciprocity

Many of the interviewees felt it imperative that, in a partnership, the behaviour of one partner did not negatively affect the other. Speaking in the context of domestic work, Trevor, for example, commented that:

It’s part of being married, I suppose, or living with someone, you just sort of have to adapt to the way that other person is, you know, and if I sort of you know left stuff all over the place every day of the week, then again we wouldn’t be together
anymore you know. So you have to learn to coexist. (Trevor, 44, landscape architect),

This statement explicitly outlines what many couples did on a day-to-day basis: patterning their work, family and leisure with a degree of mutuality. This mutuality was negotiated within the couple at an everyday level and across the lifecourse. Examples of how work, family and leisure behaviours of partners were patterned to compliment one another are used here to demonstrate the interdependence of partners' behaviour. In addition, reciprocity is examined in the context of gender relations in the home. By doing so, an impression of how gender is reinforced or challenged at an everyday level within the family unit can be gained.

Several examples were found among the study group of partners supporting one another’s economic activity and arranging time so that dual employment could be facilitated. Nigel (44, town planner) and Kelly (42, library assistant), for example, had negotiated an arrangement that enabled dual employment in the family and, for Kelly, the maintenance of three jobs. Kelly’s primary job was working as a library assistant on two weekday evenings and a Sunday. She was able to work this arrangement due to her partner’s ability and willingness to be back from work early enough to take over looking after their two children on the evenings she worked:

I think it only works because I’ve got a husband who will come, can get home for quarter past five when I have to be at the library for half five. If he was a late worker, if he had a job that didn’t get him home ‘til seven, I wouldn’t be able to do it and I have friends who are in that situation … so I think I’m lucky that I can get there at half five and do the job. And, you know, he’ll just take over from me with the kids and he’s happy to do it, no problem, it’s totally shared. (Kelly, 42, library assistant)

This sentiment was confirmed by Nigel: ‘I think it works well. She’s able to do all the things in the daytime, the chores that she needs to do and then because I’m flexible I can come home early when it’s time for her to go to work in the evenings’. He then went on to say that it was ‘nice’ to be ‘in sole charge’ of the children as it allowed him some time with them:

I do want to spend as much time as I can because, you know, obviously they, well, they all grow at a phenomenal rate as far as I’m concerned and the doors of childhood close very quickly so I don’t want miss that. But it is tough for personal time for myself, it is tough, and it is tiring. (Nigel, 44, town planner)

Kelly and Nigel’s example demonstrates how couples develop strategies to incorporate the needs of both partners. It also shows how gender assumptions inform
behaviours and, hence, the strategies adopted. Kelly’s fulfilment of the daytime chores, for example, was an underlying expectation in the comments made by Nigel and one which, in later discussions, Kelly did not fundamentally question:

I’ve got three jobs and I have the time in the day to clean and hoover then I will fit that in and it’s no problem ... I don’t think it would work if Nigel was a man that wasn’t willing to give everything to the kids. I would rather him spend time with the children ... and it’s lovely to see him spending time with them so, you know, there’s no way I’d want him to hoover or dust or anything like that. (Kelly, 42, library assistant)

The strategies developed were, therefore, informed by established patterns of gendered behaviour. Although Nigel commented that spending time with the children was ‘tough for personal time’ for himself, family time was of ‘profound importance’ to him and his leisure orientations had altered considerably since having children to include ‘family time’. His time with the children was facilitated by his partner who assumed primary responsibility for domestic chores and, as a consequence, ‘time with the children’ equated to something that was ‘leisure-like’ as well as ‘work-like’ for Nigel. Kelly’s opinion that she would rather see Nigel spend time with the children than do domestic work maintained patterns of gendered work, family and leisure behaviour and these seemed to be considered ‘fair’. These patterns of integrated work, family and leisure behaviour varied between couples and while most primarily reinforced role differentiation within the couple, some partners expressed an awareness of gender inequalities in the home and actively sought to re-define work, family, leisure configurations within the family. Mary (39, nursery nurse) and Richard (44, self employed) were one such couple.

At the time of interview Mary was working 35 and a half hours a week after gradually increasing her hours of work after having children. Her decision to take the job was a difficult one: ‘at the time when I thought about the job it was knowing that my children, they were sorted out, that was the main thing. Could I do both things? You know, could the children get to school and back?’ The change in her role as an employee put strains on her role as a mother: she felt her balance of work and home was ‘a constant struggle’. She said that she spent ‘less and less time with the family in the evenings’, that she needed to employ a cleaner to help her with the housework, and that generally ‘there just aren’t enough hours in the day to fit everything in’. After a period of time, this strain caused significant distress, at which point the family
reassessed household divisions of labour, thereby enabling Mary to cope better with the demands of work and home:

I got to a certain point at the end of last term when I just was not coping well with working full-time, with the family and it just ended up that I was crying every day and thought, ‘I can’t do this’: it’s not fair on the children, it’s not fair on my husband, it’s not fair for the children at school, erm and so that’s when we had a, all of us had a sit down and talk about it ... That was when he [Richard] said, ‘oh, I’ll take them out’. He has often done that but it’s precious to me now, it’s very precious time to myself which I’ve never needed before, I’ve always wanted to be around other people and the children but now I really do need to be alone sometimes. (Mary, 39, nursery nurse)

This mutual agreement arose as a result of significant role strain and meant that Mary had to partially re-negotiate her roles and responsibilities as a mother to reconcile the demands of work, home and her own individual needs.

Although Mary clearly demonstrates a close attachment to the motherhood role by basing her decision to take on additional paid work on the well-being of her children, she also, with the aid of her partner, was willing to re-negotiate part of her roles and responsibilities so that she could meet her ‘need to be alone sometimes’. Richard affirmed this need and felt Mary’s new ability to claim her own personal leisure had positive outcomes for both Mary and the family: ‘I think it’s good for her, she needs it. It would be, it would probably make our lives difficult if she didn’t have it because she would be under continuous pressure all the time’.

Mary and Richard’s example shows how couples can consciously decide to alter relations in the home so that the work, family and leisure lives of each partner can be synchronised. While these negotiations took place more implicitly at an everyday level for most couples, this example demonstrates how the dynamics of mutuality and reciprocity can work inside the couple unit. It also indicates that relations in the home are, to some extent, negotiable, particularly when ‘role strain’ on behalf of the female partner becomes obvious and, for some, unbearable. The extent to which small adjustments such as those made by Mary and Richard can contribute to the contestation of gender relations in the home is, however, questionable. Signs of significant alterations in, for example, the division of domestic labour were not apparent (beyond the ‘contracting in’ of a cleaner) and so it would be inaccurate to overstate the extent to which gender was being re-negotiated. The fact that Mary reached a point of crisis before the balance of work, family and leisure was renegotiated indicates that established patterns of gendered behaviour are resilient to
change. The study found no other examples of the renegotiation of women's access to leisure, and it is questionable that, in a situation of 'crisis', role assumptions are being fundamentally challenged.

**Leisure perceptions and conflicts**

The interviewees in the study gave full accounts of their leisure lives, how they had changed over time and how personal leisure related and compared to their partner's leisure. Most of the interviewees perceived their own and their partner's leisure to be constrained by a lack of time; leisure could only be accessed during 'free time' in the evenings and at the weekends. When referring to their partner's leisure, subjects would often directly compare their own time available for leisure to their partner's, and many couples agreed that they had roughly the same amount of time available for leisure. There were also high levels of awareness of imbalances of time available for leisure between partners where and when it occurred, but many of the interviewees felt that it was an individual responsibility to rectify a personal lack of leisure time, and it was rare for the subjects to place onus on their partner or the family to help balance time demands. This was particularly characteristic of the female participants in the study who felt that their experience of 'time squeeze' and their consequent lack of time for leisure was something that they had 'chosen'. Eva (42, government advisor), for example, when asked if anything stopped her from doing the things she wanted to do in terms of leisure, responded: 'Time, my own fault. That's the thing isn't it, there's a choice, you just have to make the choice'. Eva worked, on average, 50 hours a week, and had two children aged 11 and 13. Her desire to reduce her working week to four days instead of five indicates that her 'choice' over time allocation primarily refers to her decision to work full-time hours and that this decision had cost her personal leisure, which was her 'own fault'. The expression of limited access to time for leisure as a 'choice' by many of the female participants reflects the way in which behaviour and understandings are gendered. The combination of earning, in particular, full-time employment and motherhood was conceptualised as a 'choice' that would inevitably constrain time available for leisure. For time to be 'freed', hours in employment would have to be curtailed. Reducing the responsibilities associated with the motherhood role were more difficult to renegotiate and was, for many, not an option. As a consequence, women in full-time employment often faced the stark prospect of significantly reduced time available for leisure.
Although partners tended to agree on the amount of time they had available for leisure and felt that accessing time was primarily an issue of personal responsibility, it was the use and structure of time that caused the greatest degree of conflict within couples. In particular, structuring leisure time in a formalised way by some of the male partners caused some disagreement within households. The following example of Debbie (35, environmental health officer) and Tom (41, insurance broker) demonstrates the conflict of different behaviours within a couple and the pivotal role of leisure in the construction and maintenance of gender relations in the home. In the following comments, Debbie clearly outlines her perception of how her own and her partner’s leisure changed over time:

