School of Management

The Non-traditional FIFO Experience: An Exploration of the Experiences of Non-traditional Western Australian Employees and Families Who Work and Live FIFO

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This thesis is presented for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy
of
Curtin University

October 2017

Declaration

To the best of my knowledge and belief this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgment has been made.

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university.

Human Ethics (For projects involving human participants/tissue, etc) The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (2007) – updated March 2014. The proposed research study received human research ethics approval from the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (EC00262), Approval Number HR88/2015.

Signature:

Date: 05/10/2017

Abstract

This study explored the experiences of non-traditional Western Australian employees and families who work and live fly-in/fly-out (FIFO). Due to the complex nature of the study, constructivist grounded theory and a blended paradigm consisting of elements from interpretivism, constructivism and realism was used to detail the personal experiences of employees and their partners, and highlight the contextual factors and stressors impacting their experiences and well-being. In addition, through the adoption of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework and the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, the study highlighted the role various personal, social and protective resources play in managing job and home demands, coping with stress, and maintaining healthy well-being. A total of 109 participants were sampled which consisted of three groups that included FIFO employees (55 participants), partners of FIFO employees (47 participants), and key stakeholders (7 participants). The findings were examined in relation to previous literature.

Findings revealed that when comparing non-traditional FIFO employee and family experiences with individuals from conventional FIFO backgrounds, those from non-traditional households, even though they described facing the same type of challenges as conventional families, experienced the same challenges with greater intensity, and in turn this influenced on their work and home life. The study also illustrated the benefits of having a full resource reservoir containing personal, social and protective resources in terms of helping mitigate various challenges of FIFO working and living, thus reducing the impact of job and home demands and leading to a lower stress response that also improved employee and partner well-being. Participant experiences were moderated by a number of individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions. Work and home domains were viewed as separate from one another but also complementary of each other, as involvement at one domain influenced the experiences in the other and vice versa. Despite the challenges associated with the FIFO lifestyle, participants generally made informed choices to enter and remain in FIFO employment as they felt the benefits and rewards associated with FIFO outweighed the negatives and drawbacks of FIFO. Furthermore, participants felt that the challenges of FIFO working and living provided avenues for

further resource creation that could be used to manage job and home demands, thus reducing stress and improving individual and family outcomes. Recommendations for improving the experiences of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners are made at an individual and family, organisational, and community level. The strengths and limitations of the study are addressed before potential future research is suggested.

Acknowledgements

I wish to acknowledge the many people that have given their generous time, support and assistance to me along this journey and have made this thesis possible. Without these people this thesis may have never been written and to them I will forever be greatly in their debt.

To my mother and father, Mirsada and Zilhad, whose upbringing did not provide them with the comfort of a tertiary education, but for whom the value of knowledge acquisition has not been lost. I thank you for getting me over those difficult hurdles and for your source of encouragement throughout my entire life.

I thank my supervisors, Professor John Burgess and Dr Scott Fitzgerald, for helping guide me through this research process and for providing their time and expertise when I needed it most. For their feedback, guidance, patience and motivation I am grateful. I could not have asked for better advisors and mentors whose knowledge and consideration has helped shape this thesis.

A special thanks to Professor Alistair Rainnie, Professor Rowena Barrett and Dr Tara Smith for planting the seeds that helped make this research a reality, without them this study may have never started. Thank you for believing in me in times when I was struggling to believe in myself.

My sincere thanks are extended to the many fly-in/fly-out personnel, their families and the key stakeholders who participated in this study. Their experiences, stories and insights made this thesis possible.

I thank you all.

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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

ABS	**A**ustralian **B**ureau of **S**tatistics
ACRRMH	**A**ustralasian **C**entre for **R**ural and **R**emote **M**ental **H**ealth
AMMA	**A**ustralian **M**ines and **M**etals **A**ssociation
AusIMM	**A**ustralasian **I**nstitute of **M**ining and **M**etallurgy
AWALI	**A**ustralian **W**ork and **L**ife **I**ndex
BCEC	**B**ankwest **C**urtin **E**conomics **C**entre
BIBO	**B**us-**in**/**B**us-**o**ut
CCIWA	**C**hamber of **C**ommerce and **I**ndustry of **W**estern **A**ustralia
CFMEU	**C**onstruction, **F**orestry, **M**ining and **E**nergy **U**nion
CME	**C**hamber of **M**inerals and **E**nergy
CMEWA	**C**hamber of **M**inerals and **E**nergy **W**estern **A**ustralia
COR	**C**onservation **of R**esources
CSRM	**C**entre for **S**ocial **R**esponsibility in **M**ining
DAS	**D**yadic **A**djustment **S**cale
DHHS	**D**epartment of **H**ealth and **H**uman **S**ervices of Tasmanian
DIDO	**D**rive-**in**/**D**rive-**o**ut
DMP	**D**epartment of **M**ines and **P**etroleum
DOCEP	**D**epartment **of C**onsumer and **E**mployment **P**rotection
DTWD	**D**epartment of **T**raining and **W**orkforce **D**evelopment
EAP	**E**mployee **A**ssistance **P**rogram
EOWA	**E**qual **O**pportunity for **W**omen in the Workplace **A**gency
FAD	**F**amily **A**ssessment **D**evice
FIFO	**F**ly-**in**/**F**ly-**o**ut
FTE	**F**ull-**t**ime **E**quivalent
GDP	**G**ross **D**omestic **P**roduct
GFC	**G**lobal **F**inancial **C**risis
GHQ-12	**G**eneral **H**ealth **Q**uestionnaire **12**
GI	**G**ender **I**dentity
HILDA	**H**ousehold, **I**ncome and **L**abour **D**ynamics in **A**ustralia
HREOC	**H**uman **R**ights and **E**qual **O**pportunity **C**ommission
JHDR	**J**ob and **H**ome **D**emands **R**esources Model
LDC	**L**ong **D**istance **C**ommuting

LGBT	**L**esbian, **G**ay, **B**isexual and **T**ransgender
LSAC	**L**ongitudinal **S**tudy of **A**ustralian **C**hildren
MCA	**M**inerals **C**ouncil of **A**ustralia
MMFF	**M**cMaster **M**odel of **F**amily **F**unctioning
NCVER	**N**ational **C**entre for **V**ocational **E**ducation **R**esearch
NCW	**N**ational **C**ouncil of **W**omen
PASS	**P**arent **A**wareness **S**kills **S**urvey
SISO	**S**hip-**i**n/**S**hip-**o**ut
SO	**S**exual **O**rientation
SWING	**S**urvey **W**ork-home **I**nteraction - **N**ijme**G**en

List of Participant Abbreviations

BE	**B**isexual **E**mployee
BP	**B**isexual **P**artner
GE	**G**ay **E**mployee
GP	**G**ay **P**artner
HFE	**H**eterosexual **F**emale **E**mployee
HFP	**H**eterosexual **F**emale **P**artner
HME	**H**eterosexual **M**ale **E**mployee
HMP	**H**eterosexual **M**ale **P**artner
LE	**L**esbian **E**mployee
LP	**L**esbian **P**artner
TSE	**T**wo-**S**pirited **E**mployee

Chapter 1
Background and Context

1.1 Introduction

The Australian mining industry and in particular the resources sector of Western Australia (WA) is a leading contributor to national income, government revenue and exports (Roarty, 2010). In the last few decades the industry has remained a leading driver of high-wage jobs and high living standards across Australia and has ensured strong economic stabilisation during difficult times such as the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007-08 (Minerals Council of Australia [MCA], 2015). Research has shown that between 2003-04 and 2011-12 Australian mining-dependent jobs grew by 1.1 million with the minerals industry accounting for $156 billion in federal taxes and state royalties between 2004-05 and 2013-14 (Deloitte Access Economics, 2014).

The establishment of new mine sites in otherwise unviable, geographically remote, and inhospitable locations have led to resource companies adopting the use of long distance commuting (LDC) such as fly-in/fly-out (FIFO), drive-in/drive-out (DIDO), bus-in/bus-out (BIBO), and ship-in/ship-out (SISO). This has allowed mining employers to widen their recruitment options in tight labour markets where a wealth of employment competition exists. Individuals from capital cities and non-mining communities have greater employment opportunities through LDC. The use of FIFO and DIDO is also not limited to the resources sector with non-standard employment practices employed throughout the entire economy across all Australian states. LDC offers greater employment options, and in certain instances higher levels of flexibility, where individuals can live in one area and work in another without the need of relocating their family, thus families generally remain in a metropolitan area where they have access to better health, education and social facilities that are not as abundant in mining communities (Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia [CMEWA], 2005).

Families generally make the decision on whether or not to enter into FIFO based on the benefits offered to them, such as those associated with financial resource gains, job and life security, family time, personal freedom, and flexibility in terms of where

to live, among many others. Furthermore, as discussed in this study, individual life stage has a strong influence over the decision to work in isolated remote locations. Singlehood employees typically prefer FIFO working due to the shorter roster structure compared to the traditional eight-hour workweek; unmarried couples view FIFO employment as a means to establishing a future for themselves and their partner; and those with children adopt the FIFO lifestyle as it helps ensure long-term financial security for their family. LDC is gaining considerable popularity, from both employee and employer, across all sectors and its use in the mining industry has never been stronger.

FIFO working and living involves regular physical separation of the employee from their place of residence, family and friends (Watts, 2004). Employees' work in remote locations where food and accommodation is provided to them but not their families (Storey, 2001). It is a continual cycle of coming and going in which employees' travel to work, stay a pre-determined number of days on-site, and then return home for a fixed number of days before going back to work again (Price, 2008; Shrimpton & Storey, 1989). The risks facing the mining industry and that the impact LDC has on well-being is slowly being understood and in need of further, more comprehensive, research and development (Ernst & Young, 2013). Our understanding of the long-term effects FIFO employment has on employee and family mental health and well-being, or how reductions in social availability influence employee productivity levels, or the impact the continually changing social structure of FIFO employees' has on adapting to local demographics, is limited.

Technological advancements, that have improved the type and availability of communication between FIFO employees' and their families; job and life security, that has ensured worker peace of mind and future family prosperity; and the option to live in a metropolitan area while working away, have all led to an increase in FIFO employment among Australian households. The rise of FIFO has also improved Australia's economic growth through continual resource and mineral demands from international markets. During the 2000s the mining industry experienced a sharp shift in global mining commodity prices, driven by a growing demand for emerging economies that brought higher levels of currency and trade (Connolly & Orsmond, 2011). The tighter labour market heightened volatility in the resources sector as well

as dispersion of resource operations through disparity between large, medium and small mining companies (CMEWA, 2014). In addition, the nature of project types (e.g., short-term or ongoing operations), cost of establishing work areas, and the personal demands of workers required that any newly established mine operations were to implement LDC (CMEWA, 2014).

The benefits of FIFO include the high remuneration associated with mining based employment that helps attract and retain employees (Gent, 2004; Keown, 2005). By working in remote locations employees' have fewer expenses while on-site as everything is provided for them, and therefore they have higher levels of remuneration for personal needs and desires while at home (Carter & Kaczmarek, 2009). Other benefits include the growth of personal strength in one's own abilities, improvements in coping and confidence, and the expansion of roles and responsibilities between partners (Watts, 2004). Gallegos (2005) found that FIFO families choose to continue living the FIFO lifestyle due to financial security, quality of time available to spend with children, and an overall high level of job satisfaction.

Although FIFO employment can be beneficial for many individuals, families, organisations and communities, it is not without its challenges. Research has indicated that the use of FIFO arrangements can have a significant impact on employees' work and social life. Disruptions to personal and home time, lower levels of performance, drops in productivity and concerns relating to mental health have been examined by various researchers (Costa, Silva, & Hui, 2006; Heiler, Pickersgill, & Briggs, 2000; Houghton, 1993). International studies, as discussed in chapter three, detail the FIFO challenges associated with isolation, due to physical separation, when employees have to work away from their loved ones. Studies suggest that isolation can lead to conflict over individual roles and responsibilities and struggles with family identity that, in some instances, could have a negative influence over child development for families with children, all of which impact individual stress levels (Collinson, 1998; Mckee, Mauthner, & Maclean, 2000). Employees' will commonly miss family events or life milestones such as birthdays or their children graduating. Due to remoteness, most employees are restricted to travel home and therefore are limited in their ability to support their loved ones (Gallegos, 2006). Such challenges can place strain on the

family and maintaining healthy family functioning can be difficult when living the FIFO lifestyle.

Families involved in FIFO also have added pressures placed on them. The partner of the FIFO employee is often left alone while the employee is on-site and as a result they take on greater responsibility, especially if they are with child, while at home. Pollard (1990) claimed that, due to the comings and goings associated with the FIFO lifestyle, when the employee returns home it can be difficult for them to re-adjust to home life and their partner can struggle to adjust to the physical presence of the employee. The household structure shifts to accommodate to the employee's needs and for some families this disrupts their daily routine and habits. Some younger children can experience difficulties in trying to identify their relationship with their parents as a result of regular periods of absence from the FIFO parent, thus parenting problems can arise (Pollard, 1990). The lack of daily interaction with the FIFO parent could lead to negative emotions from children relating to paternal absence, loss of physical and emotional support, and a restriction to their daily activities that become limited to one parent instead of two (Bradbury, 2011). Emotional problems in children are worse when their parents are unable to partake in home activities, due to long hours and emotional exhaustion that result from FIFO employment (Robinson, Peetz, Murray, Griffin, & Muurlink, 2017). Communication can help mitigate such challenges, however employee access to different forms of communication while on-site can be restrictive. The size of the mine, employee position, and employee swing, also known as a roster and refers to the number of days an employee spends on-site and the number of non-work days they spend at home, can determine how much access they have to communication while on-site, illustrating the social impact of FIFO on both the employee and their family.

The challenges that come with working a FIFO schedule can influence everyone involved. Physical and psychological demands from FIFO working and living can influence individual stress that in turn impacts work and life satisfaction, job performance, engagement levels, relationships, family functioning, career, awareness, time allocation and daily life. However, the research to date has primarily focused on addressing the views and experiences of conventional and heterosexual two-parent FIFO employees and their partners. While studies exist on lesbian, gay, bisexual and

transgender (LGBT) workers (Barrett, Lewis, & Dwyer, 2011; Willis, 2009), there is a dearth of research on LGBT FIFO employees working in the mining industry. By exploring this group of individuals the research could provide an additional layer to previous literature by examining an area that has yet to be addressed from an academic perspective. The present study addresses the various issues faced by a group of people that have yet to have their voices heard via an academic forum and could potentially lead to improvements in workplace policies that may help enhance employee satisfaction through higher levels of morale and overall work/life satisfaction. It could also potentially aid in lowering discrimination and prejudices faced by LGBT FIFO employees and improve overall workplace equality.

This study also supports further research in the area of FIFO-related mental health. According to the WA parliamentary committee (Parliament of Western Australia, 2014, 2015), which highlights the need for a Code of Practice to address FIFO work arrangements, and the federal inquiry into FIFO practices by the House of Representatives standing committee on regional Australia (House of Representatives, 2013), it is imperative that the main factors impacting FIFO employee mental health be addressed to help better monitor FIFO challenges. In ensuring future sustainability of FIFO work arrangements the "system of work should be modified to take into account the mental health needs of workers" instead of profiling and selecting "those who are 'tough enough' to withstand the challenges of FIFO" (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015, p. 139). Although no evidence was presented to suggest that mental health difficulties were any higher among FIFO employees' than the wider Australian workforce, it is evident that "more research is needed on the prevalence of mental health issues in the FIFO workforce" (House of Representatives, 2013, p. 99). These government inquiries into FIFO employment highlight FIFO working and living as an issue of public policy interest and suggest a need for further research in the area. The recommendations made in both inquiries are limited to research around the conventional FIFO worker and as such further insight into the mental health impacts of FIFO on non-traditional employees and their partners would aid in improving our understanding of mental health challenges, especially those faced by minority groups. This study addresses the emotional and mental impacts associated with FIFO employment and sheds light on how non-traditional FIFO families cope with separation and isolation.

1.2 The Relationship Between Work and Home Domains

In the Australian social system work and home domains are no longer viewed as separate entities but instead comprise of a single system of intersecting interrelationships mutually influenced by each other (Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek, & Sweet, 2006; Pocock, Skinner, & Williams, 2007; Voydanoff, 2005). The result of social change such as alterations in workforce composition (e.g., changes in family arrangement types), working arrangements, and family structures have increased the need to better understand the relationship between work and home domains (Hosking & Western, 2008; Schultheiss, 2006). Maintaining a healthy balance between professional and family/personal time influences both domains as it can impact physical and psychological well-being (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992), job satisfaction (Adams, King, & King, 1996; Bourg & Segal, 1999; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996), turnover (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997), and family relationships (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). As a result, various employment groups, such as blue-collar employees (Babin & Boles, 1998), managers, (Carlson, Derr, & Wadsworth, 2003), police, nurses and engineers (Bacharach, Bamberger, & Conley, 1991) and retail and health care workers (Thomas & Ganster, 1995), have struggled to maintain a healthy balance between work and home.

Interaction between work and home has commonly been referred to as "work-family balance" or "work-family equilibrium", thus implying that a balance between the two needs to exist in order to meet the demands of both domains and the spill over effects that they share (Hein, 2005; Pocock, 2003; Voydanoff, 2005). These terms focus on the degree of separation between domains often without addressing the more complex and overlapping individual, relational and cultural factors that contribute to interaction. The present study, in acknowledging the interrelationships of contextual factors, adopts the terminology of Pocock, Skinner and Williams (2007) and uses the term "work-home interaction" rather than "work-family balance" or "work-family equilibrium".

Literature reviews of previous research (e.g. Clifford, 2009; Pirotta, 2006; Mostert & Rathbone, 2007) found that the majority of studies on the relationship between work and home domains primarily focused on the negative consequences of work-family conflict. Limited research highlighted the benefits of interaction between work and family roles (Voydanoff, 2004b), impacts on social network cohesion (Gallegos, 2006), and work and home interactions of single parent families and minority groups (Pitt-Catsouphes, Kossek, & Sweet, 2006). While employees rely on paid work for sustenance, employers also rely on families and communities to sustain the workforce, thus work and home roles and relationships require greater understanding and acknowledgement (Squire & Tilly, 2007; Voydanoff, 2004b).

Previous research on work and home life primarily concentrated on conventional family types with exclusions of people from more non-traditional family arrangements, household structures, and those at different life stages. Studies exploring fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) families were limited to examining conventional nuclear families, such as two-parent mother and father household structures, with a strong focus on macro issues pertaining to economics, environment and infrastructure (Iverson & Maguire, 2000; Mostert & Rathbone, 2007; Wilkinson, 2008). The views of non-traditional family types, such as those consisting of single parent families, blended families, unmarried couples, or non-heterosexual partners living together, are largely absent from the research to date. Past studies do not take into account the non-traditional household structure and therefore may be considered non-representative. As illustrated in Figure 1.1, the Australian household has changed drastically with census data showing that, in 2011, 37 per cent of families comprised a couple with dependent children, 8 per cent were couples with non-dependent children, 38 per cent were couple only families, and 15 per cent were sole parent families (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2011). In 2016, 44.7 per cent of Australian families were couples with children, 37.8 per cent were couple families without children, and 15.8 per cent were single parent families (ABS, 2016). This suggests a need for further and more updated research on FIFO work and home domains that acknowledges the ever-changing Australian household structure.

Figure 1.1: Australian Family Types
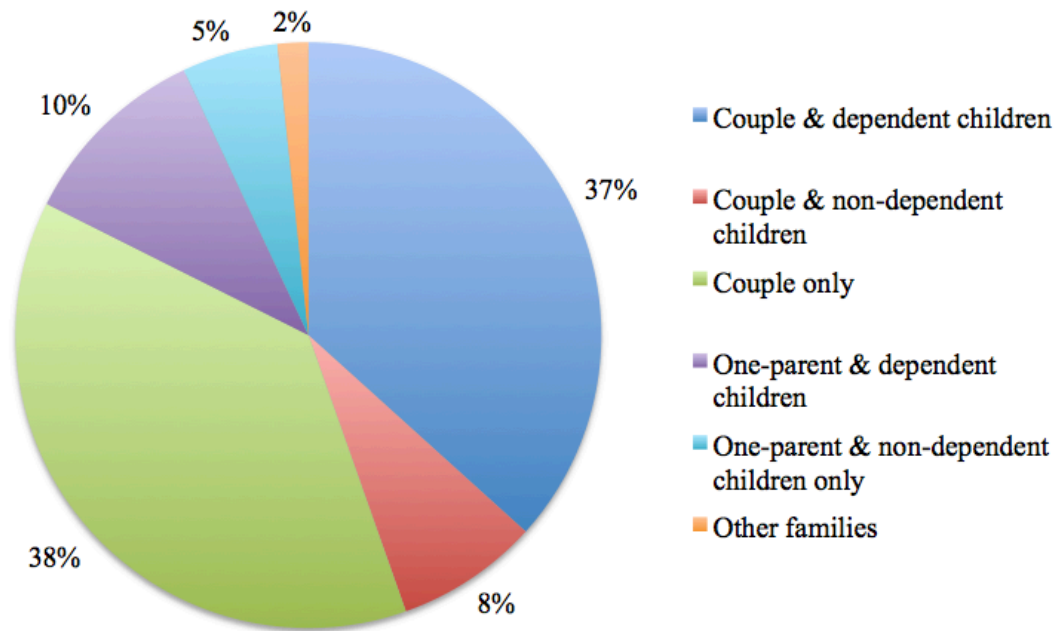
Source: ABS (2011), based on 5,584,000 families in Australia.

Due to changes in social structure and diversity in Australian family types, an inclusive definition of family is used in the current study. Based on Fassinger (2005) and definitions used by the ABS (ABS, 2007a), a family in this study consists of any conventional two-parent mother and father household (e.g., families with children under 18 that are either biologically shared, step or adopted), single parent families, blended families, lesbian, gay and bisexual families, couples (e.g., married or cohabiting) without children, and singlehood individuals. For the purposes of comparing research findings and analysing data, the two main family types covered in this study are conventional and non-traditional families, with primary focus given to non-traditional family households and individuals from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds.

According to census data there were an estimated 33,700 same-sex couples in Australia (17,600 male and 16,100 female same-sex couples) representing 1 per cent of all Australian couples at the time (ABS, 2011). Since data became available in 1996 there has been a steady increase in the number of same-sex couples each year and a pattern of more male than female couples has been consistent (Figure 1.2). The

majority of couples described themselves as de facto partners while only 1,300 saw themselves as one person being the husband/wife in the partnership.

Figure 1.2: Number of Same-Sex Couples in Australia
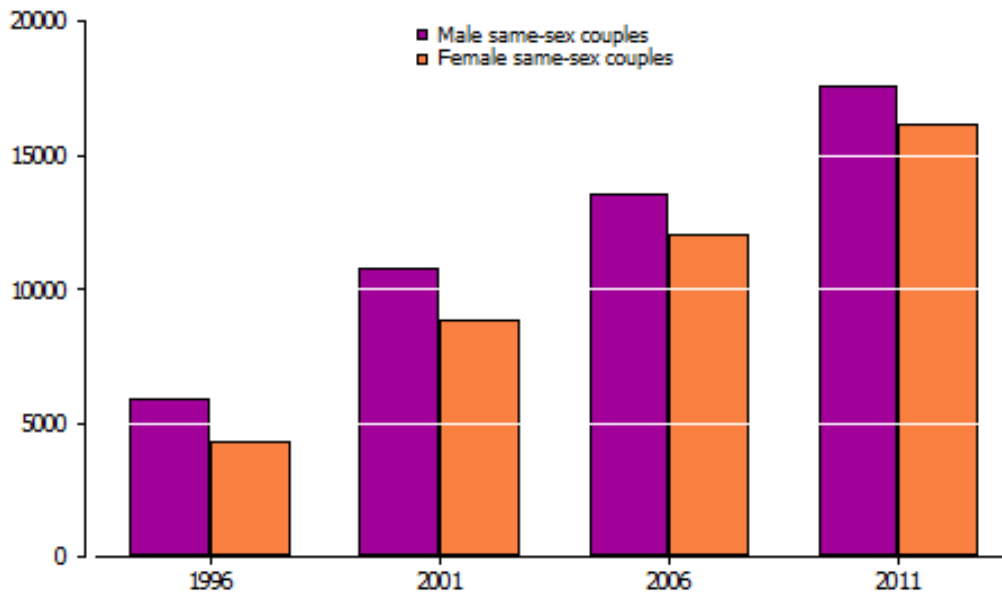
Source: 2011 Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 2011).

People in same-sex relationships tend to be younger with a medium age of 40 years compared to 48 years of those in heterosexual relationships (ABS, 2011). According to census, more than three quarters (76%) of same-sex couples were aged less than 50 years of age compared to 54 per cent of opposite-sex couples (ABS, 2011). Additionally, same-sex relationships have a significantly larger age gap between partners than opposite-sex relationships. For females, as shown in Figure 1.3, the age gap between couples averaged at 4.8 years and for males it was a 6.5 year gap (ABS, 2011). 25 per cent of male same-sex relationships had an age difference of 10 years or more compared to 8 per cent of males in opposite-sex relationships (ABS, 2011).

Figure 1.3: Age Difference Between Partners in Same-Sex Relationships
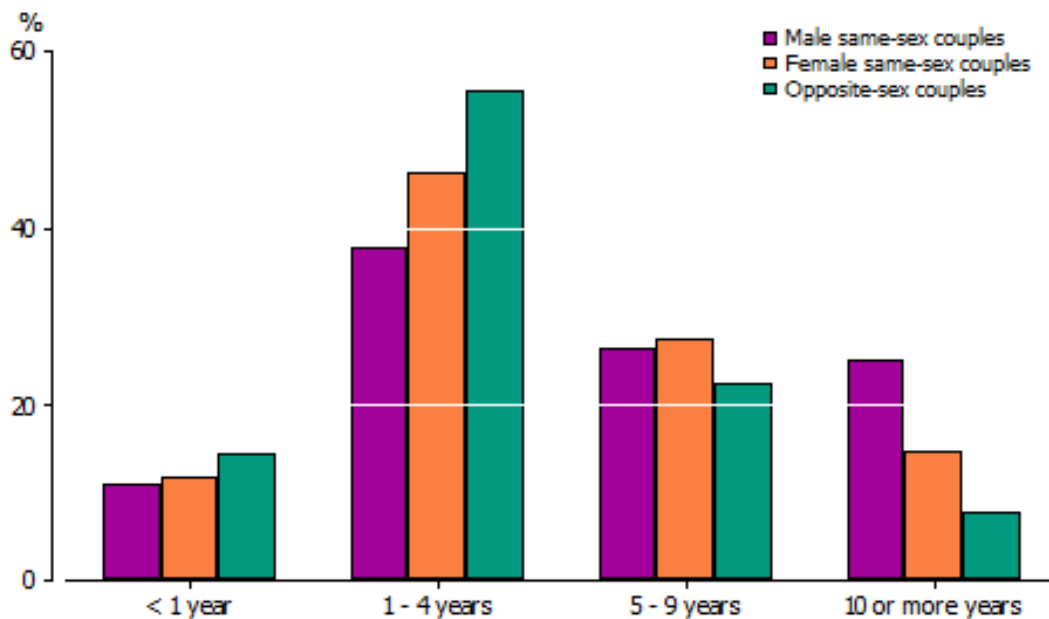
Source: 2011 Census of Population and Housing (ABS, 2011).

Along with a conventional approach to family structures, the majority of work-family literature details only the traditional view of employment that involves working eight-hour workweeks, Monday till Friday. However, with the growing trend of 24-hour societies, a shift towards more non-standardised working hours (e.g., shift work and compressed schedules) has become prevalent across all Australian industries (Costa, 2003). Work arrangements today commonly consist of nights and weekends as well as part time, casual, on-call and fixed-term contracts. This change towards non-standard employment is a direct result of societal and organisational demands and the personal preferences of individuals (Presser, 2000). Few studies have explored the impact of non-standard work arrangements on employee and partner family functioning, managing work and home demands, coping with stress, and maintaining healthy levels of well-being (Hosking & Western, 2008). The limited studies that have addressed non-standard arrangements only focused on the psychological well-being of employees and their partners. For example, Gent (2004) found that working night shift had a higher negative impact on well-being as it resulted in an increase in fatigue and poor mental agility as well as indirectly impacting family and social interaction.

1.3 The Australian Mining Industry

Boasting some the world's largest resource deposits, including coal, iron ore and gold, Australia is a major contributor to the global resources sector. Minerals are extracted across the entirety of the country but mining activities are concentrated in resource-rich states of Queensland and Western Australia (WA) (Blake, Cowper, & Gatland, 2013). Australia is the leading exporter of coal, iron ore, lead, diamond, rutile, zinc and zirconium; second largest of gold; and third largest of aluminium (Sharieff, Ali Khan, & Balakishan, 2007). The industry accounts for 10.2 per cent of the nation's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) (Department of Employment, 2014) and it is among the leading export sectors in the economy. It is an industry that has benefited the nation with vast wealth even when international economic activity was in danger of collapsing. It is also culturally significant, as it has shaped Australians' experiences, values, and identities (McDonald, Mayes, & Pini, 2012). Although the Australian population has mixed feelings on mining, it is hard to argue the positives that have resulted from the extraction of metals, coal and gold from the Earth's crust as the national economy and infrastructure, since 1823 when gold was discovered in Australia (ABS, 2001), has developed extensively in economic and social conditions. The influx of wealth brought in by the gold rush made Australia one of the most sought after exporters of gold and by mid 1850, 40 per cent of world gold was produced in Australia (Sharieff, Ali Khan, & Balakishan, 2007). This also resulted in an increase to the Australian population, with immigrants from the United Kingdom (UK) and other Commonwealth countries contributing to the gold rush, which rose from 437,655 people in 1851 to 1,151,947 people a decade later (Caldwell, 1987).

Since the gold rush, Australia has experienced mining booms and busts that have either benefited or dampened national income (Blainey, 1969, 1970). However, even with the clear benefits there have been a number of negative effects as a result of mining. The impact on the environment has increased significantly since the rise of the environmental movement in the 1970s (McQueen, 2012); there still exists a considerable degree of uncertainty on how mining and working in remote locations influences local communities where fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees' live and work; and concern regarding the unequal distribution of wealth gained through the mining boom is increasingly becoming a greater public issue.

It was in the early 2000s that Australian mining began to experience a major boom with unprecedented growth for the industry (Connolly & Orsmond, 2011). The rapid industrialisation and urbanisation of emerging Asian economies transformed global commodity markets that increased the demand for minerals and resources such as natural gas. This put Australia in a highly beneficial position to take advantage of growing Asian markets, and in the latter half of the decade mining investment had risen to its highest levels in terms of economic share (Connolly & Orsmond, 2011). The widespread impact of this revival included higher export earnings, greater job creation, and the establishment of more towns in remote locations, thus increasing the sector's importance to the Australian economy.

The mining industry has experienced substantial success in terms of job creation and growth over the last few decades. Due to high mineral prices and output expansion, employment in mining increased by 166,900 (10.3 per cent annual growth rate), and almost doubled from 115,000 in 2005 to 268,000 in 2014 (ABS, 2015). As mineral prices started to fall in May 2012, employment growth also stalled (Department of Employment, 2014). Lower demand from Asian markets and lower commodity prices meant that mining employment only grew by around 4000 (1.5 per cent) people over the 12-month period to May 2014, as shown in Figure 1.4.

Figure 1.4: Mining Industry Employment Level
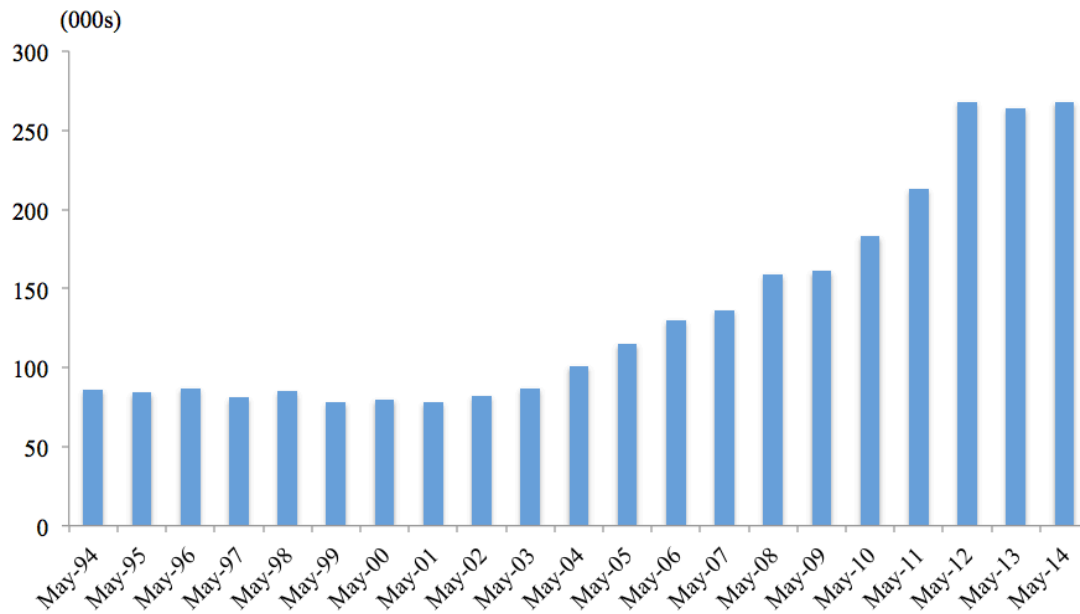
Source: ABS (2015), Labour Force, Australia, Detailed, Quarterly, Cat No. 6291.0.55.003.

A survey on 2967 (22.7 per cent) members from the Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy (AusIMM) found that unemployment in the industry increased from 1.7 per cent in July 2012 to 10.9 per cent in July 2013 (AusIMM, 2013). As skilled professionals became unemployed, the risk of permanently losing these individuals and the key knowledge they held increased. Furthermore, innovation and productivity rates fell as the industry struggled to respond to changes in economic conditions that increased international demand for minerals and energy (AusIMM, 2013). By 2014, the institute's annual survey revealed that unemployment had increased to 12.2 per cent in September 2014 (AusIMM, 2014). This doubled Australia's national unemployment rate of 5.7 per cent in April 2016 (ABS, 2016), with one out of every ten mine employees made redundant in the 2013-14 year, thus reflecting a highly volatile employment market (AusIMM, 2014). Unemployment surged to 16.2 per cent in June 2015, a considerable jump from 1.7 per cent in 2012 (AusIMM, 2015). 16.4 per cent of employees were made redundant and 18.3 per cent of those employed in the mining industry changed employers (AusIMM, 2015). This industry downturn increased the number of people seeking employment outside of mining with limited prospects of re-entering the sector. When such downturns occur, the flow on effect of a tighter labour market, given the significance of mining to national economic health,

can be detrimental to the nation. Poverty increases and people in search of employment migrate to other states or countries, as their skills are generally transferable (Tonts, Plummer, & Lawrie, 2011).

It was not until the Asian financial crisis and the global recession of the 2000s that parts of the industry would notice difficulties in production and exports, leading many mining companies down a path of failure (Connolly & Orsmond, 2011). By the end of the decade the industry had been through numerous structural changes, shifting their attention towards coal and iron ore exporting, of which Australia had high volumes, and prices were increasing. The rise in global commodity prices also led to higher levels of income during the decade and demand surpassed output for the mining boom period (Kearns & Lowe, 2011). The boom had a strong impact on the entire Australian economy but especially on resource-rich states of Queensland and WA. The growing demands for minerals and resources by international markets, especially those from China, saw a population increase in these states, and interstate and overseas labour migration led to higher levels of employment and industry gross value that enhanced overall revenue coming out of Queensland and WA (Connolly & Orsmond, 2011). Interstate migration can be affected by labour market conditions between states and individuals are more inclined to migrate from a state with high unemployment levels to a state with strong economic prospects where they are guaranteed job security, high wages and flexible working hours (Debelle & Vickery, 1999; Tonts, Plummer, & Lawrie, 2011). The mining boom also increased the use of foreign workers to help mitigate skills shortages from the domestic labour force and aid in innovation enhancement (Dickie & Dwyer, 2010). Overseas migration brought in new skills to Australia that helped support international operations through key knowledge and language skills (Bahn, Barratt-Pugh, & Yap, 2013).

There are a number of large mining companies, both nationally and internationally owned, that operate in Australia and account for almost 20 per cent of the Australian Stock Exchange by valuation (ASX) (Blake, Cowper, & Gatland, 2013). Companies such as BHP Billiton and Rio Tinto were able to capitalise on the mining boom by exporting various minerals to Asian countries such as China and Japan. As most of the major world economies went into recession following the global financial crisis (GFC) of 2007-08 (MCA, 2015), the Australian economy was able to avoid such a

fall due to the mining sector and the continual growth of emerging consumers. However, there still exists concern among those in academia and government over the sustainability of mining boom gains, with some expressing potential difficulties relating to industry dependence on Asian market demands, and that slower growth in places such as China would lower exporting and dampen the Australian economy (Smith & Dyer, 2010). There is also concern regarding other Australian industries not experiencing the same success as those in mining. Certain industries, such as those from manufacturing, agriculture and tourism, were not gaining any export growth due to mining industry success leading to a higher Australian dollar. Finally, the mining downturn and subsequent market employment volatility has seen a continual rise in industry unemployment since the peak of the boom with many workers being made redundant, struggling to find jobs outside of the sector and, according to Nicole Ashby (head of the support and training service FIFO Families), those that were still employed were in a constant fear of being cut (Paddenburg, 2015). Experts argue that Australia needs to diversify its economic base and invest in other industry types, instead of relying solely on mining, to develop a sustainable economy that also serves the non-resource demands of emerging Asian markets (Long, 2010). The Australian government should strive to increase their support for improved skills development, research and innovation in order to maintain Australia's position as a leading exporter of skills, technology and commodities.

1.4 Mining in Western Australia

The resources sector is one of the leading contributors to Australian revenue and infrastructure, providing nation-wide employment through major earnings from export income (ABS, 2001, 2007b). It has been the recipient of government support that has invested in the economic development of the state's natural assets since foundation (Walker et al., 2002). The production value out of the Western Australian (WA) sector has nearly quadrupled over the last decade, with production worth over $120 billion in 2013-14 (CMEWA, 2014). Prior to the mining boom, every Australian state had virtually the same employment growth. However, WA in particular, with substantial mineral assets and projects ranging from open pit mining to processing plants, has experienced significantly more stable employment growth than other states. In addressing the construction of new mine operations across WA the demand

for employees increased and in 2011-12 the WA mining industry employed 105,581 people directly (Department of Mines and Petroleum [DMP], 2013). 2013 saw a slight rise in employment with 105,974 people employed by the industry (DMP, 2014). By 2014 it had risen to 107,213 people (DMP, 2014) with the WA resources sector accounting for 10 per cent of the state's workforce compared to 5 per cent in 2004 (CMEWA, 2014). However, the WA mining workforce has steadily shrunk since the downturn in mid 2013 where there were an estimated 106,000 full-time equivalent employees (FTE) to around 84,000 FTEs by the end of 2015 (Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre [BCEC], 2016).

The Australian mining industry employed around 1.6 per cent of the total workforce in 2011 and 2.3 per cent in 2012 (Bryant & Jaworski, 2011) but compared to WA this figure was far higher with 8.7 per cent in 2012-13, thus making the industry the fourth largest, after construction, healthcare and retail, in the state (Department of Training and Workforce Development [DTWD], 2014). It can be argued that every job created in the industry results in the creation of three more in other sectors such as those in construction, hospitality, transport, manufacturing and technical services. This has led to the industry indirectly being responsible for employing an estimated total of 422,300 people in WA in 2011-12 (DMP, 2013). Figure 1.5 illustrates this rise in employment which had a 76.3 per cent increase and gained 44,800 jobs in the four year period from 2008 to 2012 (Monash University Centre of Policy Studies, 2011). At a regional level WA also recorded the largest increase in mining employment (13,300 people) over the five-year period from May 2010 to May 2014, in the same period Queensland's employment was up by 9,300 people (ABS, 2015). However, these estimates are subject to volatility in regional data and regional level employment is based in four-quarter average terms, thus it should be treated with caution. Employment growth in mining is reflective of project construction as the vast majority of mining companies manage on-site construction and infrastructure themselves.