Debbie: I used to ride every night, or most nights and the weekends, and so when I had her [her daughter] I just couldn’t keep the horse I hadn’t got time to do both. So I sold her. But I miss that a lot. I did a lot of horse riding before I had her ...
ES: When does Tom have his own personal leisure?
Debbie: Every Saturday.
ES: What does he do every Saturday?
Debbie: He plays golf ... It’s the one bug-bear of mine. He’s been playing golf for a long time, well ten years now, might be even longer than that. And when I had my horse it wasn’t a problem but he joined around six years ago, even longer than that. But yeah, it’s every Saturday and occasionally mid-week as well.
ES: What problems does that present?
Debbie: (laughs) It just makes me annoyed that he gets time in the day to do his own thing and I don’t. So if I want to do something on a Saturday I have to get in and book it before he books any golf or arranges that. It’s not something I can do at the last minute because he’s already arranged to play golf ... So I can’t sort of do anything on-spec because I know he’s playing golf on Saturday.
ES: So how do you think Tom’s ideas of leisure are different from your own?
Debbie: (laughs) Oh dear. I think he’s quite selfish about it to be honest ... He knows what I think about it (laughs). Yeah, he knows what I think about it. Yeah, it is quite selfish I think
ES: Have you ever tried to change anything about it?
Debbie: Oh, on several occasions, yeah. I get a stone wall. It’s his thing, it’s what he does. (Debbie, 35, environmental health officer)

The conflicts outlined by Debbie were also articulated by Tom:

Tom: Sometimes I play golf, but the amount of time I spend on that ... has reduced. Erm, Debbie will probably say completely the opposite but it has to, I mean, we play, at one time it would be every weekend and probably in the week as well, so we’d be playing twice a week; that’s a round of play. Debbie would have been out on her horse, so we’d both go away, do our thing and come back again, carry on. With Charlotte [his daughter] on the scene that doesn’t happen. The horse went, so a major part of her leisure activity disappeared. I also had a responsibility to look after Charlotte and spend time with Debbie as well so that had to reduce, I mean, the number of hours you actually spend doing other stuff ... There are times that I’ve gone and spent time by myself, playing golf or whatever
it might be when Debbie didn’t want me to ... There is a sacrifice there, you’re spending time away from the family rather than with them.

ES: So how do you think Debbie’s leisure, her ideas about leisure, differ from your own?

Tom: From a self-leisure thing I think change is probably fairly significant in that ... if we talk about the horse for example, she would want to spend more time by herself with the horse but doesn’t feel that she’s got the time to do it. And it often comes out in a way that, I’m not giving [her] any time to do it either because I’m going out doing what I want to do, and there’s often conflict. She sees me going out and not giving her the time to do it. And her other thing is that, okay if she got a horse ... and she went on a Sunday and I went on a Saturday, the downside of that is that you’re both doing your own thing but you don’t see each other so there is a conflict there as well. (Tom, 41, insurance broker)

Tom’s comments indicate that there are slightly different perceptions of his level of engagement in his chosen leisure activity since the couple’s daughter was born. Tom perceived his involvement to be less timetabled and time-consuming than Debbie. Both partners, however, accept that behaviours and orientations towards leisure within the couple unit are a source of conflict, and from Debbie’s perspective in particular. Tom’s regular and fixed leisure pursuit is ‘selfish’ and irreconcilable with the demands of living in a dual-earner family with dependent children. The perceived selfishness of Tom works counter to the seemingly important principle of ‘fairness’ within the couple unit and thereby often results in conflict. Tom’s and Debbie’s comments reinforce the findings of the previous chapters: that the leisure experiences of female partners are more closely tied to changes in the lifecourse and, in particular, the birth of children than their male partners, and that women more readily dispose of leisure in the light of work and family demands in line with their role as mothers than their male partners. In addition, the inflexibility of some of the male partner’s leisure behaviour and the engagement in formalised ‘timetabled’ leisure acted to suppress the leisure of some of the women. The disposal of personal leisure on behalf of the women acted to facilitate the leisure activities of the men. These behaviours reinforce gendered ideologies and, although attempts may be made to renegotiate arrangements, deeply entrenched patterns of gender role behaviour are resistant to change (‘I get a stone wall. It’s his thing, it’s what he does’).

The account of leisure behaviour given above was replicated by some of the other couples in the study and a variety of experiences and responses were reported. Barry (45, consultant engineer) and Barbara (43, teacher) explained the effect Barry’s regular leisure commitments had on Barbara in the following way:
Barbara: He does more social things outside the house, on a more regular basis than I do probably a couple of nights a week, which I found it very difficult at one stage, I found it quite difficult ... especially when James [her son] was ill and I'd spent all day at home with him and then Barry came home at tea time and went out again. Sometimes he needed to do that, that's his way of coping with it, but I needed him to stay in and talk to me. You know, so it was difficult sometimes balancing stuff like that. (Barbara, 43, teacher)

Barry: I also belong to an organisation called Round Table, and we meet twice a month on a Thursday night and ... when James was young that was a bit of a problem. I was regularly going out ... I felt it was a bit of a problem area that I was going out leaving Barbara with a screaming baby or something, which is very difficult, because you have to book ahead and so if you book ahead you have to pay for it, and I didn't want to pay for it and not go, so we did have a few words on that in the early days, but that's resolved itself, that seems okay. (Barry, 45, consultant engineer)

These comments indicate that the pursuit of leisure by the male partner when family and work are pressurised is an issue that not only causes conflict within the couple, but can also have a deleterious impact on the well-being of the female partner. This finding supports much of the more detailed American social-psychological leisure research of the 1990s that indicated that non-work family/leisure time is a crucial component of marital and familial satisfaction (Freysinger, 1994).

While these experiences were not uncommon among the study group, many of the male partners did not take part in regular out-of-home leisure pursuits either before or after having children. The negotiation of leisure between partners in periods of 'time squeeze' was, therefore, not so problematic. Furthermore, the greater the attachment the male partners felt to the parenting or caring element of the fatherhood role, the greater their involvement in 'family time'. This would often take the form of an adaptation of leisure time. Some other strategies, such as coercion, were used to reduce the male partner's leisure commitments after children were born: 'my wife makes sure the family comes first' (Charlie, 44, computer manager), but this was rarely used. Some of the other female partners were more accepting of their partner's behaviour and used a gendered rationality to come to terms with disparity:

I think perhaps women and mothers perhaps have a slightly different attitude, and I think women generally speaking are perhaps more able to kind of like be self-sacrificing, if you know what I mean, for the kind of like good of the family. Whereas I think men have got a slightly different attitude, I think Trevor would probably kill me for saying this, but you know if they want to go to a football match then that's what they'll do because that's what they've decided to do sort of thing, whereas ... I might say, you know, I wouldn't mind going to the pictures or
whatever, and then you know one of the girls is ill or something and I'll say well I'll cancel it then, I won't bother going. (Anne, 40, health promotion specialist)

These gendered rationalities were also used in the context of explaining gender inequalities in the sphere of housework as well as in the domain of leisure. The following examples of the rationalities used to justify the poor cooperation of many men in the domestic sphere are used to demonstrate the role of gendered rationalities in the maintenance of relations in everyday life and the ways in which they support inequalities of leisure. Rationalities reported by both the men and women in the study varied and included: the level of skill needed to carry out domestic work; personal orientations towards it (and the orientations of their partner); an acceptance of 'that's just the way it is'; and, the prioritisation of other activities in different life spheres.

Examples of each of these forms of rationalisation include Tom (41, insurance broker) who commented that his partner 'manages the housework better than me'; Guy (41, teacher) believed that he was too much of a 'perfectionist' when it came to tasks like ironing, so his partner took over to do the job more quickly; and, Barry (45, consultant engineer) commented: 'Housework, well I'm not really good at housework, so if I do it, it's not really done very well'. The perceived difference in the level of skill of each partner was often combined with discourses about the different and, more importantly, irreconcilable orientations of partners' towards housework. Peter (49, teacher), recognised that housework was an area that he and his partner didn't 'see eye to eye on' because they 'don't think the same way'. He went on to comment: 'I do the up front and obvious things ... I won't think about the insides of lampshades and under beds, and that kind of thing, which Heather will'. This theme of women's 'high standards' was replicated by Charlie (44, computer manager), who commented that his partner had always done the housework 'mainly because she prefers the house tidy and more clean than I do, I mean I don't really mind what state it's in, but I think she seems to. But I never ask her to clean the house or anything, it's purely her choice'. Feminists would question the extent to which 'choice' is exercised in this example.

As a way of reconciling difference, some women expressed a resignation to almost total responsibility for housework as just a 'fact of life'. Debbie (35, environmental health officer), when asked if she was satisfied with the way housework was shared said: 'no, but I can't see that it will ever change ... he'll probably be highly delighted with the way it's shared!'. Suzanne reinforced the notion that it was a 'fact of life' by commenting that:
I can honestly say that men don't see what we see, there can be a cobweb and they say 'can you see the size of that?', whereas we will get the duster and get it down... so I do think there's a slight difference between men and women. but Geoff's quite good if he does see something. Once he's tripped over it two or three times, he will actually remove it, or do something about it. (Suzanne, 41, secretary)

Differences in the perceived abilities of men and women, therefore, served to rationalise the unequal division of tasks in the home. It seems that, in the absence of negotiable change, some of the women use these rationalities as a way of coping with inequalities in the home. Fundamentally, however, these rationalisations acted to reinforce gender relations in the home, and this was the foundation of other inequalities in the domains of paid work and leisure, which were often 'juggled' by women to accommodate the inflexibility of many men in the domestic sphere.

The problem of lack of male flexibility was amplified for some women by the prioritisation of other life spheres, particularly leisure, over housework. Peter (49, teacher), for example, commented that he tended to play tennis on a Friday evening when his partner 'mainly organised to work in the house, and that's a bit of a clash of kind if you like'. His partner, Heather explained this conflict in terms of different priorities:

I think work is a priority for him, his leisure is a priority and the domestic chores are kind of when everything else has been done. Whereas I’m more likely to sacrifice my leisure for other things. I mean if, for instance, I have booked to go to the gym at whatever time, and the children needed to be run off to a party or something, then there’s just no contest; I wouldn’t go to the gym. I might moan but I wouldn’t go! (Heather, 45, project co-ordinator)

In these comments, Heather returns to the concept of 'hierarchies' of work, family and leisure. For Heather leisure comes towards the bottom of the hierarchy, whereas she feels that leisure is a priority for her partner. In this and a few other cases there was reference to leisure as a priority for the men in the study. Evidence from this and other research supports the idea that leisure is more highly placed on the work, family and leisure hierarchy for men in families with dependent children than for women (Kay, 1998). This example also supports the notion that, sometimes, the leisure time of female partners is adapted or curtailed in response to the demands of, not only the time and ideological constraints at a personal level, but also in response to the work, family and leisure priorities and behaviours of male partners. Some partners attempted to ensure that there was a 'balanced' approach to the work, family and leisure mixes of the couple, so that each partner had 'equal' or 'fair' access to each life domain.
Perceptions of 'fairness' within the couple, however, varied. The extent to which partners agreed on what constituted 'fairness' and, crucially, how this agreement transferred into practice, impacted on the levels of satisfaction partners had regarding the balance of work, family and leisure in the family. Perceptions of fairness were also gendered, with most of the women in the study implicitly expecting to give more than their partners to their family owing to their special roles as mothers. The activities and attitudes of many of the men in the project reinforced this expectation.

This chapter has demonstrated how leisure acts to reproduce gender in the context of the dual-earner family. The data have shown that leisure roles, meanings and experiences are highly gendered. The female participants in the study more readily curtailed their leisure compared to their partners when work and family demands required a reallocation of time and task. The men's leisure was more commonly 'timetabled' and formalised, whereas women's was more flexible and negotiable. This was regarded as a reflection of the nature of gender relations in the home, whereby the roles and responsibilities of partners were assigned according to their respective statuses. For women, their status as mothers and carers required 'the family' to be their primary reference point. As such, self-sacrifice 'for the good of the family' often took the form of the exclusion of personal leisure, although some women sought to renegotiate their responsibilities with varying degrees of success.

Conflict was sometimes a characteristic of attempts at the renegotiation process. In particular, the inflexibility of the male 'timetable' for leisure was the cause of dispute within couples. It was found that some of the couples were unable to reconcile inequalities of leisure between partners to the cost of some of the female participants. When these gendered inequalities were irreconcilable, some of the female participants responded by attempting coercion, by strategising and prioritising their own time if possible, or accepting inequality as a 'man/woman thing'. Conflict was, therefore, also focussed on unequal gender relations in the home and in leisure and these inequalities were remarkably resilient in some of the couples studied. Their status as dual-earner couples magnified existing inequalities and while 'time squeeze' was generally accepted as inevitable by both partners, the inevitability of the need to reorganise the behaviours and orientations of both partners was not.

In summary, the key findings of the chapter are:

- Leisure was the subject of gendered strategising
Men and women prioritised leisure in their daily lives, albeit differently. Decisions relating to leisure can be viewed in the context of the constraints and opportunities offered by the gendered organisation of the household. The interpretation of what constituted appropriate gendered behaviour informed leisure choices.

- Leisure was co-dependent

The men and women in the study group negotiated, in a gendered way, the form, content and meaning of leisure within the context of the couple and the family. The behaviours and orientations of one partner could not be divorced from the other, or from the family environment.

- Leisure reflected, reinforced and sometimes challenged dominant gender assumptions

The organisation and meaning of leisure was a key component of the lifestyles of the couples in the study and it was vital to the construction and reconstruction of gender relations in the home. Leisure was both a site of conformity to dominant gender assumptions and a site of resistance. The limited amount of detectable change in the patterning of leisure throughout the lifecourse indicates that gender is a powerful organising force that is resistant to family and employment change.

The concluding comments outlined in Chapter 8 bring together these key observations and those of the other chapters.
Chapter 8 Conclusion

The aim of the thesis was to explore, analyse and assess the role played by leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. To meet this aim, three research objectives were examined. These were:

1. To identify patterns of employment and family life across the lifecourse and to explore how employment and family transitions are experienced
2. To examine the role of leisure in the lifestyles of individuals across the lifecourse and in the context of the dual-earner family
3. To analyse the relationships between leisure and gender in dual-earner families.

Key research questions associated with these aims were:

1. How do patterns of the lifecourse converge/diverge between individuals?
2. How and why do the work and family lives of men and women converge/diverge?
3. How is the lifecourse negotiated within couples and what role does gender play in negotiations?
4. How does leisure interact with changes in the work and family lives of couples/individuals?
5. How and why do the leisure experiences of men and women converge/diverge across the lifecourse?
6. How is gender constructed/negotiated through leisure?
7. How do couples negotiate and renegotiate leisure and how does this reflect, reinforce or challenge gender relations?

The fieldwork for the thesis was designed to provide insight into the lifestyles of dual-earner families and answer the questions outlined above. A two-phase, small-scale qualitative study of 14 dual-earner couples with dependent children was carried out to explore the work, family and leisure lives of employed men and women in couples. The first stage of the empirical work was a questionnaire phase in which couples were required to identify their family structure and employment and leisure behaviours. The second stage was the primary means of data collection and was an interview phase. Couples who identified themselves as available for the second stage of research on the questionnaire were interviewed about their work, family and leisure behaviours and orientations throughout the lifecourse and in the context of the dual-earner family.

The fieldwork produced several findings that contribute to existing evidence relating to the lifestyles of dual-earner families. Theoretical and methodological
insights can also be gained from an analysis of the approaches adopted in the thesis. Firstly, the findings of the thesis are examined in terms of the conclusions that can be drawn from the data from the fieldwork and how these relate to existing bodies of knowledge on the lifestyles of dual-earner families. The themes of the conclusions are structured around the objectives of the thesis and the research questions set out above.

8.1 Objective 1: To identify patterns of employment and family life across the lifecourse and to explore how employment and family transitions are experienced

The first objective of the thesis was to identify patterns of employment and family life across the lifecourse and to explore how employment and family transitions were experienced. The employment and family life histories of the men and women in the study group revealed that there were broad similarities in the working lives of men and women until the onset of parenthood. After children were born, however, patterns of work and levels of engagement in the labour market substantially diverged. Women's employment activities were characterised by a period of inactivity after children were born and gradual re-engagement in the labour market after a period of time that ranged from months to years. The most common stage at which the female interviewees re-entered the labour force was after their youngest child reached school age. This corresponds with the trend data explored in Chapter 1 of the thesis which showed how rates of maternal employment increase substantially after the youngest child in the household reaches school age (see Figure 1.6). The female interviewees tended to gradually increase their level of engagement in employment as their children aged, and some had increased their hours of work incrementally from short part-time hours to full-time hours over several years. This finding reflects Simon Duncan's (1996) observation that the employment activities of women who have children in the UK, when represented graphically across the lifecourse, produces an 'M-shape' curve. This pattern of behaviour across the lifecourse was not, however, universal. A few of the women in the study group maintained high levels of economic activity throughout the childrearing stage of the lifecourse, although these were often highly educated women in professional, career-oriented jobs.