Figure 1.5: Total Mining Employment in Western Australia
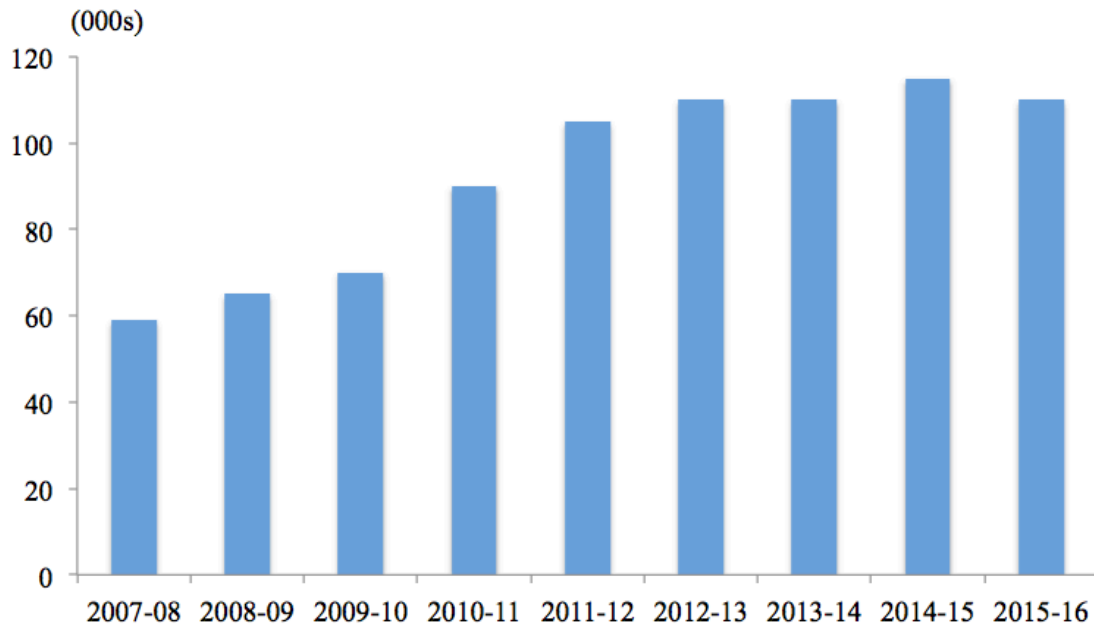
Source: Monash University Centre of Policy Studies, December (2011) and ABS (2015) Cat No. 6291.0 (year average levels shown).

Over the last decade the benefits of the WA mining boom have spread with the creation of numerous jobs and wealth. Government support of the WA mining sector highlights its perceived importance to the state's economy measured through indicators of income, employment and Gross Domestic Product (GDP) growth (Brueckner, Durey, Mayes, & Pforr, 2013). The state's GDP is two-thirds higher than the national average, having risen nearly 5 per cent per year (ABS, 2014). Although confidence did fall slightly when the initial phase of boom-related investment wore off around mid 2013, however the state did elevate to another level of the boom with the extraction of ore from established mines. In addition, as shown in Figure 1.6, per capita gross state income in 2012 averaged around $98,000 (BCEC, 2015). The average gross household income for WA families was around $2,117 per week with around one in five high income WA households headed by someone in the trade industry (Pash, 2014). As such, income growth has largely been restricted to people employed in the resources sector (Richardson & Denniss, 2011).

Figure 1.6: Real Per Capita Gross State Income: Western Australia and Australia
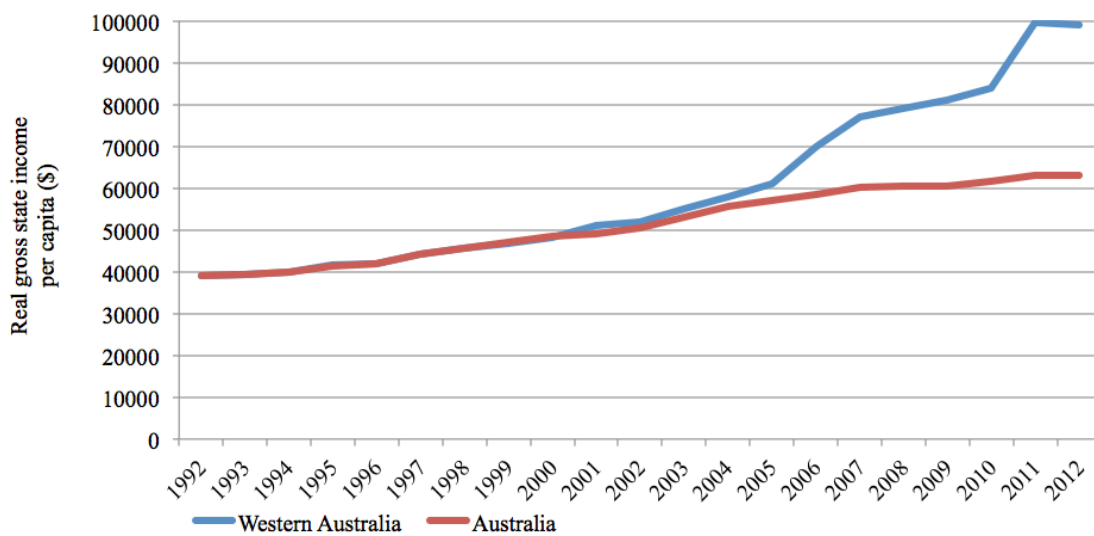
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (2015) and ABS (2014) Cat No. 5220.0 (year average levels shown).

The WA resources sector has helped protect economic growth rates and has ensured job security for many employees that in other industries were struggling during the GFC. The industrialisation of Asian markets increased the demand for minerals and energy from places such as China, Japan and Korea, thus rapidly increasing WA's economic growth, both in terms of commodity export value and mining investment. Moreover, this growth had a significant impact on the broader Australian economy and spill over from mining activity has generated more demand for labour and investment that has helped boost the WA market.

During the data collection process of this study WA was going through a period of high unemployment (approximately 5.1 per cent), however this was still lower than the Australian average (approximately 5.9 per cent) (ABS, 2015). Commodity prices were dropping as exports declined, thus the medium-term outlook for resource investment weakened which induced job shedding in the mining sector (Tasker, 2015), and as detailed in Figure 1.7 the overall employment of FTEs was shrinking. The high jobless rate not just in the mining industry but also across WA, limited the range of employment options available to participants at the time of the study. As a result, participants were less willing to seek employment elsewhere as they knew the

risks of leaving FIFO employment. So while there still existed a degree of choice regarding employment, as a few participants pointed out, it was heavily confined to individual's willingness to leave the FIFO lifestyle based on the job market. While some claimed that they had a desire to leave, they also noted the difficulties of acting on those urges due to the lack of employment options available outside of the mining industry.

Figure 1.7: Full-time Equivalent Employment in Western Australian Mining
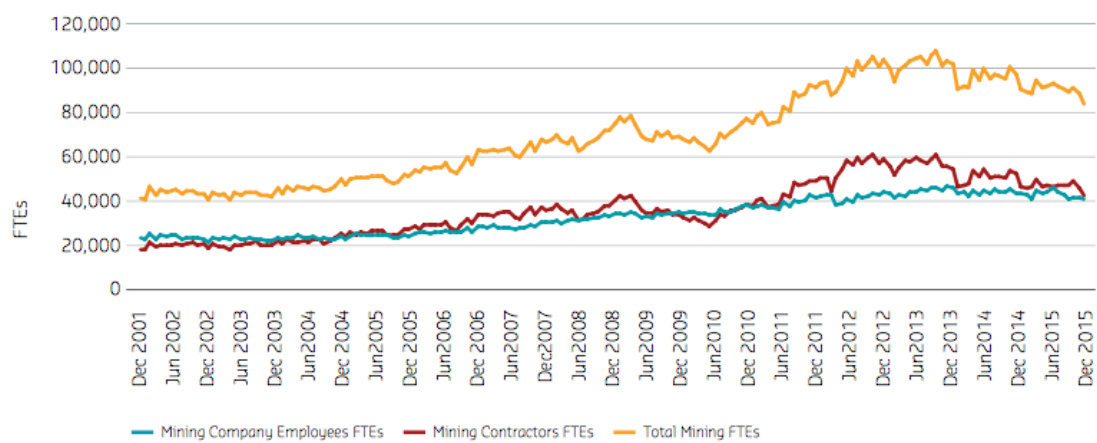
Source: Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre (2016).

Despite the shrinking mining workforce, the contribution of the industry still remained extensive. Iron ore production continued to rise from around 450 million tonnes in 2011 to an estimated 750 million tonnes in 2015 (BCEC, 2016). Therefore, despite the decline, WA's share of national mining investment has remained stable (Brueckner, Durey, Mayes, & Prforr, 2013).

Since the completion of this study further on-going public and private debate has addressed the impact of FIFO employment in relation to residents of local communities in which mining projects are established (Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources Committee, 2017) and how residents within the vicinity of large resource projects can benefit from the operation of such projects. The key growth enablers of the resources workforce, resource energy consumption, resource water abstraction, and infrastructure in the mining industry have also been addressed to

inform government policy settings (Deloitte Access Economics, 2014). It is evident that FIFO remains an important part of the Australian economy as there is continued interest surrounding the issues associated with FIFO working and living, thus warranting a need for further research in all aspects of the FIFO lifestyle.

1.5 Understanding Mine Sites

Each mine site is different and the conditions of FIFO employment, such as swing arrangements, on-site accommodation, and individual and family support services, may vary from one mine to the next. The amount of time spent at work and at home is based on the swing offered by the employer. Offshore mine companies, such as those of oil and gas, commonly employ a 2/2 swing where the employee spends two weeks on-site followed by two weeks at home. On-shore land-based mining offers more asymmetrical swing structures such as 4/1 where the employee spends four weeks on-site and one week at home (Watts, 2004). The most common swing employees' from this study were on was two weeks away and one week at home (2/1). Most individuals worked a pre-determined number of day or night shifts while others worked a combination of both. For example, many employees' were employed under compressed FIFO work schedules where they typically worked 12-hour shifts for the consecutive weeks they were on-site.

The typical profile of a mine site consists of the principal company that owns the lease and all the products from the mine site, and the employees' that includes all the general, managerial and administrative staff as well as those responsible for processing plant operations. Additionally, there are contractor and sub-contractor companies who provide employees' to mine sites and offer services such as plant and machinery maintenance, catering, transport and cleaning along with providing employees' for underground and open pit mining. Employees' from contractor companies are more likely to move across sites depending on the contract their employer has arranged with different mining companies. The principal company typically provides accommodation and facilities at the work site. The camp design will either have single or shared rooms where employees' have their own room, kitchen, shower and sleep area or have to share facilities with other employees' (e.g., shared bathroom blocks and sleeping areas). Depending on the mine site,

communication availability will also vary from one location to the next. Larger mine sites tend to have their own landlines directly linked to employee rooms whereas smaller operator sites have limited satellite access, thus can only offer selective communication options to their employees'. Some sites, in places such as Newman and Kalgoorlie, are located near regional mining towns and therefore allow mining companies the option to offer their employees' a choice of FIFO or residential arrangements. Sibbel, Sibbel and Goh (2006) claimed that due to employee accommodation being located in regional towns, employees' from such sites have regular access to all the town's facilities such as shops, sporting events and social activities.

Support services offered to FIFO employees and their families also varies across different mine sites and often depends on the size and profitability of the mine as well as the managerial style of the mine/site manager (Sibbel, Sibbel, & Goh, 2006). Support can come in many forms such as roster flexibility, communication availability, and provision of support materials for FIFO families. Further, the job position and title an employee holds can influence their access to support services. For example, an administrative employee might have phone and internet access as part of their job, thus having the ability to communicate with their family back home during working hours. A machinery or plant operator would have more restricted access and might only be able to use phone or internet services after they've completed their shift. Similarly, the choice of different swing arrangements can be determined by the specific requirements of the job, availability of flights, and mine distance from a regional town or capital city (CMEWA, 2008a; Sibbel, Sibbel, & Goh, 2006).

Nearly all new mine sites, due to the nature of being in the resources industry, tend to be established simultaneously and thus production can enter a surplus that leads to a decline in prices. Profitability levels decrease, operations shut down, global production struggles, prices increase and the cycle continues (Williams, 2013). As a result of such patterns leading to fluctuations in global market demand for minerals and energy, the demand for skilled and knowledgeable employees also fluctuates. This results in a large amount of vacant positions, as the domestic job market struggles to cater to the needs of mining companies, thus creating an industry skills

shortage (Huang & Austin, 2011; Lindorff, 2011). Furthermore, mining companies not only have to address this volatile cycle but also the life cycle of the mine (Tonts, 2010). Every mine site has a life cycle that starts from the initial investment of the mine and goes through the construction, transition and maturity stages of the mine. The skills needed during the construction stage are different to those during the maturity stage (CMEWA, 2013), and trying to recruit people with the necessary skills and knowledge can be difficult due to volatility.

FIFO has been a viable solution in the attraction and retention of employees' with the right skills, knowledge and background to work in the mining industry across remote and regional communities throughout Australia. It has been successful in meeting growing international demands for minerals and energy, and the subsequent needs of employers' to fill these demands. Furthermore, it has provided potential workers, thinking about entering into FIFO employment, with a choice. Workers are faced with the choice of whether they want to work in remote environments, on varying swings that involve 12 hour shifts, be isolated from the rest of society for extended periods at a time, and be separated from loved ones. The FIFO lifestyle can be difficult but also rewarding, and if an individual chooses FIFO they are entitled to receive appropriate financial rewards for their skills and knowledge. In most cases, FIFO employment and swing arrangements are family friendly as they give the opportunity for employees' to spend quality time with family and friends when they are not on-site. The majority of swings offered to workers recognise the needs of each individual, thus they are typically short in order to achieve a healthy balance between work and home life.

Some employers' also offer apprenticeships, with the mining industry employing more than 11,000 apprentices (5 per cent of the direct workforce) in 2013 (Australian Mines and Metals Association [AMMA], 2013). This trend has increased substantially from 2003 to 2011 where the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) showed that the mining sector was spending around 5.5 per cent of direct labour cost, above the benchmarks set by the Australian government, on training new employees (Diamond, 2013). A total of $1.147 billion was spent on training in 2011-12 (AMMA, 2013).

1.6 Personal Motivation for Undertaking the Study

The study and topic selection is motivated by my own personal experiences as a son of an ex fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employee and colleague to many others working under the mining banner of employment, both from blue and white collar professions. While not directly linked to mining myself, the industry has impacted me in a number of ways having grown up in a non-traditional FIFO household structure. I grew up with my father spending more time at work than he did at home, and this way of living shaped my beliefs and approach to life even at an early age. As I aged so did my understanding of the lifestyle. I saw my mother go through difficult times when it was just she and I at home. We came from a non-English speaking background having arrived to Australia after the Yugoslav war of 1991. It wasn't an easy life, and even though we didn't have much we still managed to make it work.

The mining industry has long been an interest of mine, and curiosity into how non-traditional FIFO families experience the FIFO lifestyle is an area I have wanted to examine since I began studying the mining world. Reading FIFO-related mining literature established that while research on FIFO employment does exist, it is limited in that it primarily focuses on the traditional conventional view of a FIFO family household. There is a considerable amount of scarcity in academic research on non-traditional FIFO families published in the public domain. In filling this literature gap, the present study explores the experiences of non-traditional Western Australian (WA) FIFO employees and their partners using qualitative analysis techniques, as detailed in chapter five and six, to highlight the relationship and link, using the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model developed for this study in conjunction with Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resource (COR) theoretical framework, between resources and job and home demands, stress levels and various outcomes such as work and life satisfaction, job performance, work and home engagement, relationships, family functioning, career, awareness, time allocation, general daily life, and employee and partner well-being. Additionally, along with non-traditional FIFO families, those living in conventional nuclear household structures as well as key stakeholders, such as human resource managers, mine/site managers and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) representatives were sampled to ensure a comprehensive and detailed analysis was conducted.

The minerals and resources industry in WA consists of both offshore and on-shore mining sectors with each having their own employment conditions, policies and practices. This study, due to the scope of research, focuses specifically on on-shore mining in which the employment context depended on the type of ore being mined, the size and profitability of the mine site, and the actual projected life of the mine. I chose to examine land-based mining employees and their partners because of personal experience in the area but also because there exists a continual demand for new on-shore employees, and the number of people entering into land-based FIFO employment is continually growing.

1.7 Research Question and Research Issues

The originality of the study comes from it being one of the first academic research studies to primarily focus on examining non-traditional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners. The research is designed to fill a gap in a broad amount of FIFO-related literature from various disciplines that include psychology and business to social sciences (Rainnie, Fitzgerald, Ellem, & Goods, 2014a; Rainnie, Michelson, Goods, & Burgess, 2014b), and a number of public inquires that have addressed the impact of FIFO practices on employees, their families and local communities (House of Representatives, 2013; Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). Building on previous research (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Grzywacz & Carlson 2007; Voydanoff, 2004b) and through the adoption of Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework and the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, this study further enhances our understanding of the contextual factors and stressors that impact non-traditional FIFO families. In exploring how changes in personal, social and protective resources impact job and home demands, stress response and well-being, the research addresses the following question:

> *How does fly-in fly-out (FIFO) employment influence the work-home interaction of non-traditional Western Australian employees and their partners working and living FIFO?*

The study, due to a lack of academic research on non-traditional FIFO families, is exploratory and aims to build a foundation for future research in this area. As such, it investigates the *"what"*, *"how"* and *"why"* of the phenomenon. There are three underlying research issues (RI) that helped develop an in-depth understanding of the impact FIFO working and living has on non-traditional FIFO families. The three issues are as follows:

> RI 1: *What factors from the FIFO lifestyle influence the work-home interaction and well-being of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners?*

The first RI answers the *"what"* in the research question by addressing the FIFO employment factors that influence work-home interaction and well-being of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners.

> RI 2: *How do FIFO lifestyle factors influence the work-home interaction and well-being of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners?*

RI two further elaborates on issue one by exploring the *"how"* in the research question by highlighting how said factors impact on employee and partner work-home interaction and well-being.

> RI 3: *What are the cultural, organisational and societal issues relating to FIFO employment and how do they influence perceptions of the FIFO lifestyle?*

The final RI details the *"why"* in the research question by illustrating the cultural, organisational and societal issues influencing FIFO employment and perceptions of the FIFO lifestyle.

In answering the research question and the subsequent research issues, a number of FIFO employees, partners of employees and key stakeholders were either directly or indirectly interviewed. The interview structure was designed in a way that allowed voluntary discussion with little to no hesitation from the participants. Although a

qualitative semi-structured interview process was adopted, open-ended questions were used in an informal manner and the interview process was designed to be more of a conversation between two people rather than a formal interview. The research methodology is discussed in chapter six and further details the qualitative approach used in this study to determine how factors of the FIFO lifestyle influence the work-home interaction and well-being of non-traditional FIFO families.

1.8 Research Methodology

Due to the exploratory and complex nature of this study, a blended paradigm consisting of elements from interpretivism, constructivism and realism was adopted to illustrate the personal experiences of non-traditional fly-n/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners. Qualitative research techniques, such as semi-structured interviews, were applied throughout the data gathering process and a total of 109 participants (55 FIFO employees, 47 employee partners and seven key stakeholders) were sampled, thus providing for an in-depth understanding of a diverse group of perspectives that consisted of singlehood employees, single parent families, blended families, cohabiting families, same-sex couples, as well as conventional nuclear two-parent mother and father families. The research methodology is further discussed in chapter six.

1.9 Significance of the Study

Over the last few decades there has been considerable public and private debate regarding the introduction of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment to on-shore land-based mining, specifically in relation to regional town sustainability and FIFO family well-being (Watts, 2004). Community perceptions and attitudes towards FIFO have been stereotypically negative, often blaming FIFO on marriage and relationship difficulties due to the long periods of physical separation associated FIFO employment where employees work in inhospitable locations that are isolated from loved ones (Loney, 2005). Shrimpton and Storey (2000) suggest that FIFO is often a scapegoat for other problems (e.g., at home and in relationships) that are far more complex in reality. Individual perceptions and experiences of FIFO employment are influenced by numerous factors outside of the job, such as their life cycle stage, social

support availability and pre-existing personal or relationship issues (Sibbel, 2004). FIFO-related benefits and challenges to employee and family well-being depend on the different individual and family needs. For example, the FIFO lifestyle can provide access to a wide choice of educational options for families with children but at the same time the FIFO employee does not get to see their children when they are at work, whereas residential employment allows parents to see their children each day (Sibbel & Kaczmarek, 2005; Watts, 2004). As such, both FIFO and residential employment come with their own positives and negatives that are shaped by various internal and external variables.

Although FIFO employment has become common practice across Australian mining industries, there has been scarce research exploring non-traditional FIFO employee and partner experiences of FIFO working and living, and in turn our understanding of the FIFO lifestyle is limited. Government and non-government agencies, the wider community, and the mining industry itself have all expressed a need for further research in the area (Gallegos, 2006; Reynolds, 2004; Sibbel, 2010; Watts, 2004). The present study sought to respond to this need by investigating the contextual factors and stressors impacting non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners, and the role various personal, social and protective resources play in managing job and home demands, coping with stress, and maintaining healthy well-being. The findings of this study provide a greater understanding of the impacts FIFO can have on non-traditional FIFO families, that in turn may aid policy makers in the development of policies and practices that further support FIFO families. A supportive community and mine site can lead to healthier family functioning, improve productivity levels, increase safety, lower turnover, and ensure overall organisational commitment (Behson, 2002; Bourg & Segal, 1999).

This study is significant to academic literature both from a practical and theoretical standpoint. As the research primarily focuses on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners, the practical contribution relates to the integration, development and/or updating workplace policies and practices in the mining industry, thus potentially leading to improvements in employee and family support and work programs where both work and home domains are addressed equally. Furthermore, while there are many studies on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) people, as discussed

in chapter four, there is no research or empirical data on LGBT FIFO employees working in the mining industry. With the number of same-sex couples involved in FIFO employment and social acceptance of LGBT families steadily increasing, this lack of research is cause for concern. This study is inclusive of LGBT FIFO employees and their partners. The benefits of exploring this side of the mining industry may help address issues faced by a group of people that have yet to have their voices be heard through an public academic forum, thus highlighting the experiences of these individuals and potentially leading to improved policies and practices that address the needs of LGBT employees and their partners. Furthermore, this study aids in building a foundation for future research that explores minority groups and non-traditional family households involved in FIFO employment. Ultimately, the findings could help lower discrimination and prejudice in the mining industry and improve overall workforce and workplace equality.

This study is also significant to the broad theoretical understandings of the interface between work and home domains and the resulting impact these have on individual and family well-being. It extends the field of work-life facilitation and work-home interaction, through the use of Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory and the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, to improve our understanding of the impact regular employment absence can have on the relationship between work and home lives generally, and specifically for non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. The theoretical scheme enhances our understanding of FIFO employment and how non-traditional FIFO families adapt and manage the challenges that come from FIFO working and living.

This study is also important for a number of reasons. Firstly, there is a dearth of literature specifically exploring non-traditional FIFO mining families (Beach, 1999; Gallegos, 2006; Shimanoff, 2009). There is also virtually no academic research on minority groups such as LGBT individuals and families involved in the mining industry and living the FIFO lifestyle. Furthermore, the majority of the literature to date could be considered non-representative as the 21st century Australian household is no longer the conventional nuclear, mother and father, two-parent family structure but consists of other family types such as single parent families, unmarried couples

and non-heterosexual partners living together (ABS, 2011), thus further and more updated research is needed.

1.10 Thesis Structure

The structure of the thesis is separated into eight chapters that cover the entire scope of the study. The first chapter introduces the thesis, details the background and history of mining in Australia and Western Australia (WA), discusses what is involved in fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment and what makes up a typical mine site profile, personal motivation for undertaking the study, the research question and research issues, and the significance of the study to wider FIFO literature. Chapter two examines work-home interaction, the key determinants and outcomes of work-home conflict that result from living a FIFO lifestyle, work-home facilitation and family functioning. The ecological systems model and the Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework (Hobfoll, 1989) are also briefly discussed in this chapter. Chapter three details FIFO mental health and the impact poor employee mental health can have on the organisation, individual, and family. Female experience of FIFO employment is discussed before coping strategies are addressed. Chapter three also reviews international and Australian academic literature on the FIFO lifestyle and the impact it has on FIFO employees and their families. Chapter four provides background on Australian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals and families. The existing literature on LGBT individuals in the Australian workplace is reviewed before LGBT FIFO families are detailed. The diversification of family types, LGBT parenting and family literature is also explored. Chapter five details the research framework and covers Hobfoll's (1989) COR theoretical framework and the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model used in this study. In chapter six, the methodology used to conduct the research is examined. Theoretical sampling, grounded theory, research paradigms, triangulation, and research design are all discussed in this chapter. The ethical considerations, data analysis, and research validation is also covered in this chapter. In chapter seven the experiences of FIFO employment by the sampled participants are highlighted and an analyses of the findings is conducted. Chapter eight addresses the research question, contributions of the study, recommendations at an individual and family, organisation, and community level, the strengths and limitations of the study, and future research potential, before

concluding remarks are presented. Please refer to Figure 1.8 for a graphical representation of the thesis structure.

Figure 1.8: Graphical Representation of Thesis Structure

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 1                  │
│             Background and Context          │
│  Background, FIFO employment, personal      │
│  motivation and research question/issues    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
                      │
                      ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 2                  │
│             Work-Home Interaction           │
│  Work-home relationship, conflict,          │
│  facilitation and family functioning        │
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                      ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 3                  │
│     FIFO and its Mental Health Consequences │
│  Mental health and coping strategies, and   │
│  FIFO lifestyle research                    │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 4                  │
│     Australian LGBT Individuals and Families│
│  Literature review, LGBT families, LGBT     │
│  in WA, Family types                        │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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                      ▼
┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 5                  │
│             Research Framework              │
│          COR theory and JHDR model          │
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 6                  │
│             Research Methodology            │
│        Research design and data analysis    │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 7                  │
│             Findings and Discussion         │
│         Experiences of FIFO employment      │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────┘
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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                  Chapter 8                  │
│                  Conclusion                 │
│  Contributions, recommendations and final   │
│  words                                      │
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Chapter 2
Work-Home Interaction

2.1 Introduction

The management of work and home roles is an on-going challenge for numerous individuals, families and organisations involved in the resources sector, especially among those from fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) backgrounds (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). The relationship between work and home domains consists of different characteristics that often clash with one another and influence individual well-being both physically and psychologically (Voydanoff, 2004). However, with proper management and balance of characteristics, scholars across various disciplines (Behson, 2002; O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2006) have illustrated that harmony can exist between the two domains. The following section reviews studies that examined the relationship between work and home. Although these studies are discussed across various disciplines, such as business (e.g., human resources and management), sociology and psychology (e.g., counselling), they are chosen in order to detail the different issues faced by individuals in managing work and home. For example, business academics are more focused on the work-related outcomes whereas psychologists tend to address family based challenges (Voydanoff, 2007). These studies were selected based on their relevance to challenges found in FIFO working and living, such as family strain that arises with absence, the negativities that result from poor balance between work and home, the influence the work environment can have on well-being, and the role various personal resources such as self-esteem play in managing work-home interaction. As such, these studies were selected due to their diversity in detailing the complex reality of work and home relationships and the challenges that result from poor management of the interrelationships between work and home domains.

Despite the large amount of research undertaken on work and home domains, many questions still remain about the relationship between the two, specifically in relation to the connections between domain demands and stressors, individual and family well-being, and various personal, family and work outcomes. Previous research applied various psychometric approaches, as detailed in Table 2.1, such as self-report scales on marital satisfaction (Spanier, 1976), family functioning (Epstein, Baldwin,

& Bishop, 1983), general health measures (Goldberg & Williams, 1991), job satisfaction questionnaires (Warr, Cook, & Wall, 1979), and four-item scales designed to measure work-family conflict (Gutek, Searle, & Klepa, 1991; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983) and illustrate different aspects of work-home interaction. These instruments are the most common across the different studies discussed in the following chapter, however they do not represent all research on work and home, as there are numerous other forms of quantitative and qualitative approaches that can be used to study and analyse work-home interaction, such as the survey work-home interaction – NijmeGen (SWING) questionnaire (Geurts et al., 2005). Studies either examined a specific area of work or home life or used a homogenous sample, such as dual earner couples, therefore limiting the generalisability of findings (Westman & Piotrkovski, 1999). Some were cross-sectional, focusing on specific individual outcomes rather than the wider impact on family or community (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000), with only a select few developing models around interaction and relationship processes (Bronfenbrenner, 1979; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006; Voydanoff, 2008).

Table 2.1: Summary of Approaches

Approach	Description	Key References
Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS)	32-item self-report measure designed for measuring the quality of relationships between either married or unmarried cohabiting couples	Spanier (1976, 2001)
Family Assessment Device (FAD)	60-item self-report questionnaire, based on the McMaster Model of Family Functioning (MMFF), designed to evaluate families	Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop (1983)
Four-item Scale	Four-item scale designed to measure work-to-family and family-to-work conflict	Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly (1983); Gutek, Searle, & Klepa (1991)
General Health Questionnaire 12 (GHQ-12)	12-item self-report measure of the psychological health and well-being of adults	Goldberg & Williams (1991)
Warr-Cook-Wall Questionnaire	10-item questionnaire designed to measure overall job satisfaction	Warr, Cook, & Wall (1979)

The following chapter reviews work-home interaction literature, including outcomes of interaction on work-home conflict, facilitation and family functioning. Although the literature covers a broad number of disciplines, it was chosen based on how

strongly it aligned with work related absence generally and more specifically absence as a result of FIFO employment. The chapter also details moderating variables and resources in relation to stressors and personal, family and work outcomes. Finally, the Ecological Systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1986) and the Conservation of Resources (COR) approach (Hobfoll, 1989) are introduced to provide a better understanding of the challenges and impacts of work-home interaction. The Ecological Systems approach details the relationship between individual interactions with multiple complex contexts whereas the COR approach provides a theoretical framework for examining the link between resources and overall well-being. It is important to address work-home interaction when discussing FIFO working and living as FIFO employees work non-standard hours and swing arrangements and in turn are regularly absent from their loved ones for extended periods at a time, and this absence can impact on their work-home interaction and well-being.

2.2 Work-Home Relationship

The work-home relationship consists of links between work domain characteristics and relationships in the home domain interacting with each other (Voydanoff, 2004). Due to the complexity of such connections, many individuals and families often struggle to successfully manage the relationship between the two domains (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). As illustrated in Table 2.2 there has been extensive research on this relationship and the impact it has on both domains. Despite this broad literature coverage, there exists a lack of theoretical focus (Voydanoff, 2007) with many questions, relating to the role of resources and impact of stressors on well-being and various personal, family and work outcomes, left unanswered (Sikora, Moore, Grunberg, & Greenberg, 2007).

Table 2.2: Summary of Work-Home Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Baxter, Gray, Alexander, Strazdins, & Bittman (2007)	Use data from the Longitudinal Study of Australian Children (LSAC) to examine how child care, time parents spend with their children, and parental well-being relate to parental employment	Fathers that worked more than 55 hours per week had a higher level of work-family strain. Mothers' well-being was based on their relationship status, with single mothers experiencing higher levels of difficulty due to having more responsibility as an employee and parent
Byron (2005)	Conduct a meta-analytic review of more than 60 studies to determine the effects of work, non-work, and demographic and individual factors on work interfering with family and family interfering with work	Work factors related to work interfering with family and some non-work factors related to family interfering with work. Employee gender and marital status related weakly to both work-family and family-work interference, as such they are poor predictors of conflict
Carlson & Frone (2003)	Examine the relationship of role involvement with work-family interference of 534 American employed adults with families	Results showed that mapping behavioural and psychological involvement to specific external and internal work-family interference was essential when examining role involvement to work-family interference
Hosking & Westman (2008)	Use data from the first wave of Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) project to determine whether part-time, casual, fixed-term or non-standard schedules are associated with greater or reduced conflict	Mothers working full-time experienced high levels of work-family conflict. Fathers working weekends reported high work-family conflict. Mothers did not report greater conflict levels compared to fathers due to gender differences in time spent working outside of home
Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, & D'Souza (2006)	Examine 4,306 Canadian families with children aged 2-11 years to determine how parent(s) working night or weekends affect family relationships and well-being	Parents working non-standard schedules experienced greater difficulty with family functioning, showed depressive symptoms, and were less effective at parenting. Their children were more likely to have social and emotional difficulties. The 24-hour economy put strain on some parents and children
Voydanoff (2004)	Examine 1,938 employed American adults living with a family member to determine the effects of work demands and resources on work-family conflict and facilitation	Time and strain based work demands positively correlated with work-family conflict. Resources were strongly linked with work-family facilitation
Wilson, Polzer-Debruyne, Chen, & Fernades (2007)	Examine 432 male shift employees from three manufacturing sites in New Zealand to determine the effectiveness of family involvement in shift work training and reducing conflict	Work-family conflict reduced after training programs were introduced for all three sites. The third site, with the highest level of family involvement, experienced the highest drop

The majority of previous studies adopted a quantitative approach to their research, thus primarily focusing on statistical measures instead of individual experiences. Furthermore, the choice of measures used was influenced by the researcher's own field of interest and many implemented variations of self-report scales (Epstein, Baldwin, & Bishop, 1983; Goldberg & Williams, 1991; Kopelman, Greenhaus, & Connolly, 1983; Spanier, 1976) to gather and analyse data. Additionally, researchers' limited their generalisation of results by examining specific work contexts (e.g., focusing only on one employment group or people working in one sector) or gathering data from homogeneous samples. Findings were based around groups of people instead of the uniqueness of each individual. As such, these studies were narrow and did not explore the wider impact fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment has on families of employees' or the broader local community. Based on the present study it is clear that FIFO employees are not homogenous as they have their own unique circumstances, are at different points in their life stage, have different needs, and vary in age and gender. They are a diverse group of people that work together, and our understanding of how they interact with their work environment and those around them needs further developing, as previous research has not addressed the impact of FIFO employment on these diverse individuals, especially those from minority backgrounds such as lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees and their partners.

The current trend of 24-hour societies and workplaces has led to more diverse working arrangements, such as compressed schedules, weekend work, and shift arrangements that have become more urbanized across numerous Australian sectors (Costa, 2003). These have impacted workforce composition and family structure, thus resulting in a need to expand our understanding of the interrelationships between work and home (Voydanoff, 2005), in particular the impact FIFO employment has on well-being (Hosking & Western, 2005). Hospitality, retail and industrial sectors have all added diverse arrangements in response to growing and flexible market demands (Wilson, Polzer-Debruyne, Chen, & Fernades, 2007). Changes to the global economy, increased competition between countries and higher demand for extended business operating times has led to more flexible working hours across all Australian industries (Strazdins, Clements, Korda, Broom, & D'Souza, 2006). Baxter, Gray, Alexander, Strazdins and Bittman (2007) found that more than half of Australia's labour force is

working some form of non-standard employment, implying a need for further research into the impact these arrangements have on diverse family groups.

Typically viewed as separate individual domains, work and home life were investigated and seen as not impacting on one another in much of the earlier literature. However, a number of studies, as noted by Kossek and Ozeki (1998), have acknowledged that although the two domains are distinct they are also interconnected as experiences at work can spill over into home and vice versa. These interrelationships between domains have been widely explored from both the employee and organisational perspective (O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2006; Voydanoff, 2004). While negative and positive spill over effects were recognised, the majority of previous studies mainly focused on the antecedents and consequences of conflict rather than on the role of stressors and moderating variables, or how work and home domains can support and enhance each other (Frone, 2003).

2.3 Work-Home Conflict

Work-home conflict is a form of inter-role conflict where work and home pressures become incompatible with one another in some respect (Greenhaus & Beutall, 1985). It suggests that conflict from either domain arises when an individual is given more responsibility and multiple roles as a worker, parent or member of the community, thus requiring greater demand of them and putting more strain on their lives. Sieber (1974) notes that a role is a pattern of expectations attributed to specific social positions. If an individual feels the demands from one position exceeds their resource capabilities, conflict between competing demands is more likely to occur (Voydanoff, 2004). The demands from one domain can spill over into the other and vice versa. Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) add that how much value an individual places on their position or role can determine the amount of strain they experience. For example, a person working away from home with high family demands might have low attachment to their family role as that role would be transferred to others in the family such as their partner (Thornwaite, 2002).

Conflict from work and conflict from home, as identified by numerous researchers (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Netemeyer, Boles, & McMurrian, 1996), are the

two main constructs of work-home interaction. Netemeyer, Boles and McMurrian (1996) claim that conflict from work occurs when the employee's job, either due to their work commitments, time devoted to the job, or strain created from the work environment, interferes with their home responsibilities. Conflict from home relates to interference an employee might have with work roles due to strain generated from the home domain and home responsibilities such as child illness preventing attendance at work (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). Research suggests that it is more socially acceptable for work to interfere with home life than home life to interfere with work (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Carlson & Frone, 2003).

This study addresses conflict in terms of the impact is has on fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners. Both work and home interference are explored to help identify sources and forms of conflict and how individuals and families manage and mitigate conflict. The study addresses and compares conflict experienced by conventional FIFO families with conflict experienced by those from non-traditional FIFO backgrounds to illustrate the impact the FIFO lifestyle can have on employee and partner well-being.

2.3.1 Key Determinants of Work-Home Conflict

The key determinants of work-home conflict, as illustrated in Table 2.3, are categorised into time-based, strain-based and behaviour-based determinants. Time-based work conflict relates to role pressures from the two domains competing for the individual's time, such as the number of hours an employee spends at the work site compared to how many hours they are absent from work (Byron, 2005; Ettner & Grzywacz, 2001). For example, Baxter, Gray, Alexander, Strazdins and Bittman (2007) found that fathers who spend more than 55 hours working per week experience higher levels of strain compared to those working fewer hours. There is also time-based home conflict that relates to family demands such as childcare and household responsibilities (Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992). A person might be physically present at home but mentally preoccupied with a work issue, thus they will struggle to meet home demands as efficiently and effectively as those that are able to mentally separate the two domains (Greenhaus & Beutell, 1985). The number of hours worked,

and the extent to which work commitments are balanced with home responsibilities, is a major influence on work-home interference (Skinner & Chapman, 2013). The Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) showed that time pressure was the most common form of work-home strain experienced by both men and women (Skinner & Pocock, 2014.

Strain-based conflict occurs when psychological stress from one domain spills into the other, making it difficult for an individual to fill particular role obligations (O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2006). Perceived stress from work caused by an individual's work role or work overload can lead to role pressure and incompatibility (Grennhaus & Beutell, 1985). Conversely, a negative reaction at home could result in difficulty while at the workplace. For example, if a FIFO employee were to leave home after an argument with their partner, this may lead to lower productivity levels while at work due to the employee mentally being preoccupied with how they left their partner (Byron, 2005). Strain-based conflict addresses stressors from both work and home life and how they produce symptoms such as fatigue, anxiety and depression that affect work and home. However, the impact of work on well-being varies based on the wider context and circumstances of an employee's life (Pocock, Skinner, & Williams, 2012).

Behaviour-based determinants occur when behavioural expectations from one domain are perceived to be incompatible with the other, thus resulting in behavioural-based conflict (Carlson & Frone, 2003). For example, in order to succeed in their job an individual, working as a business manager, might be required to be aggressive and controlling whereas at home their role would encompass loving and supportive behaviours (O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2006). Therefore, what is considered the norm at work might clash with what is expected while at home. If an individual cannot adjust their behaviour to meet the expectations of different roles there is a higher chance that conflict will occur.

Table 2.3: Types of Conflict

Type of Conflict	Description	Key References
Time-Based	Restraints from one domain interfering with roles and responsibilities in another domain	Byron (2005); Frone, Russell, & Cooper (1992); Greenhaus & Beutell (1985)
Strain-Based	Increased tension from one domain that hinders performance in another domain	Greenhaus & Beutell (1985); O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath (2006)
Behaviour-Based	Behaviours in one domain are transferred to another domain and hinder performance in that domain	Carlson & Frone (2003); O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath (2006)

Conflict between domains can be damaging to both individual outcomes, such as depression and substance abuse, and organisational outcomes, such as turnover and lower job commitment (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). The majority of previous research focused on time and strain-based conflict with limited studies examining the behavioural-based determinants (Stephens & Sommer, 1996; van Steenbergen, Ellemers, & Mooijaart, 2007). This study explores all three conflict types on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. Although current research focusing on conflict has primarily relied on self-report measures, such as questionnaires, to gather data (Carlson & Frone, 2003; O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath 2006), this study used qualitative semi-structured interviews to highlight the personal experiences of conflict and the influence different determinants have on FIFO employees and their partners.