The employment histories of the male partners in the study group were, on the whole, characterised by relatively continuous patterns of full-time employment throughout the lifecourse. This pattern of continuity in the labour market behaviour of
men was also reflected in the statistical data outlined in Chapter 1 (see Figure 1.6). The men's working behaviours were relatively independent of changes in family structure, although many of the male interviewees were acutely aware of their perceived obligations to 'provide' for the family once children were born. The discourses of many of the men in the study revealed that they felt a clear allegiance to the 'male breadwinner' role, often regardless of the employment status of their partner. The resilience of notions of male breadwinning in the context of dual-earnership is surprising at a superficial level, given the apparent greater egalitarian distribution of paid work between partners relative to the 'traditional' male breadwinner family structure. One of the over-arching themes of the findings on the work and family lives of partners, however, were discourses of the meaning of family life. The construction of meaning was shown to be informed by ideologies of the family, a key component of which were notions of male breadwinning. This supports Julia Brannen's (1992, p.60) contention that male breadwinning is a powerful ideological agent that promotes the idea that 'men are not expected to have breaks in their employment histories and, as a consequence, are [viewed as] the long-term providers for the household'. For the interviewees in the fieldwork, family life was not defined on the basis of the employment patterns pertaining to the household, but by dominant ideological discourses about what it meant to be 'a family'. The ideology of male breadwinning was often clearly evident in the family and employment behaviours of the men in the dual-earner families interviewed, and it was articulated in their attitudes towards their own and their partner's behaviours in the work and domestic spheres. The finding that the income provided by the female partner on her return to the labour market after having children was often regarded as a 'second' income illustrates this point.

Brannen (1992, p.60) also argued that ideologies of the family and of male breadwinning were reinforced by powerful agencies and institutions 'which extend beyond the labour market and the household'. The literatures reviewed in the third part of Chapter 1 indicated that policy and political context of family life in the UK has, since the Second World War, been dominated by ideologies of the male breadwinner family form. The maladaption of political and policy structures to the growth in dual-earner families in the socio-demographic profile of the UK since the 1970s may contribute further to the apparent resilience of male breadwinning as an ideological referent for men and women in dual-earner families.
The exploration of the employment and family life histories of couples and their experiences of life transitions also revealed that ideologies of motherhood were a strong influencing factor in the lifecourse trajectories of the women in the study group. Ideologies of motherhood were based on the centrality on the mother–child relationship, and the results from the study reflected the findings of previous research which indicated that the motherhood role is defined as primarily nurturant, giving and expressive. The behaviours and orientations of the female interviewees in the employment and domestic spheres reflected this ideology, although the way motherhood was interpreted at an individual level varied between women. One of the themes of the results of the fieldwork, however, centred on the importance of 'being there' for children and this clearly incorporated ideologies of motherhood, the tenets of which were highly gendered. 'Being there' for children was referred to by the female interviewees in terms of the provision of practical, day-to-day care, emotional security, and educational and moral guidance. The principle of 'being there' guided the behaviours of many of the female interviewees in both the domestic and employment spheres. Several women expressed, for example, that their activities in employment were secondary to the needs of their children and that 'family came first'. This meant that women patterned their employment around the needs of their children and were careful to consider the impact of paid work on the well-being of children. The extent to which women felt paid work was reconcilable with the motherhood role and their perceptions of what constituted the well being of children impacted on the degree of adaptation made to the behaviours of women in the employment and domestic spheres.

These findings from the empirical stage of the thesis point to two key conclusions: a) that the employment and family lives of men and women in dual-earner families diverged substantially after children were born and b) that these divergences were informed by dominant family ideologies. The ideology of male breadwinning and of motherhood were two crucial components of family ideology, the roles and responsibilities of which were highly differentiated and gendered.

A further question that the thesis sought to answer was: How is the lifecourse negotiated within couples and what role does gender play in negotiations? The findings from the interviews revealed that couples engaged in processes of negotiation at an everyday level and two examples of negotiations of the lifecourse, namely, between-partner discussions relating to the return of the female partner to the labour
market and the negotiation of domestic tasks, were used to demonstrate the ways in which gender was constructed and reconstructed within the context of the couple.

One key finding of the study was the different ways in which partners perceived life events and the negotiation of everyday life and how these reflected 'gendered rationalities'. In other words, the men and women in the study group provided a range of rationalities that legitimised - in a gendered way - their own and their partners' behaviours in the work, family and leisure spheres. Negotiations of the female partners' return to work after childbirth was, for example, reported to be an issue of 'personal choice' and autonomy by the male interviewees, and about 'family comes first' for the female interviewees. These two different ways of rationalising the re-entry of the female partner into the labour market were examples of how the negotiation process was a site of gender construction for the men and women in the study group. The women were stating the primary importance of fulfilling the duties of motherhood over their role in the labour market, while the men were expressing their own understandings of how decisions about the labour market are made (i.e. relatively free from constraint). Some of the men in the study also suggested that 'choice' could be exercised in the context of there being no financial need for the female partner to find employment, thus confirming their own status as the 'breadwinner' or 'provider'. These gendered rationalities were also used to explain the distribution of domestic work. Whereas men tended to provide reasons for their relative inactivity in domestic work in terms of their lack of skill, the 'high standards' of their partner and their different priorities, the women tended to rationalise inequality in terms of it being a 'fact of life', that men were 'naturally' less able to recognise the needs of the household and that one should be thankful for small interventions made by partners in the domestic domain. Rationalities differed between individuals and some of them rejected explanations that centred on what were essentially ways of 'explaining away' fundamental gender inequalities. Such individuals, therefore, actively redefined gender in a way that challenged dominant patriarchal discourses.

These findings have fulfilled the objective to identify, examine and explain patterns of employment and family life and to explore how employment and family transitions are structured and experienced. To summarize, gender has been shown to be a crucial mediating factor in the lifecourse trajectories of men and women in dual-earner families with dependent children and in the negotiation of the employment and
family lives of partners. It was also shown that ideological discourses of family life were constructed and reconstructed at an everyday level and that gendered notions of motherhood and male breadwinning were resilient to attempted renegotiations of the roles and responsibilities of partners in the domestic sphere.

8.2 Objective 2: To examine the role of leisure in the lifestyles of individuals across the lifecourse and in the context of the dual-earner family

The second main objective of the thesis was to examine the role of leisure in the lifestyles of individuals across the lifecourse and in the context of the dual-earner family. This goal was closely linked to the first objective of the thesis because the work and family histories of individuals served as a valuable context in which to examine the leisure orientations and behaviours of the interviewees over time. The context dependency of leisure rendered the examination of its family and employment environment as crucial to an understanding of leisure as a sphere of life in its own right and its role in the construction of lifestyle in general. The fieldwork produced several key findings that relate to the definitional debate that surrounds the concept of 'leisure' and the way leisure changes in structure and meaning across the lifecourse. These themes of investigation have been debated in the leisure studies literatures in the UK but rarely in the context of the dual-earner family. The interviews revealed that leisure is a multifaceted concept that is comprised of several parts.

Leisure may simultaneously be embedded in time, activity or experience and the results from the fieldwork indicated that several dimensions of leisure were included in the highly individualised accounts offered by the interviewees. This is consistent with the debates on the definition of leisure in the leisure studies literature which points to the complexity and variability of meanings of leisure across time and space. The leisure literature also indicated that meanings of leisure and patterns of behaviour change across the lifecourse and indications from this research reinforce this notion. The work of the Rapoports, for example, demonstrated how work, family and leisure 'planes' interacted across four phases of the life cycle (Rapoport and Rapoport, 1975).

While the analysis of this research utilised a more holistic approach to the lifecourse that emphasised the fluid nature of lifestyle over time rather than its development in distinct stages, three phases of lifecourse were isolated for the purposes of analysis to demonstrate the variable role of leisure in different family—
employment configurations. Analysis of the pre-children, childrearing and dual earner phases of the lifecourse revealed that leisure experiences and structures were not only influenced by stages in the lifecourse but were informed by the gendered roles and responsibilities of couple members. The findings of feminist researchers in leisure studies revealed that women's leisure behaviours and attitudes were closely aligned with notions of motherhood. This research found that this close association between motherhood and leisure was identifiable in the childrearing and dual earning stages of the lifecourse for the women in the study group. Common patterns of experience included the curtailment of leisure during childrearing and the addition of an extra layer of constraint on personal leisure after the transition to dual earning. This was starkly contrasted with the men's relatively continuous engagement in leisure throughout childrearing, although the form of men's leisure often changed to include family-related, child-oriented leisure rather than independent, autonomous leisure.

These patterns of behaviour have been replicated in previous research, although the empirical data from the fieldwork of the thesis has gone beyond many of the women-centred investigations into the relationships between work, family and leisure in its inclusion of men's experiences. The examination of men's leisure throughout the lifecourse also revealed that autonomous leisure was relatively easily accessed by some of the men in the study group throughout the lifecourse, but that this was by no means universal. The leisure discourses of the male participants uncovered feelings of practical, financial and, for some, emotional constraint after children were born. These constraints were, however, not compounded by the gendered obligations to provide and organise care for children and to be primarily responsible for domestic work. These obligations were, however, experienced to a greater or lesser extent by the women in the study group. Relative to their partners, the male interviewees were able to exercise a degree of autonomy over their leisure throughout the lifecourse.

These findings have contributed to an understanding of leisure throughout the lifecourse, the way leisure interacts with family and employment over time and how and why men's and women's leisure experiences diverged. One further conclusion that emerged from the data was women's differential experience of leisure during periods of part-time employment compared to times of full-time work. It was apparent that the combination of childrearing and dual earning placed powerful constraints on women's leisure and that this was amplified for the women who worked full-time. There was little evidence of women sensing a greater entitlement to leisure as they
became more involved in the labour market and increased their hours of work, as some leisure studies research has suggested. This confirms the findings of Kay (1998, p.449), who found that the full-time employed women in professional occupations in her study ‘recognised their own needs for leisure but did not have a strong enough sense of entitlement to override other demands’. This research also adds to these findings by indicating that women who had made the transition to full-time work from part-time work felt an extra layer of constraint and that the flexibility of a part-time job was often a preferred working arrangement that enabled lifestyle ‘balance’. This conclusion adds to the body of evidence which fundamentally questions the assumption that gender equality in the labour force is a catalyst to gender equality in the home and in leisure. Hegemonic familial and gender ideologies have been shown in this research to be resilient to the changing employment behaviours and aspirations of women. Only a few couples addressed the implications of the full time employment of the female partner and changed patterns of intra-couple behaviour in ways that challenged gender assumptions. These families were characterised by the professional, high status occupational position of the female partner, and their position in the labour market commonly equalled or exceeded their male partners’ situations. These challenges were also often not fixed but were negotiated and renegotiated between partners as family and employment structures changed. This finding makes an additional contribution to the literatures on the ways in which leisure interacts with employment and family lives by demonstrating both experiential commonalities and differences among groups of working women and the variability of individual experience across the lifecourse.

8.3 Objective 3: To analyse the relationships between leisure and gender in dual-earner families

The third aim of the thesis was to analyse the relationships between leisure and gender in dual-earner families. The conclusions presented in the preceding discussion give an indication of the relationships between gender and leisure across the lifecourse. Ideologies of motherhood have particularly been shown in this and other research to contain female leisure. The findings from the fieldwork also showed how gender relations were manifested in the leisure behaviours and orientations of partners. One key finding was the residual nature of leisure in the lifestyles of the women in the dual-earner families interviewed. Many of the women described personal leisure as a
relatively low priority in their lifestyles during the childrearing and dual-earner phases of their lives. The use of Kay’s (1998) concept of ‘hierarchies’ was particularly illuminating when examining the relationships between leisure and gender in dual-earner families. In Kay’s and this research, women’s hierarchies were commonly structured around the priority of the family. Paid work was temporally ‘fixed’ and was perceived as a relatively inflexible obligation that came before leisure needs. Leisure was a relatively low priority in women’s lives, although many of the female interviewees recognised its valuable and, often irreplaceable, personal and emotional role. The research also added an extra dimension to the concept of hierarchies by exploring men’s work, family and leisure priorities. Men’s lifestyles were commonly characterised by the pre-dominance of paid work and leisure and family were attributed lower but often equal importance. The equal status of family time and leisure time was a result of the complementary nature of the two which were frequently combined in the lifestyles of the men in dual-earner families. Some of the male participants, however, preserved personal leisure across the lifecourse and maintained a clear distinction between work, family and leisure. In these cases, there was a distinct paid work, leisure and family hierarchy and this was sometimes a site of conflict within the couple.

Differences between the work, family and leisure hierarchies of men and women were clearly evident in the participants’ articulation of the ‘sacrifices’ made for and of leisure. Many of the women, for example, believed they made personal leisure sacrifices to meet the needs of the family in particular, and some felt that their partners sacrificed time with the family in order to pursue personal leisure. The men in the study also felt that they made personal leisure sacrifices in order to ‘spend time with the family’, and some recognised that they engaged in personal leisure, sometimes to the detriment of their families and partners. These different ‘sacrifices’ informed hierarchies of work, family and leisure and acted to structure and reinforce gender relations in the home.

The discussion in Chapter 3 of the contributions of scholars in UK leisure studies revealed that early studies of the work–leisure relationship in the 1970s were gender-blind and that many assumed that paid work and leisure were diametrically opposed, or at least contrasting. Critiques of the paid work–leisure dichotomy principally made by feminists in the 1980s pointed to the interconnected nature of life domains in the everyday lives of women. This research indicated that neither men or women
experienced work, family life or leisure in isolation, but that life domains were intricately linked. The men in the study, however, clearly derived their sense of entitlement to leisure from their activities in the employment sphere. Their long-term, full-time and relatively continuous engagement in paid work and their role as 'provider' or breadwinner constructed and reinforced their 'right' to leisure, whereas the discontinuous and complex activities in the employment sphere and the roles and responsibilities of motherhood made it relatively difficult for the women in the study to 'compartmentalise' areas of life and access autonomous leisure. This finding has been replicated in other research and clearly demonstrates the significant role of leisure in the construction of gendered relationships in the home.

The concept of lifestyle 'strategies' outlined in Chapter 2 was utilised in the analysis of the data from the fieldwork to uncover the ways in which women and men reconcile the demands of paid, unpaid work, childcare and leisure. The strategies uncovered were essentially methods of coping with gender inequalities in the home and included negotiations of work and family responsibilities and leisure. The inclusion of leisure strategies in the analysis of the data went beyond many of the studies of household strategies which primarily focus on the methods used by women in particular to reconcile the demands of housework childcare with paid work. Strategies that were designed to improve access to leisure among the female interviewees varied and many required little or no alteration of their roles and responsibilities as mothers, earners and home-makers. Altering orientations towards and activities in housework was the most common strategy adopted to access leisure, although this was often 'family leisure' rather than personal leisure. Some women also 'timetabled' leisure into their daily lives, although in general this was rare among the female interviewees. More common was the phenomena of what one interviewee called 'juggling' daily life. This notion of 'juggling' has been reported in other research (for example Clough, 2001) and represents the adoption of a lifestyle strategy among women which is easily adaptable to change: flexibility. In many cases, paid work was designed to fit around the needs of children and leisure was also sufficiently flexible to be relinquished in the light of family demands. This concept of female flexibility has been highlighted in other research on working mothers and it represents a key characteristic of contemporary women's (gendered) response to their combined status as mothers and earners.
The lifestyle strategies used by men in dual-earner families has been the subject of less attention in studies of leisure and gender in the UK, although some research has reported female partners' accounts of male behaviour. The fieldwork for the thesis revealed that some of the men did not adjust their fixed patterns of out-of-home leisure behaviour after children were born or during dual-earning. and 'timetabled' formalised leisure to ensure ongoing access to personal leisure time and activities. Many of the partners of the men who 'timetabled' personal leisure time felt that this worked counter to their perceptions of intra-couple 'fairness' and conflict often resulted. The outcomes of conflict were varied, although the resilience of some of the men's attitudes towards their personal leisure acted to maintain imbalances of leisure and domestic work within the home. The structuring and organisation of leisure within the couple unit, therefore, played a pivotal role in the construction and maintenance of gender relations in the home. The inflexibility of some of the male partners' leisure acted to suppress the leisure of some of the women, and the flexibility of female leisure resulted in the facilitation of male leisure. Furthermore, the coping mechanisms adopted by many of the women in relation to their partners' 'timetabled' leisure rationalised, in a gendered way, inequalities of leisure between partners and acted to reinforce imbalances of power within the couple unit.

These findings have uncovered the complex relationships between leisure and gender in dual-earner families. Leisure has been shown to be central to the construction of gendered relationships within the home. It also closely interrelates with the ideologies of motherhood and male breadwinning described in the preceding discussion. Such ideologies are a crucial reference point for men and women in dual-earner families who construct gendered 'hierarchies' of work, family and leisure according to their differential roles as parents and earners.

8.4 Contribution to knowledge and future directions

The findings and conclusions outlined above have fulfilled the aim of the current study to explore, analyse and assess the role played by leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. In addition, the research has contributed to existing bodies of knowledge on the work–family–leisure relationship in dual-earner families and the following discussion demonstrates the way the thesis has extended several fields of study at empirical, theoretical and methodological levels.
The contribution to methods and its future direction

The key methodological contribution of the thesis is its representation of both men and women in the research. The two-sex study group represents an original approach to research on the leisure–gender relationship in leisure studies in the UK which has mainly focussed on the experiences of women alone. In addition, the men and women in the study group were in couples and each partner was interviewed in isolation and in direct succession to avoid any communication about the content of the interview between partners. Interviewing couples in relationships is also an underrepresented method of research in UK leisure studies, but it has provided valuable additional data on the internal workings of dual-earner families. Furthermore, the qualitative nature of the research has uncovered rich information about the experiences of men and women in dual-earner families which could not have been revealed through the use of large-scale surveys and questionnaires or other quantitative methods such as time-budget research. The use of a life history approach has also provided insight into how and why behaviours change across the lifecourse.