2.3.2 Outcomes of Work-Home Conflict

According to Allen, Herst, Bruck and Sutton (2000) there are three outcomes of work-home conflict that include: work-related outcomes, non-work related outcomes, and stress-related outcomes that can all lead to higher levels of self-harm, violence and anti-social behaviour. Work-related outcomes are commonly associated with low work commitment, job attachment and job satisfaction, and those with high levels of work-home conflict have a greater chance of leaving the organisation (Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997). Non-work related outcomes include lower levels of family and life satisfaction (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000), whereas

stress-related outcomes are those associated with depression and anxiety that lead to a higher risk of burnout and relationship difficulties (Byron, 2005; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998). Previous research (Byron, 2005; Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Mesmer-Magnus & Viswesvaran, 2005) suggests that no matter the direction of conflict (e.g., work to home or home to work) some form of a negative relationship typically exists between the two domains and various indicators of well-being.

Research has also found that work-home conflict can influence parenting, and the number, age and presence of children can impact the individual degree of strain (MacEwen & Barling, 1994). Pocock, Skinner and Williams (2007) claim that people with children less than four years of age, or those that have more than two children, generally experience lower work-home outcomes, as a result of using more of their resources, than those without children. As individuals try to integrate both domains their perceptions of insufficient resources, to fulfil work and home responsibilities, can lead to job and life dissatisfaction, higher levels of stress, and poorer well-being (Burke, 1988; Frone, Russell, & Cooper, 1992; Greenhaus, Collins, Singh, & Parasuraman, 1997; Squire & Tilly, 2007). The AWALI found that work-home conflict remains a persistent challenge that affects a wide range of workers, families and communities (Skinner & Pocock, 2014).

This study adds an additional layer to previous findings by highlighting the importance of resources in terms of managing work-home conflict and how resources help meet the demands of both work and home domains. The research, using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework as discussed by Hobfoll (1989) along with the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model developed in this study, highlights the personal, family and work outcomes that result from having a healthy and full resource reservoir. It examines the different outcomes of work-home conflict primarily in relation to the home domain but also how they influence the work domain of non-traditional FIFO employees. Furthermore, the study analyses how perceptions of resources influences individual and family stress, strain and well-being.

2.4 Work-Home Facilitation

While work-home conflict can result in higher stress levels, the notion of work-home facilitation suggests that involvement in one domain can benefit the other and vice versa (Werbel & Walter, 2002). Research has found that having multiple roles can be life enhancing when roles provide additional resources such as improved personal skills and greater social support (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008; Kirchmeyer, 1993). For example, a married male fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) worker with the role of husband, father and employee would be more likely to have lower levels of depression and higher self-esteem, as they would be able to enhance their life through various role types, than those with fewer life roles (Baruch & Barnett, 1987).

There are also differences between the constructs of positive spill over, enrichment and facilitation. Positive spill over occurs when individual attributes are transferred between work and home domains, whereas enrichment relates to experiences from one role improving performance in another, thus enhancing overall life quality (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008; Greenhaus & Powell, 2006). Facilitation refers to the extent to which an individual engages in one domain and how this contributes to growth in the other (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008). Hill (2005) adds that facilitation relates positively to job and life satisfaction and negatively to individual stress, depression and job commitment. Facilitation is also transferred both ways between the two domains as resources from one role, either at work or at home, help facilitate participation in another (Voydanoff, 2004b). Both spill over and enrichment focus on consequences at an individual level, while facilitation addresses consequences at a system level (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008). Similar to research on work-home conflict, the majority of previous studies examining work-home facilitation focus on performance at an individual level in a specific domain, with findings showing that facilitation helps improve individual and family well-being, increases employee commitment and enhances life satisfaction (Frone, 2003; Grzywacz, 2000).

In this study, life enhancement through multiple roles is addressed by comparing individuals from different backgrounds and family structures. For example, comparing FIFO employees that have children with employees that don't have children or married couples with unmarried couples, thus determining the importance of multiple roles to overall life quality. Furthermore, the study highlights the influence positive spill over and enrichment can have on individual and family well-

being by showing the relationship between personal experiences and attributes from both domains. The research also addresses, through the use of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework, work-home facilitation and how engagement and the use of resources in one domain or role influences the experiences and participation in the other and vice versa.

2.5 Work-Home Family Functioning

There is evidence to suggest that work-home conflict and work-home facilitation influence family functioning and impact everyone from employees' families and friends to co-workers. For example, work stressors can influence family functioning through burnout and depression (Allen, Herst, Bruck, & Sutton, 2000). Partner employment status (Song, Foo, Uy, & Sun, 2011), work engagement (Bakker & Demerouti, 2009), and exhaustion (Bakker, Demerouti, & Dollard, 2008) have been found to crossover between spouses and potentially lead to difficulties in family functioning, thus suggesting a correlation exists between conflict experienced by the employee and conflict experienced by the partner of the employee and vice versa (Cinamon, Weisel, & Tzuk, 2007). Therefore, along with spill over between domains, there is also crossover between spouses. Work and home demands can indirectly influence the well-being of family members, friends or other workers the employee interacts with on a daily basis (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005).

A number of studies have addressed the presence of various personal, family and organisational characteristics, including how much value an individual assigns to each role (Baxter, Gray, Alexander, Strazdins, & Bittman, 2007; Carlson & Frone, 2003; Presser, 2000). O'Driscoll, Brough and Kalliath (2006) claim that moderating variables influence the strength of association between work and home demands and impact on the relationship between work-home conflict and various outcomes of work and home satisfaction, work and home engagement, relationships, and family functioning. In examining the relationship between conflict experienced by fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and those around them, this study addresses how different variables such as age, gender and swing arrangements influence both employee and partner well-being and experiences of FIFO employment. Using the Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework (Hobfoll, 1989) and the Job and Home

Demands Resources (JHDR) model, the study highlights how resources influence individual FIFO employee and partner stress response and coping mechanisms. It is important to address family functioning when discussing FIFO working and living as previous research indicates a strong correlation between conflict experienced by the employee as a result of their work environment and conflict experienced by the employee's partner (Cinamon, Weisel, & Tzuk, 2007).

2.6 Models of Work-Home Interaction

Work-home interaction and the outcomes that result from either a healthy or unhealthy balance between the two domains leads to desirable or undesirable outcomes. When taking on additional roles and responsibilities it can become more difficult to perform each task and daily routine successfully. Poor time management, lower personal motivation, and conflicting role behaviours, all lead to struggles in meeting the demands of both work and home domains. In addition, there are moderating variables that influence resources, stressors and personal, family and work outcomes experienced by individuals and their families (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

In order to improve our understanding of work-home interaction and the role of resources, two approaches have been proposed by previous researchers (e.g., Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Voydanoff, 2004b). The Ecological Systems approach (Bronfenbrenner, 1979) extends individual interactions into multiple complex contexts and is recognised as an appropriate model for examining interaction between work and home (Voydanoff, 2007). This model provides a broad theoretical framework to better understand the relationship and processes between individuals, moderating variables and system level outcomes (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008). The Conservation of Resources (COR) approach (Hobfoll, 1989) provides a more refined theoretical framework for understanding how resources influence stressors and well-being. This approach proposes that the conserving of resources is essential to how well individuals and families adapt to stressors.

2.6.1 Ecological Systems Approach

A number of studies, as illustrated in Table 2.4, have explored work-home interaction and work-family research at a system level, rather than an individual level, examining the impact of interaction on work, family and community domains (Johnson, 2008; Pocock, Williams, & Skinner, 2012; Voydanoff, 2007; Williams, Bridge, & Pocock, 2009). The Australian Work and Life Index (AWALI) survey in particular has highlighted the importance of work-home interaction and the challenges that result from work-home interference (Skinner & Pocock, 2014). Voydanoff (2007), using the Ecological Systems model (Figure 2.1) as developed by Bronfenbrenner (1979), claims that individuals are tied to complex historical, cultural and political contexts, and when such a model is applied to the analysis of work-home interaction it helps better facilitate our understanding of the processes between system members, variables and system based outcomes such as those of workplace commitment and performance, relationships, and life satisfaction (Carlson & Grzywacz, 2008; Westman & Piotrkovski, 1999).

Figure 2.1: Ecological Systems Model
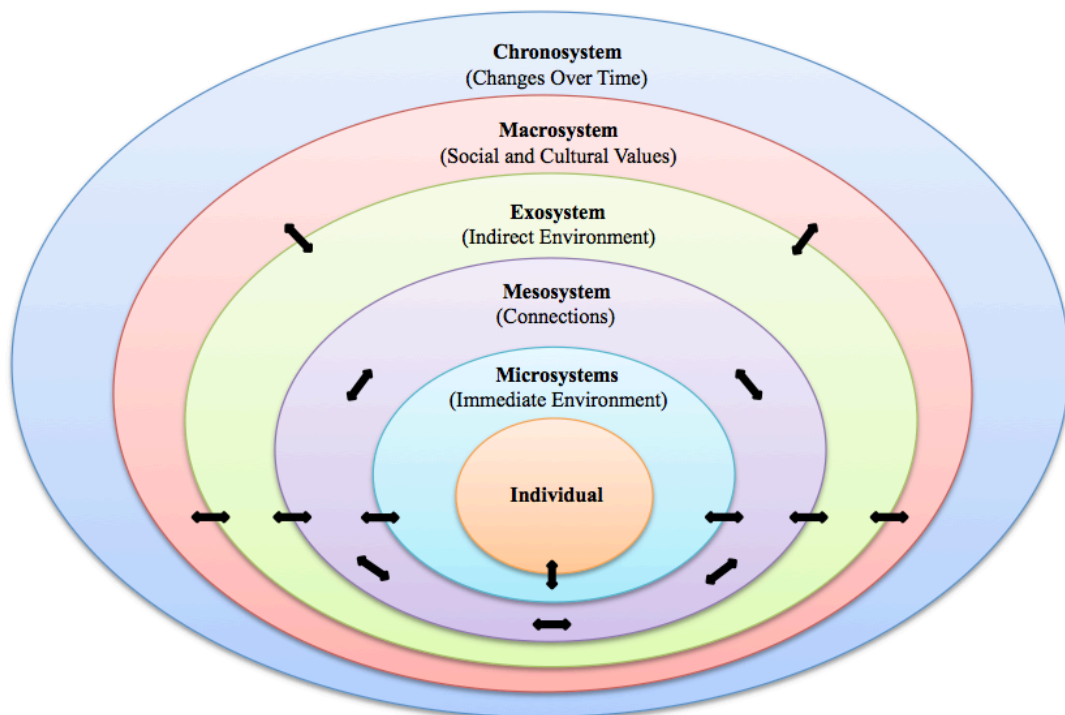
Note: Adapted from Bronfenbrenner (1979).

In order to understand human development it is essential to consider the entire ecological system in which growth occurs (Bronfenbrenner, 1994). The Ecological Systems model illustrates the interactions of an individual within multiple contexts and how individuals live in such complex systems across time (Bronfenbrenner, 1977). It is a fluid progression of interactions where each system (e.g., individual life stage, social setting, cultural norm, work environment, home life, and political and historical contexts) is influenced by the nature of the other systems, and it is important to view these systems as separate, but also whole, in order to give weight to the sources of power from each system (Pocock, Williams, & Skinner, 2012). For example, a fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employee, at the core of the model, may have microsystems within their immediate environment that consists of relationships they formed at work and those with their family and friends. How these linkages within the microsystem occur is based on the mesosystem of connections. For example, when a FIFO employee returns to work, after spending time at home, they may experience fatigue or even loneliness and this could negatively impact on their time at work, and they might need a day or two to readjust to the on-site environment and work conditions. The exosystem encompasses the indirect environment such as the broader social setting that interacts and influences both the microsystem and mesosystem. For example, not all mine sites have the same communication options and therefore some employees may not have the same access to communicate with their family while on-site. The macrosystem includes the social and cultural values, such as cultural, political and historical contexts, in which the micro, meso and exo systems are connected. For example, the swing arrangement and hours worked by a FIFO employee are determined by government policies (Department of Consumer and Employment Protection [DOCEP], 2003) and mining company policies heavily influence FIFO family support. Finally, the chronosystem refers to changes that take place over time such as changes in family structure, employment status, and economy. For example, a FIFO employee that has recently had a child will have their entire ecological system changed, either subtly or dramatically, as a result of having the child. As such, Bronfenbrenner's (1977, 1986) Ecological Systems model is appropriate for the investigation and understanding of such complex system interactions. It illustrates the interactions an individual will face at multiple levels and how these interactions impact on well-being.

Table 2.4: Summary of the Different Foci of Ecological Systems Research

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Bronfenbrenner (1977, 1986)	Examine how the environment impacts individual development	Developed the Ecological Systems model after findings showed that people live and function in a system of layers that progressively become more complex and embedded across time in which every layer is separate but also whole. Each system is influenced by the other systems in the model and as such is fluid
Johnson (2008)	Examine the academic achievement of students across America and how interactions among layers in a complex system influence achievement	The Ecological Systems model highlighted the processes and interactions involved in student achievement, and the complexity of school systems
Pocock, Williams, & Skinner (2012)	Review empirical research about work, family and community in Australia	Findings suggest that it is important to view every layer of the Ecological Systems model as separate in order to give weight to the sources of power at each level. The research also argued for a need of a stronger analytical framework around work, family and community, and how these intersect
Voydanoff (2008)	Examine the positive and negative interconnections between work, family and community domains	Research showed that demands and resources from one domain impacted performance in other domains and individual well-being
Williams, Bridge, & Pocock (2009)	Report on how Australian teenagers live their lives within the context of changing work and household patterns	Using the Ecological Systems model, research showed that home, school, community, teenage work and parental work affected the lives of teenagers. Demands and resources across the different domains intersected and influenced opportunities for teenagers

Voydanoff (2008) used the Ecological Systems model to illustrate the complexity of connections between work, home and community domains. Voydanoff's (2008) conceptual model helped highlight the demands and resources within these domains and how they influence each other. Demands are based on the roles and responsibilities held by an individual in each domain, while resources are assets that help improve individual performance and reduce demands (Voydanoff, 2008). Voydanoff's (2008) research suggests that demands and resources from one domain

are linked to balance, conflict and facilitation of work and family in other domains. According to Voydanoff (2008), work-family balance refers to an individual's satisfaction with work and family resources to address the demands from each domain; work-family conflict relates to inter-role conflict where an individual feels their role is made more difficult from participation in another domain; and work-family facilitation suggests that resources from one role improve participation in another. Although Voydanoff (2008) proposes a useful framework for future research on the relationship between work and home life, her model is still relatively new and requiring further conceptual research and empirical studies to test its application.

2.6.2 Conservation of Resources (COR) Approach

In understanding the role of moderating variables, such as those of gender, age and life stage, on work-home interaction, a more general theoretical framework has been suggested by various researchers (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Lapierre & Allen, 2006; Wayne, Grzywacz, Carlson, & Kacmar, 2007). Hobfoll's (1989) COR approach has been proposed as one of the most appropriate frameworks to help enhance our understanding of work-home interaction. This model takes into account resources held by individuals and families, and how changes in resources, either through gains or losses, influence well-being, and how social and psychological resources help mediate stress from work and home demands on psychosocial well-being (Hobfoll, 1989, 2002). Resources help mitigate strain and conflict and therefore those with a full resource reservoir are more likely to experience lower levels of strain and conflict while at work or at home (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999).

Resources are separated into personal, social and protective resources. Personal resources relate to an individual's positive emotions, beliefs and coping styles (Bandura, 1997; Rappaport, 1981); social resources are those of emotional support, guidance and assistance from family, friends and community (Hobfoll & Speilberger, 1992; Thoits, 1995); and protective resources are typically found at a macro level of the social organisation of institutions, governments and cultures (Hobfoll, 1998; Sandler, 2001). Structures and policies developed in these establishments can impact how much access an individual has to protective resources (Braver, Hipke, Ellman, &

Sandler, 2004). The COR theoretical framework also focuses on sociocultural resources that are developed over the course of a lifetime (Hobfoll, 2002). As such, resources are assets that aid in facilitating interaction and thus contribute to overall well-being.

According to COR theory, individuals and families strive to gain the maximum amount of resources to fill their reservoir while at the same time minimising resource losses (Hakanen, Peeters, & Perhoniemi, 2011). How an individual interprets a situation or issue will either result in a loss or gain, but a gain becomes more noticeable and important after a resource loss has occurred (Billings, Folkman, Acree, & Moskowitz, 2000). However, a loss can have a greater impact than a gain as it could potentially set in motion a pattern in which further loss is likely to occur, as there are less resources in the reservoir to adapt to the stressors. Some individuals will seek out resource gains by perceiving a situation positively and looking at the benefits, instead of the drawbacks, of their issue (Folkman & Moskowitz, 2000; Hobfoll, 1998; Holahan, Moos, Holahan, & Cronkite, 1999), and others may use resources in the form of workplace professionalism to help improve employee-customer relationships (Zimmerman, Dormann, & Dollard, 2011).

When discussing work-home interaction, COR theory relates to both inter-role and intra-role positive and negative stress outcomes. Positive outcomes are achieved through a greater amount of resource availability that helps increase facilitation potential, thus resulting in improved work, family and system functioning (Hill, 2005). The most successful resources, and those with the greatest impact on outcomes, come from the domain in which they were gained (Frone, Yardley, & Markel, 1997). For example, if co-workers are supportive of each other then there is a higher chance of increasing job satisfaction (Durup, 1993), and support from loved ones while at home has been positively linked with improved levels of home satisfaction (Parasuraman, Purohit, Godshalk, & Beutell, 1996). Variables such as gender, age and job type are also considered resources as they too impact on stress outcomes (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). For example, having strong job security is seen as a positive and as such could increase individual and family resources, thus leading to improved well-being (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Negative outcomes are manifested when the demands of work and home life integration lead to resource

loss, which is associated with lower job and life satisfaction (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005). For example, if an individual is unable to meet the demands of their job they will use resources from both work and home domains to help manage these demands, but overtime this will deplete their resource reservoir thus leading to higher stress and lower well-being (Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, & Houtman, 2003). Table 2.5 provides a summary of the different applications of the COR model.

Table 2.5: Examples of Different Applications of the COR Model

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Billings, Folkman, Acree, & Moskowitz (2000)	Examine the coping, mood, and health variables of 86 HIV positive and 167 HIV negative gay men undergoing stress of AIDS-related caregiving	Findings showed that a higher level of social coping led to a higher positive effect that resulted in lower levels of physical symptoms and higher cognitive avoidance led to an increase in negative effects that resulted in higher levels of physical symptoms. Both positive and negative moods and coping strategies increased understanding of why some people suffer adverse health effects during times of stress
Brotheridge & Lee (2005)	Examine 474 Canadian government employees to determine how social support, stress, and strain effect work interfering with family and family interfering with work	Supervisor support related to work overload, job distress, and turnover. Work overload and job distress impacted how much work interfered with family time. Family support was related to home overload, marital distress, and increase in divorce. Home overload moderately impacted family interfering with work
Folkman & Moskowitz (2000)	Examine the positive outcomes of the stress process. Reviewed findings on the co-occurrence of positive affect with negative affect during chronic stress	Reframing a situation to see it in a positive light helped people sustain efforts over long periods of time
Geurts, Kompier, Roxburgh, & Houtman (2003)	Examine the relationships between work-home interference and workload of 828 Dutch police officers	Workload was not only an antecedent of work-home interference but also a potential consequence. Workload and work-home interference had a causal relationship across time, and participants claimed to have used resources from both work and home to minimise workload demands
Grandey & Cropanzano (1999)	Examine the consequences of role stress and the relationship of work and family stressors with outcomes of work, family and life distress, physical health, and turnover intentions	The COR model helped predict and understand work-family conflict and the attitudinal and behavioural outcomes that result from poor management of conflict. It showed how changes in resources impacted individuals, and how stressful events created stress in people

Hill (2005)	Examine work-to-family and family-to-work facilitation based on 1,314 participants from the National Study of the Changing Workforce	Work-to-family facilitation positively related to job and life satisfaction and negatively to individual stress. Family-to-work facilitation positively related to marital, family and life satisfaction and negatively to organisational commitment
Hobfoll (1989)	Examine perspectives concerning stress to clarify a vague construct and develop a stress model	Developed the COR model based on the assumption that people strive to gain and conserve resources
Holahan, Moos, Holahan, & Cronkite (1999)	Examine the role of psychosocial resources, stress and coping processes of 326 adults over a 10-year period	Resource losses were associated with increases in depressive symptoms and resource gains were associated with decreases in depressive symptoms. Changes in the number of negative over positive events was a result of changes in resources

The COR theoretical framework (Hobfoll, 1989) is used in this study, and is discussed in more detail in chapter five, to provide an understanding of work-home interaction and the role resources and moderating variables play in relation to stress and the creation of various personal, family and work outcomes. The study explores the linkages between work-home interaction and non-traditional FIFO employee and partner well-being and experiences of FIFO employment, thus providing greater depth to our understanding of the relationship between work and home domains.

2.7 Chapter Summary

The research on work-home interaction and the outcomes that result from a healthy or poor relationship between domains has established that work and home demands can negatively impact individual and family well-being. When people find that their roles and responsibilities from one domain are taking over their time both physically and psychologically they will often use their resources from both work and home to minimise these demands. Although this has shown to have a positive short-term impact in regards to lowering demands, long-term it has been associated with psychological strain as it leads to the creation of more stressors that result in negative outcomes such as depression, poor family functioning, and lower job commitment. However, previous research has also found that personal resources, such as individual coping mechanisms and personal beliefs, can result in positive impacts on the work and home domain. Furthermore, the chapter highlighted the benefits of the ecological

systems approach in terms of examining individual interaction at a systematic level, and the benefits of the Conservation of Resources (COR) approach in helping understand the role of resources and moderating variables.

Although there exists a considerable amount of research on the interaction between work and home across numerous disciplines, our understanding of these interactions and interrelationships between work and home from a fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) perspective, specifically from non-traditional FIFO family perspectives, is limited. When applied to the current study, these findings can aid in illustrating the impacts of FIFO working and living on employee and partner well-being, family functioning, and creation of various personal, family and work outcomes. Access to personal, social and protective resources could determine the severity of individual, family, home, and work factors on FIFO employee and partner well-being. The research on work-home interaction and the challenges that result from work-home interference are used in support of the theoretical framework established for this study, as detailed in chapter five.

This study contributes to a broad amount of work-home research by adopting the COR approach to highlight the influence of work-home interaction on FIFO families. COR theory is used to illustrate how changes in life and critical events impact individual and family resource levels, work and home demands, stressors, and various outcomes. In examining FIFO employee and partner interaction between work and home, the study explores the sources and forms of time-based, strain-based, and behaviour-based conflict that exist among FIFO families and how resources are used to manage and mitigated these conflict types. Furthermore, life enhancement through multiple work and home roles is addressed by comparing different family structures, thus highlighting the impact of numerous roles on overall life quality. It also compares how resources in one domain influence participation in the other and how different variables of age, gender and swing arrangements impact employee and partner well-being.

Chapter 3
FIFO and its Mental Health Consequences

3.1 Introduction

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), mental health is defined as "a state of well-being in which every individual realizes his or her own potential, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully, and is able to make a contribution to his or her community" (WHO, 2014). When individuals struggle to maintain balanced levels of mental health, various issues arise that influence how they manage life stressors and whether they are capable of meeting their full potential. It is a complex and diagnosable disorder that impacts cognitive, emotional and social abilities (Australian Health Ministers, 2003), and includes numerous short and long-term conditions such as anxiety, mood disorders, depression and a potential for substance abuse. Depending on the severity of the illness, people may need to seek treatment with health care providers or through the use of medication.

The Western Australian (WA) Parliamentary committee inquiry into fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) related mental health issues found that working in an isolated area, away from family and friends, for extended periods at a time on a regular basis can lead to a number of work and social implications (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). The WA Parliamentary inquiry (2015), which received over 130 formal submissions, many informal contacts from concerned individuals and groups, and formal interviews, highlighted the growing concern around the impact FIFO employment is having on employee mental health. Research by the Australasian Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (ACRRMH, 2015), which sampled 994 employees (response rate of 99.2 per cent) across six sites involved in underground and open cut mining and construction, found that mental distress ranged from 26 to 33 per cent across four of the six sites, which is significantly higher than the national average of 20 per cent (ACRRMH, 2015).

While mental health problems are experienced across all industry types, the resources sector presents a unique number of challenges typically not present in other industries.

These include pressures associated with high work and home demands; working in an geographically remote and inhospitable environment away from loved ones; organisational culture and group mentality that influences employee help-seeking behaviours; and compressed FIFO work schedules that lead to high stress levels, increased isolation, and psychological distress. Furthermore, according to the House of Representatives standing committee on regional Australia, FIFO related health concerns can stem into poor diet, lack of physical activity, higher rates of sexually transmitted diseases and fatigue related injuries (House of Representatives, 2013). Research has indicated that WA is positioned to address these difficulties as FIFO is more prevalent in WA than in any other part of Australia, directly impacting nine per cent of the community with subsequent indirect impacts across the larger portion of the state (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). Furthermore, the WA Parliamentary committee found that demographic characteristics could increase the chances of FIFO employees developing a mental health problem (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015), and by ignoring the demographic profile FIFO employees may be vulnerable to mental health illness. In contrast, other government and industry bodies, such as the Chamber of Minerals and Energy (CME, 2015) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia (CCIWA, 2015), have found that the mental health of FIFO employees was no worse than the general Australian population.

The following chapter reviews previous academic research on FIFO and its mental health consequences to detail the potential mental health issues faced by FIFO employees and their families and how these influence work and home domains, the experiences of female FIFO employees are addressed, and FIFO employees and families mental health coping strategies are detailed. Furthermore, international and Australian FIFO lifestyle research is examined in order to highlight the impact of FIFO living on employees and their families. As this study primarily focuses on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners, the literature reviewed was chosen based on Australian academic research that focused on FIFO families. When discussing FIFO working and living it is necessary to address the mental health issues faced by FIFO employees and their partners as Federal inquires into FIFO have found that the typical employee working in the resources sector comes from a high risk demographic (male aged 18-44) for mental illness and suicide (Parliament of Western

Australia, 2015). FIFO employees' are subject to high levels of fatigue within a controlled environment where they have limited flexibility in terms of social support, and as such they are prone to experiencing poor emotional health and well-being.

3.2 Mental Health

The interaction between social, psychological and biological factors determine the mental health of an individual (WHO, 2004). Economic disadvantage, lack of social support, and accessibility to health services may all influence mental health. For example, if an individual is struggling to find employment then their socio-economic circumstances can increase the chances of them experiencing a mental disorder. Fryers, Melzer, Jenkins and Brugha (2005) found that people with low socio-economic statues generally have higher mental health issues, in particular with depression and anxiety.

Mental health issues vary across the Australian population with prevalence of mental illness peaking among those in the labour force (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2008). Males aged 25-40 living and working in remote locations, with high disposable incomes, are more likely to experience mental health difficulties and therefore have a greater risk of committing suicide (Minerals Council of Australia [MCA], 2015). The mining industry is predominately male, with women accounting for just 18 per cent of the mining workforce (Mayes & Pini, 2010); the median age of the workforce is 40 years old with 56.7 per cent of workers aged 25-44 years compared to 44.9 per cent across all industries (ABS, 2014), and as such there exists a link between demographics and individuals considered at risk of mental health illness. The WA Parliamentary committee notes that a person does not need to be diagnosed with a mental illness in order to consider suicide, with findings showing that any ordinary person who is struggling with stressful work and home life, especially in relation to relationship difficulties, is vulnerable to suicide (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). When a fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employee spends regular extended absence away from home and family life due to work, they are more likely to be vulnerable to such relationship difficulties. Therefore, the committee recommends that resource companies and industry bodies acknowledge that their workforce is vulnerable to suicide and in turn suicide should be considered a workplace hazard

(Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). The committee also recommends that management report any attempted suicides, regardless of location and motivation, to the Department of Mines and Petroleum (DMP) and that every potential suicide notification received by the DMP is investigated even if the initial indication suggests the suicide was not work related (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015)

Mental health problems also account for approximately 35-45 per cent of all absenteeism, leading to lower productivity levels and increasing the chance of employee injury (MCA, 2015). When issues pertaining to mental health difficulties are mitigated or adverted completely the impact on the overall labour force is highly positive as it influences everyone involved. Given the nature of life, in which hardships from work and home occur for almost everyone, the WA Parliamentary committee suggests that each mine site should be seen as vulnerable and as such require assistance (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). The committee recommends that resource organisations and industry bodies take action in response to the demographic information available about FIFO employees and mental health problems, as ignoring the link between these factors can place the lives of employees and their well-being at risk (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015).

Previous research, as illustrated in Table 3.1, found that mental health issues are not restricted to gender, age or status in the mining industry and can impact all employees and families involved in FIFO working and living. The FIFO lifestyle was linked to having a negative influence over psychological health, relationships, and the general well-being of FIFO families as it can disrupt both work and home domains (Costa, Silva, & Hui, 2006; Heiler, Pickersgill, & Briggs, 2000).

Table 3.1: Summary of the Australian FIFO and Mental Health Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Barclay, Harris, Everingham, Kirsch, Arend, Shi, & Kim (2013)	Examine 286 FIFO workers currently employed in the Australian resources sector to identify the factors linked to retention and FIFO employee well-being	Findings showed that FIFO employees required personal space and opportunities for private communication with family and friends to enhance their sense of well-being while at work, with private rooms and good internet connection being among the most desired necessities

Bjorvatn, Kecklund, & Akerstedt (1998)	Examine the readjustment of oil platform night workers to day life at home	Readjustment to day life was slow and difficult, disrupting the circadian rhythm of workers. Lack of morning daylight exposure may facilitate rapid adjustment to night work
Collinson (1998)	Examine the work-home relationship of FIFO contract employees	Extended time away from family could potentially impact the work-home relationship of FIFO employees negatively due to conflicting work and family roles that influence family functioning, distress, strain and stress
Heiler (2002)	Review the impact of extended and intensive work schedules on the health and safety of employees and family life in the Tasmanian mining industry	Information obtained from over 1,000 employees, families, management and stakeholders across all Tasmanian mine sites showed that extended work schedules led to higher levels of employee fatigue, lack of sleep, family disruptions, and poor family functioning
Heiler, Pickersgill, & Briggs (2000)	Examine the impact of work arrangements, such as extended working time and compressed schedules, in the Australian mining industry to identify occupational risks and hazards	Research showed that the mining industry is increasingly adopting long working hours that result in intensive work schedules. The identification and management of these arrangements and risks lacks structure, and when the arrangements are not sustainable they have the potential to distort regional labour markets
Keown (2005)	Examine the general, psychological and social health of 510 male residential and FIFO mining employees from 29 organisations in the Eastern Goldfields region of WA	There were no differences in regards to general and physical health, chronic fatigue, and perceptions of social support between residential and FIFO workers. FIFO workers had better coping strategies and healthier lifestyle habits with lower levels of alcohol consumption than residential workers. Compared to residential workers, FIFO employees had higher levels of sleep disturbance and social disruptions
Pocock, van Wanrooy, Strazzari, & Bridge (2001)	Analyse over 50 families involved in working long hours, irregular shift arrangements, and changes in time zones	Findings showed that the majority of employees and their partners were negatively affected by unreasonable hours, and those that worked longer hours may experience serious effects of depression and illness
Velander, Schineanu, Liang, & Midford (2010)	Investigate the lifestyle and work-related health risk factors of 591 workers from a goldmine in WA	The rate of smoking, diabetes, depression and anxiety was higher than those of national rural and remote state figures. The psychosocial work environment may be responsible for the high rate of mental health issues experienced in the goldmine
Vojnovic & Bahn (2015)	Examine the mental health of 629 WA FIFO employees	Findings indicated that 36 per cent of participants experienced depression, anxiety and/or stress symptoms. Research suggests that FIFO mental health problems are associated with employee demographic differences

| Sibbel (2010) | Investigate the psychosocial well-being of 90 WA FIFO employees and 32 partners of FIFO employees | Both FIFO employees and their partners had normal psychosocial well-being, relationship satisfaction, and family functioning when compared to the general Australian population |

The reason FIFO employees appear to experience poorer mental health over those in other industry types seems to be related to home life absence associated with FIFO employment. International research exploring FIFO separation in the oil and gas sectors suggests that prolonged time away from home can result in family disruption and poor family functioning when conflict regarding work and family roles arises, and some individuals might have difficulty with family identity, thus leading to greater perceived stress and psychological problems (Collinson, 1998; Mckee, Mauthner, & Maclean, 2000).

Research on employee roster structure and swing arrangements (the number of days on-site and the number of non-work days at home) indicate that compressed FIFO work schedules can create health and lifestyle problems that could in turn impact workplace productivity and safety (Heiler, Pickersgill, & Briggs, 2000). Working long hours can disrupt the circadian rhythm of FIFO employees, thus increasing the potential for employee depression and illness (Bjorvatn, Kecklund, & Akerstedt, 1998; Pocock, van Wanrooy, Strazzari, & Bridge, 2001). Heiler (2002), in reviewing the use of extended shift arrangements in the Tasmanian mining industry, found that fatigue issues, due to extended roster structures, are evident across the entire industry. Sleep data highlighted that the lack of sleep employees get while working a night shift influenced their performance outcomes and increased their chances of experiencing an accident while on-site (Heiler, 2002). Sleep deprivation has also been correlated with child behavioural problems, as it can determine the amount of time employees spend interacting with their children (Robinson, Peetz, Murray, Griffin, & Muurlink, 2017). When the FIFO partner works an extended shift it impacts their family life negatively with 66 per cent of participants from Heiler's (2002) study experiencing difficulty in managing home roles and responsibilities while their partner worked a concentrated roster.

The WA Parliamentary committee found that FIFO employees are typically chosen on their suitability for FIFO employment, with construction workers in particular having

a high tolerance for working on compressed swings (i.e. four weeks on-site and one week at home) due to the short timeframe of construction projects (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). However, these workers often move across projects, thus they are continually exposed to highly compressed rosters. The committee recommends that rather than recruiting workers that are able to withstand the challenges associated with FIFO, the resources sector should instead focus on managing the health and well-being of their current workforce (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). According to the committee, the swings that show the best support of mental well-being are those with an equal and balanced split between time at work and time at home, and such swings should be encouraged over others (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015).

Similar research by Keown (2005), using a general health questionnaire (GHQ), addressed the psychological and social health of 510 male residential and FIFO workers across 29 mining organisations from the Goldfields region of WA. The results showed that workers were concerned with changes in their emotional and behavioural response, social isolation, fatigue and physical strain, stress, and relationship difficulties. Those working a night shift were more prone to emotional and behavioural changes when compared to employees' working day shifts as they had less contact with their families due to conflicting schedules with their at-home partner who typically worked traditional nine-to-five weekday employment. They experienced greater levels of depression, anxiety and stress, as well as reporting higher amounts of alcohol consumption. Additionally, workers from Keown's (2005) study claimed that changes in emotions, behaviour and energy at the workplace spilled into their home domain impacting both their work and home relationships. This poses a safety concern for employees, especially those commuting to and from work via drive-in/drive-out (DIDO) methods, as they are, due to long work schedules and increased fatigue, more likely to injure themselves or others while on the road. However, Keown (2005) found no difference in the mental health of male residential and FIFO mining employees. This is similar to Sibbel's (2010) research that, through the use of a GHQ, Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) and Family Assessment Device (FAD), sampled 90 WA FIFO employees and 32 partners of FIFO employees and found that all the sampled participants had healthy levels of psychological well-being. Similarly, Barclay et al (2013) surveyed 286 Australian FIFO workers using the 21

item self report Depression, Anxiety and Stress Scale (DASS 21) and found that 86 per cent of workers had normal stress levels and the group as a whole had lower rates of depression and anxiety when compared to the general population. However, Barclay et al (2013) add that poor communication between the FIFO employee and their at-home partner can increase strain in the relationship. The WA Parliamentary committee recognises the importance of high quality communication and recommends that the Minister for Mines and Petroleum ensure the Code of Practice on FIFO employment provides reliable and accessible communication to all FIFO employees while in their on-site accommodation (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015).

A report by Velander, Schineanu, Liang and Midford (2010), on the health and lifestyle risk factors of 591 workers from a goldmine in WA, found that the rate of smoking, diabetes and anxiety was higher among those sampled when compared to other national rural and remote state figures. Although only 32.5 per cent of the participants worked FIFO employment, the study showed that work, home and personal stress did significantly attribute to an increase in employee alcohol consumption, depression and stress, thus highlighting the impact of the psychosocial work environment on mental health. Similar research by the Australasian Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (ACRRMH, 2015) on the well-being and mental health of 994 remote employees (90 per cent male and nine per cent female) found that the prevalence of mental distress ranged from 26 to 33 per cent across four of the six sites sampled. Both reports found that mental health distress was higher among resource workers than the national average.

Another study by Vojnovic and Bahn (2015), on depression, anxiety and stress symptoms of 629 WA FIFO employees, found that over a third (36 per cent) of participants sampled experienced some form of depression, anxiety and/or stress that could be considered above the clinical cut-off level. However, their study did not indicate whether mental health problems were an issue employees were experiencing prior to undertaking FIFO employment, and as such it is plausible that FIFO work demands exasperated mental health issues among workers that had existing personal problems. Such findings are consistent with research from Velander, Schineanu, Liang and Midford (2010) who also reported high mental health difficulties among their participants. This consistency supports the generalisability of findings across

different resource locations with similar workforce demographics and employment conditions. However, based on these studies, the majority of FIFO employees sampled were satisfied with the FIFO lifestyle generally and more specifically with the swing arrangements and work environment they experienced. There is evidence to suggest that swing arrangement length, which impacts both work and home domains, could also be partly responsible for the high employee turnover rates that are present in the resources sector.

3.2.1 Employee Turnover

FIFO related employee turnover, as illustrated in Table 3.2, is another area that has been examined by researchers (Beach & Cliff, 2003; Funston, 2012; Muller, Carter, & Williamson, 2008). The Centre for Social Responsibility in Mining (CSRM) conducted a study on turnover in the mining industry and found that a correlation exists between swing roster length and employee turnover (Beach, Brereton, & Cliff, 2003). Colley (2005) suggests that FIFO employees will often choose to work long hours because of the financial gains associated with a longer swing arrangement but at the same time consider it a temporary option to increase their short-term financial position. They choose to work long hours due to the financial gains but leave as a result of fatigue and inability to mentally cope with the extended separation from loved ones. Therefore, turnover is more likely due to employees not being able to adjust to the FIFO lifestyle psychologically, rather than physically (Colley, 2005). A report by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) found that the mobility of labour is commonly driven by personal priorities an individual places on how they spend their time, which typically involves an element of family commitment (NCVER, 2014). Individuals desire to have some form of contact with their family and friends, and when this contact is taken away people struggle with the lifestyle. Most are capable of handling the physical aspect of FIFO employment but the psychological strain and mental health challenges that result from separation and isolation can become too difficult to manage for many individuals, to the point where some will leave FIFO in seek of employment closer to their loved ones.

Funston (2012) found that the conflict between work and home arises because of the impact long shift arrangements and roster structures have on work and home domains. An unbalanced roster typically correlated with higher levels of work and home conflict, especially among individuals that had children who needed daily caring. When employees' felt that conflict increased and became more severe, their intention of turnover was higher (Funston, 2012). However, if the organisation showed commitment to the employee and offered employee and/or family support then the likelihood of turnover was reduced (Walford, 2012). Higher commitment levels from the employer resulted in a lower turnover rate. As FIFO employment involves separation from family, who are commonly viewed as a support group by many individuals, employees' typically turn to their organisation for support, and if their needs are not met then the likelihood of leaving increases (Walford, 2012).

Other studies on FIFO related employee turnover such as Beach and Cliff's (2003) research on nine mine sites across Queensland and WA found that, on average, there was 21 per cent turnover experienced across their sample. Results indicated that employees' were physically, mentally, and emotionally exhausted and left because they couldn't cope with ongoing FIFO demands and psychological distress. Muller, Carter and Williamson (2008) also found that fatigue, which is linked to poor mental health and well-being, was a major issue among FIFO employees, putting strain on their relationships, disrupting family units, and leading to poor psychological well-being. Disturbed circadian rhythms and overall day roster length were among the primary contributors to high employee fatigue levels (Muller, Carter, & Williamson, 2008). However, due to numerous work-related factors influencing the nature of fatigue, the findings of the study could be site specific and confined to the sampled group of participants, thus they might not be generalisable to other locations across Australia. The WA Parliamentary committee suggests that resource companies should acknowledge the importance of compressed swings in terms of managing worker fatigue and the Minister for Mines and Petroleum should, through the Code of Practice on FIFO employment, detail ways to manage the consequences of poor mental health (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015).