These contributions must, however, be viewed in the light of the limitations of the methods and methodology adopted. One of the problems with targeting couples for interview was that both partners in a cohabiting relationship were not always prepared to participate in the research. In addition, it was evident that many of the questionnaires in the first phase of the research were completed by one member of the couple. Responses to the questionnaire were, therefore, completed by one partner on behalf of the other and they were possibly not prepared to commit their partner to interview without discussing it with them first. As a result, many of the respondents to the questionnaire did not provide contact details. The low rate of response to the initial call for interviewees limited the number of couples in the study to a small, self-selected group.

The limited scale of the research impacts on the extent to which the conclusions of the research can be applied to the wider population. Although the research was designed as a qualitative study and therefore did not intend to be representative of dual-earner families as a group, future research would undoubtedly benefit from a larger study group in terms of the greater variety of experiences the research would encapsulate. Self-selection also inevitably presented methodological problems because the interviewees may have already established a personal agenda for the research by
the time of the interview. This problem was unavoidable in the context of the thesis due to the low number of couples that offered themselves for interview.

The study group was also disproportionately middle-class and additional, more informal methods of interviewee recruitment failed to capture dual-earner families from a wider range of socio-economic backgrounds. Important sub-groups of dual-earner families were, therefore, not represented and as a result the conclusions of the thesis primarily apply to middle-class families. Although similar life experiences may be replicated across a variety of socio-economic groups, the nature of similarities cannot be indicated by this research. Divergent experiences between social classes can also not be established.

The interviewees were also all of a similar age and most were at comparable stages in the lifecourse. This was an outcome of the method used to approach families (through primary schools) and limited the results to an exploration of the work, family and leisure experiences of men and women from similar generations. The findings from this research can, however, be related to the findings from earlier studies, such as the Rapoports' in the 1960s and 1970s, to give some indication of how behaviours and attitudes in dual-earner families contrast between generations. The study did, however, challenge the notion that the dual-earner family form is a static family state by investigating the processes through which individuals came to be part of a dual-earner family over time. The lifecourse approach was, however, both a strength and a weakness of the research. The dependence of the method on the interviewees' recall of 'life events was an unavoidable weakness of the life history approach. This problem is further amplified in studies of leisure over the lifecourse because of the nebulous nature of leisure. Recalling leisure behaviours across the lifecourse was apparently more problematic than recording family and employment histories because leisure would often assume a variety of forms that, relative to the recall of family life and employment, was not remembered in terms of activities or 'events'. Interviewees, for example, did not often recall the specific forms leisure took but referred to it in terms of time and experience. Common patterns of recall related to the amount of time available for leisure at specific stages in the lifecourse (for example before and after children) and how leisure experiences fitted into lifestyle at that time (for example the valuation of leisure as 'relaxation' during the pre-school years of children's lives). The ambiguous nature of leisure, therefore, limited the extent to which it was easily recalled by interviewees. One possible way to overcome this limitation would be the
use of longitudinal research methods, although the cost and time required to carry out such a project would be substantial.

The methodological contribution of the thesis is not, therefore solely based in the positive and original aspects of the fieldwork but it is also located in its weaknesses. An evaluation of the limitations of the fieldwork of the thesis leads to several conclusions about the future direction of similar work:

- **The temporal dimension**
  
  Future research needs to incorporate temporal dimensions to studies on family life in order to capture the fluid nature of leisure, lifestyle and family and employment lives, particularly in the contemporary climate of family diversity and increased family dissolution and reconstitution. The use of family and employment life histories represents an adequate way of capturing changes over time despite the problem of the potential vagaries of interviewee recall, but longitudinal work is clearly preferable.

- **Representing a range of socio-economic groups**
  
  Most research on dual-earner families in the social sciences in the UK has focussed on middle-class or ‘dual-career’ families. There is a clear gap in the literature in relation to the lifestyles of working class dual-earner families. This current omission offers several opportunities for future research in the area. The present project indicated that method of approach is vital and informal approaches are considered to be preferable to the more formalised ‘questionnaire’ approach adopted in the study. Time is also key if a range of dual-earner families are to be reached. Establishing early contact with potential interviewees is, therefore, advisable if an acceptable sample size is to be gained.

- **Overcoming self-selection**
  
  The interviewees for the study were self-selected. It is likely that given the additional resources of time, money and people, the problem of self-selection could be overcome. Future directions for research on couples in the same, and possibly different family units would benefit from an injection of resources that exceeded those available to this doctoral study.

- **The value of interviewing women and men in couples**
  
  The value of including both men and women in couple units in the research has been shown to be considerable. Interviewing both members of the couple was a valuable
tool to understanding the dynamic and interdependent nature of daily life. Such an approach could be applied to subsequent studies of within-family processes.

The contribution of the empirical data and its future direction

At an empirical level, the conclusions of the research builds on the literatures of the family-employment relationship. Chapter 2 of the thesis reviewed the contribution of the social sciences to an understanding of the dual-earner family since the 1970s in the UK. The findings of the empirical stage of the thesis reflected many of the observations made by second wave feminist researchers about the family-employment relationship. In particular, the notion that women’s employment position is inextricably linked to their domestic responsibilities has been supported by this research. In addition, the fieldwork of the thesis has demonstrated that women's labour force participation and their domestic obligations places a ‘double burden’ of work on women’s everyday lives, thus reflecting Hochschild’s (1989) theory of the ‘second shift’. The results from the thesis, therefore, challenge Robinson and Godbey’s (1997) contention that an egalitarian, ‘androgynous’ society is emerging, wherein men and women have equal access to all spheres of life, including work, family and leisure. Robinson and Godbey (1997), like Hochschild, drew their conclusions from studies in the US, but researchers in the UK have also drawn some conflicting findings. Gershuny (2000) and Laurie and Gershuny (2000), for example, have used data from household panel surveys in the UK to demonstrate that the behaviours of men and women in the UK are moving towards a model of greater gender equality in the domestic sphere. While the current study did not explore the exact amount of time allocated to specific daily tasks, it did examine the underlying attitudes that informed behaviour and the meanings attributed to daily life. From the perspective of the participants in the study, time spent engaged in paid and unpaid work, family life and leisure provided meanings and constructed identities that were highly gendered. The resilience of these identities to changes in the employment configurations of households fundamentally questions the idea that changes in the time spent engaged in specific tasks equates to changes in gender relations in the home and in the public sphere. The research carried out for the thesis contributes to the body of knowledge on the family-employment relationship by uncovering the patterns, meanings and structures of the lifestyles of dual-earner families. The data
from the fieldwork, therefore, adds to current understandings of the qualitative nature of dual-earner lifestyles and supplements quantitative data from time-budget research.

The empirical results also unravelled the leisure dimension of everyday life and demonstrated its significance in the lifestyles of dual-earner families. This has rarely been explicitly problematised either in leisure studies in the UK or in the broader social sciences. Deem (1999, p.162) has argued that leisure studies and, particularly, leisure research with a gender component has been ‘ghettoised’ within the social sciences. The absence of clear discussions of leisure as an element of lifestyle in dominant discourses on the family-employment relationship within social research is indicative of the marginalisation of leisure studies within the mainstream social sciences. The thesis has, therefore, partly filled a gap in an under-researched area by exploring the relationships between leisure, employment and family life in dual-earner families from a gender constructivist perspective.

As earlier discussions indicated, leisure was central to the construction of gender relations in the home for the couples in the study group. The feminist leisure research outlined in Chapter 3 reflected this finding. The results of the thesis also contribute to contemporary discussions in the post-structuralist feminist leisure research which has pointed to the concept of ‘difference’ in the construction of gendered leisure experience. The findings highlighted both the similar structures and experiences of leisure between men and women as well as the differential ways in which leisure was interpreted, negotiated and rationalised in the construction and reconstruction of gendered identities and gender relations in the home. The design and adoption of strategies that enabled some of the women in the study group to improve their access to personal leisure, for example, was dependent on their interpretation of the motherhood role and their understanding of what constituted the well being of children. Interpretations of the meaning of motherhood, therefore, impacted on the extent to which the women in the study group conformed or actively challenged dominant gender and familial ideologies, which consequently impacted on their leisure orientations and behaviours.

When related to key feminist works in leisure studies in the 1980s such as Green et al (1987, 1990) and Deem (1986), these findings reveal striking continuities as well as new complexities. Motherhood has been shown in these and other studies to be a key ideological referent that negatively impacts on women’s access to leisure. The current study has clearly demonstrated that gender roles continue to influence leisure
behaviour, for both women and men. Only a modest degree of change is detectable in, for example, some of the men and women's attitudes towards 'sharing' care and negotiating between-partner behaviour. What this study has pointed to, however, is not only the resilience of gendered behaviour but the processes through which such behaviours emerge and are maintained. One of the key findings from the empirical work seen through the lens of gender constructivism was the vital importance of motherhood and male breadwinning as a site of identity construction.