Table 3.2: Summary of Australian FIFO Employee Turnover Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Beach & Cliff (2003)	Examine FIFO employee turnover based on data from nine mine sites across Queensland and WA	Highest rate of turnover was among mine professionals and mine operators. Turnover fluctuated over time and was influenced by work arrangements and management. Workplace culture mediated turnover. Management did not know the financial cost of turnover at their site
Beach, Brereton, & Cliff (2003)	Examine workforce turnover in Australian FIFO mining operations	Data from three mines in WA and six in northern Queensland showed that turnover was higher among mine professionals compared to maintenance and minerals processing workers. Site-specific factors, such as changes in working arrangements and roster structure, had the strongest link with the rate of employee turnover
Funston (2012)	Examine work interference with family life of 202 Australia FIFO employees	Work-family conflict was linked with the swing a FIFO employee worked, and those with longer time away from home or those with children or single parent employees had the highest level of conflict. Employees that felt more support from their organisation had lower conflict. Turnover intentions were higher among those with high levels of work-family conflict
Muller, Carter, & Williamson (2008)	Assess the dynamics of occupational fatigue associated with FIFO employment of 55 production staff in the Australian mining industry	Occupational fatigue was at a concerning level during the completion of the first three nights of night shift work and from the eighth day shift onwards. Hours of sleep and alcohol consumption did not significantly correlate with fatigue
Walford (2012)	Explore the link between organisational support and turnover of 223 Australian FIFO workers	Increased commitment from organisations to support FIFO employees led to lower turnover. Perceived organisational support was associated with higher commitment from employees. Individuals did not feel a sense of attachment to their organisation

In a competitive labour market it is imperative that mining organisations implement initiatives to help reduce turnover among FIFO employees. Employers should address the diversity of their workforce in order to increase employee retention (Hutchings, De Cieri, & Shea, 2011). They should offer more commuting options, greater flexibility in shift arrangements and schedules, employee and/or family support, and higher quality amenities. For example, over 30,000 people applied for 950 positions at Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance's (BMA) Caval Ridge and Daunia projects in Queensland ("BHP Billiton Opens Caval Ridge Metallurgical Coal Mine in Central

Queensland," 2014), thus highlighting the growing number of people willing to work FIFO employment in the mining industry. According to Dean Dalla Valle, the former president and chief operating officer at BHP Billiton, FIFO employment gives mining employers the opportunity to reach a wider pool of potential employees that in turn creates greater diversity and allows the economic benefits of the mine to be shared more broadly (Chan, 2014). However, it is also important that employers have established policies and practices in place that address employee health and well-being, to ensure employee retention. Furthermore, the House of Representatives standing committee on regional Australia states that until the resources sector addresses the issue associated with balancing work and home in the FIFO lifestyle and recruits people into the appropriate positions not only based on their knowledge and skills but also on their life stage, FIFO employee turnover will continue to remain high (House of Representatives, 2013).

3.2.2 Well-being of Families

As discussed in chapter two, there exists a strong correlation between FIFO employees and those around them. Research has found that people with limited experience working outside a capital city generally are more likely to have a negative reaction to separation and geographical isolation, putting them at greater risk of developing psychological distress and mental health issues when working in remote environments (Bowers, 2011). Table 3.3 summarises the literature on FIFO families and how pressures from FIFO employment impact family well-being.

Table 3.3: Summary of Australian FIFO Well-being Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Adler (1983)	Examine the interaction between offshore oil rig workers and their family to detail how parental absence can impact children	When continual repeated absence of one parent, due to work, from the home environment occurred, child development decreased. Separation anxiety was directly linked with absence, and some children struggled to identify with the away parent the same way they identified with the home parent
Carter & Kaczmarek (2009)	Review the literature addressing the impact of FIFO employment with an emphasis on issues surrounding Gen Y. Examine the impact of FIFO on ten 18-28 year old employees working in the mining industry	Research indicated that despite the challenges of FIFO employment and emotional fluctuations that result from a FIFO cycle, the sampled participants were satisfied with FIFO working and living
Gallegos (2005)	Examine 32 couples to illustrate how FIFO families manage parenting and concentrated work schedules	FIFO families go through a number of different emotions based on the comings and goings of the FIFO parent. The families sampled had a clear understanding of the FIFO lifestyle and the impact it would have on their relationship, and chose to remain in FIFO due to the strong financial gains associated with FIFO employment
Iverson & Maguire (2000)	Examine the relationship between job and life satisfaction of 286 male mine employees from Queensland	Results showed that community variables of family isolation and kinship support had the greatest effect on satisfaction. Job satisfaction mediated the impact of the industrial relations climate, work overload, family isolation, and kinship support. Job satisfaction had a stronger effect on life satisfaction than vice versa
Joyce, Tomlin, Somerford, & Weeramanthri (2013)	Examine the health behaviours and outcomes associated with FIFO and shift workers in WA	Compared with other employment types, FIFO employees were more likely to be smokers, drink alcohol, and be overweight. FIFO employees were less likely to report any mental health issues or problems they were experiencing

Gallegos (2005), in a study on FIFO parenting, found that parents go through a range of emotions relating to the comings and goings of the FIFO partner. They feel happy when the FIFO partner returns home and anxious when they have to leave. Often the FIFO partner will become more withdrawn from the family before departing for work and feel helpless and lonely when they leave (Gallegos, 2005). While managing these emotions can be difficult for couples, knowing that they are in a financially secure position, due to the strong remuneration associated with FIFO employment, helps

maintain their emotions. Carter and Kaczmarek (2009) reported similar findings in their study on younger Gen Y FIFO workers. They claimed that young employees also experience fluctuating emotions during different periods of the FIFO cycle. For example, they are more likely to note symptoms of depression in the days leading up to their return to work as they struggle with the thought of leaving their family and friends. It is evident that no matter the age of the employee or their partner, everyone involved in the FIFO lifestyle goes through a range of emotions, some at a more manageable level than others.

Adler (1983) examined parental absence from family and found that family stress was higher when repeated absence of one parent occurred, thus leading to a negative impact on the overall family unit and child development. Furthermore, sons of the father (FIFO employee) may struggle to identify with their absent father in the same way they identify with their mother (stay at-home parent), due to them having regular daily contact with their mother as opposed to their father who they might only see every few weeks, and as a result could potentially lead to the creation of separation anxiety (Adler, 1983). When families go through these feelings of loneliness they are more likely to seek an escape to help combat such emotions, an escape that typically comes in the form of alcohol or substance abuse (Watts, 2004).

In exploring the impact of offshore rotational work on family life, Collinson (1998) found that economic and time-space pressures led to relationship difficulties and higher divorce rates among FIFO families. According to Collinson (1998), such negative impacts can result in higher levels of substance abuse as people turn to alcohol as a means of escaping the pressures of work and home life. Iverson and Maguire (2000) similarly found that FIFO employees reported higher than average alcohol consumption levels as a result of family isolation. Research by Joyce, Tomlin, Somerford and Weeramanthri (2013), on health behaviours and outcomes in different employment types across WA, found that FIFO employees were more likely to consume alcohol at an abnormal level, be smokers, and have higher obesity levels than workers from other employment types. However, their research also indicated that FIFO employees, through self-report data, were less likely to experience mental health issues when compared to those from other employment types (Joyce, Tomlin, Somerford, & Weeramanthri, 2013). This could be due to the self-selection of

workers to enter FIFO employment and being prepared to accept and commit to FIFO work conditions based on their knowledge and word of mouth from family and friends regarding FIFO, thus it is likely that they were always going to report having good mental health.

In the present study the mental health issues and challenges associated with FIFO employment are discussed in relation to how they impact non-traditional FIFO employee and partner well-being and their experiences of the FIFO lifestyle. Although there has been considerable research on FIFO related mental health difficulties faced by FIFO families and the impact this has on the psychological health of employees, depression, family functioning, and turnover, there is a clear gap in the literature that does not take into account the changing Australian household structure. Previous research has primarily focused on two-parent conventional FIFO families. This study addresses the mental health issues faced by non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners, from minority groups such as individuals from lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, as result of FIFO working and living. The study adopts previous research findings to illustrate any discrepancies between research on mental health issues of conventional FIFO families and families from non-traditional backgrounds. Comparisons can help highlight factors with the greatest impact on mental health and well-being, and such data could be used to better inform the need for further mental health support of FIFO employees and their families.

3.3 Female FIFO Employee Experience

Despite the Australian mining boom, women still remain under-represented in the resources sector (Mayes & Pini, 2014). In recent years the growth of women in mining has increased substantially with 15 per cent making up the total workforce employed by the industry in 2011, an increase of 4 per cent since 2001 (Equal Opportunity for Women in the Workplace Agency [EOWA], 2012). Although there has been a scarce amount of academic research focusing on women in fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment, as illustrated in Table 3.4, the research that does exist has reported similar findings. Women have had to dig deeper than men and manage the

emotional aspects of FIFO employment in order to deter harassment they faced in male-dominated environments (Murray Peetz, & Muurlink, 2017).

Table 3.4: Summary of Women in FIFO Employment Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Costa, Silva, & Hui (2006)	Examine the opportunities and challenges of women in the Canadian resources sector	Women were concerned with future plans for family and children, discomfort with air travel, and perceived risk of sexual harassment. They also had less financial rewards from FIFO and often felt guilty and helpless due to separation from home. However, FIFO creates opportunities for young women to live in remote locations and start their careers, and for mature women to work while pursuing other interests at home
Murray, Peetz, & Muurlink (2017)	Examine the experiences of 100 Australian women working in modern coal mining	Women struggled with harassment but this was constrained by regulation from state and non-state actors. Women could be made to feel uncomfortable by male co-workers but responded by seeking to prove themselves. They felt pressured to conform to male co-workers and had to engage in emotion work in order to be accepted
Pirotta (2009)	Examine the experiences of 20 Australian women working in FIFO employment	Women were attracted to FIFO because of financial security, work satisfaction, career advancement, sense of belonging, and enduring friendships. Challenges included developing friendships, living in isolation, depression, anxiety, fatigue, lack of female contact, lack of privacy, and coping with discrimination and harassment
Steed & Sinclair (2000)	Examine the stressors of 30 residential and FIFO women in the Australian mining industry	Stressors related to relationships, career, social life, family readaptation, gender, lack of privacy, and regular exposure to sexist comments from men while on-site

Steed and Sinclair (2000), in researching the stressors faced by women employed in remote areas, found that gender was among one of the main stressors women had to manage in a male dominant environment. Additional stressors related to difficulties in maintaining healthy relationships, struggles with career progression and social life, and a lack of on-site privacy. Murray, Peetz and Muurlink (2017) add that women generally feel pressured to conform to male co-workers, and have often felt exposed to sexist comments from male employees while on-site (Steed & Sinclair, 2000). They had to demonstrate themselves to be reliable workers that are capable of performing highly under considerable scrutiny from their male counterparts (Murray, Peetz, & Muurlink, 2017). Furthermore, women in the mining industry are likely to be affected by the 'glass ceiling' as they generally earn less than male FIFO employees

working in the same or similar position, with data from 2016 showing females working full-time in mining had a base salary of $101,207 compared to the male salary of $119,731 (Bankwest Curtin Economics Centre [BCEC], 2016). In addition, as they are a minority, their performance is more visible and any minor mistake by one female could be generalised to all women, thus placing more pressure on them (Murray, Peetz, & Muurlink, 2017).

A study by Costa, Silva and Hui (2006) investigated the well-being of women working in FIFO employment and how the mining industry recruits and retains women workers. In relation to the impact of compressed working schedules and camp life, Costa, Silva and Hui (2006) found, similar to Steed and Sinclair's (2000) research, that women struggled with balancing work and family life and missed important social and family events as a result of FIFO. However, the findings in these studies were not explored in depth and therefore it is unknown if the women had children, so we don't know if it was difficult to balance work and family time due to having children or whether they chose not to have children because they felt it was not plausible to start a family while working in FIFO employment. Furthermore, with the exception of maternity leave, the mine sites examined by Costa, Silva and Hui (2006) did not have specific policies designed to hire and retain women. However, FIFO employment does give opportunities for young women to live and work in remote locations where they can start their long-term careers, and for mature women to work while pursuing other interests, during their off schedule, while at home (Costa, Silva, & Hui, 2006).

Pirotta (2009) examined the experiences of FIFO employment by female FIFO employees and found that the majority of issues reported by women related to them having to work in a male dominate environment. Similar to research by Steed and Sinclair (2000) and Costa, Silva and Hui (2006), women claimed there was limited female contact, privacy, lack of boundaries, and challenges in adjusting and coping with male mine site behaviour. Women struggled with loneliness, depression, and on-going fatigue. Furthermore, due to their gender, women were prone to discrimination and harassment (Murray, Peetz, & Muurlink, 2017), and as a result most viewed FIFO as a temporary short-term work option (Pirotta, 2009) rather than a long-term career. Although there are many challenges for women in the resources sector, Pirotta (2009)

also notes that there exist opportunities for women to enhance their financial security, improve their career advancement, and have a sense of belonging when working in the sector. The reason women succeed in the mining industry is due to their ability to adapt to the FIFO lifestyle, as they are open-minded, sociable and resourceful (Pirotta, 2006). Compared to male FIFO employees there were no significant differences in levels of job and life satisfaction, mental health and well-being.

According to the National Council of Women (NCW), interpersonal relationship stress and family commitments were the main barriers preventing women from entering into FIFO employment (NCW, 2011). These barriers are reflective of the positions held by women in the mining industry, with most working as support in metropolitan and regional centres (Skills Australia, 2011). Many mining organisations are introducing policies to make work arrangements more flexible for women, such as compressed work hours and maternity level (Australian Mines and Metals Association [AMMA], 2011). Some of the larger companies are working with local government to help facilitate childcare arrangements, as most women typically leave the industry when they have children (Skills Australia, 2011). Furthermore, anti-discrimination legislation and regulation has also enabled women to enter the mining industry without the fear of harassment that is typical of male-dominated environments (Murray, Peetz, & Muurlink, 2017). However, women still view FIFO as a short-term gain rather than a long-term option, claiming that the drawbacks of FIFO, such as social isolation, loneliness, depression and a potential sense of loss to their femininity, outweigh the benefits associated with the financial gains of FIFO employment (Pirotta, 2009).

Women in the resources sector are considered a minority and similar to research on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) FIFO mining employees and families, as discussed in chapter four, there has been a limited focus on their experiences. The WA Parliamentary committee acknowledges the position of female FIFO employees in the resources sector and states that further research on women in mining is necessary to raise greater awareness of the mental health issues faced by female workers (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). Furthermore, the committee suggests that the initiatives addressing FIFO mental health as a whole should aid in improving the experiences of female FIFO employees, and recommends that resource

organisations acknowledge female workers and ensure that their needs are taken into consideration (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). The Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU) also notes that a significant gender imbalance exists in the industry that has the potential to be worsened by the pressures associated with FIFO employment (CFMEU, 2015). The present study adds to previous literature on women in mining by highlighting the experiences of women involved in FIFO employment that don't identify as straight heterosexual women. It provides an additional layer to previous research by addressing the experiences of both FIFO men and women from non-traditional backgrounds. This study details the impact a male dominant work environment has on these individuals and how moderating variables, such as those of sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI) influence the creation of stressors in FIFO employee and partner lives.

3.4 Coping Strategies by FIFO Employees and their Families

In managing fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) mental health and physical stressors, such as disruptions to work and home life due to emotional and physical strain, FIFO employees and families adopt a number of coping strategies. However, some of these can do more harm than good, such as consuming alcohol or sleeping pills to help sleep between shifts (Keown, 2005). Positive strategies include positive reframing and continual active coping (Keown, 2005). Table 3.5 summaries the literature on coping strategies by FIFO employees and families.

Table 3.5: Summary of Australian FIFO Coping Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Henry, Hamilton, Watson, & McDonald (2013)	Identify the stressors associated with FIFO/DIDO employment of 924 Australian FIFO/DIDO workers and how these workers cope with such stressors	One in five workers claimed to not aware of on-site mental health services or counselling facilities. Female workers were more likely to access support services on-site. Barriers preventing access to support included workplace culture, fear, embarrassment, and mistrust of the formal support system
Torkington, Larkins, & Gupta (2011)	Examine how FIFO/DIDO employment affects the psychosocial well-being of 11 miners in Queensland, and identify the sources of support employees use to manage these issues	Participants were aware of both the positive and negative psychosocial impacts associated with family life, social life, work satisfaction, mood and sleep. Awareness of on-site support offered by the mining organisation varied. Family and friends were more preferred in terms of support

Voysey (2012)	Examine FIFO lifestyle satisfaction of 245 Australian FIFO employees and 314 partners of FIFO employees	Research found that FIFO employees were satisfied with roster length and relationships. Partners of employees were less satisfied with rosters and relationships, and less than half of the partners were aware of support from the organisation. Support from family and friends helped lower any perceived stress experienced by employees and partners. Both employees and partners rated personal support from family and friends as the most beneficial

A study by Torkington, Larkins and Gupta (2011), on FIFO related help-seeking behaviours, found that employees generally do seek help for work-related stress. However, their awareness of on-site support offered by the organisation depends on the individual, with only a few being aware of support. Similarly Voysey (2012), in her research on FIFO lifestyle satisfaction, found that less than half of the 314 partners of FIFO employees sampled in her study, through self-report means, were aware of the support available to them. Personal support through family and friends was more preferential over formal organisational support. The majority of the eleven workers sampled by Torkington, Larkins and Gupta (2011) also relied on family and friends for support rather than formal support through official channels such as Employee Assistance Programs (EAP). In addition, workplace culture created a sense of fear in employees' in which they felt that if they were to discuss problems with their employer that they could potentially be treated differently by co-workers or even lose their job, hence their lack of desire to seek formal support (Torkington, Larkins, & Gupta, 2011). Some participants were comfortable discussing physical health concerns with a nurse but more hesitant in disclosing mental health issues (Torkington, Larkins, & Gupta, 2011). Similarly, a health survey conducted by Lifeline WA found that support-seeking barriers in the mining industry included a culture of not discussing concerns, fear of employment loss, embarrassment, and mistrust of formal support (Henry, Hamilton, Watson, & McDonald, 2013).

The mining industry is highly male dominant with a 'macho' type culture, and therefore the likeness of men seeking support or discussing their problems with others is minimal. It is important that this mentality be addressed to clear up the role of

support services and encourage greater support access, thus helping organisations potentially reduce the long-term impact of various health and mental concerns faced by FIFO employees (Rickwood, Deane, & Wilson, 2007). Research has shown that men are less likely to seek help regarding depression, stress and substance abuse issues (Addis & Mahalik, 2003), as they generally keep their emotional problems and feelings to themselves (Kessler, Brown, & Boman, 1981). This is a cause for concern given the increase in suicide rates among FIFO workers over the last few years (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). In 2010, the Australasian Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health (ACRRMH) reported that male suicide rates, due to challenges associated with FIFO employment such as isolation and psychological distress, were four times greater than the general male population (Ashby, 2011). Social norms and cultural values established through gendered stereotypes also influence perceptions men have about self-reliance and emotional control (Addis & Mahalik, 2003). They will often feel their masculine strength is threatened by seeking support and therefore are more hesitant in accessing formal support. The WA Parliamentary committee recommends that resource companies implement peer-based programs to help assist FIFO employees in discussing mental health problems among themselves and breakdown the stigma associated with mental health issues, and therefore all staff should have mental health training (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015).

According to Bowers (2011), in order to maintain healthy levels of psychological well-being, a productive mental health strategy that is embedded in the organisation's culture needs to be established to help address all challenges faced by FIFO employees. Physical and mental health should be on the same level in regards to the priority they receive and until mining companies achieve such balance they will continue to experience issues relating to employee stress, anxiety, depression, absenteeism and declines in productivity (Bowers, 2011). The WA Parliamentary committee highlighted the importance of mental health awareness and recommended that the Mental Health Commission, along with industry and non-government organisations, develop training programs for managers and supervisors, who are said to generally be poorly equipped with the necessary skills to manage mental health issues within their workforce, enhance awareness of mental health and help address mental health problems faced by FIFO employees (Parliament of Western Australia,

2015). The benefits of addressing mental health across all organisational levels includes higher morale among employees, lower absenteeism and turnover, improved health and safety procedures, and increased productivity and production levels (Bowers, 2011).

Coping strategies are examined in the present study to illustrate how different moderating variables of age, background, sexual orientation (SO), gender identity (GI), and life stage influence FIFO employee help seeking behaviours. This study highlights the awareness of on-site support from organisations, and how workplace culture can impact employee desire to seek support from their employer or family and friends. It is important to address coping strategies when discussing non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners as they are impacted by moderating variables that not typically applied to those from conventional FIFO families.

3.5 The FIFO Lifestyle

The number of Australian workers adopting the fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) lifestyle has steadily increased since the early 1990s (Chamber of Minerals and Energy Western Australia [CMEWA], 2008a), however our understanding on the impact of FIFO employment remains scarce, as previous studies have provided a limited view on the lifestyle and the consequences that result from FIFO living. Prior research has explored practical organisational issues relating to FIFO employment that include FIFO employee turnover and retention (Beach, Brereton, & Cliff, 2003), workplace practices (Graham, 2000), the economic impact of FIFO living (Price, 2008), and overall employee job and home satisfaction (Gent, 2004). Although these studies provide a clearer understanding of the motivational drivers of FIFO employment, the impact geographical isolation has on individuals and their families, and the influence of FIFO on regional and local communities, the majority have focused on the negative aspects of the lifestyle rather than the beneficial implications at an individual, family and community level.

The majority of claims made on the impact of FIFO employment are based on media reports that have no support from empirical research (Lenney, 2010). Although research on FIFO work and home life does exist, it is primarily structured around the

traditional view of two-parent family households (Sibbel, 2010). There is virtually no research on non-traditional FIFO families, in particular those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, and only a select number of Australian studies that examine the health and well-being of families involved in the FIFO lifestyle. Lenney (2010) claims that, due to a lack of research, the broader influence FIFO has on local communities and government is also slowly being understood.

International research suggests that families who have been part of the FIFO lifestyle for more than a year are better at coping with the demands associated with FIFO than those new to the lifestyle. Moreover, those working on longer or compressed swings were more likely to struggle with the lifestyle generally, and specifically with maintaining healthy relationships with loved ones, as they were away for longer periods at a time. In terms of Australian research, there have been similarities as well as conflicting findings between studies on the impact of FIFO on stress, well-being, relationships and family functioning. Although previous studies mainly focused on the negatives of FIFO, the benefits included the strong financial gains associated with the lifestyle, opportunities for employee career progression, having longer periods to spend with family, being able to separate work from home, and partners of FIFO employees experiencing a greater sense of independence. Swing length, shift arrangements, and support services appear to have the greatest influence over how much impact FIFO has on individuals and families.

Previous studies used qualitative or quantitative methodologies, or a combination of both, and most lacked a theoretical foundation or background to support their findings. The following reviews these studies to highlight the impact of FIFO living on employees and their families. It addresses FIFO challenges and issues pertaining to individual and family stress, well-being and relationship quality, sharing of roles and responsibilities, and family functioning.

3.5.1 International FIFO Lifestyle Research

Since the 1980s there has been a substantial amount of international research examining the relationship between work and home domains, specifically on the influence work-related absence has on employees and their families (Solheim, 1988; Storey, Shrimpton, Lewis, & Clark, 1989; Taylor, Morrice, Clark, & McCann, 1985). The sectors explored by previous studies were male dominate and include off-shore oil and gas companies as well as military organisations, with each industry having their own specific employment conditions, work environment, culture, policies and practices. For example, a fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) oil and gas employee may work a swing of two weeks on-site followed by one week at home (2/1), whereas military personnel could be absent/on-duty for months at a time, thus it can be argued that the employment group itself influences employment conditions. The work and shift arrangements also vary across industry types with the majority of today's employees working non-standard or compressed work schedules, such as 12-hour day shifts, compared to traditional employment that adopts the standard eight-hour workday. Other differences include the type of working environment (e.g., local or international; fixed or variable location), accommodation, support services and communication availability (Sibbel, 2001), all of which influence how individuals and their families experience the FIFO lifestyle. Table 3.6 summarises international literature exploring the experiences of FIFO living by FIFO families.

Table 3.6: Summary of International FIFO Lifestyle Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Clark & Taylor (1988)	Examine the experiences of women married to or living with men employed in the British North Sea offshore oil industry	Findings suggest that those from traditional marriages were more likely to cope with the FIFO lifestyle better, and if the wife had increased independence it could threaten the relationship
Forsyth & Gauthier (1991)	Examine how families of offshore oil workers adapt to the comings and goings of the FIFO employee/father	The wife that stays at home takes on greater responsibility when left alone and may struggle to share her authority with the employee upon return. Couples that had strategies in place to help with the division of roles and responsibilities also experienced lower levels of conflict
Solhiem (1988)	Examine the experiences of FIFO families in the Norwegian offshore oil industry	Findings indicated that those in traditional marriages, where the wife was the homemaker and husband the provider, needed less time to adjust to the FIFO lifestyle. Husbands had limited understanding of the changes that occurred at home and within their family due to

		the regular periods of separation
Storey, Shrimpton, Lewis, & Clark (1989)	Examine the impact of FIFO employment on Canadian offshore oil and gas mining employees and their spouses	A series of studies using surveys and interviews showed that roster length did impact relationship satisfaction. Participants noted difficulties with role sharing, maintaining healthy relationships, and negotiating how time together was spent. Children's behaviour was more difficult to control when the FIFO partner was absent from home due to work
Storey (2010)	Examine the positive and negative effects of FIFO on community sustainability	Findings indicated that while employment, through mine site projects could be beneficial to source communities, when a mine closes it leads to high unemployment. In addition, FIFO can disrupt communities through infrastructure and service demands, thus reducing the economic viability of local infrastructure
Taylor, Morrice, Clark, & McCann (1985)	Examine the psychosocial impact of irregular husband absence on wives, from the Aberdeen area of Scotland, of mining and offshore oil and gas employees	Findings showed, through the use of interviews, that the mental and physical health of wives with husbands working offshore was similar to the health of wives with husbands working onshore. Irregular husband absence had the greatest impact on newly married wives who had children in preschool and had no previous experience of husband absence

In their research on offshore and onshore FIFO employee wives, Taylor, Morrice, Clark and McCann (1985) found no differences between the two groups based on physical and psychological well-being, although some wives did notice fluctuations in mood due to the comings and goings of their FIFO partner. They also found that those who reported poor well-being were more than likely to be women that had just entered into marriage with their significant other, or were employed outside of their home, or had young children that needed caring, or were new to the FIFO lifestyle and did not previously experience husband absence from home due to work. Those that were involved in FIFO employment for longer than a year were more adapted to the demands and challenges associated with FIFO living. Communication availability was seen as a key indicator of individual stress levels as wives, who felt lonely without their partner, desired to keep in regular contact with their partner while they were on-site and absent from home. Clark and Taylor (1988) note that those that accept the traditional spousal role (e.g., husband is the worker and the wife the homemaker), similar to the conclusions made by Solheim's (1988) research that traditional roles require less adjusting to FIFO living, have a higher chance of

successfully adapting to and coping with the FIFO lifestyle. They claimed that when household roles and responsibilities are divided between partners, the adjustment to the lifestyle becomes more difficult especially for the at-home partner who typically takes on more responsibility when the FIFO employee leaves for work. Furthermore, due to the regular comings and goings of the FIFO husband, Solheim (1988) found that husbands typically did not have a clear understanding of the changes that occurred at home and role demand difficulties their wives faced when they took on more responsibility. This division of labour can lead to conflict during the FIFO employee's home period if the couples do not have a strategy or routine for dealing with the sharing of household duties and responsibilities (Clark, McCann, Morrice, & Taylor, 1985). Those that are better able to manage the transitioning of roles have strategies in place to help with the decision making process of parental, financial and home duties (Forsyth & Gauthier, 1991), and until such strategies are implemented and accepted by all parties, conflict will likely remain in the family. Moreover, in coping with FIFO partner absence, the at-home partner will generally seek personal, social or protective resources, as highlighted in Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework and in the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, in the form of emotional and practical support from friends and family, pursue social interaction through paid or unpaid employment outside of home, or mentally focus on the positives of the lifestyle instead of the negatives (Clark & Taylor, 1988).

The findings of Clark and Taylor (1988) are highly supportive of those by Storey, Shrimpton, Lewis and Clark's (1989) research on Canadian offshore mining employees' and their partners. Although the exact number of participants from their study is not identified, Storey, Shrimpton, Lewis and Clark (1989) claimed that the length of the swing does impact on relationship well-being and that those working on longer swings will experience greater challenges in adjusting to the FIFO lifestyle. Participants from their study noted difficulties in sharing roles and responsibilities, maintaining healthy relationships with loved ones, and negotiating how time together with their partner would be spent. Storey, Shrimpton, Lewis and Clark (1989) also found that children's behaviour was significantly harder to manage when the FIFO employee was away as the at-home partner had more responsibility living alone and struggled to manage all the needs of their children. However, although some

participants did struggle with FIFO employment and left the industry entirely as they wanted to be with their family, the majority of couples were able to cope with the FIFO lifestyle successfully.

Community sustainability is another area that has been examined by international research, with Storey (2010) highlighting a number of benefits and drawbacks associated with mine site projects and FIFO working and living. Storey (2010) used examples from Canada, Alaska and Australia to detail the potential effects FIFO can have on source communities. The research showed that FIFO employment could be highly beneficial for Aboriginal workers in both Canada and Australia as it is one of the few opportunities for them to be involved in the industrial wage economy without leaving their particular cultural environment. In addition, earned incomes result in taxes for government, thus when incomes are spent locally there will be income benefits for other community members and local businesses. However, these notions of development that lead to sustained employment and higher incomes for Aboriginal workers are often intolerant of cultural differences (Altman, 2009). For many Aboriginal groups, especially in Western Australia (WA), persevering their cultural integrity is important (Brueckner, Durey, Mayes, & Pforr, 2013). Additionally, if a mine site were to close this could reduce the number of FIFO operations and increase job shedding, and in places such as Northern Canada, where there are fewer FIFO operations, it can become problematic and impractical for FIFO employees to relocate operations as easily as those from Australia where there are a number of mine sites (Storey, 2010), and this in turn can lead to FIFO employees' experiencing considerable uncertainty and distress (Pini, Mayes, & McDonald, 2010). FIFO employment can also result in infrastructure and service demands that communities could struggle to address due to a lack of resources, thus reducing the economic viability of the community. Furthermore, community engagement is contingent upon the specificities of the labour market and engagement is a direct response to community interactions in other places and times (Mayes, McDonald, & Pini, 2014).

While international research on the FIFO lifestyle does reflect family structures of the time, differences in family types, availability and access to family support, along with changes in culture, limit how the findings and conclusions from previous studies could be used to illustrate the experiences and impacts of the FIFO lifestyle on

Australian employees and families in the present day. As Squire and Tilly (2007) note, gender role expectations and family structure has changed drastically since the introduction of FIFO employment. The present study provides an updated view of the FIFO lifestyle based on the experiences of FIFO families from non-traditional family types that are becoming more common across Australian households.

3.5.2 Australian FIFO Lifestyle Research

The Australian resources sector began to implement fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment in the 1980s and with it came a number of research studies, as illustrated in Table 3.7, focusing on employee attitude towards FIFO and how this impacted individual work and life satisfaction, and the influence non-standard work arrangements had on employee and partner well-being (e.g., Gent, 2004; Gillies, Wu, & Jones, 1997; Limerick, Crane, Roberts, & Baillie, 1991; Pollard, 1990). Through the use of quantitative research methods, the majority of these studies showed that FIFO employees' valued the strong financial gains associated with FIFO, extended periods of time with family, and job security that came with such roles. However, these studies were primarily introductory and descriptive without any speculation on the theoretical aspects of FIFO working and living.

Table 3.7: Summary of Australian FIFO Lifestyle Literature

Author(s)/Year	Focus	Findings
Beach (1999)	Examine the impact of intense working schedules on the family structure of 10 Australian FIFO mining couples	Through the use of interviews the findings showed that absence from home/family, due to work, increased the level of work-home conflict
Clifford (2009)	Examine the impact of FIFO employment and extended working hours on stress, lifestyle, relationship and health of 222 WA FIFO and daily commute mining employees and their partners	Findings showed, through the use of questionnaires and saliva samples, that FIFO employment was disruptive to home and family time. Families used adaptive coping strategies to cope with stress. However, FIFO employees and partners were no more likely to have high stress levels, poor relationships or poor health than daily commute employees
Gallegos (2006)	Examine the coping experiences of 32 two-parent FIFO families from WA mining and offshore oil and gas industries	Using surveys and interviews the findings showed that families with young children had unique coping styles and those able to manage roles equally had a higher chance of successfully adapting to the FIFO lifestyle

Gent (2004)	Examine the impact of FIFO employment on the well-being and work-life satisfaction of 132 FIFO employees (114 male and 18 female) from WA mining and offshore oil and gas industries	Results, through the use of Dyadic Adjustment Scale, indicated that FIFO had a negative impact on job, life and relationship satisfaction, and this impact was worse when employees worked longer shifts and had young children that needed caring. Day shift workers experienced higher levels of job satisfaction than night shift workers
Gillies, Wu, & Jones (1997)	Examine the FIFO employment experiences of 227 Australian FIFO mining employees (107 professionals and 120 non-professionals)	The majority of participants indicated, through questionnaires, that their family was not at a disadvantage due to the lifestyle. Approximately 30% did not enjoy the FIFO lifestyle and 25% felt their family relationship has been disadvantaged due to the lifestyle. Attitudes to FIFO employment were similar across different categories of FIFO employees
Keown (2005)	Examine the health status of 510 male mining employees (148 FIFO and 362 residential employees) from 29 organisations in the Eastern Goldfields region of WA	Findings showed that, through the use of surveys and interviews, FIFO employees had better coping strategies, were generally healthier and had a lower chance of harming themselves than residential employees. However, FIFO employees were more likely to experience social difficulties
Macbeth, Kaczmarek, & Sibbel (2012)	Examine the FIFO lifestyle experiences of 8 male teenagers who have FIFO fathers working in the Australian mining and offshore oil and gas industries	The participants, through the interview process, were aware of the costs and benefits associated with the FIFO lifestyle. Some believed that their relationship with their father had grown stronger as a result of regular extended absence
Lester, Waters, Spears, Epstein, Watson, & Wenden (2015)	Explore FIFO parenting patterns of 21 WA at-home parents and 23 FIFO workers in raising adolescent children (41 sampled children)	Findings showed, through semi-structured telephone interviews and questionnaires, that parents and children generally coped well with FIFO challenges but families experienced distress associated with the absence of one parent. FIFO parents were also typically reluctant to ask for help in managing the challenges of the FIFO lifestyle
Pollard (1990)	Examine the social impact of FIFO employment on FIFO employees and their spouses from three WA mining operations (exact number of participants not identified)	Some couples, through the use of interviews, reported a higher impact on family life, especially with the division of labour and child care roles between partners. Limited childcare, spousal employment, and a sense of feeling left out by the local community worsened these impacts
Reynolds (2004)	Examine the effects of FIFO employment on the relationships of 22 female partners of male FIFO	Findings showed that, through the use of interviews, partners of FIFO employees constantly had to re-adjust to shift arrangements of the male FIFO partner.

	employees working in the WA offshore oil and gas industry	Those without children were more likely to experience loneliness when the partner was away. The majority of the participants were satisfied with the costs and benefits of the FIFO lifestyle
Sibbel (2001)	Examine the psychosocial well-being and impacts of regular father absence on 30 children of Australian FIFO families	Findings showed that, through the use of Depression Inventory, Anxiety Scale and Family Assessment Device, there were no significant differences of depression, anxiety and perceptions of family functioning compared to children from non-FIFO families. Some mothers did indicate less than adequate family functioning and behaviour control. Children's well-being was not affected
Sibbel & Kaczmarek (2005)	Examine the reasoning behind the choice of FIFO or residential employment of 65 Australian mining employees (25 male, 10 female residential employees and 22 male, 8 female FIFO employees)	Based on surveys, interviews and focus groups, the findings indicated that people enter into FIFO employment due to remuneration, opportunities for advancement, working hours and career opportunities for family members. The importance of these varied based on life stage
Taylor & Simmonds (2009)	Examine FIFO stress and coping strategies of 28 FIFO couples (14 male, 14 female) and 7 single employees (6 male and 1 female) from Australian construction, offshore oil and gas, and mining industries	Findings indicated that, through the use of questionnaires, strong communication, cohesion and flexibility were key to healthy family functioning. Employment outside of home was associated with the age of children. Successful coping was linked with life stage, roster, and previous FIFO experience
Watts (2004)	Examine 33 FIFO employees, 28 partners of FIFO employees, 39 residential employees, 15 former FIFO workers, and 91 non-mining Pilbara community members to identify the impacts of FIFO employment in the Pilbara region of WA	Findings showed that the positive impacts of FIFO included personal growth of coping skills, role expansion in relationships, more time together with partner, and enhanced career opportunities and financial gains. The negatives included feelings of loneliness and isolation, depression, family difficulties, and marital problems

Gillies, Wu and Jones (1997), in their survey sample of 227 FIFO employees, found that approximately 30 per cent of the workers did not enjoy the FIFO lifestyle with a further 25 per cent claiming that their relationship with their partner was at a disadvantage as a result of the comings and goings associated with the job. The study, however, only sampled FIFO employees' and discussed their experiences, thus it was limited in that it did not address partners or family members of the FIFO employee who are also impacted, either directly or indirectly, by the FIFO lifestyle (Brotheridge & Lee, 2005).

Pollard (1990) interviewed both WA FIFO employees and their spouses and found that there were a number of added pressures placed on families as a result of the FIFO lifestyle. The spouse that was left at home, when the FIFO partner was on-site, became a sole parent and took on greater responsibility when the employee was away. Pollard (1990) claimed that, for some families, when the employee returned home it would be an inconvenience to the family as they became used to living in a single parent household structure when the employee was at work, so they had to continually re-adjust to the presence of the FIFO partner. Children, from Pollard's (1990) study, claimed it was a holiday every time their FIFO parent returned home as they had someone new to spend time with for the weekend or week that the employee was home. It became an abnormal family aspect and some couples felt their home lives were impacted significantly as a result. Pollard's (1990) research also showed that there were incidents of family violence, higher levels of divorce and parenting problems due to children struggling to identify their relationship with their parents. Young children especially became used to living with one parent for weeks at a time and found it difficult to adjust to the presence of the FIFO parent when they were home, as they were regularly absent from the child's life for extended periods at a time. Communication was said to be a key factor in reducing family disruption, however the availability of communication such as internet or phone access while on-site was, in some instances, limited. Some workers only have a short window of time, at the end of their shift, in which they are able to contact their partner or family (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015), thus highlighting the social impact the FIFO lifestyle can have on both FIFO employees and their loved ones.

3.5.2.1 FIFO Employees

Since the discovery of gold, mining has been a leading contributor to the WA economy (Blainey, 1994). As the industry continues to grow so does the demand for workers, with an annual average increase of 15 per cent, or about 5,500 new employees, entering into FIFO employment each year (Mining in WA: 2010 labour market overview, 2010). While employment increases, Keown (2005) claimed that the lifestyle of the FIFO employee has become less than adequate with job requirements being hazardous to their health and adjustment to the work environment

impractical. Using a combination of semi-structured interviews along with surveys, Keown (2005) conducted a study on general, psychological and social health of 510 male mining employees (362 residential and 148 FIFO employees) across 29 mining companies in the Eastern Goldfields region of WA. Through the use of health scales and questionnaires, Keown (2005) addressed issues pertaining to emotional and psychological distress, physical health and the influence these issues have on roles and responsibilities, sleep disturbance, social functioning, social support and the balance of work and family life. An additional 53 partners of residential employees completed questionnaires on their well-being. The research showed that there were no apparent differences between residential and FIFO employees on matters of physical health, chronic fatigue and the availability of support for employees and their families. FIFO employees, when compared to residential workers, were seen as having better coping strategies, were overall healthier, and had a lower risk of harming themselves from short or long term alcohol or drug consumption. However, FIFO employees were more inclined to experience higher levels of stress often leading to disruptions in their social life with co-workers and family. Similar to previous research by Adams (1991) and Pollard (1990), Keown (2005) found that certain employees expressed disliking the lifestyle but remained in the position due the financial benefits and strong remuneration associated with the job. This highlights the strength and motivational pull of the FIFO pay rate in regards to employee retention. The findings from Keown's (2005) research did present a sound summary of FIFO employee health that was highly comprehensive, however, due to the research being mainly descriptive, the data discussed was done through summary form and therefore made it difficult to analyse the findings in greater depth.

A study by Gent (2004) on 132 onshore and offshore FIFO employees found that there were no significant differences between the two employee types based on work and home satisfaction. However, differences were highlighted between the different swing and roster arrangements. Through the use of self-report instruments, Gent (2004) found that individuals working only day shifts experienced a higher level of job satisfaction than those working night shift or a combination of both. Furthermore, employees working on non-symmetrical rosters (e.g., more than three weeks on-site) experienced overall lower job satisfaction than those on a short swing. It should be noted that the swing did not impact life and relationship satisfaction but when

compared to established norms, married FIFO employees reported lower scores on dyadic consensus and satisfaction. Gent (2004) also claimed that FIFO employees with young children (i.e., under five years old) had lower relationship satisfaction with their children than those with teenagers or young adults. The positive aspects associated with the lifestyle included high financial gains, being able to separate work from home and having time to spend with family and friends. Negative aspects included long working hours, difficulties in forming new relationships, poor working conditions, and negotiating role duties while at home. Gent's (2004) research identified that the swing an individual was on, while not having any significant impact on life satisfaction, did influence their job satisfaction and organisational commitment, and employees that enjoyed their job had a better chance of adapting successfully to the FIFO lifestyle. However, the findings were not compared to that of the wider Australian population and certain aspects of the study, such as the statistical analysis, were based on relatively small cell sizes, thus our understanding of these impacts is limited.

Clifford (2009) investigated the short and long-term impacts of FIFO employment and extended working hours on 222 WA mining employees and their partners, with a further 32 participants from the sample volunteering to have their saliva tested each day throughout their regular roster. The findings showed that FIFO employment, given the abnormal working hours associated with the job, had a negative influence on job satisfaction and in the long-term were seen as being disruptive to the home domain and family time. Similar to Gent's (2004) research, the results also indicated that the swing an employee worked had no significant impact on their relationship with their partner. Clifford (2009) also found that there was no difference to individual stress levels and relationship satisfaction between FIFO employees and daily commuters. However, in regards to health characteristics, FIFO employees reported lower health outcomes than other sample groups. Furthermore, both FIFO employees and their partners tended to fluctuate in their satisfaction with the lifestyle throughout the duration of the swing cycle, often feeling least satisfied when the employee was about to leave for work. Clifford (2009) found that families commonly used adaptive coping strategies to manage stress associated with transitioning from home to work. The only weakness of the study was that participants were self-selected, thus limiting the analysis and findings to a specific group of people.

The WA Parliamentary committee found that FIFO employees who work non-symmetrical rosters and spend significantly more time on-site than at home can become disconnected from their family and potentially lose their sense of belonging due to a lack of physical contact and interaction with their partner or family (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). The committee recommends that workers have dedicated rooms in which they are able to have their own personal space while also being able to socialise with their neighbours, thus creating a home away from home. This removes the barrier preventing the creation of support networks, which are important given that male FIFO employees are more likely to seek support from family and co-workers instead of formal organisational support (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015).

Although previous studies have illustrated how different swing types, working environment, and support services impact FIFO employees, and in particular employee mental health, they all focused on detailing the experiences of conventional employees from traditional two-parent families. Furthermore, the House of Representatives standing committee on regional Australia states that there is a lack of research addressing the direct and indirect impacts of the FIFO lifestyle on FIFO employee health and well-being (House of Representatives, 2013). The present study provides an updated counterview to previous research by detailing the experiences of the FIFO lifestyle by non-traditional FIFO employees, especially those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, and how moderating variables, such as sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI), impact employees in terms of their daily routines both physically and psychologically.

3.5.2.2 FIFO Couples

There is a dearth of academic literature exploring the experiences of FIFO living by FIFO couples. A study by Reynolds (2004) on FIFO relationships revealed the complex nature such a lifestyle can have on couples. Interviewing 22 female partners of offshore FIFO employees, Reynolds (2004) identified a number of advantages and disadvantages of FIFO living. For example, women valued the time they had with

their partner when they were at home, independence when the partner was away, and the financial benefits of FIFO employment. The participants claimed it was easier to cope with the lifestyle when problems in the relationship were attributed to an outside source such as the FIFO job itself. Reynolds (2004) also found that the at-home partner constantly had to re-adjust to the shift arrangements of the employee and those without children were more prone to experiencing loneliness. FIFO families with teenagers or young adults living in the same household as their parents reported more negative experiences due to prolonged caring responsibilities when compared to those with younger children. Further, it was found that women employed away from home had higher levels of fatigue compared to those that were not employed outside their home. They took on more responsibility in terms of their job as well as having to fulfil home roles while the FIFO employee was on-site. However, the majority of sampled participants were satisfied with the benefits and costs associated with the FIFO lifestyle.

Using the circumplex model of family systems (Olson & Gorall, 2003), Taylor and Simmonds (2009) examined relationship satisfaction and well-being of 28 FIFO couples and seven single employees across different sectors of construction, oil and gas, and land-based mining. The circumplex model is a clinical and theoretical model that describes the relationship qualities that enable families to effectively manage change and stress in order to achieve family goals (Taylor & Simmonds, 2009). Although the sample size was not enough for a detailed statistical analysis, when compared to norms it did illustrate that strong communication, cohesion and flexibility were key to healthy family functioning. Similar to Reynolds (2004) research, Taylor and Simmonds (2009) also found that employment outside of home was influenced by the age of children. Mothers working part-time and having to take care of teenage children at home were impacted positively whereas full-time work made it more difficult to cope and balance both work and home roles. These findings show that partners of FIFO employees also seek paid employment to provide a sense of purpose. However, this type of living can lead to a higher risk of work overload when the FIFO partner is at home, thus limiting couples time together. According to Taylor and Simmonds (2009), previous experience, roster structure and life stage are all linked to how successful individuals are at coping with the FIFO lifestyle.

Research by Watts (2004), through the use of interviews and focus groups, highlighted the impact of FIFO employment in the Pilbara region of WA. Detailing the experiences of 33 FIFO employees (22 male and 11 female), 28 family members of the FIFO employees (two male and 26 female) and an additional 15 former FIFO employees (ten male and five female), Watts (2004) found that the positives of FIFO employment included improved personal coping skills, stronger relationship between couples, opportunities for career progression, and financial gains. The negatives were associated with loneliness due to isolation, feelings of guilt when leaving the family alone, and struggles with depression and family difficulties when employees worked longer swings that resulted in a lack of communication with their family. Watts (2004) also found that alcohol and drug use was common in the industry and often impacted personal well-being of workers.

Gallegos (2006), similar to other studies on FIFO employment, focused her research on the negative emotions that FIFO families' experience. Surveying 32 two-parent FIFO families with at least one child less than six years of age, Gallegos (2006) found that families who were able to allocate and manage roles, such as that of finance, parent and household responsibilities, were more successful at adapting to the FIFO lifestyle. Other studies (Gent, 2004; Reynolds, 2004; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009) showed that FIFO families with young children had more difficulties with the lifestyle than those with no children, however Gallegos's (2006) research illustrated that families with young children had a more unique style of coping and that families simply needed time to adjust to the FIFO lifestyle, claiming that the first few months of FIFO living were the most difficult. Gallegos's (2006) study was limited to a set range of negative emotions and as such did not explore all the emotions families go through during the comings and goings of the FIFO employee. For example, Gallegos (2006) claimed that when employees' were on-site they experienced feelings or loneliness and helplessness, however other studies (e.g., Gent, 2004; Pirotta, 2006; Sibbel, 2004) found that employees often experience a diverse range of both positive and negative emotions during time at work, such as feelings of relief typically associated with separation of work from home in which they are able to focus on their job (Gent, 2004), knowing that they don't have to directly deal with home issues while at work (Sibbel, 2004), and experiencing a sense of belonging as part of a wider community of workers (Pirotta, 2006). Similarly, Reynolds (2004) found that partners

of FIFO employees could experience positive emotions when they are alone due to an increase in independence and empowerment. Although Gallegos's (2006) research did provide some insight into the impacts of the FIFO lifestyle on FIFO families, it was limited in that it was based on a small sample in which the father was the FIFO employee and the mother the stay-at-home partner.

In assisting couples and families to better prepare themselves and understand the FIFO lifestyle experience, the WA Parliamentary committee recommended that mining companies implement on-site family days that allow employees' families to tour the on-site facilities (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). This gives families a better insight into employees' working environment and families learn more about the operations of the mine. Furthermore, the committee highlighted the benefits of using induction programs to help FIFO couples adjust to the lifestyle. These programs provide couples considering FIFO employment a more in-depth understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with FIFO working and living, as well as highlighting the necessary strategies and coping mechanisms needed to manage the demands of the FIFO lifestyle, thus better preparing them for the realities of FIFO employment (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015).

The majority of FIFO couples sampled in previous studies were aware of the challenges associated with FIFO employment and were able to adapt successfully to the lifestyle. Although the difficulties of separation and isolation were an issue for many of the participants, the strong remuneration and financial gains offered through FIFO employment ensured that employees and their families remained in the resources sector. However, previous research on FIFO couples, similar to research on FIFO employees, focused solely on conventional two-parent FIFO couples. Therefore there exists a gap in the research that is addressed in the present study as it details the experiences of couples from non-traditional FIFO households, such as individuals from LGBT backgrounds. It highlights their experience of the FIFO lifestyle by examining the different contextual factors and stressors associated with FIFO working and living that influence non-traditional FIFO couples.

3.5.2.3 Children from FIFO Families

Children from FIFO families are another area where there is limited academic research on the effects of FIFO employment. Beach (1999) interviewed ten employees and their families about the impact FIFO employment has on children and found that extended working hours with regular absence from home led to high levels of conflict between work and home domains, thus making family time unstable. Participants reported difficulties in successfully adapting to the FIFO lifestyle, as they had to prioritise their time around their children as well as the job. Each family interviewed claimed that a shorter roster, with equally divided time between home and work, would enable them to have healthier family functioning.

Sibbel (2001), in exploring the impact of FIFO father absence from home on school aged children, found no difference in regards to FIFO family functioning when compared to non-FIFO families. However, mothers from the study indicated that their family functioning and behaviour control was less than adequate, expressing concerns with a lack of communication, struggling to maintain a strong partner relationship, sharing of roles and responsibilities with their partner, and some claimed to be fearful of their safety when their partner was absent from home. Despite these perceptions of family functioning, children's well-being was not affected (Sibbel, 2001).

In developing a greater understanding of the experiences and views of children from FIFO families, Macbeth, Kaczmarek and Sibbel (2012) interviewed eight male teenagers with fathers involved in FIFO employment. While only a small sample, it did show that young adults, aged between 13 and 21 years old, were aware of the FIFO lifestyle and the financial benefits that it offered them and their family as a whole. The majority of those interviewed claimed that their father-son attachment grew stronger as a result of extended separation. Most children noted that their relationship with their father was the same as their friends who had non-FIFO fathers. They also claimed that their mother (at-home partner) often felt stressed due to the difficulties associated with greater role responsibility while their father was on-site. This is similar to previous research (Reynolds, 2004; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009) and is seen as a natural part of the FIFO lifestyle.

Lester, Waters, Spears, Epstein, Watson and Wenden (2015), in their study on parenting patterns of FIFO families, found that many families struggle to provide consistent parenting strategies due to the comings and goings of the FIFO parent. Based on a sample of 21 WA at-home parents with FIFO partners, 23 FIFO workers, and 41 adolescent children of FIFO parents, the study showed that FIFO families are typically unable to physically attend events or group parenting sessions and generally are reluctant to seek help with managing the difficulties associated with parental absence due to FIFO work. When compared to Australian normative data, the larger proportion of at-home and FIFO parents reported high levels of psychological distress (Lester et al., 2015). However, participants that had an equal amount of time at work and at home reported lower psychological distress, thus suggesting that a balance between the two domains can be more beneficial to FIFO families.

The federal inquiry into FIFO practices by the House of Representatives standing committee on regional Australia received conflicting evidence in relation to the impact a FIFO parent has on the well-being of children (House of Representatives, 2013). The benefits for children with a FIFO parent included having more options in terms of educational opportunities as families are based in major cities, more quality time to spend with the FIFO parent when the parent was at home, and children in their teenage years demonstrated greater independence and took on more responsibility around the household when their FIFO parent was on-site (House of Representatives, 2013). The negatives faced by children included a higher level of anxiety and depression when compared to children from residential families, having less interaction with their FIFO parent on a daily basis, and, similar to Pollard's (1990) findings, inconsistent expectations between the FIFO and at-home parent (House of Representatives, 2013). It is evident that there are both benefits and stressors specifically related to children from FIFO families. However, the House of Representatives standing committee noted that, due to a lack of research on children with a FIFO parent, it is difficult to make any conclusive statements on the benefits and needs of children from FIFO families (House of Representatives, 2013).

Although the present study does not specifically focus on children from FIFO families, it does highlight the impact a FIFO lifestyle has on children from both conventional and non-traditional FIFO family structures. Research has indicated a

correlation between children's behaviour and FIFO working arrangements (Robinson, Peetz, Murray, Griffin, & Muurlink, 2017), and this study will further add to this research and increase awareness for family support initiatives to be tailored towards families in such circumstances.

3.5.2.4 Choosing FIFO and FIFO Lifestyles

It is evident that, based on these studies, there are many negative as well as positive aspects associated with the FIFO lifestyle and people remain in FIFO employment for numerous reasons. Sibbel and Kaczmarek (2005), in their investigation of why people choose the FIFO option over alternatives such as residential or community employment, found that most employees made their choice based on a number of needs relating to remuneration, opportunities for advancement, working hours, and career opportunities for family members. The importance of these needs varied based on individual life stage, for example those that were about to start a family desired greater time to spend at home, whereas mature aged employees were more concerned with job security.

The Minerals Council of Australia (MCA) claimed that the FIFO lifestyle is generally adopted by individuals that are single and used the opportunity associated with a shorter roster to participate in sporting or social activities while in the metropolitan area; unmarried couples chose FIFO as a career and because the employment needs of their partner could also be accommodated; families that had children in their teenage years preferred FIFO as it allowed their children to have greater access to social activities, more secondary and tertiary education options, and their partners were more likely to have access to better career opportunities; however, families with young children, that require regular care, typically preferred to live locally as they needed to be with their children on a daily basis (MCA, 2011). Furthermore, many FIFO workers alternate between FIFO employment and regional residential living depending on their life stage, with a select number of employees claiming that they will remain in the resources sector until retirement (MCA, 2011). However, according to Sibbel and Kaczmarek (2005), the most important consideration when choosing a job, for both residential and FIFO employees, was the ability to maintain a healthy

balance between work and home domains. It should be noted that their research only focused on addressing FIFO employees, thus it was limited in that it did not explore how partners of employees contributed to such lifestyle choices.

In addition to life stage, the federal inquiry into FIFO practices by the House of Representatives standing committee on regional Australia found that the majority of people choose the FIFO lifestyle due to working hours that give FIFO employees a longer set of time to spend with their families while on their off schedule and partake in activities not available to those working traditional 9 to 5 employment; others chose FIFO due to the access it provides to various facilities and having the option to base their families in communities where there is greater availability of services such as schooling for their children, as well as remaining in their home city where they might have extended family and support networks; and some workers preferred the FIFO lifestyle as it does not impact on their partner's career outside of the home (House of Representatives, 2013).

The present study addresses the choice of FIFO employment by non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. It highlights the influence different family structures and backgrounds have on the choice of entering into the FIFO lifestyle. As such, the study is able to compare the reasoning behind the choice of FIFO employment by non-traditional FIFO families with those from conventional FIFO backgrounds. It considers the influence moderating variables, such as individual SO and GI, play in determining the choice to enter into the FIFO lifestyle.

3.6 Chapter Summary

The WA Parliamentary inquiry into fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) mental health concluded that FIFO employee demographic characteristics could increase the chances of employees developing a mental health problem, with young male workers at the greatest risk (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). However, according to other government and industry body, such as the Chamber of Minerals and Energy (CME, 2015) and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia (CCIWA, 2015), submissions into mental health difficulties associated with FIFO employment,

the mental health of workers was said to be no worse than the general Australian population based on differences in workforce demographic characteristics.

The literature analysing FIFO related mental health consequences has been mixed with some studies showing no indication of a correlation between FIFO work arrangements and poor mental health (Barclay et al., 2013; Sibbel, 2010), while others suggest that FIFO workers are more prone to high levels of poor mental health when compared to the general population (Velander, Schineanu, Liang, & Midford, 2010; Vojnovic & Bahn, 2015). Keown (2005) found no difference in the mental health of male residential and FIFO mining workers; Sibbel (2010) similarly found that both FIFO employees and their partners have healthy levels of psychological well-being; and Barclay et al (2013) found that FIFO workers have normal depression, anxiety and stress levels. Velander, Schineanu, Liang and Midford (2010) found that smoking, diabetes and anxiety was higher among FIFO employees than those from national rural and remote locations, while Vojnovic and Bahn (2015) found that FIFO employees were more likely to experience moderate to severe levels of depression, anxiety and/or stress.

The previous research primarily focused on male and conventional family structure employees, their partners and children, with limited studies examining women in mining and virtually no research on non-traditional FIFO family structures such as those consisting of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) individuals. Although the current body of research addressing FIFO related mental health should not be ignored, the WA Parliamentary inquiry (2015) suggests a need for further research in the area that addresses the changing Australian FIFO household structure and the impact FIFO related mental health issues have on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. The findings from previous research, consistent with recommendations made in the WA parliamentary inquiry (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015), suggest that although some organisations have been proactively implementing various programs to help mitigate mental health issues (Henry, Hamilton, Watson, & Macdonald, 2013), there is still a greater need for further support to alleviate mental health problems faced by FIFO employees.

International and Australian research on the FIFO lifestyle has detailed a number of benefits and opportunities associated with FIFO employment as well a number of negatives that come from FIFO living. The majority of previous studies suggest that FIFO families are generally accepting of the lifestyle and are able to cope, through the use of different strategies, with FIFO demands and challenges. Common FIFO benefits included high remuneration, extended family time, personal independence and empowerment, separation of work from home, and having the option to choose where to live (Pollard, 1990; Storey, Shrimpton, Lewis, & Clark, 1989). Some FIFO couples took advantage of the time apart to reflect on their own relationship, develop strategies to cope with the transition of roles associated with the comings and goings of the FIFO partner, and enhance their appreciation for one another (Clark & Taylor, 1988; Forsyth & Gauthier, 1991). The lifestyle also improved communication between couples as most set-aside specific times during the day or week for telephone calls (Reynolds, 2004). The negatives of the lifestyle ranged from geographical isolation and extended separation leading to higher levels of loneliness for both the FIFO employee and their at-home partner, increased levels of depression and feelings of guilt, sense of disconnection with family, and relationship difficulties when employees worked non-symmetrical rosters (Clifford, 2009; Gent, 2004; Watts, 2004).

The review of previous academic literature also highlighted a number of different employment types, with the majority of studies focusing specifically on addressing the impact of the lifestyle on conventional FIFO employees and families. Many of those sampled throughout these studies reported overall satisfaction with the FIFO lifestyle, however stressors relating to relationships, role responsibilities, working environment, social isolation and health concerns were identified, suggesting that the lifestyle, in certain instances, could be more difficult for the at-home partner than the FIFO employee. Life stage, working conditions, and access to resources were viewed as necessities for the successful adoption of the lifestyle. However, due to the limited number of studies, our understanding of the FIFO lifestyle, and the impact it has on FIFO employees and their families, is still in need of further analysis, as many of the cited studies had very small samples and were conducted at no point in time.

While a growing body of research detailing the impacts of FIFO exists and continues to expand, there are a scarce number of studies that address these impacts on minority groups or non-traditional family structures that are becoming more common across Australian households. Minority groups involved in the resources sector are not only at risk of mental health issues but are also more likely to exhibit an array of psychological difficulties as they work in highly heterosexual male dominate environments. As a result of their on-site social and work environment they have a greater chance of experiencing mental health difficulties due to discrimination and prejudice they face almost daily. By exploring non-traditional FIFO families this study, through the use of the Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework (Hobfoll, 1989) in conjunction with the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, is able to make comparisons that could help highlight factors causing the most harm to FIFO employee and partner mental health, and potentially detail ways to mitigate stressors that result from work and home demands. This gap in literature needs addressing as the data can be essential in informing the development of support for non-traditional FIFO employees and their partner's social and emotional needs.

This study, through the use of a blended paradigm consisting of elements from interpretivism, constructivism and realism, provides an updated view on the FIFO lifestyle and adds to further research in the area of FIFO employment. It provides an additional layer to previous research by detailing the impact of FIFO working and living on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. Furthermore, it highlights how moderating variables, such as individual sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI), influence employees and their partners both physically and psychologically, and how different contextual factors, as well as stressors, of the lifestyle impact non-traditional family experiences of FIFO working and living. It also addresses how different family structures and backgrounds impact the choice of whether to enter into FIFO employment, and how much of an influence gender plays in determining this choice. This additional layer to previous FIFO research can help increase awareness of the social and emotional needs of FIFO families and potentially lead to the development of family support initiatives that are tailored towards families from different backgrounds, household structures and life stage.

Chapter 4
Australian LGBT Individuals and Families

4.1 Introduction

The body of literature exploring sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI) is continually growing and in recent years has focused on highlighting the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees in the workplace. However, compared to international studies, there has been significantly less Australian research on the topic and little is known about the way disclosure of SO or GI influence individuals and families at work and home. The dedicated Australian academic literature that exists focuses on a varying number of discriminatory and prejudicial aspects faced by LGBT employees and as such, due the broad range of studies with limited focus, does not offer a unifying framework by which research can be guided. The following details Australian LGBT literature and highlights the gap in current studies examining LGBT employees and their families in relation to FIFO employment. It is important to examine this research in the present study, as this study is one of the first to detail the relationship between FIFO employment and LGBT employee and partner lives. There is no hard evidence or research that details these experiences, however there does exist a considerable amount of literature that focuses on LGBT employees in general and more specifically on LGBT parenting practices, children from LGBT families, and help-seeking behaviours. The following review provides an in-depth view on the difficulties and challenges faced by LGBT individuals working and living in Australia.

The following chapter is separated into a number of sections that cover various LGBT literature themes. Firstly, heterosexism is addressed in relation to this study. Second, a literature review is conducted on relevant Australian LGBT literature. Australian LGBT FIFO families are detailed before LGBT in Western Australia (WA) is discussed. Finally, the diversification of family types is discussed in relation to LGBT parenting and family literature and specific LGBT parenting research findings.

4.2 Heterosexism

Negative social attitudes towards lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals are commonly referred to as homophobia. Although not a phobia in the literal sense, it is a common term describing the social description of daily tension surrounding sexual identity that is widespread among heterosexuals (Flood & Hamilton, 2005). However, numerous researchers (Herek, 1988, 1990; Neisen, 1990; Waldo, 1999) have argued towards the use of heterosexism as a more appropriate term due to it encompassing broader issues of social inequality that is evident across various workplace and interpersonal relationships. Sexual or gender diversity can also lead to considerable issues pertaining to individual stigmatisation not only in the workplace but also in society (Berkley & Watt, 2006; Dawson, 2005; Ragins, Singh, & Cornwell, 2007), and even with legislation (Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission [HREOC], 2007) and trade union participation (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2007). As such, heterosexism is more than a fear of homosexuality as it includes fears pertaining to social factors that are reflective of cultural values and norms.

Waldo (1999) suggests that heterosexism is normalised through the belief that each individual is heterosexual and that heterosexual people are viewed on a higher level than those from non-heterosexual backgrounds. Herek (1992) notes that heterosexism is an ideological system that stigmatises any behaviour, identity, relationship or community that aligns with non-heterosexual values or beliefs, thus illustrating the ongoing discrimination faced by LGBT individuals. The present study addressed heterosexism in the resources sector where heterosexuality is predominate. In addition to being sexual minorities, a number of the sampled participants from this study were also part of racial, ethnic or cultural minorities. As a result, they experienced a considerably higher degree of perceived stress because not only were they socially isolated due to their sexuality but also because they came from different racial or ethnic backgrounds.

According to Meyer (2003), when perceived stress is combined with a discriminatory work environment, psychological well-being is likely to deteriorate and potentially lead to mental health problems or illness. The consequences of disclosing individual sexual orientation (SO) or gender identity (GI) to workplace colleagues has been linked to higher levels of discrimination in the workplace, despite legislation and

government policies that address anti-discrimination (Barrett, Lewis, & Dwyer, 2011). Discrimination towards LGBT individuals can increase individual isolation, fear, anger and expectations of rejection and prejudice (Hatzenbuehler, 2009; Liao, Kashubeck-West, Weng, & Deitz, 2015; Meyer, 2003). Social relationships are essential in helping mitigate any stress issues that might arise from heterosexism, as regular contact with individuals from minority groups can make them feel welcomed and part of the work team, thus potentially lowering negative attitudes and discrimination. When the workplace climate is discriminatory it can shape the intra-organisational network circle, thus influencing the quality of work-life experienced by LGBT employees (Trau, 2015). Although the complex nature of stigmatisation in the workplace can be challenging, the organisational climate can be controlled through appropriate human resource policies and practices. Policies relating to equality and diversity for example, if implemented effectively at all levels of the organisation, could enable organisations to capitalise on the knowledge and talents held by their diverse workforce (Trau, 2015).

The legislative and policy framework concerning SO and GI equality and discrimination has undergone a transformation in many parts of the world (Elliot & Bonauto, 2005; Waaldijk & Bonini-Baraldi, 2006; Hunt & Eaton, 2007), and organisations have begun to include SO and GI in their equality policies (Kersley et al., 2006). However, sexual minorities still commonly face discrimination due to their SO or GI (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2007; Denvir, Broughton, Gifford, & Hill, 2007; Guiffre, Dellinger, & Williams, 2008), and in Australia, legislation prohibits sexuality-based employment discrimination, yet federal protection is limited (HREOC, 2007). In 2007, the HREOC released the *Same-Sex, Same Entitlements* report that highlighted 58 pieces of Australian Federal Government legislation that discriminated against sexual minorities in the workplace by denying them equal access to the entitlements received by heterosexual employees (HREOC, 2007). In response, the Australian Federal Labor Government, as headed by Prime Minister Kevin Rudd, amended legislative definitions of relationships in over 84 Commonwealth laws (Australian Government, Attorney General's Department, 2008). The importance of legislation at a federal level has been detailed through research on gay men which found that gay men in the workplace earn a decrement relative to married heterosexual men (Arabsheibani, Marini, & Wadsworth, 2005;

Burdge, 2009; Embrick, Walther, & Wickens, 2007; Plug & Berkhout, 2004). This discrepancy can be attributed to social desirability rather than real attitude change toward sexual minorities (Embrick, Walther, & Wickens, 2007). Although anti-discrimination legislation has made it illegal in some instances to discriminate against sexual minorities, long-standing social attitudes towards sexual minorities may be more resistant to the acceptance of such change (Willis, 2009). While some social change is documented, complete social approval of all forms of sexuality remains relatively scarce in Western societies.

A limited number of studies have addressed the effects of LGBT non-discrimination policies on business outcomes. Johnston and Malina (2008) investigated the financial effects of LGBT-friendly policies on organisational value by examining the relationship between firms' value and firms' stock market value in relation to the extent to which these firms manage equality and diversity in the workplace. Although the research failed to uncover any evidence to suggest an association, their findings indicate that, at worst, LGBT-friendly policies are neutral. In addition, they suggest that the organisation is not penalised for supporting SO diversity. Unlike the study conducted by Johnston and Malina (2008), Wang and Schwarz (2010) examined the long-term effects of equality policies on organisational stock price valuations to determine whether publicly traded firms that possessed greater quality policies generated higher stock values when compared to firms with limited or less-favourable policies. They found that firms with LGBT-friendly policies had a stronger corporate image and reputation because of their fair and equal treatment of all individuals regardless of sexuality. This, in turn could attract a wider pool of skilled job candidates from within the LGBT community, thus generating a recruitment advantage.

According to Colgan, Creegan, McKearney and Wright (2007), trade unions are broadly welcoming of any regulation that helps assist them in bargaining for LGBT members. However, although trade unions have become more supportive of many of the equality and diversity initiatives pertaining to LGBT groups, their involvement by organisations is variable (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2007). For example, many trade union groups have reported difficulties in securing participation of LGBT sub-groups in organisational initiatives, thus illustrating a hesitation or a

"hidden" nature associated with the working LGBT population, even in organisations where trade unions have strived to implement equality and diversity policies and practices. The level of participation is even lower in work environments that are more orientated towards male employment, such as those within the mining industry, where LGBT employees are less likely to be visible and vocal in the workplace (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2006), due to a fear of heterosexism.

Heterosexsim at work has the potential to damage relationships LGBT individuals have with their workplace. Stressors resulting from heterosexism can drain energy and motivation to complete tasks while on-site, lower willingness to work as a team and collaborate with other co-workers, and lead to higher levels of loneliness (Liddle, Luzzo, Hauenstein, & Schuck, 2004). Daily experiences of discrimination or prejudice have also been linked to poorer psychosocial health (King, Semlyen, Tai, Killaspy, Osborn, Popelyuk, & Nazareth, 2008), physical health (Denton, Rostosky, & Danner, 2014) and well-being (Schmitt, Branscombe, Postmes, & Garcia, 2014). The present study adds to previous research by examining the impact between heterosexist behaviour and attitudes to fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) LGBT employees at the workplace, and how this influences their perceived stress and well-being.

4.3 Australian LGBT Literature Review

In one of the largest Australian studies (n = 900) on workplace experiences of lesbian women, gay men and transgender employees, Irwin (1999) found that 59 per cent of participants felt they had been a victim or had experienced some form of heterosexism, on the basis of their sexual orientation (SO) and/or gender identity (GI), at the workplace. 50 per cent were publicly ridiculed by their fellow co-workers and 97 per cent noted issues with daily on-going harassment and the influences this had on their behaviour and actions whilst at work, their interaction with other employees, and the way they viewed themselves as a person. Some participants claimed they were victims of both verbal and physical abuse, sexual assault, had their property damaged or homophobic slurs directed towards them. They also believed that prejudice towards them was high with unreasonable work expectations, sabotage and unrealistic roster structures. Several participants highlighted that work entitlements received by heterosexuals, such as partner travel, were denied to them and 41 per cent

felt that their GI and homosexuality were the main reason for their dismissal from the workplace. Compared to just over 67 per cent of lesbian women and 57 per cent of gay men, Irwin (1999) found that 75 per cent of transgender individuals were more likely to experience workplace discrimination. As a result of heterosexism, many participants identified issues pertaining to stress, depression, substance abuse and suicidal tendencies. This is similar to research by Bagley and Tremblay (1997) who, in their sample of 750 Canadian males aged 18-27 years, found a strong correlation between homosexuality and suicide, with 62.5 per cent of homosexually orientated males claiming that they attempted suicide as a result of their SO. Irwin (1999) also adds that, as individuals are preoccupied with discrimination and prejudice, workplace performance drops and absenteeism increases. While Irwin's (1999) study is one of the largest in Australia, it was limited in that it used non-probability sampling as well as having an absence of bisexual employees that would have provided for a more in-depth understanding on experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) individuals at the workplace. It is still, however, one of the more detailed studies and has provided a foundation of research on the issue of transphobic discrimination at the workplace.

Furthermore, in relation to gendered patterns of employment, LGBT employees in general report higher levels of formal discrimination on the basis of their SO or GI in comparison to heterosexual employees (Ozeren, 2014). For example, they are more likely to experience career difficulties in terms of finding employment, especially in relation to promotion barriers for those that are employed, due to their sexuality. When compared to their heterosexual counterparts, they are also more likely to have unequal wages, and be excluded from other benefits (Ozeren, 2014). This not only impacts the LGBT employee but also the wider organisation in which they work, as it can lead to low morale thus in turn reducing productivity caused by discrimination against sexual minorities (Poe, 1996).

Research by the Department of Health and Human Services of Tasmania (DHHS, 2003) found that suicide, alcohol and substance abuse was higher among LGBT individuals compared to the heterosexual population. Sampling 131 LGBT employees, the findings showed that 40 per cent suffered from some form of depression as a direct result of being subjected to discrimination and harassment. The

issue of suicide, as highlighted in chapter three, becomes an even greater mental barrier in the mining industry where it is considered a workplace hazard (Parliament of Western Australia, 2015). Therefore, LGBT individuals working in FIFO employment could have more difficulty managing these mental hurdles when compared to their heterosexual FIFO counterparts. Furthermore, the DHHS (2003) showed 71 per cent of lesbian women, 31 per cent of gay men, 33 per cent of bisexuals and 27 per cent of transgender employees were not willing to disclose their SO or GI to their employer and co-workers due to a fear of being discriminated against. This is similar to research by McNair and Thomacos (2005), who sampled 652 (90% gay and lesbian and 5.5% bisexual) employees from the Melbourne metropolitan area, which showed 75 per cent of participants concealed their SO to avoid discrimination. 81.5 per cent of lesbian women and 79.4 per cent of gay men claimed to have been harassed and insulted because of their GI. 68 per cent of the bisexual participants experienced verbal abuse and indirect insults, and 13 per cent were sexually assaulted (McNair & Thomacos, 2005). The choice of SO or GI disclosure becomes an even greater issue when applied to the FIFO employment context. The consequences of disclosure can be severe in terms of the mental impact it could have on LGBT employee experiences working in FIFO employment, as it can lead to feelings of vulnerability or inequality. Furthermore, disclosure or concealment of SO or GI could impact on well-being, job and life satisfaction and mental health, with many participants across the aforementioned studies reporting heterosexism as being the main cause of negative job attitudes and high absenteeism (Day & Schoenrade, 2000). These findings also suggest that because SO and GI are not readily observable, discrimination requires knowledge of employee orientation, thus the potential to discriminate is presumed to be higher when non-heterosexual employees disclose their SO or GI to other co-workers or their employer. However, research studies have been highly standardised having only explored typical white and blue-collar business environments. Further research into more male dominate workplaces, such as those in the mining industry, could provide for greater rigor in research and lead to a better understanding of the impacts this type of environment can have on LGBT employees and their families.

It is alarming that in today's society, with legislative rights available, studies still indicate a strong correlation between heterosexism and organisational distress

associated with SO and GI. The majority of studies have illustrated that discrimination is still an issue and the psychological health and well-being of non-heterosexual employees are being impacted negatively, and as a result are negatively influencing their work and home life. While many Australian organisations comply with workplace legislations, it is evident that LGBT employees are still experiencing challenges pertaining to both direct and indirect discrimination. Therefore, a need exists to understand the complex nature of SO and GI and how minority groups are impacted from working in highly male dominate environments where research indicates that disclosure or concealment of SO or GI can impact on individual satisfaction and well-being (Cain, 1991). The present study addresses this gap to provide a better understanding of the impact FIFO employment can have on non-heterosexual FIFO employees and their partners.

4.4 Australian LGBT FIFO Families

This study focused on addressing the experiences of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and families that considered themselves a part of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community working in the Western Australian (WA) resources sector. Such a group has been virtually left absent from all previous FIFO-related literature, and it is often the side of FIFO employment that gets overlooked in academic research. LGBT is a recognisable acronym referring to a collective group of people that identify themselves as non-heterosexual and gender diverse. It is difficult to define this group under a single definition as the meaning of terms differs from person to person and is interpreted differently depending on individual context. Therefore, no one acronym can reflect such a diverse group of individuals. However, for the purpose and scope of the present study all non-heterosexual participants are identified under the LGBT umbrella. It is also important to note that a person's gender identity (GI) does not relate to their sexual orientation (SO), and the challenges faced by lesbian women may differ to those faced by gay males or transgender individuals. Therefore, this study is inclusive not only of lesbian, gay and bisexual people but also of transgender individuals.

Since the 1970s and in the last 30 years the Australian household has experienced steady shift in family types and the diversification of a wider range of family

structures. The conventional nuclear mother and father two-parent household has been broadened to encompass a wider range of family types that include single-parent families, blended families and families where the child was conceived through reproductive technologies, among others (de Vaus, 2004; McNair, 2004; Wise, 2003). There are an increasing number of babies being born into a family with one or more same-sex parents (ABS, 2011). Based on her review of research on gay and lesbian families, Millbank (2003) found that 50-70 per cent of children raised in Australian lesbian-parented households were children born into the relationship. In these family types each couple is able to give birth to more than one child and as such would be constituted through blended or step-parents. Fostering and adoption has also led to an increase in the number of non-heterosexual parents, but as Duffey (2007) notes there are still a considerable number of adoption laws that place restrictions on same-sex couples adopting children.

Similar to the wider Australian population, LGBT families are diverse with different cultural, racial and class backgrounds. The main difference between non-heterosexual and heterosexual families is that the former live in a legal, social and discursive context in which discrimination and prejudice on parents' sexuality is a feature of daily life.

4.5 LGBT in Western Australia

Compared to other Australian states and jurisdictions, Western Australia (WA), prior to 2001, was less welcoming and progressive on gay and lesbian rights with no pre-existing anti-discrimination protection based on gender identity (GI) and sexual orientation (SO) (Millbank, 2006). According to Millbank (2006), when the state implemented the 1989 Law Reform (Decriminalisation of Sodomy) Act it decriminalised gay sex, making it unlawful to promote or encourage homosexual behaviour. Additionally, this act set a five-year age difference for consenting homosexual sex compared with heterosexual sex (21 as opposed to 16 years old). This decision also impeded safe-sex education campaigns, thus making it difficult for young homosexual individuals to learn about safe-sex.

Not until 2001 when the Labor Party was elected did the Government establish a Ministerial Committee to address inequality in laws regarding gay and lesbian rights. According to Millbank (2006a), in June of that year a number of changes were implemented, one of which included a more gender-neutral definition of de facto relationships in all WA laws, as well as equalisation of the age of consent (Dharmananda & Kendall, 2001). As a result, a de facto relationship was defined as "a relationship (other than legal marriage) between two persons who live together in a marriage-like relationship" (Western Australian Bills - Commonwealth Powers Bill, 2005).

Unlike other Australian states, WA has its own family court that allowed non-heterosexual couples into the family law system (Western Australian Numbered Acts - Family Court Amendment Act, 2002). Furthermore, WA also included adoption law in its reforms thus allowing for same-sex couples (that have cohabited for three or more years) to apply for the adoption of unrelated children (Millbank, 2006b). These reforms by the state government have been one of the most extensive in Australian history, covering every area of law in WA that concerns relationships. However, the Liberal party has vowed to repeal the 2002 reforms, further highlighting the continual difficulties faced by the Australian lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community.

4.6 Diversification of Family Types

Over the last forty years the traditional conventional Australian family structure has changed significantly leading to a rapid increase in diversification of family types in Western society. This change in family types has led to a growing number of studies on family diversification that is reviewed in the current chapter. The following explores lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) literature relating to parenting and families, comparative research of non-heterosexual and heterosexual parents and couples, research on children of same-sex couples, discrimination and prejudice, same-sex relationships, and studies on help-seeking behaviours.

The heterosexual two-parent nuclear family is slowly becoming out-dated with the diversification and recognition of wider non-traditional family types that include

single parent families, step-parent families, blended families, same-sex families and families with children conceived through reproductive technologies (de Vaus, 2004; McNair, 2004; Wise, 2003). One of the main contributing factors to diversification has been a direct result of the "lesbian baby boom" or "gayby boom" that occurred in the 1970s and has continued to intensify immensely over the last few years (Patterson, 1995). As such, there are an increasing number of children in same-sex families of which are predominately female as both partners are capable of conceiving a baby naturally or through advanced technologies. Millbank (2003) states that 50-70 per cent of children in today's society that are raised in lesbian same-sex households are born into the family. These family types can also be constituted through step-parent or blended families that can potentially involve multiple parents as one or both of the parents could be divorced from their previous relationship, which may have been of a heterosexual nature. Similar to heterosexual families, non-heterosexual family types often change overtime and develop through the adult member's relationships as well as the needs of the child. Gay men have also become parents through surrogacy or co-parenting arrangements with single women or lesbian couples. However, while many gay men desire the parenting role there are still relatively few in Australia with children when compared to lesbian women with children (McNair, 2004). Although the exact reason for this remains unclear, the often discriminative and prejudicial society that the LGBT community lives in might be cause for such patterns.