Both the male and female interviewees showed signs of resisting movements towards egalitarian structures in the household, even if they were cognisant of clear inequalities. The incidence of men 'timetabling' leisure and the conflict this caused in the couple unit, for example, did not always necessitate its renegotiation. As indicated earlier, in some cases, men and women went through processes of rationalisation to 'explain away' inequalities. In practice, these rationalisations served to reinforce inequalities in work, family life and leisure, but were often accepted as an unchangeable 'fact of life'. Resistance to change, therefore, was shown to be a dynamic process that was related to identity construction and maintenance, rather than merely an outcome of gendered power imbalances. As a valued component of identity, both fatherhood and motherhood was a site of power and privilege which was guarded by the men and women in the study. This is not to say, however, that the roles and duties of both motherhood and fatherhood were not viewed with ambivalence, but that the perceived positive values of each were protected by those who had a stake in their maintenance.

The thesis has also contributed to the leisure literatures by explicitly focussing on leisure experiences in the context of a particular family form. Writing in a North American context, Shaw (1997, p.109) commented that there was a clear need for leisure research to represent family diversity and focus on a range of leisure experiences across family forms. Chapter 1 of the thesis identified dual-earner families as a contemporary family form that had emerged in the context wider socio-demographic and family change since the 1970s. The dual-earner family represented increasing family diversity because it diverged from the norm of the male-breadwinner model. UK leisure research has rarely accounted for this and has, as a consequence rarely explicitly focused on the dual-earner family. This research partially fills this gap.
The empirical work of the thesis also contributes to an understanding of the interrelation of work, family and leisure across the lifecourse. The findings have supported John and Janice Kelly’s (1994, p.272) contention that ‘there is probably a shifting centrality of the three domains [work, family/community and leisure] and of their dimensions through the lifecourse’. The study explored these shifting relationships and dimensions of meaning throughout the lifecourse and revealed highly individualised and gendered accounts of work, family and leisure lives over time. Furthermore, the findings from the study demonstrated the close interaction of patterns and meanings of work, family and leisure across the lifecourse, thereby confirming Kelly and Kelly’s (1994, p.273) conclusion that ‘life cannot be conventionally divided into domains with unique sets of meanings’. This idea has been supported by the findings of much feminist leisure research since the 1980s and has been clearly inferred from the data from the current study.

The empirical work of the thesis contributes to the policy debate, particularly contemporary policy and political discourses on ‘work–life’ balance or the reconciliation of work and home. The policy and political context of dual-earner family life presented in Chapter 1 revealed that ‘reconciliation’ policies have emerged on the political and policy agenda in the UK, especially since the election of the New Labour government in 1997. The fieldwork of the thesis has revealed the central importance of leisure in the lifestyles of the families to whom reconciliation policies are targeted, yet policy and political discourse on the ‘work–life’ balance make very little explicit reference to leisure or gender. ‘Work=life’ debates in policy and political contexts are essentially concerned with the paid and domestic labour of dual-earner couples and fail to evaluate the leisure dimension. Leisure has, however, been shown to lay at the heart of the construction, maintenance and negotiation of gender relations in the home, and the women in the study in particular experienced a ‘leisure deficit’ as an outcome of an imbalanced ‘work–life’ mix. The results from the thesis, therefore, can inform policy debate by broadening understandings of what constitutes ‘life’ in the ‘work–life’ debate by demonstrating the role played by the leisure in the lives of dual-earner families.

The fieldwork has been shown to reveal key components of the everyday experiences of dual-earner families. This furthering of understanding, however, raises new and equally important questions and highlights gaps in knowledge that need
addressing. Future work could build on the findings of the current study in the following ways:

- **Deconstructing and reconstructing intra-couple dynamics**

Examining between-partner processes has illuminated the ways in which (gendered) lifestyles are constructed. Future work could explore such processes in more detail. Such research would contribute to an understanding of the dynamic nature of everyday life in couple families, how lifestyle is negotiated over time and the ways in which gender relations are challenged or reinforced.

- **Exploring the holistic nature of daily life**

The results from the current study have demonstrated the value of viewing everyday life in a holistic way. Future work would benefit from the deconstruction of life ‘domains’ such as ‘employment’ and ‘family’ so that they are viewed in the context of the lifestyle of the ‘whole’ individual and of that of other family members.

- **Understanding for family/family-employment diversity**

Additional benefits could be gained by broadening the focus of the relationships between work, family and leisure in a variety of family forms. There are clear gaps in knowledge on the role of leisure in the lifestyles of lone parents and reconstituted families, for example, and information is limited in relation to other ‘alternative’ family forms such as gay or lesbian households.

- **Understanding cultural diversity**

The everyday lives of men and women with particular social and cultural characteristics also need to be represented in the literatures on leisure and lifestyle. The work of Scraton *et al* (1998), for example, has made a valuable contribution to understandings of the leisure experience of elderly women. Similar studies that account for different ages, ethnicities, sexualities and (dis)abilities, are, however, underrepresented in leisure studies in the UK. Additional research that accounted for socio-cultural diversity would, therefore be valuable way forward for the field.

- **Informing policy debate**

The current study has indicated that work on the work-family-leisure triad can inform debates on the work-life balance, particularly with respect to the way such research points to the gendered nature of daily life. Future work could usefully adopt a similar approach but would place the ‘work-life’ problematic at its core. Policy and political assumptions about the nature of the daily lives of dual-earner families could be
scrutinised. In particular, future research could attempt to answer the question that this work poses, namely: What constitutes ‘life’ in the ‘work-life’ debate?

The contribution to theory and its future direction

In terms of theory, the research has contributed to the literatures on the approach in theory to the dual-earner family through its development and application of a gender constructivist approach. This perspective, described in Chapter 2, represents a juncture between debates of structure and agency in the social sciences in general, and in feminist theory in particular. The key characteristics of the theoretical approach were a concern for the centrality of gender in analyses of relations in the home and the importance of individual agency in the (often different) ways in which actors participate in the construction of everyday life and identity. This approach has helped unravel the complex ways in which dual earners construct family life at an individual level and as a consequence of between-partner negotiation. Common patterns of gendered behaviour were identified in the data and were related to the shared structural position of the men and women in the study group. In addition, the analysis of the data from the fieldwork has uncovered the different ways in which men and women in dual-earner families actively construct gendered identities that reproduce or conflict with dominant ideologies. This construction exercise was shown to take place at the couple as well as the individual level. The actions, orientations and attitudes of partners were shown to be co-dependent and were subject to the negotiations of partners. The concepts of negotiation and rationalisation, in particular, have helped reveal the different ways in which individuals in couples construct daily life.

The theoretical insights the gender constructivist approach offers to an understanding of dual-earner family life is, however, mediated by some of the limitations of the perspective. The focus on the centrality of gender could be perceived as a weakness as well as a strength of the approach. The criticisms directed at standpoint feminist theories identified in Chapter 2 could, therefore, be applied to the gender constructivist approach. In particular, the approach may be perceived as reductionist and structurally deterministic. In addition, the focus on gender may mask the influence of other structural variables such as ethnicity, age and religious affiliation. These potential criticisms are partly countered by the constructivist approach which was woven into the structural consideration of gender. The interactionist, interpretative approach highlights the differential ways in which social
structures are interpreted. Gender does, therefore, not determine behavioural outcomes, but is subject to interpretation and reinterpretation throughout the lifecourse. This concern for interpretations and 'difference' is also, therefore consistent with post-structuralist feminist theoretical approaches and discussions of these approaches outlined in Part I of the thesis demonstrated the ways in which post-structuralist feminist approaches have contributed to the gender constructivist perspective adopted in the thesis. This approach does, however, represent the fusion of apparently disparate theoretical perspectives and is, therefore, open to criticism. The analytical devices that the theoretical framework offered, however, produced rich insight into the role of leisure in the lifestyles of dual-earner families that can, therefore, inform debates on theory-building and the application of theory. The current project's theoretical approach can be useful for further research in several ways:

- **Exploring structure and agency**
  The gender constructivist approach is useful in the exploration of the impact and influence of structure and agency in daily life. While this is potentially problematic (see above), it could be usefully applied to subsequent work on lifestyle and family life. Its application and development could help illuminate how men and women make sense of their daily lives in the context of a range of social, cultural and familial environments; the way men and women interpret, reinterpret, negotiate and renegotiate lifestyle and the dynamic processes of everyday life in family contexts. Essentially it combines notions of control and constraint with ideas about opportunity and interpretation, which when placed in an analytic framework provides an insightful view into how and why daily life is acted out in social and ideological settings.

- **The centrality of gender**
  The gender constructivist approach also points to the centrality of gender in the organisation of daily life. Further work on the dynamics of family life requires gender, as well as other social and cultural factors such as age, ethnicity and (dis)ability), to be placed at the centre of the theoretical framework.

These suggestions, as well as those made in the discussion above point to a broader application of the concept of (gendered) leisure to the daily lives of individuals in families. Its inclusion in the research problematic has the potential to enrich existing understandings of lifestyle and the family-employment relationship, and thereby
broaden debates in public and academic arenas pertaining to the nature of everyday life and lived experience.
References


Mies, M. (1991) 'Women's research or feminist research? The debate surrounding feminist science and methodology', in M.M. Fonow and J.A. Cook (eds), Beyond Methodology: feminist scholarship as lived research, Bloomington/Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, pp.60–84.


Appendix 1

Fieldwork questionnaire
## Working Couples Questionnaire

1. Age __________________________________________

2. Sex
   - Male
   - Female

3. How many people are in your household? ________

4. Ages of the members of the household:

5. Do you have any of the following qualifications?
   - GCE ‘O’ level
   - GCSE
   - Scottish (SCE) lower
   - GCE ‘A’ level
   - Scottish (SCE) higher
   - BTEC diploma
   - Undergraduate degree
   - Postgraduate degree

6. Are you employed?
   - Yes
   - No (go to Qu. 7)

   a) If yes, what is your job? _______________________

   b) Do you work:
      - Full-time
      - Part-time
      - Other (please specify) _______________________

   c) How many hours a week do you work (on average)? _______________________ hours

   d) Time in current occupation:
      - 0–5 months
      - 6–11 months
      - 1 year–1 year 11 months
      - 2 years–2 years 11 months
      - 3+ years

   e) Do you have any of the following flexible work-arrangements in your job?
      - Flexi-time
      - Job share
      - Work from home
      - Other (please specify) _______________________

   f) Do you work any of the following?
      - Shift work
      - Casual hours
      - Evening work
      - Work at the weekend

   g) How do you travel to work?
      - Walk
      - Own car
      - Other car
      - Motorbike
      - Bicycle
      - Bus
      - Other (please specify) _______________________

   h) How long does it take you to get to work?
      - Less than 5 minutes
      - 5–15 minutes
      - 16–30 minutes
      - 31–45 minutes
      - 46–60 minutes
      - more than 1 hour

   i) Do you have more than one job?
      - Yes
      - No

   j) If yes, what is your job title?

7. Do you use any of the following in your childcare arrangements?
   - Childminder
   - Babysitter
   - Nanny (live-in)
   - Friends
   - Relatives

8. Who usually cares for your child(ren) when they are off school with illness?
   - Myself
   - My partner
   - Other (please specify) _______________________

9. Do you care for any other dependants such as elderly and/or disabled relatives?
   - Yes
   - No
10. Do you do any of the following activities? Please indicate how regularly you take part.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Daily</th>
<th>2 or 3 times a week</th>
<th>Once a week</th>
<th>At least once a month</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Watch television</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to radio</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Read books/newspapers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ride bicycle</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Walking</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cinema</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Theatre</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pub</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gardening</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DIY</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Swimming</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Aerobics/fitness classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gym/health club</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennis</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Squash</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cricket</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football (spectator)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Football (playing)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yoga</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Martial arts</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jogging/running</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ten pin bowling</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Snooker</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adult education classes</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other (please specify)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Please add any other comments you would like to make about your work, family and/or leisure life.

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

12. If you would like to continue to take part in this study and would be available for interview, please provide your contact details.

Name
Address
Telephone number _____________________ (daytime) and/or ___________________ (evening)
Email (if applicable)

Please return this questionnaire in the envelope provided to:
Elizabeth Such
Institute of Sport and Leisure Policy, Loughborough University
Leicestershire, LE11 3TU

Thank you for completing this questionnaire.
Appendix 2

Interview guide and life history table
Interview guide

Introduction
This interview forms part of a study that attempts to understand how working couples with dependent children experience everyday life. It seeks to understand the ways in which parents experience employment, family life and leisure and how the behaviour of one partner affects the other. To do this the study raises questions about how housework is shared, how childcare is arranged, how work time is organized and what people do outside of work time. The patterns of behaviour described and the reasons behind them will help us understand what modern family life is like and how it changes over time.

I want to start by asking questions about how your life has changed since you finished compulsory education; in particular what jobs you have done, when you had children, what living arrangements you have had and any other events that have impacted on your life, such as moving house, getting married, divorced, and so on. I’ll then go on to ask more general questions about your current life situation; how you combine family and work, what sort of childcare arrangements you have, how domestic work is organized and how you spend your leisure. To get a good feel for your current way of life, we shall complete a day diary for yesterday that goes through all the things you did that day and whether or not it reflects a ‘normal’ day for you. I’m particularly interested in your leisure time and how that fits in with the rest of your life. Firstly, we’ll go through your work and family life since you finished schooling.

RECORD LIFE HISTORY. PLOT IT OUT TOGETHER ON THE LIFE HISTORY TABLE.

Paid Work
INDICATE CHANGES IN EMPLOYMENT STATUS AND WORKING PATTERNS.

What are the main reasons for your change in employment?

Do you feel that you had many options when you changed your job / when you stopped working at this point?

Did you discuss any changes in employment with your partner?

What did you want to happen at this point? (e.g. go back to work, change job, increase/reduce hours, stop working, receive further education/training)

How did having children affect your employment? How did it affect your partner’s employment?

How important is work to you?

What are your reasons for working in your current job?
Would you like to alter your current working patterns in any way? Why? How?

How do you feel about your balance of work and home? How do you feel about your partner’s balance of work and home? Has it changed over time?

Did both your mother and your father work when you were a child?

How did you feel about your mother working/not working?

**Domestic responsibilities**

Now, we’ll go onto how housework has been organized since you have lived in partnership and especially since you have had children.

Who has had the main responsibility for domestic work in your family?

How do you divide tasks between yourselves?

Has it always been organized this way? Please indicate when throughout your family life this pattern has changed (probe: when children born, when household was single-earner).

How do you feel about doing housework?

Have you ever had any help with the housework from, for example, cleaners, gardeners, relatives? Please indicate when and how it affected your life / how you think it affected the life of your partner.

Are you satisfied with the way housework is shared?

Have you always been satisfied / dissatisfied with the way housework is shared? When? Why? (indicate phases in the lifecourse when division seemed fair / unfair – probe)

Would you like to change anything about how the housework is shared?

Have you ever tried to change the housework arrangements? What was the outcome?

**Childcare**

How do you organize childcare at this time? (probe: flexible working patterns, relatives, sharing with partner, formal childcare, informal networks)

Has it always been organized this way?

How do you organize childcare in the summer holidays?

Were you satisfied with these arrangements?
What affects your childcare choices? (probe: availability of family / friends, finances, availability of quality childcare services, transportation, working times)

What would be your ideal childcare situation?

Have you ever had to take time off work to care for your child? In what circumstances? Has your partner? How did you decide who would take time off? How did it affect your work?

Have you ever been unable to take time off work to care for your child when you have needed to? What did you do? How did this make you feel?

**Leisure**
Describe what the word ‘leisure’ means to you (N.B. be aware that leisure can be defined in terms of time and activity and state of mind).

When do you have personal leisure and what do you prefer to do during it?

Has this changed as your family and work life has altered? (probe: birth of first, second, etc child, change in job, change in working times, change in partner’s job / working times)

When have you been satisfied with the leisure you experience and when have you been dissatisfied?

Have you had to sacrifice other things so that you can have your own personal leisure? For example, work, housework, time with your partner, time with your children.

Who cares for you child(ren) when you pursue your own personal leisure?

When does your partner have personal leisure? Does s/he engage in any regular activity?

Who cares for your child(ren) when your partner is pursuing his / her own leisure?

How important is your own personal leisure to you? Has this changed over time? (probe: birth of child(ren), change in job / working times, change in partner’s job / working times)

Do you spend leisure time together as a family? Has this changed at different stages in your family life? (probe: age of children, presence / absence of a partner)

How important is this time to you? Has it been more / less important at different stages in your family life?

Has having children presented you with new opportunities for leisure?
Has having a job presented you with opportunities for leisure? (probe: social contacts, feelings of entitlement, disposable income)

Does anything stop you from doing the things you want to do in terms of leisure? (probe: work, housework, partner's work / leisure, childcare responsibilities)

Conclude: Is there anything you would like to add?
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Age/date</th>
<th>Work</th>
<th>Family</th>
<th>Other</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Bank (full time)</td>
<td></td>
<td>A levels end</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Year out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23</td>
<td>Photographer (10 months)</td>
<td></td>
<td>Art college</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24</td>
<td>Moved to another firm (full time for 7 years)</td>
<td>Married</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26</td>
<td></td>
<td>Separated (living in London with mother)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>Left work (home for 7 years)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1st son born</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
<td>Moved to East Midlands with son to be with husband</td>
<td>Odd jobs; short term work; infrequently working from home; some freelance photography</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>32</td>
<td></td>
<td>2nd son born</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>33</td>
<td></td>
<td>3rd son born</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>39</td>
<td>Full time position at Audio-Visual Services (for 4 months) Shift to part-time (full-time hours too demanding) - ongoing</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Current age = 44