Research on non-traditional families and family structure has steadily increased since diverse family forms became more common and visible in today's society. One of the main drivers behind studies on non-traditional family types has been growing concern expressed by families from LGBT households pertaining to poor public perception of the LGBT community, issues with discrimination and prejudice that result from such unawareness, and lack of Government support or acknowledgement of the same-sex community. The idea that non-traditional and same-sex families are not considered 'real' family types when compared to conventional two-parent mother and father family types, and that children in such families are treated differently, is a concern among many researchers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Millbank, 2003; Rickard, 2002). In Australia, since the early 1990s, discrimination through family-law has justified that children are more successful in life when they have both a mother and father figure present in their lives (Flood, 2003). Millbank (2003) notes that policies preventing

same-sex parenting only exist because the Australian Government considers same-sex parenting suspect and harmful to children.

4.6.1 LGBT Parenting and Family Literature

The LGBT community has been the focus of many studies, by numerous political scientists, psychologists, academics and health and family researchers, that have included comparative research on parenting across different family types and the impact this has on children; exploratory research on overall family life with a strong focus on the social and legislative context; and theoretical critiques on assumptions of non-heterosexual parenting. The amount of comparative research available and still being conducted is extensive having impacted public policy and legal reform both nationally and internationally. Furthermore, current literature on lesbian-parented families exceeds that of gay-parented families, bisexual families and transgender families.

4.6.1.1 Comparative Research

Comparative research on LGBT families to date has focused on comparing both single and partnered lesbian mothers with heterosexual mothers, fathers and social norms (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Dunne, 2000; Millbank, 2003). There have also been a small number of studies examining the difference between gay fathers with heterosexual fathers and select few studies have compared gay with lesbian parenting (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Bigner & Jacobson, 1989; Ryan-Flood, 2005; Tasker, 2005). These studies, along with other forms of research on same-sex parenting, have highlighted that sexual orientation (SO), gender identity (GI), biological relation to child and family type all influence parenting practices and outcomes. Through the use of standardised interviews, psychological inventories, reports, psychiatric ratings, analysis diaries and observational tools, researchers have been able to undertake extensive analysis of non-traditional family types. While earlier studies relied on convenience and volunteer sampling to gather data, many of the researchers, in the last 20 years, have

been able to match groups systematically, thus allowing for a more refined comparison of data while accessing a vast number of participants.

4.6.1.2 Exploratory Research

The biggest area of concentrated LGBT-related research is focused around a vast array of aspects on lesbian-parented families that include the decision-making process in regards to having a child (Almack, 2006; Touroni & Coyle, 2002); legislative and political descriptions of family life (Benkov, 1994, 1998; Nelson, 1996); the impact of laws on family formulation (Griffin, 1998; Ryan-Flood, 2005); understanding communication associated with family life (Donovan, 2000; Dunne, 2000; Hequembourg, 2004); the use of terms and language significance (Almack, 2005; Brown & Perlesz, 2007); experiences with finding suitable donors (Dempsey, 2005; Ripper, 2007); children's relationships with extended family members (Patterson, Hurt, & Mason, 1998); social support (Speziale & Gopalakrishna, 2004); and lesbian parented step-families (Hall & Kitson, 2000; Wright, 1990).

In relation to gay male parenting, researchers have explored aspects regarding the decision-making process of adopting/having a child (Beers, 1996; Sbordone, 1993); satisfaction levels (McPherson, 1993); experiences of the adoption process (Hicks, 1996); children's experiences living with gay men (Barrett & Tasker, 2001; Mallon, 2004); social support following adoption of children (Erich, Leung, Kindle, & Carter, 2005); and fatherhood practices (Silverstein, Auerbach, & Levant, 2002).

The findings from these studies have directly or indirectly illustrated discrimination, prejudice, and difficulties faced by individuals from non-traditional family backgrounds. They have also highlighted the strengths developed by such families through the use of resources, quality of family relationships, commitment, social support and feelings of connectedness with family, workplace and community members. These studies have explored how and why LGBT families function so highly, in comparison to conventional two-parent mother and father family types, despite discrimination and prejudice directed towards them (Connolly, 2005; Hequembourg & Farrell, 1999; Kershaw, 2000; Lambert, 2005; McNair, 2004).

4.6.1.3 Discursive Research

Along with comparative research and exploratory studies of non-heterosexual parented families there exists a body of research conducted by psychologists that have analysed the assumptions parents, researchers and academics make when discussing LGBT families, especially lesbian and gay parented couples. One of the major issues when examining same-sex parenting relates to the expectation that lesbian and gay parents must conform to a parenting model that privileges heterosexual families (Clarke, 2002). Clarke (2000b, 2002) claims that heterosexual families are seen as the 'gold standard' and that non-heterosexual families are just like them through the notion of sameness, thus discounting differences faced by same-sex individuals. Essentially, it is a denial of difference that leads to non-heterosexual families adopting a defensive or apologetic framework when discussing parenting issues and practices (Clarke & Kitzinger, 2004). This results in same-sex couples and parents having to prove that they are just as capable of parenting a child as heterosexual couples and parents. Furthermore, Clarke (2002) suggests that this encourages non-heterosexual families to be less inclined to voice their opinions and simply accept parenting practices that they view as oppressive.

In dispelling myths about homosexuality, research often compartmentalises the experiences of non-heterosexual people (Malone & Cleary, 2002). However, this only serves to benefit and give priority to heterosexual parents through discouragement of the aspects that shape same-sex relationships. By completely dismissing sexuality in LGBT research it promotes a model of what is considered a 'perfect' non-heterosexual parent (Malone & Cleary, 2002), thus discouraging individuals and families to speak out about the negatives of parenting they have or are experiencing.

Current research on LGBT individuals and families has moved from examining the suitability of parenting to exploring why these questions were asked in the first place. The studies to date have illustrated the difficulties faced by non-heterosexual people and the need for further research on parenting to address how these aspects work in harmony together, and how other races, gender and ethnic groups influence non-

heterosexual parenting, as previous studies have primarily focused on white middle-class LGBT parents (Riggs, 2006b).

4.6.2 Specific LGBT Parenting Research Findings

In recent years researchers have found that same-sex parenting is no different to heterosexual parenting but may also be, in certain aspects, better (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Kershaw, 2000; McNair, 2004; Millbank, 2003; Patterson, 2000; Tasker, 2005). For example, while researching the division of labour between lesbian and gay co-parents, Millbank (2003) found that there is far greater equality and sharing of roles and responsibilities between non-heterosexual parents compared to heterosexual parents, thus leading to better partner relations and in turn creating positive child adjustment. Johnson and O'Connor (2002) claim that same-sex parents are more responsive to their children and the children's needs, which are characteristics of a positive child outcome. Stacey, in Cooper and Cates (2006, p. 34), adds that non-heterosexual parents are as effective and successful as heterosexual parents at managing their children's lives, as children from such family types are as healthy and socially adjusted as those from non-heterosexual families. Even in the midst of discrimination and prejudice these families continue to strive (Patterson, 2000). They are surrounded by an environment that disavows their union, challenges their rights, questions their parenting abilities and denies them basic legal protections, yet they still manage to have nurturing and caring families that raise well-functioning and socially tolerant children (Parks, 1998).

4.6.2.1 Division of Care and Involvement

Research concerning the equality of child care in lesbian-parented families has been extensive with results suggesting that the non-birth mother's involvement in child care is the same as the birth mother's and considerably higher than that of a heterosexual father (Ciano-Boyce & Shelley-Sires, 2002; Dunne, 2000; McNair, 2004; Millbank, 2003; Patterson & Chan, 1999; Tasker & Golombok, 1998). Similarly, research on gay parenting has found similar results to research on lesbian parenting, with parenting equitability being at a higher level among gay parents when

compared to heterosexual parents, although slightly less equitable than lesbian parents (McPherson, 1993; Patterson & Chan, 1999). Furthermore, studies have illustrated that non-heterosexual partners show far greater equality to one another than heterosexual partners it terms of role and responsibility division (Herek, 2006). Studies by Craig (2003) and Howard (2003) found that in conventional two-parent family households women take on the majority of child caring responsibilities. Even in separated heterosexual families the mother still undertakes the majority of parental duties with more than one third of Australian separated fathers having no physical contact with their children (Flood, 2003). This is similar to research by Murray, Peetz and Muurlink (2017), who found that female employees involved in the mining industry were also more likely than males to have greater responsibility for the majority of childcare. Therefore, they were more likely to have their request for flexible work granted when compared to their male counterparts, thus reinforcing the gender division of home responsibilities (Murray, Peetz, & Muurlink, 2017).

A study on three types of two-parent families (lesbian couples with children conceived through donor insemination, heterosexual couples with children conceived through donor insemination, and heterosexual couples with children conceived through conventional methods) with children whose average age was six years old found that the majority of birth mothers from female couples reported their partner having the same amount involvement in the child's life as the birth mother (Tasker & Golombok, 1998). A similar study using the same family types, from Belgium, found that the non-birth mother was actually more involved in the child's life than a biological father or gay fathers that had adopted a child (Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997). Even in Chan, Brooks, Raboy and Patterson's (1998) study, on participants that conceived their child via donor insemination, female couples were more equitable in role sharing as well as being more involved in child care when compared to parents from heterosexual families. Furthermore, studies have found that the level of involvement of non-birth mothers in caring for the child were at the same level of biological mothers (Chan, Brooks, Raboy, & Patterson, 1998; McNair, 2004; Millbank, 2003). Additionally, Golombok, Perry, Burston, Murray, Mooney-Somers, Stevens and Golding (2003) found no difference between non-birth mothers and lesbian stepmothers in regards to how emotionally involved they were in the child's life. Australian research has also shown that stepmothers from lesbian

families are less inclined to share equal role in parenting with the lesbian birth mother when compared to stepmothers from heterosexual families (Brown & Perlesz, 2007).

Based on these studies it is evident that parenting patterns are allocated differently between same-sex and opposite-sex couples. Furthermore, research has shown that the income earner role from a non-heterosexual family type is undertaken more equally between partners than what it is in a heterosexual family. Research has found that both same-sex partners generally undertake less than full time employment and rotate the role of income earner between one another so that they both have an equal amount of time to care for their children as well as earn a healthy income (Dunne, 2000; Millbank, 2003; Sullivan, 1996).

4.6.2.2 Parenting Practices

Research has shown that parents from non-heterosexual family backgrounds, although having the same parenting duties as those from heterosexual families, face different and more severe challenges not typically associated with heterosexual parents. Becoming a same-sex parent in Australia is more difficult than in other countries where same-sex laws are less strict. However, when comparing the two parenting types, research has indicated that there is no difference in the parenting style adopted by non-heterosexual parents compared to heterosexual parents, and that in certain instances the quality of lesbian and gay parenting practices is often higher than heterosexual parenting (Brewaeys, 2001; Stacey & Biblarz, 2001).

4.6.2.2.1 Parenting Practices of Lesbian Couples

Literature on parenting practices is primarily focused on comparing lesbian couples with heterosexual couples and the difference in overall parenting quality between mothers (heterosexual, lesbian, single or partnered) and heterosexual fathers (Biblarz & Stacey, 2010; Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997; Millbank, 2003). In these studies, women have reported higher levels of involvement in child care compared to men, with the quality of interaction between mother and child in lesbian families being superior to fathers in heterosexual and even non-heterosexual families

(Brewaeys, Ponjaert, Van Hall, & Golombok, 1997). Through the use of a Parent Awareness Skills Survey (PASS), Flaks, Ficher, Masterpasqua and Joseph (1995) found that from their sample of 30 lesbian and heterosexual parent couples that lesbian couples were more aware of the skills needed for effective parenting and problem solving. Lesbian parents in comparison to heterosexual fathers and mothers were also less likely to endorse or use physical punishment, were more engaged in domestic play, and less gender-stereotypical when purchasing toys and games for their children (Gartrell, Deck, Rodas, Peyser, & Banks, 2005; Golombok et al., 2003; Green, Mandel, Hotvedt, Gray, & Smith, 1986). Vanfraussen, Panjaert-Kristoffersen and Brewaeys (2002) add that children from non-heterosexual families were more likely to share their emotional feelings with their mother compared to those from heterosexual family backgrounds. These findings suggest that lesbian parented families are highly motivated, share equal responsibilities and roles between partners, are committed to feminism, have gendered expectations, and relate to their children more so than those from a heterosexual family type.

4.6.2.2.2 Parenting Practices of Gay Fathers

Sampling 66 (33 gay and 33 heterosexual) fathers through the use of self-report instruments and analysis techniques, Bigner and Jacobson (1989) found that both groups of fathers had similar views on their involvement and intimacy with their children. However, gay fathers saw their behaviour to be more related to how well they respond to the child through reasoning, warmth and discipline. They shared child caring responsibilities on an equal level compared to heterosexual fathers, although still less than lesbian parented families. According to Biblarz and Stacey (2010), when two gay men adopt a child they become more closely aligned to that of two lesbian parents but still not identical in terms of affection and emotional connectedness lesbian parents have with their children.

4.7 Chapter Summary

The review of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) literature has provided a summary on the main studies from research conducted on non-traditional family

types. Findings indicate that non-heterosexual families are similar in their parenting practices to those of heterosexual families. In addition, despite the continued challenges of legal discrimination faced by non-heterosexual individuals, they are likely to have the same or, in certain areas, more favourable interactions with their children compared to heterosexual families. The importance of these studies is that the information can be used to assist researchers, academics and policy makers in addressing LGBT debates that arise across Australia. It is necessary to acknowledge these findings in the present study on non-traditional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) families because there is no hard evidence to support the difficulties faced by this group of people. The reviewed literature illustrates the difficulties faced by LGBT people living in Australia, and further research that highlights the experiences of LGBT individuals working in the minerals and resources sector would provide an additional layer to research from other industries, fields and backgrounds, thus enhancing our understanding of the impact FIFO employment can have on such minority groups.

While there are many studies on the LGBT community, there is no research or empirical data on LGBT employees or their partners working in the mining industry under FIFO employment. Specifically, there has been limited research on the interpersonal relations of LGBT employees and families and the impact this has on their work and home domains. Huffman, King and Goldberg (2012) found that non-heterosexual parents that are exposed to stressors from the workplace are also more likely to experience flow-on negative effectives on not only their work-related outcomes such as job performance and job satisfaction, but also in terms of their overall health and well-being. Stressors can lead to lower levels of morale and productivity (Poe, 1996), that in turn impact both the employee and organisation. The present study, through Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework and the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, explores these stressors in relation to both the work and home domain of non-heterosexual FIFO families.

With the number of same-sex couples continually growing and the acceptance of LGBT family types increasing in today's society, this lack of research is cause for concern. The benefits of exploring non-heterosexual families living the FIFO lifestyle can be beneficial for both the future of academia as well as helping address issues

faced by an overlooked group of people working in the mining industry. It could potentially present a new field of research to be examined and analysed by future academics and may lead to improved procedures and policies in the minerals and resources sector that could help lower discrimination and provide equal treatment for all employees. The present study provides this foundation for future research looking to explore FIFO LGBT employees and the type of impact FIFO employment has on their lives and well-being. The next chapter describes the theoretical building of this study in relation to Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework and the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model used in this research.

Chapter 5
Research Framework

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter discusses Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework in conjunction with the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model. The COR theoretical framework and the JHDR model highlighted the importance of personal, social and protective resources in terms of managing the job and home demands associated with the FIFO lifestyle, employee and partner emotional, physiological and behavioural stress response to FIFO employment, and the organisational and home outcomes that result from high or low stress management.

5.2 Conservation of Resources Theory

As highlighted by various authors (Billings, Folkman, Acree, & Moskowitz, 2000; Brotheridge & Lee, 2005; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999) in chapter two, Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, as proposed by Hobfoll (1989), is a motivational theory in which individuals are motivated to gain, retain and protect resources that they value. According to Hobfoll (2002), a resource can be broadly defined as the overall capability of an individual in fulfilling their valued needs. These resources fall into either primary or secondary resources. Primary resources are those essential for survival such as food and shelter. Secondary resources help preserve the primary resources and include work, family and time spent with others (Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2005). Furthermore, resources can be accumulated over time and through proper investment of resources the individual may experience a positive change to their well-being (Hobfoll, 2002).

The main belief of COR theory is that individuals have a natural desire and need to create, conserve and protect their resources (Hobfoll, 1989), and that stress is a direct result of any threat that to could lead to a potential loss of resources, an actual loss, or when resource expectations are not met (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). While there are many differences in how one defines a resource, COR theory only relates to those

resources essential for individual and family well-being and survival (e.g., shelter, self-esteem), or are connected to the process of resource creation (e.g., money). A loss to any of these resources, even a threat of loss, can influence how an individual experiences stress (Rosenberg, 1979).

The COR theory views stress outcomes as both intra-role and inter-role conflict, and that stress occurs when people feel their resources are threatened with loss, are actually lost, or when people don't gain enough significant resources after investing large amounts of their current resources (Hobfoll, 1998). For example, an employee experiencing difficulties in their work role (intra-role) might feel as if they are incapable of successfully performing their job and therefore would invest more of their resources into the job due to a fear of potentially being made redundant. As individuals try to balance their work and home role responsibilities, they experience inter-role conflict that eventually leads to stress as resources get lost in maintaining a healthy balance between the two domains. Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) claim that this loss or sense of loss can often lead to depression, anxiety or physiological tension.

Another component of COR theory relates to individual differences, which are also considered to be a resource. The level of resources an individual has determines how they react to stress (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999), and some people naturally have better skills than others in minimising any resource loss or the impact of said loss. For example, someone with high self-esteem can use their confidence to help reduce the impact of time (resource) loss, thus they would be less bothered with lost time as they know they can cope with it, whereas those with low self-esteem would struggle with losing time.

Critical events or moments are also seen as a source of stress. Specifically, an event that leads to resource lose can create strain on outcomes. Hobfoll (1989) notes that change on its own is not a source of stress, but if change results in the loss of resources, especially resources valued by the individual, it can be problematic. Semi-structured interviews, as used in the present study, helped describe such events and revealed losses in participant lives.

Essentially, Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory offers a theoretical guide for understanding work-home interaction. It suggests work and home hypotheses, allows for predictions of individual and family relationships, and incorporates how changes in life and critical events impact on individual and family stress levels (Hobfoll & Shirom, 2000; Lee & Ashforth, 1996; Wright & Cropanzano, 1998). Since the early 1990's, the value of COR theory has been further reinforced when researchers started to apply it to the study of work engagement, burnout, absenteeism and job satisfaction, and scholars began to examine positive, sustaining, and protective power of resources and work experiences (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008).

5.2.1 Behaviour During Stressful Circumstances

The COR model goes beyond previous models in that it is more focused on the actions of individuals when confronted or not confronted by stress. It states that when people are confronted with stress they will strive to reduce the impact of resource loss. This is similar to Lazarus and Folkman's (1984) transactional model of stress and coping that was built on the assumption that stress is based on person-situation interaction. However, unlike the transactional model, the COR model further emphasis the goal of coping instead of simply suggesting that it limits stress. Furthermore, when people are not confronted by stress they strive to gain and develop more resources in preparation of the possibility of future loss (Hobfoll, 1989). In preventing loss, individuals employ their own resources or use the resources available to them from the environment (Hobfoll, 1989). For example, an individual looking to gain a promotion in his or her job would invest their time and energy resources in order to attain a higher position, thus leading to resource gains in the form of money and power.

5.2.2 The Conceptualisation of Work and Family Dynamics

Westman and Piotrkovski (1999) claim that research exploring work-home relationships has been fragmented making it difficult to draw any clear conclusions. Zedeck (1992) also found that theories relating to the work-home domain were post-hoc in that they used information from studies that measured work and home

variables, thus were not based on a true defined theory. Therefore, in understanding antecedents and consequences of the work and home relationship, a more comprehensive theory is required. The COR theory provides explanations of these complex dynamics as it bridges the gap between environment and individual theories (Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2005). Due to conflicting demands from work and home domains, work-home conflict poses extreme threats of resource loss and loss from one domain may lead to loss in the other.

Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) found that COR theory could be used to explain work-home dynamics, suggesting that work-home interference is a result of how resource gains and losses interplay with each other. They highlighted the impact of workplace role conflict and role ambiguity on work-home interference. Likewise, the family/home domain demands resources of the individual and in turn may diminish individual resources at work, thus potentially leading to stress at home and increasing the chances of family-work conflict (Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2005). In the process of maintaining a healthy balance between work and home roles, there is a high chance of inter-role conflict that can result in resource loss if no action is taken. The more role conflict individuals experience at home, the fewer resources they have while at work and vice versa.

5.2.3 Types of Resources

COR theory illustrates the impact of resources and people's desire to obtain, retain and protect their resource quality and quantity (Hobfoll, 1989). Resources are those that hold either intrinsic or instrumental value to the individual and are separated into four types that include objects, conditions, personal characteristics and energies. Examples include self-esteem (Rosenberg, 1965), socioeconomic status (Worden & Sobel, 1978) and employment (Parry, 1986), and a gain or loss of these or any resources results in higher or lower levels of stress and well-being (Hobfoll, 1989).

5.2.3.1 Objects

Object resources are seen as holding value due to their physical nature as well as their ability to acquire secondary status value based on rarity and expense (Hobfoll, 1989). For example, a house would have value as it provides essential survival needs through shelter. A mansion would hold further secondary status value as not only does it provide shelter but also indicates status, thus it is linked to socioeconomic status which is an important aspect of stress resistance (Dohrenwend, 1978).

5.2.3.2 Conditions

Conditions are those resources that an individual values and seeks to attain. They can include anything from getting a promotion at work to getting married. Pearlin (1983) notes that to understand people's resistance to stress we must take into account the roles of those around individuals being subject to specific conditions. For example, an employer would have a strong influence over an employee seeking a promotion or as Henderson, Byrne and Duncan-Jones (1981) found, being married is in itself a resistance resource. However, these conditions may need qualifying because it is highly likely that a bad relationship, for example, could lead to negative effects, thus potentially resulting in resource loss (Thoits, 1987). COR theory highlights the need to measure individual resource value in order to gain a greater understanding of their stress resistance.

5.2.3.3 Personal Characteristics

Personal characteristics are specific personal resources, such as self-esteem, that help strengthen individual stress resistance. Antonovsky (1979) found that a person's orientation towards life was crucial in how stress resistant they were. Coining the term 'general resistance resources,' Antonovsky (1979) claims that personal traits, skills and characteristics can aid in stress resistance. As such, each individual has their own personal characteristics that they can harness to help manage stress within their lives.

5.2.3.4 Energies

Energy based resources are those of time, money and knowledge (Hobfoll, 1989). These types of resources are not representative of their intrinsic value but more the value they hold in helping aid the acquisition of other resources. For example, when seeking a new job, having a broad network of friends and colleagues is considered an energy resource when access to information requires numerous sources such as contacts of potential employers.

While social support doesn't fit into any of the four categories mentioned, it is also considered a resource in that it helps preserve resources and aids individuals with managing stressful circumstances (Cohen & Wills, 1985), but it can also diminish resource value (Hobfoll, 1989). Research has shown that social support can be beneficial when it leads to situational needs and harmful when it does not (Hobfoll & London, 1986).

5.2.4 Principles of COR Theory

The most important of resources are those relating to health, family and survival, with psychological resources (e.g., self-esteem, self-efficacy, optimism) being essential to the management of these resources (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson and Laski (2005) note that individuals will naturally seek primary resources. In protecting these primary resources there are secondary resources whose value is determined within the context of a specific process (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). In life, people are part of larger systems such as work and family groups and natural environments, and it is from these systems that people gain and use resources. Each system is designed to reward certain behaviour over others and sets rules in how resources get divided amongst members. For example, work related resources usually come in the form of income but for many individuals it can also come from social attachment to fellow co-workers or simple recognition of their work. Workplace culture determines how much value is placed on these resources and therefore differences at an individual level are said to be less important (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). The motivation to gain and protect resources is governed by several key

principles: the primacy of resource loss, resource investment, and loss and gain spirals.

5.2.4.1 The Primacy of Resource Loss

The first principle of COR theory states that a resource loss holds more weight in its impact than a resource gain, and that potential for a resource loss or an actual resource loss has a stronger influence on individual motivation than an expected resource gain (Hobfoll, 1989). A resource loss often leads to negative thoughts, emotions and poor overall well-being (both physical and psychological). Furthermore, a loss demotivates people to a point of avoidance in which they don't desire to seek new opportunities for resource gains. In interpreting this principle to the study of non-traditional fly-in fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners, the comings and goings associated with the job were found to have major influences on personal, social and protective resources of FIFO families. For example, when the FIFO employee left their home domain to return to work they lost support and assistance from family, which is considered a social resource. While this is inevitable, it can be minimised through various methods of organisational support or when people are faced with a resource threat the environment may need to encourage striving for gain by emphasizing individual strengths.

5.2.4.2 Resource Investment

This principle states that in order for individuals to protect their resources, recover from resource losses and gain further resources, they must invest their current resources accordingly (Hobfoll, 1989). As this principle requires people to use their resources in order to protect or gain other resources it can be difficult to employ at a satisfactory manner and poor employment can lead to secondary losses. For example, if an individual uses his or her resources and the situation gets worse, those resources would get depleted and require more resources that might come at a higher cost to the individual. Those with a fuller resource reservoir (accumulation of all resources held by an individual) are less vulnerable to resource loss compared to those with fewer resources, as they can rely on other resources in times of need and increase the

chances of successfully adapting to stressors (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). When translated to the present study, people with a vast number of resources or who are part of resource rich social groups and settings were more successful in adapting to the FIFO lifestyle than those with minimal resources or who came from poor resource groups.

5.2.4.3 Loss and Gain Spirals

The third principle notes that motivation and stress are seen as resource loss and gain spirals. As people lose resources they become less capable of withstanding further threats (loss cycle) to resource loss (Gorgievski & Hobfoll, 2008). However, according to the resource gain cycle, as people gain resources they experience healthier levels of well-being and therefore are capable of better investing their resources to make further gains and sustain their current resources. Gorgievski and Hobfoll (2008) claim that as resources strengthen, people become more confident and take more risks in resource investment, which is crucial in high demand work environments and in the avoidance of work failure. In regards to the present study, as people gained resources, such as higher pay or a more flexible working arrangements, they became more effective in investing their resources and therefore were less likely to experience difficulties associated with FIFO working and living. As they gained resources they were more inclined to take further resource risk investments that are critical in high demand work environments such as those in the resources sector. Simply staying on the same level or not looking to gain further resources was seen as a potential avenue that could lead to resource loss through work failure.

5.2.5 Stability and Change in Resources

COR theory states that resource level, rather than situational changes, influences individual well-being (Hobfoll, 2001). Research has shown that negative or positive life events only have a temporary impact on well-being and job engagement (Llorens, Schaufeli, Bakker, & Salanova, 2007). After a certain amount of time the impact of the life event and well-being reverts back to its original state. It is often argued that health, well-being, and exposure to life events may be a direct result of the

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individual's own personal attributes and characteristics such as their personality type (Cummins & Nistico, 2002; Taylor & Brown, 1994). Additionally, in maintaining stability, there are numerous dynamic systems that interact with each other helping establish equilibrium. These systems include biological processes, cognitive processes, self-enhancing cognitions, behavioural processes and social-relational processes, that work together to restore different types of resources (Cummins & Nistico, 2002; Taylor & Brown, 1994). People are part of larger social systems and natural environments with each having their own dynamics that interact with the personal dynamics of the individual, thus ensuring continual resource restoration and stability maintenance.

5.2.6 Resource Caravans

Throughout life people will experience a vast amount of resource losses and gains that aggregate in what is known as resource caravans. COR theory claims that major resources are linked with other major resources and lack of resources is linked to lacking in others (Hobfoll, 1998b). In this sense, resources are seen as clusters that work together to build on one another. While social status and sense of control are important in their own right, they are rarely found individually. Rather, they move in herds and can even disappear in aggregate much like caravans (Westman, Hobfoll, Chen, Davidson, & Laski, 2005).

5.2.7 COR Theory Research Findings

Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) were one of the first researchers to apply COR theory to work and home relations. According to their model, individual differences were viewed as resources and include age, gender, marital status and the number of children living at home. These resources are connected to each other as resource caravans and when threatened, due to investment in other domains, may lead to work and/or home stress (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). Their findings showed that stress from work had a direct result on employee turnover, poor well-being and life difficulties. Furthermore, they found that work-related stress had more severe impacts

than family or home related stress as work stress was said to be more difficult to control and manage than home stress.

The application of COR theory to work and home was further applied as a theoretical framework by Rosenbaum and Cohen (1999) who explored distress outcomes of work-family conflict among working women. They found that demands, other than those from work, were interpreted differently based on the environmental setting. Additionally, women that possessed at least one type of resource had overall lower stress levels than women with no resources. Those in possession of resources were more likely to gain further resources since their current resources protected them from further loss and therefore were more prone in taking greater risks to gain additional resources.

Shaffer, Harrison, Gilley and Luk (2001) found that work-family and family-work interference, social support and commitment resulted in dysfunctional behaviour when the demand for resources in a particular role was insufficiently met. Their study supported the findings of Grandey and Cropanzano (1999) in that they highlighted how organisational commitment enhanced the impact of work interference with family conflict and family commitment strengthened the impact of family interference with work conflict.

In reinforcing the importance of the loss and gain spiral process Jansen, Kant, Kristensen and Nijhuis (2003), in a two-year longitudinal study among employees from different position types, found that work-family conflict increased the need for recovery and fatigue. Those with multiple roles had a higher chance of experiencing resource loss, thus fatigue and recovery were more common among these individuals. However, when the organisation offered support and domestic help to the employee and their family it created a protective layer against future work-family conflict. Jansen, Kant, Kristensen and Nijhuis (2003) suggest that reduced overtime hours in terms of COR theory would reduce demands from one domain therefore increasing resources in the other, thus minimising the chance of conflict. Their research only focused on work and family imbalance outcomes and a more comprehensive view detailing conflict antecedents and outcomes is necessary.

Demerouti, Bakker and Bulters (2004) presented a more comprehensive model that illustrated the relationship between stress and work-home interference. Using a three wave longitudinal study of workers from an employment agency, they found that pressure from work at the first occasion predicted work-home interference at the second and third occasions, and work-home interference in the first occasion predicted work pressure at the second and third occasion. This suggests that work pressure that threatens or leads to actual resource loss evokes work-home interference, thus leading to feelings of tiredness. Demerouti, Bakker and Bulters (2004) add that those with minimal resources often employ their remaining resources to manage work pressure but this commonly leads to self-defeating consequences as their resources become depleted.

Joplin, Shaffer, Francesco and Lau (2003) proposed a different observation regarding COR theory in that they applied the COR concept to a larger scope, researching the individual-environmental exchange. The researchers found that changes in the macro-environment, such as those of economic, technological, social, legal and cultural changes, influenced individuals struggling to meet both work and home demands. For example, when the economy is struggling the chances of stress and work-family conflict increase. People from countries that go through deterioration or economic growth would experience greater resource demands and threats of resource loss, thus impacting their families as illustrated by the loss cycles described in COR theory.

One of the most frequently cited studies underpinning the majority of work-home research is Greenhaus and Beutell's (1985) conceptual framework. Building upon Kahn, Wolfe, Quinn, Snoek and Rosenthal's (1964) inter-role conflict theory, Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) developed a model based on the sources of work-family conflict that claimed role pressures from work and home domains were, in some respects, mutually incompatible. According to Greenhaus and Beutell (1985) the key determinants of work-family conflict can be categorised into three main types that include time-based (Byron, 2005; Ettner & Grzywacz, 2001), strain-based (O'Driscoll, Brough, & Kalliath, 2006; Rantanen, Kinnunen, Feldt, & Pulkkinen, 2008) and behaviour-based conflict (Carlson & Frone, 2003). Although few studies have investigated consequences within the family/home domain, there is evidence to suggest that as individuals attempt to integrate their work and family lives their

perceptions of insufficient resources to successfully fill work and home roles becomes linked to work and family dissatisfaction, tension, depression and life stress (Beutell & Wittig-Berman, 2008; Squire & Tilly, 2007). With decades of sustained research examining the impacts and antecedents of the work-home relationship, the body of research has provided a clear conceptual framework for analysing the link between work and home domains (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000). However, it is still yet to address a range of gaps that include, among others, the lack of understanding about individual differences in reactions to work-home pressures when a resource loss or gain is experienced (Parasuraman & Greenhaus, 2002). In filling these gaps, the present study adopted Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory to enhance our understanding of work-home interaction and the impact FIFO employment can have on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners' experiences of working and living FIFO.

Resources in this study are separated into personal, social and protective resources which act as buffers against any strain or conflict the individual experiences, as such those individuals with a fuller resource reservoir could in turn experience less work-home related strain or conflict. Personal resources included personal beliefs, coping mechanisms and positive emotions (Bandura, 1997; Rappaport, 1981). Social resources included emotional support, guidance and assistance from family, friends and community (Thoits, 1995). Protective resources were those found at macro levels of social organisations such as places of work, government, institutions and culture (Hobfoll, 1998; Sandler, 2001). The policies developed by these establishments helped aid in the access given to protective resources (Braver, Hipke, Ellman, & Sandler, 2004).

According to COR theory, individuals and families aim to maximise the overall gain of their resources while minimising or eliminating threats to resource loss (Hobfoll, 1998). Resources are evaluated by the context of the specific individual and how they interpret said situation would result in either a resource loss or gain (Hobfoll, Freedy, Green, & Solomon, 1996). People with high self-esteem and confidence may be better at maximising losses as they can draw on these personal skills in problematic situations, thus they might not be as bothered by the possibility of losing certain resources, such as time or energy, as they know they can cope with such loss (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999). However, it should also be noted that a resource loss

might have a more severe impact compared to a resource gain as it could set a chain reaction in which further loss is likely to occur due to less resources being available to adapt to further stressors (Hobfoll, 1998; Holahan, Moos, Holahan, & Cronkite, 1999). Furthermore, COR theory suggests that certain critical events are a source of stress as well. Specifically, an event resulting in a resource loss can lead to the creation of stress and strain outcomes. Qualitative interviewing techniques used in the present study described specific events in non-traditional FIFO employee and partner lives that have resulted in resource losses or gains.

A number of studies have illustrated empirical support for COR theory in work and home research (Edwards & Rothbard, 2000; Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Lapierre & Allen, 2006). The use of COR theory in the present study helped facilitate understanding of the role of resources in relation to managing job and home demands, stress response, well-being and outcomes, as well as highlighting processes of moderating variables. It provided a theoretical basis for predicting and understanding work-home interaction and the mechanism by which resource loss and gain cycles create stress in people.

5.3 Job and Home Demands Resources Model

The model developed for this research is known as the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model. It is separated into five sections (resources, job demands, home demands, stress response and outcomes) that illustrate a continual process of resource losses and gains. Designed with the uniqueness of each individual in mind, the model is broad and overarching in that it can be applied to various job types and family settings. Based on the similar Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) model (Bakker, Demerouti, de Boer, & Schaufeli, 2003) which focuses solely on job demands, the JHDR model is more comprehensive in that it not only takes into account job demands but also the demands from the home environment and how these impact on individual stress response.

The JHDR model, as illustrated in Figure 5.1, separates resources into personal resources (e.g., personal beliefs, coping mechanisms and positive emotions), social resources (e.g., emotional support and guidance/assistance) and protective resources

(e.g., place of work, government/institutions and workplace culture), which together are known as the resource reservoir (accumulation of all resources held by an individual). Resources are independent of one another but also influence each other and help predict how people will respond to resource loss or gain. These resources are subject to job and home demands that require the individual to use said resources in order to maintain or gain further resources. This incorporates a number of aspects from Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory, as it states that the prime motivation of humans is to obtain, retain and protect their resources. Resources hold value in their own right but are also valuable in that they are a means to gaining further resources and protecting current ones.

Job and home demands contribute to how many resources people lose or gain. They are separated into emotional, mental and physical demands. Job demands refer to organisational aspects of the job that require physical, cognitive and emotional contribution from the employee, thus leading to physiological and psychological strain and stress. Examples can include difficult roster structure, job pressure and an unappealing work environment. While not necessarily negative, job demands can turn into job stressors that influence individual stress response when the resources required to meet demands start to deplete and the employee cannot adequately recover from having used said resources.

Home demands are those aspects of home or family life that require physical, cognitive and emotional commitments, and they too impact on physiological and psychological costs to the individual. Examples include taking care of children, sharing responsibilities with partner and attending social events. Similar to job demands, home demands only become negative when the individual uses a substantial amount of their resources to meet the demands adequately. These demands, if too extreme, can lead to a more severe stress response.

The stress response refers to how an individual reacts to the loss or gain of resources. It is separated into three response types that include emotional response (e.g., annoyance, anxiety, anger, dejection, fear and grief), physiological response (e.g., automatic arousal, hormonal functions and neurochemical changes), and behavioural response (e.g., coping mechanisms such as lashing out at others, blaming oneself,

seeking help, solving problems and releasing emotions), that influence a number of outcomes. Depending on the resource type, or if the individual experienced a loss or gain, the reaction may either be one of a positive nature leading to better or improved outcomes or one that warrants a negative reaction and therefore leads to negative outcomes. For example, a job with chronic demands such as those that involve high work overloads or high levels of emotional commitment may exhaust an employee's physical and psychological resources that as a result can diminish their energy. Depending on the resources an individual holds this can either lead to a positive or negative reaction both of which will influence the final outcomes from the stress response.

Resources and job/home demands initiate a stress response that eventually influences a number of organisational and home outcomes. These outcomes relate to work and life satisfaction, job performance, work and home engagement, family functioning, relationships, career, awareness, time allocation, and daily life. The result of these outcomes will lead to more or less resources in an individual's resource reservoir as the cycle or resource loss and gain continues.

Figure 5.1: Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) Model

Continual process of resource loss/gain cycles
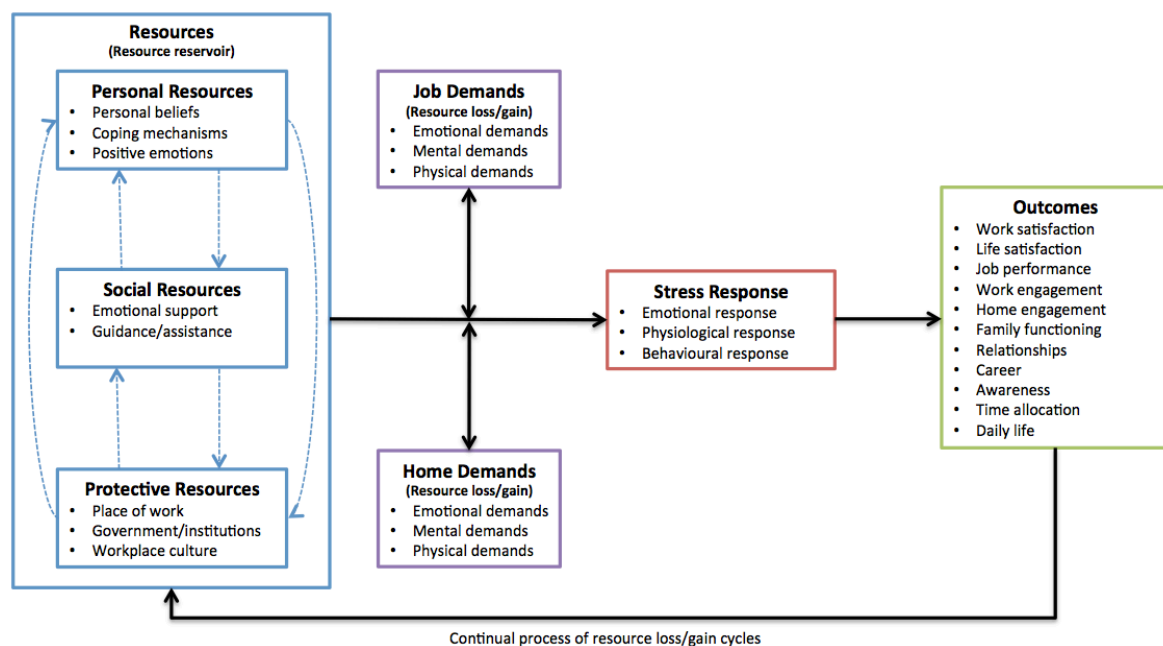
The way in which resources and job/home demands interact with one another determines the level of strain and how much motivation an individual will need to have in order to manage the loss or gain of resources. It can be assumed that the resource reservoir held by an individual can help maintain or minimise the impact of job/home demands on strain. This is similar to the Demand-Control model proposed by Karasek (1979), which states that employees who are able to decide, by themselves, how to meet the demands of the job will not experience strain in any form. However, unlike the Demand-Control model, the JHDR model expands on the control of task execution by suggesting that a number of different resources interact with job and home demands to predict strain and stress. This is also consistent with Diener and Fujita's (1995) research, whose work illustrated that having a variety of resources helps facilitate the achievement of specific demands.

There are numerous reasons why resources help manage job and home demands. For example, social support (resource) helps achieve work and home goals, therefore support from co-workers would help ensure that tasks are completed on time, thus reducing the impact of work overload on job strain (van der Doef & Maes, 1998, 1999a). Another example would be giving an individual autonomy in their job to help with employee health, as greater autonomy can provide more opportunities to cope with stressful situations (Karasek, 1998). Employee appraisals and regular employer communication could also aid in maintaining employee motivation that in turn can improve efficiency and productivity, and potentially lead to a decline in future workplace problems (Hackman & Oldham, 1976).

The JHDR model in this study was used in conjunction with Hobfoll's (1989) COR theory to illustrate how fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment influences the experiences of non-traditional Western Australian (WA) FIFO employees and their partners working and living FIFO. The importance of having a full resource reservoir, in terms of managing job and home demands, stress and outcomes, was illustrated and the impact of the FIFO lifestyle on well-being was highlighted. Theoretically, this research contributes to the current body of FIFO-related knowledge and literature by revealing how changes in personal, social and protective resources impact the work-home relationship. Hence, the intention of the study was to expand on the scope and extent of current FIFO literature by adopting the JHDR model and COR theoretical

framework to better enhance our understanding of the work-home interaction of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. Furthermore, this study was exploratory and as such aimed to provide a foundation for future research in this area, thus potentially assisting in the development of new theory and ways in addressing people management, work, home and family satisfaction, and employee motivation.

5.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter highlighted the research framework for understanding the issues addressed in the present study. It provided an overview of Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theory that was used in conjunction with the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model. The JHDR model was used to expand on the COR theoretical framework in order to draw attention to the importance and awareness of personal, social and protective resources in relation to the management of FIFO challenges and difficulties that arise from FIFO working and living. As such, this framework is suitable in highlighting the impact a full or depleted resource reservoir can have on individual experiences of FIFO employment. It adds an additional layer to previous academic research on FIFO and in particular how non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners adapt to the FIFO lifestyle. In addition, the framework details the role of various resources in managing job and home demands, and how individuals respond to stress and the spill over effect this has on conserving resources and maintaining healthy levels of well-being. The research methodology is discussed in chapter six.

Chapter 6
Research Methodology

6.1 Introduction

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment and non-traditional FIFO employee and partner experiences of the FIFO lifestyle. The following chapter details the major research approaches pertaining to this study, research question and research issues, conceptual framework, and the rationale for the adopted methodology. It also details the research process, the use of constructivist grounded theory, research paradigms, triangulation, research design, ethical considerations, data analysis, and research validation. The implementation of a grounded theory was chosen because the study sampled individuals who are unique and come from different gender and sexual backgrounds, thus a socially constructed approach to grounded theory was implemented. Through various forms of coding and data analysis, the research ensured that the meaning of data remained accurate in the final theoretical outcomes. Therefore, participants' experiences of FIFO working and living were retained through a series of connections, and as such participants also contributed to the reconstruction of the final theory.

In achieving these objectives, the relevant methodology literature pertaining to this research was reviewed to establish a research design for how the study would be conducted. The research sought to examine and understand the physical and psychological affects FIFO working and living has on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners in comparison to FIFO families from two-parent conventional backgrounds. Comparing these two groups helped generate a more in-depth study by highlighting both viewpoints without bias. Simply focusing on one group would have offered a one-sided perception of FIFO employment, thus both heterosexual and non-heterosexual participants were sampled. As such, this study offered an opportunity for a group of minorities that included individuals from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds to participate in discussions relating to their experiences of the resources sector by providing an avenue for their voices to be heard via an academic forum. Specifically, the study adopted a qualitative methodology to develop a greater understanding of how

individuals cope with the FIFO lifestyle and how resource gains and losses influence their well-being and ability to successfully adapt to the lifestyle. The research was concerned with answering one overarching research question (RQ) and three subsidiary research issues (RI), as described in chapter one, regarding FIFO employment in relation to employee and partner experiences of the FIFO lifestyle:

RQ   *How does fly-in fly-out (FIFO) employment influence the work-home interaction of non-traditional Western Australian employees and their partners working and living FIFO?*

RI 1:   *What factors from the FIFO lifestyle influence the work-home interaction and well-being of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners?*

RI 2:   *How do FIFO lifestyle factors influence the well-being of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners?*

RI 3:   *What are the cultural, organisational and societal issues relating to FIFO employment and how do they influence perceptions of the FIFO lifestyle?*

In answering the research question and subsequent research issues, interviews were conducted with both non-traditional and conventional FIFO employees and their partners, as well as key stakeholders from the Western Australian (WA) resources sector and LGBT representatives, thus allowing for more in-depth comparison and cross-referencing of findings. Coding, memo writing, personal journals, interview notes and transcripts were also used to highlight complex and personal participant experiences, and helped improve the overall data analysis.

6.2 Theoretical Sampling

Through theoretical sampling the study aimed to generate theory by examining the social world (Emmel, 2013). This involved the continual gathering of data until no new properties of categories emerged (Thornberg & Charmaz, 2011). Through the use

of both inductive and deductive reasoning it helped develop theory found in the 'grounded' part of grounded theory (Emmel, 2013). Strauss and Corbin (1990) breakdown the theoretical process into three types of coding, open coding, axial coding and selective coding (Figure 6.1), that increases the sampling focus as research progresses.

Figure 6.1: Coding in Grounded Theory
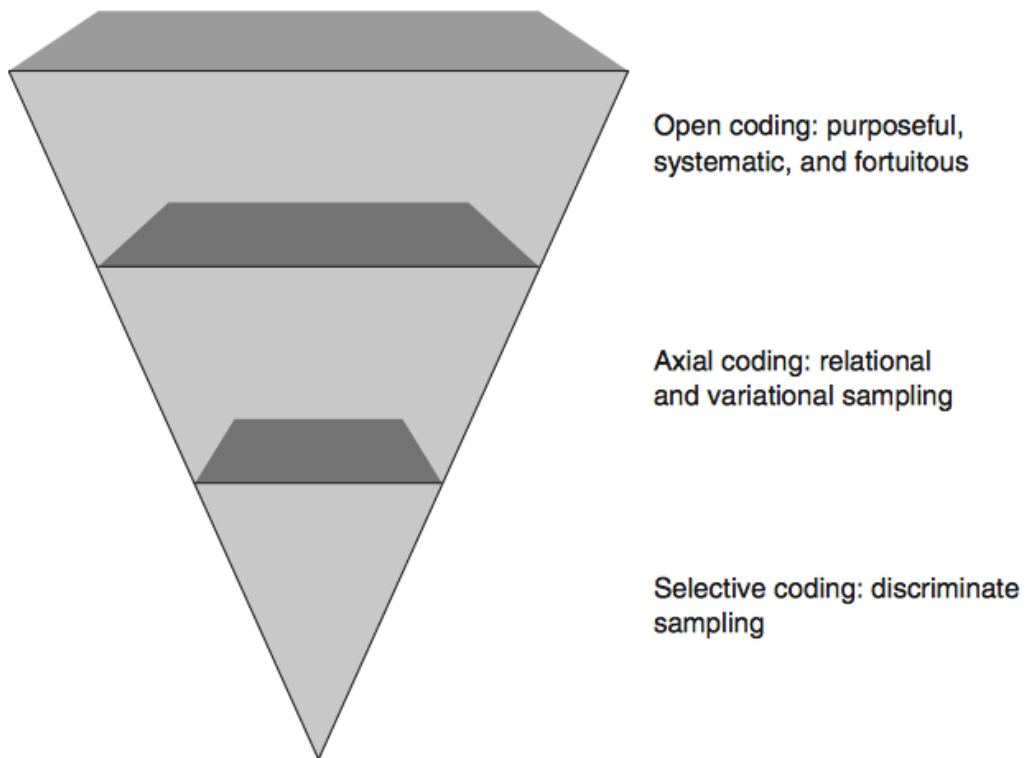
Source: Emmel (2013), as described by Strauss and Corbin (1990).

6.2.1 Open Coding

During the initial or earliest stage of research, the researcher has the least amount of theoretical sensitivity and as such their study is heavily reliant on open coding to discover categories based on the phenomena (Emmel, 2013). Openness, in this study, helped highlight key data that provided the most knowledge on the phenomena and facilitated data comparison. Strauss and Corbin (1990) suggest three types of open

sampling, purposeful, systematic and fortuitous sampling, which can be used individually or combined together.

Purposeful sampling involves deliberately choosing specific people, documents or sites for sampling as they have some link to the phenomena either through categories or properties of the social phenomena (Emmel, 2013). This aids in exploring common differences, whereas the second method, systematic sampling, highlights the more subtle differences (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Systematic sampling involves moving from person to person, place to place, or document to document, searching for points of interest, and by doing so it increases the researcher's chances of uncovering any differences or similarities that might exist in the sample. For example, organisational structure might differ from those working in administrative roles and those working on the ground floor, thus providing for a comparison between the two sampled groups. The third method, fortuitous sampling, is a method of chance. Strauss and Corbin (1990) emphasise the importance of questioning by the researcher. This method highlights the researcher's own assumptions of the phenomena prior to the study that ultimately mediates theoretical sensitivity. In this study, open coding was used in terms of reading and re-reading the data to summarise what was happening by creating labels and categories for parts of the data. All three forms of sampling were used throughout the research, thus encouraging theoretical sensitivity by exposing variation and process.

6.2.2 Axial Coding

Axial coding is about creating categories, generated during open coding, more specific to the research. In this research it involved illustrating relationships among open codes and how these categories are connected with one another in relation to conditions, contexts, actions and consequences. Strauss and Corbin (1990) claim that the researcher commonly manipulates the research through dimensional variation of the phenomena such as sampling during different points in the day. It aims to link categories to emerging theory and find differences relating to the dimensional level of data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990).

6.2.3 Selective Coding

At this point in the sampling process the researcher is at his or her most theoretically sensitive having repeatedly analysed and categorised concepts through axial coding (Emmel, 2013). Selective coding was employed in this study to generate theory through relationship validation and category solidification. Hypotheses were tested against the data to inform the coding, analysis and sampling in the research (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Essentially, through selective coding, the study aimed to highlight the core variable, which can be a theoretical code, process, dimension, condition or consequence, with the main function being the integration of theory to increase density and saturation.

6.2.4 The Sampling Strategy

The connection between analysis and sampling, as outlined by Strauss and Corbin (1990), is to increase focus on the sampling strategy. The sampling strategy is a funnel-like character, as seen in Figure 6.1, and the aim is to continually refine theory from the point of its discovery. Theory is built through fluid and complex interactions of empirical units as categories being explored allow for theory to develop (Strauss & Corbin, 2008). In order to see empirical data as real and therefore test emergent theory, this study constantly compared hypotheses against reality (data), making changes along the way and continually re-testing (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Charmaz (2009) suggests that methodological accounts of grounded theory sit along a sequence between objectivist grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory, the comparison between the two foundational assumptions are highlighted in Table 6.1. It is evident that what constitutes reality is different between the two theory types.

Table 6.1: Foundational Assumptions of Objectivist and Constructivist Grounded Theory

Objectivist grounded theory	Constructivist grounded theory
Assumes an external reality	Assumes multiple realities
Assumes discovery of data	Assumes mutual construction of data through

	interaction
Assumes conceptualisations emerge from data	Assumes researchers construct categories
Views representation of data as unproblematic	Views representation of data as problematic, relativistic, situational and partial
Assumes neutrality, passivity and the authority of the observer	Assumes the observer's values, priorities, positions and actions affect views

Source: Emmel (2013).

6.2.4.1 Theoretical Sampling in Objectivist Grounded Theory

According to objectivist grounded theorists, theoretical sampling is guided by concepts that have emerged from the analysis of empirical data and everything that happens during research is considered data (Glaser, 2002). The criteria for selecting a theoretical sample, according to Morse (2007), must not be based on categories such as age or gender but instead on the conceptual needs of the study. Morse (2007) argues that if a researcher were to deviate from theoretical sensitivity this would lead to conceptual blindness, and that the correct form of sampling participants is by sampling those experiencing a critical point in the phenomenon. This is a deliberate form of selection based on coding from empirical data. Furthermore, it can be assumed that the researcher is neutral in the research as they are to seek optimal, instead of average, participant experiences. They either focus on the best or worst cases of the phenomenon being studied, thus allowing them to pin point the optimal examples and then move on to the more average experiences (Morse, 2007). This selection bias means that the researcher is able to discover and test theory at an efficient manner. The main approaches to this type of sampling are objectivism and positivism. The researcher should not go into the study with a pre-determined theory, however, they should also not enter blindly without any knowledge of the social world they are investigating (Morse, 1994).

6.2.4.2 Theoretical Sampling in Constructivist Grounded Theory

The constructivist grounded theorist uses theoretical knowledge and hypotheses in their research planning and discovery that leads to theory creation (Charmaz, 2006). This approach was adopted for this study as the researcher, with the participants, became a co-producer of theory. Charmaz (2000) notes that constructivist grounded theory is situated between postmodernism and positivism, aiming to gain a greater understanding of meaning. In getting to this middle ground this study used participant experiences to develop meaning and categories that reflect their experiences. Theoretical sampling was systematic, involving data collection, coding and memo writing, in the use of data to fill gaps (Emmel, 2013). Therefore, sampling did not start at the beginning of research but well into initial sampling and as a result categories were not known beforehand but instead constructed throughout the analysis process. However, in refining the scope of the topic, the researcher, at the initial stage, developed criteria to sample specific demographics and people where research may occur (Emmel, 2013), thus helping identify any preconceived ideas about the area of study.

6.2.5 Emergent Theory

Emergent theory shapes and directs theoretical sampling, allowing for inductively derived hypotheses to be tested (Emmel, 2013). In this study, it involved the researcher collecting, coding and analysing data, and deciding on what data needs further collecting, in order to create theory as it emerged (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). Emergent theory guides the researcher in identifying their sample by asking what groups to turn to in data collection and for what theoretical purpose. The aim is to generate categories, for observable situations, events and problems, through coding, note taking and memo writing.

A grounded theorist is open and theoretically sensitive in their approach to research. Openness to concept discovery was essential in this study as it ensured the researcher was able to highlight concepts at an early stage of the research process. Glaser (1978)

suggests that the researcher only needs the overarching problem in his or her mind in order to go anywhere and talk to anyone about the problem area. Due to the early stages of the research process being based on such openness, false starts that do not grasp the concepts being investigated were likely to occur. However, through constant comparison that sought continual refinement of emergent theory, these were soon corrected. Therefore, theoretical sampling became more selective through its focus on concepts identified in the emerging theory. By constantly comparing data with data, concepts with concepts and incidents with incidents, the researcher was able to extend empirical theory into formal theory.

6.3 Methodology

There are a number of methodology types that include grounded theory, evolved grounded theory and constructivist grounded theory that aid in the development of a theoretical scheme of the role of contextual factors in their adaptation to the fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) lifestyle. The following section details these options before discussing the most suitable methodology type for this research.

6.3.1 Grounded Theory

Grounded theory is a methodology seeking to construct theory about the issues surrounding people's lives through an inductive data collection process in which there is no preconceived theory, ideas or views to test (Glaser & Strauss, 1967; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Instead, issues emerge through conversation about an area of interest that both researcher and participant have in common. Due to its explanatory power, grounded theory holds great appeal among a number of disciplines (i.e., education, psychology, business, nursing), as it aids in illustrating issues faced by individuals in a way that allows people to identify with theory. In developing a theory on participant experience, the researcher continually analyses and compares data being collected with data already gathered, data from previous studies, and data readily available through different forms of media (i.e., advertisements, brochures, newspaper articles) (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). These data comparisons are translated into codes and categories until a final theory can be developed. Grounded theory has evolved

over time and a researcher's ontological and epistemological beliefs determine the point of methodological development their study is based on (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006).

6.3.2 Evolved Grounded Theory

Strauss and Corbin (1994, p. 279) state that there is no "pre-existing reality…to think otherwise is to take a positivistic position…truth is enacted." This school of thought is one of an ontological position that challenges traditional grounded theorists' views that data, according to Glaser (1978), is representative of one true reality. The evolved grounded theory methodology uses language from both post-positivism and constructivism in that it acknowledges the importance to recognise bias and maintain objectivity when describing a researcher's position in relation to the data being collected and the participants sampled (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). It highlights the value of multiple perspectives in extending the range of theoretically sensitive concepts to describe human behaviour (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, 1998). This suggests that evolved grounded theory is about interpreting participant perspectives by relating their views, opinions and stories to the social world they inhabit.

There are a number of differences between evolved grounded theory and traditional grounded theory. These are based on a set of characteristics that include theoretical sensitivity, literature treatment, coding and identifying the core category.

6.3.2.1 Theoretical Sensitivity

Theoretical sensitivity relates to the researcher's level of awareness to the complexity of participants' behaviour, words and actions as well as their ability to develop meaning from the gathered data (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). Traditional grounded theory states that the researcher should enter their research with little to no biases or pre-determined thought, thus enabling them to remain sensitive to data without having to go through any personal views or hypotheses (Glaser, 1978). Immersion into the data by the researcher will increase theoretical sensitivity (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Essentially, the researcher is to approach his or her study with a blank slate,

however, according to evolved grounded theory, this is easier said than done and Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) suggest using a variety of techniques, such as questioning and comparisons, to enhance sensitivity. They claim that these techniques should be used as tools to aid in theory development and that "theorising is the act of constructing" a scheme from the data that integrates a variety of concepts through relationship statements, and that theories themselves are interpretations made by the researcher on the data and the participants (Strauss & Corbin, 1998, p. 25).

6.3.2.2 Literature Treatment

The use and treatment of literature is at two extremes when comparing grounded theory and evolved grounded theory. Grounded theorists believe that there is no need to review any literature due to it potentially impending on the researcher's analysis of codes from the data (Glaser, 1992). Evolved grounded theorists believe literature should be used as another voice in the development of research theory, and that previous studies on similar phenomena can help stimulate the thinking process and help better analyse the data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Other forms of literature, such as government reports, organisational web pages, advertisements, newspaper articles and unpublished documents, can also be used as a potential source of data that can provide researchers with information relating to the participants' context (i.e., information about the participants organisation) (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), thus leading to a more comprehensive and detailed analyses.

6.3.2.3 Coding Types

Coding is a fundamental analytical tool used by grounded theorists to uncover theory. There are three types of coding that include open, theoretical and constant comparative coding (Glaser, 1992). Open coding is the initial code development from the gathered data and ends when core category is created. Theoretical codes are those that connect similar concepts from data and develop relationships between categories. Constant comparative coding is a method used in both open and theoretical coding that involves continues comparisons of data throughout the analysis process.

Traditional grounded theory uses a set of 18 coding families to aid in conceptual analysis (Glaser, 1978). The evolved grounded theory approach to the coding paradigm is more complex, with Strauss and Corbin (1998) suggesting that it is important to hypothesise about conditions, interactions and consequences of categories. However, while the paradigm does provoke thinking, it should not be used rigidly to avoid preventing the researcher from capturing the complexity of relationships (Strauss & Corbin, 1998).

6.3.2.4 Identifying the Core Category

Identifying the core category allows grounded theorists to integrate all of the theory's various aspects (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). Evolved grounded theorists use the core category to acknowledge the researcher as a co-constructor of theory, which occurs during selective coding. By exploring the data and participant stories the researcher is able to analyse the narrative and eventually develop a core category (Mills, Bonner, & Francis, 2006). This process identifies and illustrates the participants' views and gives each participant a voice, albeit through the researcher's own interpretations (Strauss & Corbin, 1994).

6.3.3 Constructivist Grounded Theory

Charmaz (2000), with an emphasis on keeping researcher close to participant through ensuring participant words are intact during analysis, proposed a more socially constructed approach to grounded theory known as constructivist grounded theory. This theory reshapes the way in which participant and researcher interact with each other, highlighting the researcher as an author. Charmaz (2000) argues that the strategies developed by Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1994, 1998) are based on the assumption that an external reality exists, while the constructivist theory rejects notions of objectivity that are common through the use of analytical questions, hypotheses and methodological applications. Charmaz (2000) suggests that a constructivist approach to grounded theory is more desirable as interaction between researcher and participant, through temporal, cultural and structural contexts, leads to a discovered reality.

Mills, Bonner and Francis (2006) note that researchers need to search and question tacit meanings about values, beliefs and ideologies. In this sense, the researcher becomes more of a co-producer in that they add value by describing the situation, the process of interaction, and participant perceptions. The constructivist grounded theorist immerses him or herself into the interview and data analysis to understand participant perspectives. Immersion is achieved through coding to help keep participant voice in the foreground (Charmaz, 2000). In the present study, information from notes, memos, personal journals and interview transcripts was used to ensure that the meaning and understanding of data was accurate in the final theoretical outcomes.

Charmaz (2000) suggests that the researcher writing style should be literary rather than scientific in intent. Constructivist grounded theorists need to be analytical in their writing while still being able to highlight participant's feelings and experiences (Charmaz, 2001). In the present study, the researcher provided a voice that brought together aspects of work, life, mood and feelings that were reflective of participants' personal experiences. As such, participant perspectives were retained in a way that allowed clear connections between findings and data to be established (Jones, 2002), thus the participants became contributors to the reconstruction of the final theory.

The work of Charmaz (2000, 2001) aids in creating meaning from data as well as making participant experiences readable through a theoretical interpretation of data. It is about developing a model of constructivist grounded theory that addresses the researcher as a silent and distant author of meaning.

The present study used constructivist grounded theory to explore the experiences of non-traditional FIFO employees, their partners and key stakeholders in order to develop a theoretical scheme of the role of contextual factors in their adaptation to the FIFO lifestyle, and how various personal, social and protective resources can help manage job and home demands, influence individual stress response and enhance or diminish various outcomes. Constructivist grounded theory was chosen because it helps guide the researcher in forming meaning from data, and ensures that participants' experiences are accurate and made into readable theoretical

interpretations. The researcher remains close to the participants through keeping their perceptions, viewpoints and words intact during the analysis process, thus ensuring that the participants' presence is maintained throughout the study (Charmaz, 2000). It offers greater flexibility to gather participant experiences via interviews, allows the researcher to analyse participants' perspectives through categories from data collection, and helps develop a theory from concepts that emerge during the data collection. Therefore, it allows the researcher to proactively engage in the research process, and as this study focused on complex social phenomena in a non-manipulative setting the constructivist grounded theory was considered suitable. The researcher was positioned as a co-constructor of theory development as his own values, experiences and priorities were recognised (Charmaz, 2006).

6.3.3.1 Coding

Grounded theorists use coding to analytically examine interactions through comparing data with data, data with codes, and data with categories. Not only are these codes comparative but also interactive, inductive and deductive (Charmaz, 2012). Henwood and Pidgeon (2003) suggest that grounded theorists should critically analyse prior theories rather than ignore them. Coding or close coding involves breaking data into separate categories, such as statements, actions and events, and defining the actions that support said data (Charmaz, 2012). The researcher is able to highlight the processes, meanings, topics and themes that help link data together. Furthermore, through coding the researcher is able to question what the data is studying, what the data suggests, from whose point of view the data is coming from and what theoretical category the data supports (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser, 1978). This involves a more thorough analytical process that helps highlight significant points at an earlier stage of the research.

Coding can be done line-by-line, paragraph-by-paragraph, incident-by-incident or story-by-story, but it must always fit the purpose of the study (Charmaz, 2012). In this study, line-by-line coding was used to illustrate data in a new light. Data was engaged and conceptualised by labelling each line from interview transcripts and notes, and coding in gerunds to highlight actions and meanings as much as possible. This helped

see processes that through spoken word alone would have been invisible. Line-by-line coding was conducted until all codes for further analysis were established. By close coding in earlier interviews a refined set of categories were established that helped shape questions for the interviews that followed, thus fostering analytical momentum and expediting the study.

6.3.3.2 Memo Writing

Along with coding, memo writing was used in this study to interact with data and strengthen the emerging analysis. As Charmaz (2012) notes, memo writing helps speed up the analytical process and clarifies what is observed from the data. During memo writing questions arose regarding job types, roles and responsibilities, the influence of resources, stress response, and individual and family well-being, among others. These memos helped conceptualise data due to evidence being readily available. Through the use of memo writing, codes were continually refined, corrected and fitted to the data.

6.4 Research Paradigms

The research paradigm is a set of basic beliefs, understandings and values that guide the overall research process as well as placing the researcher within the same process (Morgan, 2007). It is essentially how the world works according to the researcher's own set of assumptions, views of the world, and values of the research process (Dokecki, 1992). The four main paradigms guiding social research are positivism, interpretivism, constructivism, and realism.

6.4.1 Positivism

Positivism is research conducted through natural observation where the researchers own values and biases have no influence over the outcome (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). It is heavily reliant on a single reality discovered through statistical testing of hypothesis and therefore it is more deductive rather than inductive (Mertens, 2003). The positivist paradigm uses quantitative methods to develop a greater understanding of

the social world, but also acknowledges the researchers own values. Positivist approaches to research are heavily reliant on experimental methods that ensure distance between the researchers own subjective biases and the objective of study, thus leading to generation and/or testing of hypothesis in order to prove or refute research questions. Similarly, the positivism successor, post-positivism also relies on quantitative methods in the acceptance of a single reality whilst at the same time acknowledging the researchers personal values to the study (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Positivism is focused on "theory verification", whereas post-positivism adopts "theory-falsification" with language being objective and scientific without personal voice (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 107). Through experimental and systematic procedures both positivism and post-positivism test the hypothesis and predict phenomena.

6.4.2 Interpretivism

Where positivists prefer quantitative methods, such as surveys and questionnaires, that use statistics to detail relationships between variables, interpretivists are more qualitative in their methods of research, using unstructured interviews and observations to gather data. Interpretivism argues that individuals are intricate and complex, with each person having their own unique experiences of the world (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). They aim to capture meanings in human interaction (Black, 2006), and make sense of individual perceptions of reality (Carson, Gilmore, Perry, & Gronhaug, 2001). In essence, interpretivists look at the world through the eyes of the participant, and as such believe that the researcher is interdependent and mutually interactive (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). They have some prior knowledge or insight of the research context but view said knowledge as insufficient to the development of a research design due to the complexity associated with perceived reality (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988). The researcher is open to the acquisition of new knowledge and knowledge is developed through interaction with participants. Therefore, the researcher aims to understand the meaning of human behaviour rather than generalise and predict the causes and results of behaviour (Hudson & Ozanne, 1988).

6.4.3 Constructivism

The constructivist paradigm is one of which there is no objective reality and where people shape their own social worlds through interacting with others that experience the same phenomena, and these social worlds are continually being constructed, de-constructed and re-constructed (Ponterotto, 2005). Unlike positivist theorists, constructivist grounded theorists believe that there is no single reality but instead multiple and equally valid realities, and that knowledge is developed through personal individual experiences. Constructivist grounded theorists aim to uncover knowledge of how people think and feel about their surroundings, events and circumstances instead of making judgements on the validity of their thoughts and feelings. It can be said that people are better understood through their own personal perceptions of the world and therefore the research process is value neutral. Furthermore, the researcher is seen as a crucial part of the research process as his or her personal views and opinions construct the world around them (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998).

6.4.4 Realism

Realism, through the adoption of elements from both positivism and constructivism, challenges the status quo in that it assumes only one reality exists but it is a complex reality in which the researcher can only observe certain aspects (Healy & Perry, 2000). However, it also recognises that each person is unique and that there is a difference between reality and individual perception (Bisman, 2002). As such, social conditioning influences knowledge of reality and therefore it cannot be understood independently (Dobson, 2002). The present study adopted the transformative/emancipatory (Mertens, 2003) approach as it places central importance on the lives and experiences of marginalised and minority groups such as members from the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) community among other non-traditional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) family types. By incorporating a critical perspective not only does the study challenge the status quo but also the focus is limited to a specific, relatively small, range of research. The transformative paradigm used in this study examined the experiences and impacts FIFO employment has on non-traditional

FIFO families living in Western Australia (WA). Both quantitative and qualitative researchers often use realism as it adopts inductive reasoning to show results about real world issues (Zikmund, 2000).

With increasing acceptance of alternate paradigms, positivism, interpretivism, constructivism and realism continue to be viewed as mutually exclusive. A research paradigm should be based on the context of the study and research issues being addressed, motivations, aims and constraints of the study (Hallenbone & Priest, 2009). Due to the complexity associated with this research there was no single paradigm that could, at a satisfactory level, cover all the methodological aspects. In addition, the research does not purely focus on one single group of individuals but a wide array of different people that are separated by sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI). Therefore, a blended paradigm consisting from elements of interpretivism, constructivism and realism was adopted for this study. The combination of the three approaches helped improve the overall analysis of data while also highlighting the complex and personal experiences of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners.

6.5 Triangulation

Triangulation is broadly defined as a combination of methodologies in research of the same phenomena (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). In the present study multiple triangulation methods were utilised to comprehensively investigate the research question and issues, thus increasing overall rigour and depth of research that ultimately led to providing a clearer picture of the impact fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment has on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. Webb, Campbell, Schwartz and Sechrest (1966, p. 3) claim that once a "proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced; the most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes." A variety of different data types can reduce the chances of developing flawed results, therefore helping increase research confidence as well as being constructive in other roles. Jick (1979) claims that it can stimulate creation of inventive methods, thus providing new ways to capture a problem; it may also help uncover different dimensions of the phenomena leading to

richer explanations of the research problem; and triangulation, through its comprehensiveness, can test and potentially lead to the development of new theory. As such, it plays an important role in the quality of the chosen methods as the researcher becomes more sensitive to multiple sources of data. Denzin (1970) identified four types of triangulation that include data triangulation, investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation, and methodological triangulation.

6.5.1 Data Triangulation

Also known as data sources triangulation, data triangulation involves the use of a variety of different data sources to gather data on the same study. According to Denzin (1970), there are three types of data triangulation that include time (time of when the data was collected), space (setting and surroundings from where the data was collected), and person triangulation (people involved in the data gathering process). In this research, data triangulation was used to collect information from a number of participants in the same field of FIFO employment, at various life and work stages, and from different gender and family types (Bannister, Burman, Parker, Taylor, & Tindall, 1994). Additionally, it involved crosschecking notes and memos from various participants at different times via multiple methods (Patton, 1990). Person triangulation, in particular, was heavily used in this study as data was collected from more than one type of person. Participants included blue and white collar employees, stay at home partners, mothers and fathers all involved in the resources sector, thus leading to greater insight into a variety of FIFO related contextual factors that covered everything from support services available to employees and their families to workplace practices addressing discrimination and prejudice. This data was used to support and validate information from the research findings.

6.5.2 Investigator Triangulation

Investigator triangulation involves the use of multiple researchers, interviewers, analysts or observers in the same study to increase validity (Thurmond, 2001). The findings from each researcher are compared with each other and if the same conclusion is present in each, validity is established. If there are discrepancies across

findings, further research is required. While this can be an effective method, for the purposes of the present study it was not practical given the time constraints and that there was only one researcher conducting the study.

6.5.3 Theoretical Triangulation

Unlike investigator triangulation, theoretical triangulation involves using professionals from outside the researcher's study and area of expertise, as different theories look at the problem from different perspectives (Denzin, 1970). By comparing the findings of various theories the researcher would be able to develop a greater understanding of the research problem. However, as with investigator triangulation, this method was not feasible for the present study as this research was exploratory and involving individuals from other disciplines would be time consuming.

6.5.4 Methodological Triangulation

Methodological triangulation is the use of two or more methods to study the same phenomena (Denzin, 1970). If conclusions from each method are the same, validity can be established. However, it can be confusing as it can occur at two levels in the research process. For example, some researchers indicate a paradigmatic connection through the combination of quantitative and qualitative paradigms while others view methodological triangulation as the use of both quantitative and qualitative data collection methods in studying the same phenomena (Thurmond, 2001). While a popular method in research, it does require the use of a substantial number of resources to evaluate data (Guion, Diehl, & McDonald, 2002), and therefore more time is needed for data analysis, thus it was not suitable for the purposes of the present study.

Due to the complexity associated with social reality it can be difficult to understand and observe phenomena, thus highlighting a need for analysis of different perspectives on one reality. Data triangulation in the form of person triangulation was used in this research to deepen the understanding of the impact FIFO employment has

on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. By comparing notes, memos and interview transcripts with brochures, newspaper articles, websites, social forums and other research and academic studies, validity of findings was achieved. The benefits of triangulation, due to data diversity and quantity, are that it can assist in increasing research confidence, help reveal unique findings, and provide a clearer understanding of issues (Thurmond, 2001). Triangulation was primarily used to ensure that the findings from this study were trustworthy.

6.6 Qualitative Research

Qualitative research involves a number of techniques used by the researcher to describe the meaning of certain phenomena in the social world (Van Maanem, 1979). It assists the researcher in detailing why and how things happen as they do. These techniques are used throughout both data collection and data analysis stages of research. Data collection techniques include interviews, focus groups, case studies and observations, among others, whereas data analysis involves the researcher adopting content analysis of recorded and/or written materials from participant experiences, behavioural observations, and descriptions of the surrounding environment. The aim is essentially to achieve a detailed and in-depth understanding of a particular situation. Data can be drawn from individuals, organisations, environment, texts and virtual online materials, which allow the researcher to extract feelings, emotions and perceptions from individual participants (Langer, 2001; Mason, 2002).

This form of research involves the researcher immersing themselves in the phenomena to understand and interpret all aspects of said phenomena. In the present study the purpose was to explore how fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment impacts the lives of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners, with the aim of gaining a greater in-depth understanding on the role of resources in terms of managing work and home demands, stress, and participant well-being. Qualitative research in this study was used to develop, through semi-structured interviews and coding, new theory and ways of looking at the FIFO lifestyle. The researcher was heavily involved in the process, and the use of open-ended questions ensured that each interview had formal structure while at the same time remaining unique, as each participant was

different. Analysis of interview responses was conducted and codes developed after each interview to ensure maximum information retention.

6.7 Research Design

Due to the applied and exploratory nature of this research, constructivist grounded theory analysis techniques, as described by Charmaz (2003, 2006), were employed in the present study. As illustrated in chapter three, there is a dearth of literature concentrating on fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners, thus our understanding of FIFO employment and its impact on non-traditional FIFO families is limited.

As noted by Creswell (2005), grounded theory is commonly employed by qualitative researchers to generate new theories and understandings of individual opinions and views. It develops theory based solely on data gathered from participants and is often used in business and psychological research (Charmaz, 2000). Developed by Glaser and Strauss (1967), grounded theory relates to the discovery or generation of theory from data that has been systematically obtained through social research. With roots set in sociology, grounded theory proposes that people actively construct realities through social interactions in which language, gestures and even clothing is used to convey meaning (Fassinger, 2005). In constructing theory about a particular phenomenon it incorporates "systematic inductive guidelines for gathering, synthesizing, analysing and conceptualising qualitative data" (Charmaz, 2003, p. 82). As such, the resulting theory is one that is explanatory and relevant to the group of people being studied. While Glaser and Strauss's (1967) original approach to emphasising theory solely from data has remained consistent throughout time, other researchers such as Charmaz (2003, 2006) and Strauss and Corbin (1998) have developed their own, more constructivist, approaches that acknowledge the researcher as a co-constructor of theory.

Charmaz's (2003, 2006) approach to grounded theory acknowledges that human reality is constructed socially and as such is considered changeable and influenced by both parties (speaker and listener). The researcher is seen and positioned as a co-constructor of theory development, as his or her own values, experiences and

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priorities are recognised (Charmaz, 2006). It focuses on complex social phenomena in a non-manipulative setting. As such it was considered suitable for the present study, as the aims were exploratory, applied and situated in a non-manipulative setting.

6.7.1 Participants

Due to limited resources, purposeful sampling was employed in this research to achieve variability and richness of data, thus leading to a greater understanding of FIFO employment (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2002). Individuals were identified based on how knowledgeable and experienced they were with the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Through the use of purposeful sampling, as discussed by Charmaz (2006) and Fassinger (2005), this study ensured that the sample group of participants represented the diversity of the FIFO resources sector by comparing people at different life stages, from different relationship types and employment conditions. The family arrangements that were explored included nuclear conventional families (two biological parents and their children), single-parent families (parent with children under the age of 18), cohabiting families (unmarried couples living together with or without children), blended families (family that includes children from a previous marriage of one spouse or both), and same-sex parent families (non-heterosexual partners, with or without children, living together).

To ensure an in-depth understanding was reached and a diverse group of perspectives represented, a total of 109 participants (55 FIFO employees, 47 partners of employees and 7 key stakeholders) were sampled. The participants were contacted through the researchers own professional contacts as well as through various mining unions, such as the Construction, Forestry, Mining and Energy Union (CFMEU). Participants were emailed the details of the study that addressed the aim of the research and the risks involved in partaking in the study. A follow-up email was also sent to confirm interest and establish potential times for interviews to be conducted. For a detailed view of the demographic profile of the participants please refer to Appendix A. Some participants were well adjusted to the FIFO lifestyle having worked in FIFO employment for a number of years while others were new to non-standard working arrangements. There was a mix of non-traditional family types ranging from same-sex couples with or

without children living together to single parent non-heterosexual families. The FIFO employees included mainly on-shore mining employees although there were a few off-shore oil and gas workers that were part of the sample. The sample consisted of fixed and mobile operators, engineers, machinery and plant operators, drillers, chefs, electricians, nurses, training and safety officers, boilermakers, geoscientists and environmental advisors, maintenance personnel, underground pump fitters, surveyors, and those working in administrative positions. Of the at home partners, eleven had either full-time, casual or part-time employment outside of home, six were students and two were full-time carers. From the 109 participants interviewed, 75 were considered non-traditional as per the definition set out in chapter one. All participants resided in the Perth metropolitan area. Further information regarding employment is not included to ensure participant identity remains protected.

6.7.2 Materials

In assessing the appropriateness of interview questions, content and language, a pilot study with a small group of three participants from the target population was conducted prior to commencing formal participant interviews. The pilot participants' knowledge and feedback was used to modify and refine the final interview questions. After these modifications were made there were no further changes to the final set of questions.

Following the pilot study, the process involved stratification of the groups to be researched according to sexuality and family arrangements. Participants were recruited directly by the researcher or indirectly via industry contacts and trade unions. Support, community and stakeholder groups were also approached to provide access to different family types. Through the use of referrals, participants were identified at a relatively efficient manner (Black, 2010). The only limitations that came from this type of convenience or snowball sampling (Coleman, 1958; Goodman, 1961) was that it was non-random and as such difficulties arose in drawing conclusions from the sample group and generalising findings to the wider population of non-traditional FIFO families (Maylor & Blackmon, 2005).

Semi-structured interview techniques were employed to provide consistency of the topic across all interviews while at the same time probing and paraphrasing questions back to participants, thus allowing for detailed descriptions and justifications to emerge through conversation (Fassinger, 2005; Smith, 1995). More specifically, recursive interviewing techniques were used as a guide for each interview rather than following a pre-determined set of questions. In this sense the interview, although formal in structure, was more informal and in turn led to less hesitation from participants to open up, as the interview itself became a co-construction between participant and researcher (Minichello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). Participants answered questions in their own words, however, the questions were open-ended as a way to facilitate and guide the interview process in a smooth and efficient manner. A number of question types were used to access specific information and detail research issues in greater depth (Minichello, Aroni, Timewell, & Alexander, 1995). These questions related to demographics such as how long the participant had been a part of FIFO employment; descriptive questions that allowed the participant to further justify their responses; questions relating to individual feelings of specific phenomena; knowledge questions such as those about the company and employer; and general opinion based questions. These questions were used as a guide for each interview and their order and wording changed based on the circumstances that evolved across different interviews (Strauss & Corbin, 1990). For a detailed view of the interview questions used for employees, their partners, and key stakeholders please refer to Appendix B. Additionally, if a participant desired to share any further information that was not discussed during the initial interview or wanted to elaborate on their comments, time was allocated for such desires as well contact details supplied at the end of each interview.

6.7.3 Research Breakdown

The present study used a six-step plan for data collection, as shown in Figure 6.2. The first step, through the use of emails, utilised convenience sampling as a pre-test pilot study with a small sample of the target population to test the appropriateness of interview questions. The second step used the pilot participants' knowledge and feedback to modify and refine the final interview questions. Step three involved

stratification of the groups to be researched according to sexuality and family arrangements. Participants were recruited through email directly by the researcher or indirectly via industry contacts. Support, community and stakeholder groups were also approached to provide access to different participants. In order to avoid the study interfering with participants work, the interviews were conducted mainly through email but also via Skype, video chat, telephone and face-to-face discussions, as highlighted in step four. Due to limited resources, purposeful sampling was employed in order to achieve variability and richness of data, thus leading to a greater understanding of FIFO working and living (Charmaz, 2006; Patton, 2002). Individuals were identified based on how knowledgeable and experienced they were with the phenomenon (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2011). Through the use of purposeful sampling, the study ensured that the sampled group of participants represented the diversity of the resources sector and as such compared people at different life stages, relationship types and employment. Step five involved analysing interview data and the step six was the write up of the findings.

Figure 6.2: Breakdown of Research Process
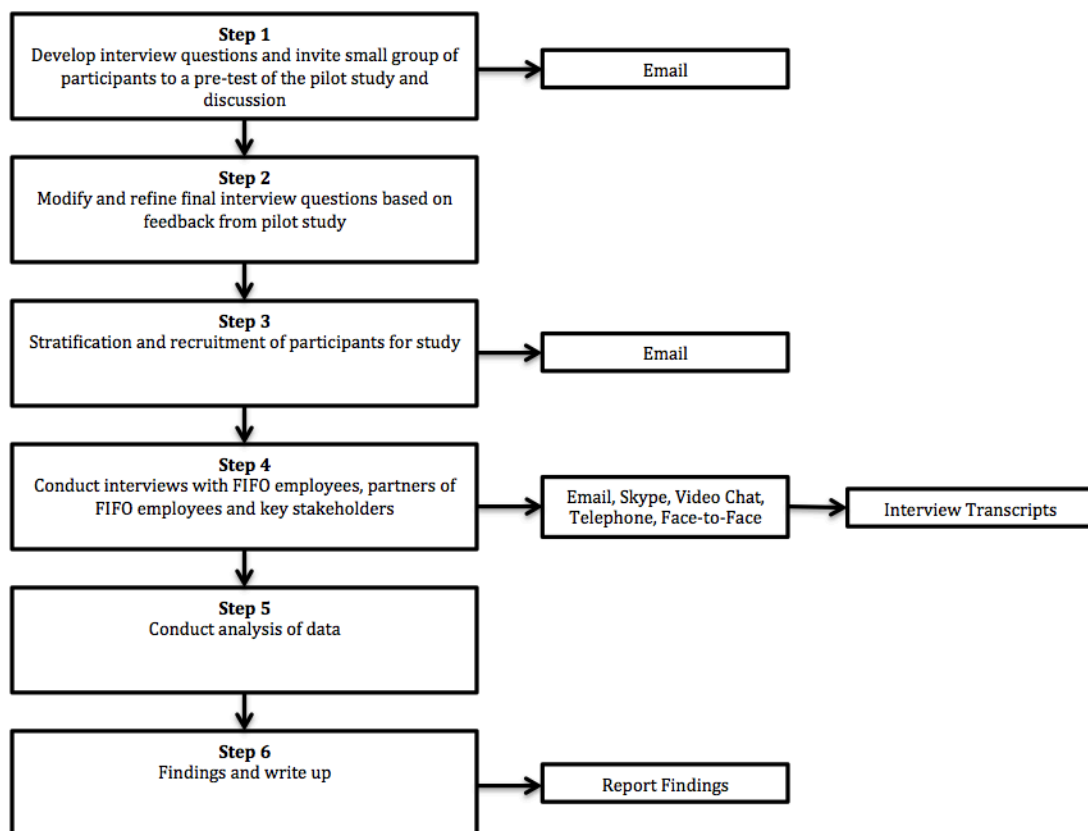
6.7.4 Process and Procedure

Each participant was contacted in advance of sending out the information sheet and informed consent form in order to generate interest in the topic. Key community and support groups were contacted view phone or email and given a brief overview of the study and procedure. Once suitable candidates were chosen, a time for each interview was arranged. Due to the geographical separation between researcher and participants, the majority of interviews were conducted through email, Skype, video chat and telephone. Two were held at the private residence of the participant and five at public facilities. According to Breakwell (1995), online or telephone-based interviews can generate the same quality of data as face-to-face interviews.

Before the commencement of each interview, rapport was established through a short informal conversation or a formal introductory email to those completing the interview via email. This introductory phase covered the study and the way in which the interview would be conducted. Privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were reassured and participant right to withdraw from the study at any time reaffirmed before the consent form was agreed and signed. Each participant was given time to ask questions they may have regarding the study which were answered by the researcher. This informal discussion set the mood for the first set of demographic questions that followed and allowed for a smooth interview process to flow throughout the rest of the questions.

It was established early on that audio taping the interviews would prove problematic as the ambient noise of the surrounding environment made it difficult to articulate what was recorded during the interview. After two interviews in a public location it was deemed that the current audio recording device (tape recorder) was incapable of clearly, without distortion, recording discussion between the participant and researcher. Therefore, the face-to-face interviews that followed were also reliant on the researcher taking notes during the interview. These notes were transferred into a text-based document that was used to cross-reference and compare all participant responses, from individuals that were sampled through online means (37.6% of

participants or 41 people) to those that were interviewed via face-to-face (62.4% of participants or 68 people) discussions. However, a tape recorder, through the permission of the participant, was still used as it aided in information retention that might have been lost through face-to-face discussion alone. Each FIFO employee interview lasted approximately 40 minutes, interviews with partners of FIFO employees ranged from 20 to 30 minutes and key stakeholders took, on average, 30 minutes to interview. Those that completed the interview online generally returned their results within the first few weeks upon receiving the email. As a result, a potential disparity could exist between participants that completed the interview via online means and those that were able to partake in face-to-face interviews. However, this was mitigated via researcher notes that supported all the interviews, and each interview was transcribed verbatim in order to avoid any potential loss of knowledge.

Upon completion of the interview, each participant was thanked for their time and reminded of the researcher's contact details should they have any further comments or questions regarding the study. For the face-to-face and telephone interviews, a short informal conversation followed, thus ensuring that each participant was comfortable after the interview process.

6.8 Ethical Considerations

Ethical considerations regarding the research of the present study addressed issues pertaining to physical and psychological harm to participants, informed consent, anonymity, confidentiality, privacy, analysis and reporting. The research study was designed to avoid participant exposure to any physical, psychological or legal harm (Sarantakos, 2005). There was a small risk that participants could reveal sensitive information relating to their organisation, employer or themselves during the interview process. However, this risk was mitigated through the use of coding to identify participants with their responses instead of using their real names. Their organisational affiliation was kept private to avoid any embarrassing comments they may have mentioned regarding their employer or place of employment.

All participants voluntarily partook in the study that involved them reading and agreeing to the research by signing an informed consent form prior to the

commencement of each interview. Each participant contacted was able to accept or refuse participation and only two chose not to partake in the study due to time constraints. Those that chose to participate did so knowingly by accepting the risks associated with the study that were outlined in the information sheet and informed consent form. These forms were also kept separate from the research data to ensure participant names could not be linked. The researcher developed codes and only the researcher could link codes with participants. A copy of the information sheet, informed consent form, and ethics clearance are available in Appendix C.

The information sheet detailed the background of the study, the study procedure, risks, benefits and confidentiality. It covered the requirements of participation as well as ensuring each participant that their privacy and anonymity would be maintained throughout the entirety of the study and after the study had been completed. As such, the names of the participants in the findings chapter (chapter seven) have been changed to codes, thus ensuring participant privacy and confidentiality. Participants were also informed that they could withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. All participants were provided with contact details of those involved in the study if they had any concerns regarding the research or if they wanted to provide further comments after completing their interview.

Ethics were adhered during the writing of the thesis through the use of codes to identify participants and presented an honest account and report of the research findings. Using codes when highlighting participant perspectives instead of participant names helped ensure that the information gathered could not be linked to the participant or their organisation.

6.9 Data Analysis

Data was analysed immediately after the completion of each interview and a short summary regarding the specific interview was written. During this stage the researcher noted comments of interest and connections between participant answers and findings from previous research, as detailed in chapters two, three and four. A more thorough analysis was conducted once all the interviews had been completed. Analysis continued throughout the entirety of the research, from the initial data

collection during the pilot study to the final write up. As new details and understanding emerged, the researcher continually revised the data to match that of new information. Interviews were conducted until enough data was generated for saturation to be reached, that is when it was determined that any new data would not add further information for emerging topics (Creswell, 2005). Once no new data was deemed possible, the researcher re-read all the interview transcripts and responses several times to gain a greater sense of each interview, thus enabling the researcher to further familiarise himself with the data and structure data into groups for comparison. This process helped highlight patterns and themes from the data. Memos were used to focus on the key ideas, themes and concepts from interview responses. Furthermore, coding was implemented to interpret findings, construct meaning from collected data and create a theoretical framework based on the experiences of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners.

6.9.1 Line and Focused Coding

Once each interview was completed, the interview notes were transcribed into text-based documents that were used to compare responses. This allowed complete data immersion and gave a greater understanding of participant experiences. Each transcript was analysed through line coding, providing for a more versatile form of data management. From there, line-by-line coding was conducted and compared with notes taken during interviews. Data was compared across different participants, points during discussion and codes with other codes. This was done until there was no more repetition and saturation was reached. Data was stored on the researcher's computer which assisted the research process as it allowed the storing of data in a single location that enabled, through NVivo software, the isolation of text segments and connections with future texts for comparison of participant responses.

Once initial coding was completed, focused coding was conducted and larger amounts of data were categorised into groups through comparison of participant experiences and opinions. These categories were refined and a link between them established. Notes were also taken during this stage that related to relationships and the actual process of analysis, which helped provide a clearer map of the analysis process and

established research rigor. Previous literature, as discussed in the chapters two, three and four, was continually accessed and referred to during analysis and included comparing data with findings from past research. Quotations from the interviews were also used to give a better understanding of how much of the theoretical framework was established from data. These quotations are shown by the use of italics and any intonations, phrases and unnecessary words were removed and replaced with ellipses to indicate omitted words while keeping the meaning of claims and discussions intact.

After initial and focused coding was conducted, all codes were reviewed to combine codes into themes. Themes were created based on the clustering of similar codes that helped identify links and interrelationships between codes. A code structure and hierarchy emerged that detailed the same themes and phenomena.

6.10 Research Validation

In ensuring research validation, issues pertaining to credibility, confirmability, dependability and transferability were all addressed during this study (Merrick, 1999; Morrow, 2005). For example, the researcher kept a personal journal throughout the entire study that contained thoughts on the research process as well as documenting all supervisor meetings and interviews with fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees, their partners and key stakeholders. Meetings with supervisors were also summarised and discussion and direction reaffirmed after each meeting. Regular contact with supervisors was maintained and their feedback always taken into consideration, as their knowledge assisted in building a stronger theoretical framework. Additionally, numerous forms of data were collected, such as information from articles, newspaper clippings, brochures, government reports, non-government research papers, student and academic forum discussions, and incorporated into the research. For face-to-face interviews a detailed description of the surroundings, environment, and participants was documented, thus allowing for credibility and transferability of findings to different contexts that could be assessed between similar settings (Burgess-Limerick & Burgess-Limerick, 1998).

6.11 Chapter Summary

This chapter detailed the overall research process of the present study, including the aims of the research and the method used to collect and analyse the data necessary in answering the research question and subsequent research issues. Research was conducted using the constructivist grounded theory, as this approach allowed the participants' experiences and perspectives to remain intact during the analysis process and helped develop theory through concepts that emerged during the data collection. The use of qualitative semi-structured interviews sought to examine the unique experiences of each individual participant, and the use of a blended paradigm consisting of elements from interpretivism, constructivism and realism highlighted the complex and personal experiences of non-traditional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners. The findings of this study are presented and discussed in chapter seven.

Chapter 7

Findings and Discussion

7.1 Introduction

The following chapter details the research findings of this study in relation to three areas of discussion. These are the experiences of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment by non-traditional FIFO employees, the experiences of FIFO living and work-home interaction by non-traditional FIFO families in comparison to conventional FIFO families, and community challenges associated with the FIFO lifestyle and community integration. The chapter also addresses FIFO-related challenges and how participants managed such challenges, realistic expectations of remaining in FIFO employment, FIFO relationships, division of roles and responsibilities, resource access, expectations of the FIFO lifestyle, and participant coping routines and strategies. Furthermore, the influence of various individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions on FIFO employee and partner experiences and well-being are addressed.

Findings show that non-traditional WA FIFO employees and their partners face similar challenges to those from conventional FIFO backgrounds, however the impact of said challenges on non-traditional families was at a more severe level than what it was for conventional families. Non-traditional family experiences were influenced by various factors associated with FIFO employment as well as the amount and type of personal, social and protective resources held by individuals that help manage job and home demands, and in turn reduce individual stress response, thus leading to better outcomes and overall healthier levels of well-being. The experiences of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners are discussed and presented in light of previous research as detailed in chapters two, three and four. In keeping the meaning of claims intact, participant quotations are used throughout this chapter to illustrate participant opinions and perceptions on the different themes of discussion.

7.2 The FIFO Experience

This study examined the experiences of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment by non-traditional FIFO employees, and their partners, working in the Western Australian (WA) minerals and resources industry. It addressed the influence FIFO employment has on non-traditional FIFO employee lives, the positives and negatives of FIFO living, employee satisfaction with current roster structure, opportunities for socialisation while at work, support services for non-work issues, quality of on-site accommodation, and availability of communication while at work. Furthermore, the study highlighted non-traditional employee perceptions of FIFO employment and the impact FIFO working and living could have on their family, their desire for a better balance between work and home domains, and the influence job and home demands have on individual stress response and various outcomes pertaining to work, home and well-being.

The literature, although solely focused on conventional FIFO families, showed that the majority of families were satisfied with the FIFO lifestyle claiming that the benefits associated with FIFO employment, such as strong remuneration and job security, held greater value than the drawbacks of FIFO living, such as irregular working hours, loneliness and physical isolation (Beach, 1999; Clifford, 2009). However, despite this, there were still a number of challenges faced by FIFO employees relating to relationships, adjusting and readjusting to work and home life, and living in a geographically isolated work area, with evidence suggesting that personal factors, such as individual life stage, family type and access to resources, impacted employee and partner well-being (Gallegos, 2006, Keown, 2005).

Similar to previous research (Beach, 1999; Gent, 2004; Reynolds, 2004; Storey, Shrimpton, Lewis, & Clark, 1989), this study found that roster structure, family type and home absence were among the main factors influencing the FIFO lifestyle experiences of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. While previous findings were based on conventional family types, the impact of these factors and issues has yet to be explored from a non-traditional family perspective. The understanding of the FIFO lifestyle was limited to that of traditional two-parent mother and father household structures. In extending the depth of FIFO-related literature, this study addressed the experiences of the FIFO lifestyle by non-traditional WA FIFO employees and their partners using the Job and Home Demands Resources

(JHDR) model in conjunction with Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework to enhance our understanding of the relationship between FIFO employment and well-being, and how individuals and families adapt to this relationship.

In gaining a better understanding of FIFO-related impacts, this study was divided into three groups that included FIFO employees, partners of FIFO employees, and key stakeholders. This provided for framework that highlighted the influence of various FIFO-related factors, and in particular participant sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI), can have on individual experiences of FIFO working and living. Both FIFO employees and partners of FIFO employees partook in this study and comparisons were made to identify any discrepancies in their perceptions of the FIFO lifestyle, their relationship to one another, overall family functioning and well-being. The following focuses on the views and opinions of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners before discussing key stakeholder perceptions of FIFO employment.

7.3 Participants

A total of 109 participants were interviewed via online forums and face-to-face communication methods that included private email, video chat, and telephone conversations. From the 109 participants there were three groups divided into fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees (55 participants), partners of FIFO employees (47 participants), and key stakeholders such as human resource managers, site manager and lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) representatives (7 participants). The participants were further separated by their sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI) with 30 identifying as gay, 22 as lesbian (one of which identified as two-spirited), and 22 as bisexual. From these participants a total of 9 considered themselves as transgender. There were 27 participants that were part of the conventional family structure of which there were 15 employees and 12 partners of employees. There was also one mother sampled who has a lesbian daughter working in FIFO employment. A comparison of conventional family experiences of FIFO employment with non-traditional family experiences is further explored later in this chapter. All employees worked in some form of FIFO employment and, either with

their partner, family or alone, resided on the south-western region of Western Australia (WA), from towns across Geraldton, Northam, Bunbury and suburbs of Perth. Additionally, as earlier research illustrated (Beach, 1999; Sibbel & Kaczmarek, 2005), roster structure, swing length, marital status and years involved in FIFO employment could influence employee and partner experiences of the FIFO lifestyle, and therefore participant employment structures and various profile types were examined and are detailed below.

7.3.1 FIFO Employees and Partners

There were a total of 55 employees sampled. 40 were from a non-traditional family background and 15 from a conventional family background. For the purposes of this study cross-sectional analysis and comparison of experiences is strictly focused on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners before a more in depth comparison between non-traditional and conventional FIFO families is detailed. The age of non-traditional FIFO employees ranged from 22 to 51 years old (M = 33.63, SD = 6.56). The number of years in the current mine site at the time of sampling as well as the overall number of years in FIFO employment by the participants is detailed in Table 7.1.

Table 7.1: FIFO Employees' Years Involved in FIFO Employment

Work experience	Range	M	SD
Years at current mine site	1mth – 8yrs	29.58	23.46
Years in FIFO employment	3mths – 30yrs	90.34	66.46

The sample is representative of blue and white-collar workers including employees at operating, managerial and administrative levels from underground and surface based personnel. Participants came from various departments such as mining, engineering, maintenance and repairs, human resources, training, health and safety, finance, and administration. The sample consisted of fixed and mobile operators, engineers, machinery and plant operators, drillers, chefs, electricians, nurses, training and safety officers, boilermakers, geoscientists and environmental advisors, maintenance personnel, underground pump fitters, surveyors, and those working in administrative positions.

A total of 47 partners of FIFO employees were also interviewed. Their ages ranged from 23 to 47 years old (M = 31.38, SD = 6.10). 29 had either casual, part-time or full-time jobs away from their home, two were self-employed, four were either part-time or full-time students, and 12 were homemakers caring for their child/children or family members living with them in the same household. There were no partners absent from home for more than the traditional eight-hour, Monday to Friday, working week.

7.3.1.1 FIFO Employee and Partner Profile: Sexual Orientation

As the present study primarily focused on non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners, Table 7.2 details the sampled participants SO frequencies as well as illustrating the number of heterosexual individuals sampled. *Lesbian* referred to women participants sexually attracted to other women. *Gay* similarly referred to men sexually attracted to other men. *Bisexual* participants were individuals sexually attracted to both men and women. There were also *transgender* people that included those who identified themselves as either male or female, or felt that neither term fit them. These participants included lesbian, gay and bisexual individuals and as such were not given a separate section in Table 7.2. *Heterosexual* participants referred to individuals that were sexually attracted to those from the opposite sex. Finally, *other* comprised of people that did not identify with any of the SO types, for example one participant that considered herself two-spirited.

Table 7.2: Sexual Orientation Frequencies

Sexual orientation	Employee		Partner		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
Lesbian	11	20	10	21.3	21	20.6
Gay	19	34.5	12	25.5	31	30.4
Bisexual	9	16.4	12	25.5	21	20.6
Heterosexual	15	27.3	13	27.7	28	27.4
Other	1	1.8	0	0	1	1

7.3.1.2 FIFO Employee and Partner Profile: Family Type

The family types investigated in the current study are detailed in Table 7.3. *LGBT couple with no children* referred to unmarried LGBT couples in a long-term relationship without any children, whereas an *LGBT couple with children* referred to either married or unmarried LGBT couples in a long-term relationship where one or both partners have a child or children in their current relationship or from a previous relationship. In certain instances a couple consisted of one LGBT partner and one heterosexual partner (please refer to Appendix A for a clearer breakdown of couples). *Singlehood* participants were, at the time of being sampled, not in any current long-term relationships, had not previously been divorced, and had no children. *Single-parent* families were individuals with one or more children and no partner. *Heterosexual couple with children* referred to families that consisted of a biological

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mother, father and their biological children. *Heterosexual couple with no children* were couples in a long-term relationship without any children. Finally, *blended family* referred to families consisting of a mother and father with either or both spouses having a child or children from their current and/or previous relationship/s.

Table 7.3: Family Type Frequencies

Family type	Employee		Partner		Total	
	Freq.	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**	**Freq.**	**%**
LGBT couple (no children)	25	45.5	28	59.6	53	52.0
LGBT couple (with children)	6	11.0	6	12.8	12	11.7
Singlehood	10	18.2	0	0	10	9.8
Single-parent	2	3.6	0	0	2	2.0
Heterosexual couple (with children)	7	12.7	7	14.9	14	13.7
Heterosexual couple (no children)	3	5.4	4	8.5	7	6.9
Blended family	2	3.6	2	4.2	4	3.9

7.3.1.3 Swing Roster

There were a number of different swing roster arrangements ranging from a few days to weeks on-site. The most common was two weeks on-site followed by one week at home (2/1). As discussed in chapter one, swings were based on the type of work, employee position and level in the organisation at the time of data collection. For a more detailed view of all the swing rosters please refer to Table 7.4.

Table 7.4: FIFO Employee Swing Rosters

Swing roster	Employee	
	Freq.	%
6/1 (weeks)	2	3.6
5/1 (weeks)	5	9.1
4/1 (weeks)	8	14.5
3/1 (weeks)	5	9.1
2/1 (weeks)	25	45.5
1/1 (weeks)	5	9.1
8/6 (days)	2	5.5
5/2 (days)	3	3.6
Total	55	100.0

While most of the FIFO employees were satisfied with their current swing arrangement, they also preferred a shorter (three or less weeks on-site) over a longer (more than three weeks on-site) swing, and spending more time with loved ones, connecting with their partner, and the feeling of living a normal lifestyle being the main motivators for such desire. They claimed that regular extended periods of home absence could lead to an abnormal way of living. *A longer home period brings a feeling of normalness to a relationship that is commonly known to be abnormal* said one lesbian employee (DD - LE). Stating that people working in FIFO employment generally don't have the same lifestyle options as those working 9-to-5 jobs.

Similarly, another employee (U - LE) claimed that, *working a shorter swing feels like I live a normal life, I see my partner, friends and family regularly this way as opposed to when I was working a longer swing.* Another gay employee (EE - GE) found that by working a shorter swing, *I get a whole week with my partner instead of a few days or a weekend; we get a lot more time together.* While another participant (AA - GE) found that a shorter swing helped him connect with his partner, *I see my partner on a* [more] *frequent basis…it has brought us closer.* Then there were participants that felt they couldn't be themselves while on-site, thus preferring a shorter swing as they got more time at home where they could freely express their sexuality and sexual preferences,

> *I hate being stuck in a place where I can barely be myself…when I'm at home I can be open whereas at work I have to hide my true self* (CC - LE).

Other participants found that their shift influenced their experience on-site, claiming that they didn't mind the length of their swing if they only had to work day shifts,

> *If I could work days and had 7 days home rest I wouldn't mind the length I spend on-site. I struggle with night* [shift] *because I rarely keep in contact with my partner…our schedules don't align* (II - GE).

Some employees had a partner that worked away from home so their partners work arrangement and the FIFO employee shift structure influenced the level of communication between the two parties, thus impacting both the employee and their

partner's experiences of the FIFO lifestyle. There were a number of participants that preferred a longer away swing noting difficulties with adjustment and readjustment to work and home life due to the regular comings and goings associated with FIFO employment, *I prefer slightly longer swings as it means I don't have to be in constant readjustment every time I leave and come home* (Z - GE). While others were fine with any swing as long as they had job security, *I know I will always have a secured job and will be able to keep in touch with my partner no matter how long I'm away* (Y - GE).

Partners of FIFO employees also generally preferred the shorter swing arrangement as it benefited them in relation to employee-partner physical contact and extended time together, *it brings some normality to the lifestyle…if he* [FIFO employee] *was working for 4, 5, 6 weeks away that normality would diminish due to lack of contact* (IIP - GP). Another partner similarly claimed that, *as long as there is a fair and balanced roster I am happy…it gives us time together while also giving him* [FIFO employee] *time to do his job* (R1 - GP). One partner (T1 - BP) noted that a shorter swing was better because it allowed for a *proper life instead of a virtual one,* suggesting that because of physical isolation between work and home the main form of communication when separated was through webcam chat, noting that physical presence of her partner in the household was more preferable over a virtual online presence.

There were only a few employees and partners that experienced working and living in a regional mining community. 21.8 per cent of the employees preferred living in the city, 3.6 per cent were more inclined to favour regional living and 74.6 per cent were undecided. Similarly, 6.4 per cent of partners claimed that city living was more preferential, 2.1 per cent preferred a regional lifestyle and 91.5 per cent were undecided, as they hadn't experienced living in a regional town and therefore they couldn't provide an unbiased answer. Please refer to Table 7.5 for a breakdown of these responses.

Table 7.5: Working and Living Preference

Preference	Employee		Partner		Total	
	Freq.	%	Freq.	%	Freq.	%
City	12	21.8	3	6.4	15	14.7
Regional	2	3.6	1	2.1	3	2.9
Undecided	41	74.6	43	91.5	84	82.4
Total	55	100.0	47	100.0	102	100.0

Participant preferences were based on their life stage, work position, job requirements and the level of remuneration offered from working a particular swing arrangement. Furthermore, the amount of time employees spent travelling to and from work impacted on the time they had with their partner, family and friends, thus further influencing their preferences as well as their work and home satisfaction levels.

7.3.1.4 Remaining in FIFO Employment

Employees and partners also discussed how long they wanted to remain in FIFO employment and how long they realistically expected to continue FIFO based working. The majority wanted to remain in FIFO employment until retirement and viewed their job as a permanent long-term position. Most claimed FIFO employment to be a crucial element of their future as a family often relying on the above average pay for financial security. Employees with children felt that it was their responsibility to provide for their family and the thought of quitting never crossed their mind, *this*

job is essential for our future (N - HME). Similarly, another employee claimed that, *I have a family in Perth that relies on this job to keep it going…I don't plan on leaving for a long time* (P - HME). They suggested that quitting and seeking employment elsewhere or closer to home was not a viable option, as finding a job locally that had the same or similar wages as FIFO employment was unrealistic because they were making more than double what they would in a similar position locally. However, when comparing the length the employee wanted to remain in FIFO employment with how long they expected to remain, there were some discrepancies across participant responses. The majority wanted to remain in FIFO employment but recognised and accepted other factors that would either shorten or prolong their expectations. Factors such as the needs of their family, personal health, career direction, and difficulty associated with returning to a city based job that had the same pay and rewards as those offered from FIFO employment. While most still wanted continue until retirement, others claimed that physically their job was too demanding on their body, driving some participants to a point of exhaustion where they felt they might not be able to continue as a result of poor physical health. For example, those that had been working FIFO employment for years recognised the strain longevity in the industry was having on their body, *I'm cooped up in a truck all day and it adds up after a while* (E - HME). Another participant claimed that, *it* [the job] *has taken a toll on my body…I see a doctor for my back pain* (E - HME). While another participant adds that, *I am not as fit as I was when I started so I don't think I will be able to continue into old age* (K - HME).

Some of the younger employees who were planning on starting a family felt that when they had children they would reduce the amount of time they spent at work in order to spend more time with their children, *if we ever have a child I think I would try finding a job closer to home…I wouldn't want to be away and have my partner support the child on his own* (AA - GA). However, they also expected to remain in FIFO employment, as the job was their family's main source of income.

Other participants noted that a drastic change in their personal life had to occur, such as a medical emergency with their parents, for them to consider leaving FIFO employment, as the reason they work long hours in inhospitable locations every day is to support their family. However, they also understood that the money that came from

FIFO employment was essential to family support, so leaving entirely was easier said than done. These participants had either their own or their partner's parent(s) living with them in the same household and a certain percentage of the money they were earning was used to cover the medical needs of the parent(s), *what I earn goes into health costs for my partner's mother…*[and it also ensures] *that we as a family have all the essentials we need for day to day life* (DD - LE).

The mining industry and the high remuneration associated with FIFO employment in particular have led to many participants leaving their city job in search of positions in the resources sector, and then finding it difficult to return to full-time city based employment due to the strong pull of high paying FIFO jobs. This is similar to previous research that explored the relationship between the "golden handcuff" and employee retention in mining (Gillies, Wu, & Jones, 1997). Participants similarly from this study described becoming accustomed to the remuneration associated with the FIFO lifestyle that, even though they had a desire to leave, they chose to remain in FIFO employment. For example, as one transgender FIFO employee claimed, *for the type of work I am doing I couldn't earn half as much in the city* (F – TSE) and another employee adds that, *the money we make here it's like apples and oranges to the money most general workers make* (P - HME). Other participants preferred the separation that came with the job, choosing to remain in FIFO employment as the lifestyle was more suited to their needs than working traditional 9-to-5 employment in the city, *I don't see myself transitioning back into full-time employment…I need my time and that is best served through FIFO* (B1 - GE).

Partners of FIFO employees had similar views as they too wanted to remain in the FIFO lifestyle as long as possible because the job ensured they were financially secure, their children could get a good education, and they would be able to continue living a healthy life as a result of the regular and high income. However, there were some partners that wanted to travel and see the world and felt that FIFO employment was preventing that from happening, *we only go on one small holiday every year which to me is not enough…I want to visit places like New York and Russia but the lifestyle does not allow for such vacations* (CCP - LP).

7.3.1.5 Positives and Negatives of FIFO Working and Living

During the data gathering stage of the study an exploration of the positives and negatives of FIFO working and living was discussed by addressing FIFO employee satisfaction levels with current roster, socialisation in the work environment, support services for non-work issues, quality of on-site accommodation, availability of communication from work to home, and the impact employees perceive FIFO employment to have on their partner and/or family members. This provided for a more thorough understanding of employee feelings towards FIFO employment and their desire to remain or leave FIFO employment.

7.3.1.5.1 Current Roster

The majority of FIFO employees sampled worked a two-week on/one week off (2/1) roster and virtually all were satisfied with their current arrangement claiming it was fair and evenly balanced between work and home, as having a whole week to spend with loved ones was more beneficial than a few days or a weekend. Most of the participants had previously worked a longer roster and therefore their satisfaction with their current roster, which was shorter in comparison, was substantially higher than that of their previous arrangement. Some employees who worked an even shorter roster claimed that although they got to see their loved ones on a more frequent basis, they would still prefer working a longer away period with a week at home as they found a weekend was not adequate enough to fulfil all their needs, *I only get to see her* [FIFO employee's partner] *on weekends, two days! It really is not enough time to do everything we want together* (DD - LE). There were also a select few that opted for a longer away period because they struggled with continual readjustment to work and home life, *I'm constantly having to adjust to the 'work me' and the 'home me'* (Z - GE). Whereas singlehood employees generally did not mind which roster they worked as they had no responsibilities at home to worry about, *any roster I am on doesn't bother me…I can work for weeks away and I'm totally cool with it* (Q1 - BE). Despite a few participants, the majority of those sampled were satisfied with their current roster arrangement.

7.3.1.5.2 Socialisation in the Work Environment

When discussing socialisation in the work environment there was a common theme of discrimination and prejudice amongst participant responses. Some participants claimed they actively avoided certain employees and stayed with those they felt comfortable with, usually the same people from their work group or those that worked the same shift as them, *there are certain people my views align with and those are the people I socialise with* (CC - LE). The majority of non-traditional employees felt that because of their SO or GI they couldn't relate to their heterosexual counterparts at the workplace, *you have to wear a mask to hide your true self because you fear being discriminated against* (H - GE).

Fear of discrimination and prejudice was a major issue among the sampled group with most claiming to have experienced or witnessed acts of racism, discrimination or prejudice either directly at them or towards others like them, thus reducing their desire to socialise with certain employees while on-site. *There are people that are super judgemental of me as a person…the LGBT community is not as big here* [mine site], said one employee (W – GE). Another employee claimed that, *it's hard to see myself on the same level as my co-workers…I feel a disconnection between us* (B1 - GE).

One individual, in particular, claimed that many of the younger and newer LGBT employees entering into FIFO employment struggle to adjust to the attitude and behaviour exhibited by those around them and as a result end up leaving,

> *You're going through fire as soon as you mention not being heterosexual. You are walking through volcanic magma that is sucking you up and burning you down…but there is another side. I see this other side because I've lived it but many of the younger* [LGBT] *kids don't see it and they quit, they leave* (F – TSE).

This was commonly attributed to the work environment which typically fostered a group mentality that led to most LGBT participants perceiving the mining industry as being *backwards* and *homophobic* as participants from LGBT backgrounds were in a regular state of fear each day due to discrimination. *People in the mining industry are, in general, kind of homophobic*, claimed one participant (GG - GE). Therefore, the

majority of participants found that their socialisation was kept at a minimal and mainly professional level to avoid any potential confrontation. Participants stayed with their own group of friends, for example the nurses would stay together, the chefs had their own group, and those that couldn't relate to others outside of a professional manner preferred to remain in their own room talking with loved ones online after completing their shift for the day. The majority of participants were satisfied with socialisation at a professional level but not at a casual, outside of working hours, level.

7.3.1.5.3 Support Services for Non-Work Issues

Similar to the comments on socialisation, the sampled group described the influence of workplace culture on the use of support services for non-work issues. The majority claimed having no knowledge about support services for non-work issues such as those of a personal or family nature, however some noted that their supervisors or managers had an *open door policy* and were welcoming of any employees that had questions or issues they wanted to discuss more privately, *the employer provides a number of counselling services to employees but there are none for family* (W - GE). Despite this, there was still a substantial amount of hesitation when it came to actually using support services because, *the workplace culture has been defined in a way that those who seek out support are valued differently* (CC - LE). Another participant claimed that, *when someone does ask for support, the behaviour of the other workers changes…they immediately tone down the way they act and behave and joke around* (S - LE), while another participant adds that, *I haven't looked into any* [support services]*…I fear that doing so will make others* [employees] *look at me differently* (M - GE). This is similar to Colgan, Creegan, McKearney and Wright's (2007) research, on employment equality and diversity practices in the workplace, that found LGBT employees were reluctant in seeking formal support from their employer, as they perceived these actions could make their work environment uncomfortable and threatening.

This type of mentality was common among nearly all the non-traditional FIFO employees sampled, suggesting that even if the mining employer did have support

services in place there would still exist a considerable degree of hesitation from employees to use said services. A number of participants were not made aware of support services, as their employer never brought them up, *I have not been told about any support* (Q - LE) and, *I haven't heard of such support services* (G - BE). There were also a few participants that attributed the lack of services to the size of the mine site or project, acknowledging that their employer couldn't afford to offer such services due to size and budgetary constraints.

7.3.1.5.4 Quality of On-Site Accommodation

The quality of on-site accommodation was said to be reasonable for the weeks that the employees were on-site with some employees sharing a room with other employees while others had their own private room. *The accommodation is great for the type of environment we live in* (W - GE), and while some were more pleased with accommodation than others, all agreed that they couldn't fault the employer or any person in particular because, *you just have to rock up and do your job, everything else is supplied* (CC - LE) and, *you never have to cook or clean for yourself which is great* (S - LE). The majority of participants were satisfied with on-site accommodation but those that had longer away periods and spent more time on-site were noticeably less satisfied as continually living the same way week after week without any change becomes *boring* and *dull* after a while (P1 - LE).

7.3.1.5.5 Availability of Communications

Every participant used some form of communication nearly every single day or night, when they were on-site, to keep in touch with their loved ones. Each room was equipped with either a landline or Wi-Fi for internet access, some rooms had their own private phone, certain sites had a public telephone that was free to use by all employees, and most participants had their own personal mobile phones that they could use to make private phone calls. The quality of communication, due to the geographical location of the mine site, was generally strong but some participants did note issues with telephone reception and internet connection, *the internet, because we are so far away from everything is not always great but for the most part it does work*

well (CC - LE). There were also some individuals that, due to their shift arrangement, had minimal opportunities to communicate with their loved ones because, *finding a time that suits both my partner and I is difficult…I work day and night shifts so it can be difficult to get time to call home* (Q - LE). However, the majority were satisfied with the availability of communication from work to home with some of the mature employees, that had been part of FIFO employment for over ten years, claiming that the *advancement in technology has helped immensely* (KK - HME) with FIFO living, describing how the different forms of communication, such as Skype, have made staying in touch with loved ones easier.

7.3.1.5.6 Impact of FIFO Employment on Partner or Family Members

The sampled employees felt that FIFO employment had a greater positive impact on their partner and family than it did a negative one, stating that it helped them start their own family, have children, move out from their parent's home and, in some cases, felt that isolation actually brought them closer to their partner, *it helps strengthen our relationship…time away makes those moments of seeing each other so much better* (CC - LE). Some found that the money they were earning helped cover their parent's medical needs, *I use a percentage of my pay to cover medical costs for mum and dad* (GG - GE). While others noted how FIFO employment has helped their partner financially as they've been able to start their own business or have a family because of the remuneration offered from their position, *it has helped my partner get his business up and running* (Z - GE).

The only negatives highlighted by participants related to separation from their partner due to physical isolation and not being able to support their partner the same way they would if they were at home, as one employee claimed, *isolation from each other is difficult to handle because I know my partner is alone with our son and trying to keep up with him* [son] *all day is pretty full on* (T - GE). He acknowledges that separation is a natural part of FIFO employment but wishes there was more he could do to help his partner. Participants on longer away swings noticed changes in physical intimacy noting feelings of disconnect from their partner, *there were periods when I was*

working long swings that we weren't as intimate (AA - GE), and another employee similarly adds that, *it* [FIFO employment] *has made us drift apart…we are still close but not in the same way as when I was working a shorter roster* (W - GE). The participants sampled felt that the negatives of FIFO were a normal part of the lifestyle and that the rewards and benefits, from working FIFO employment, for their partner and family outweighed the negatives.

7.3.1.6 Desire for Better Balance Between Work and Home

There was a clear division between employees desiring a better balance between work and home domains and employees who felt their current balance was evenly divided. All singlehood employees were satisfied with their current balance claiming that because they didn't have a partner or children back home their away swing had limited emotional impact on them. Those that desired a better balance did so because they either had a partner at home whom they wanted to spend more time with, had a child or children and didn't want to miss any of the child's milestones such as their first step or first word, had parents living with them that required caring, or generally had what they felt was an unfair ratio of work to home time. Furthermore, most felt there was nothing specifically they could do to gain a better balance because, *it feels like I'm just a number sometimes* (A - LE), and *what the company wants the company gets* (B1 - GE). This attitude was exhibited by many of the participants as, *there is not much or anything that common employees like myself can do* (W - GE). There was a perception that employees at a higher level in the organisation, or those that held more power due to their position, were able to seek out a better balance, *the ability to negotiate what roster you work is determined by your position or if you are good with some of the managers* (W - GE), and *the only way to achieve a better balance is to work an office job* (X - GE).

However, there were just as many participants that were satisfied with their roster and did not desire a change in current working arrangements to better balance work and home domains. Most of the employees sampled had worked on other roster structures previously so they were able to compare those arrangements with their current, as one employee working 3/1 (three weeks away with one week at home) claimed, *having*

done longer and shorter swings I can say that even though three weeks is still long, that whole week I get with my mum and my partner is perfect (R - LE). Participants commonly valued extra time at home and preferred having a week instead of a weekend to rest and be with their loved ones.

7.3.1.7 The Impact of Job and Home Demands on FIFO Employees

The FIFO employees sampled felt that the demands of job and home life impacted them at a physical, emotional and behavioural level. Being separated from their loved ones for extended periods of time on a regular basis, working long hours in inhospitable and geographically isolated locations, and living in remote environments for weeks at a time all influenced participants physically and psychologically with most suggesting that the FIFO lifestyle came with many challenges. Some participants were more prone to discrimination and prejudice, thus impacting how they coped with the lifestyle, with one employee (G - BE) in particular describing how the job gave him a *hard shell* where he found that he was able to control his emotions around other workers but at the same time this led to him struggling to openly express his emotions around loved ones at home. He highlighted how isolation from loved ones and working in a highly heterosexual male environment changed his emotional side to a point where he went from freely expressing himself before FIFO employment to purposefully keeping his emotions to himself after commencing FIFO employment, as he feared being judged, and this stayed with him at work and home. Others found that a spill over between work and home existed and when negative spill over occurred it lowered motivation and engagement levels especially when the work or home demands became too overwhelming, *if something is not going well at work or I am stressed…that stress will spill over into my personal life and impact my experiences at home* (S - LE), and *I take my work home with me…it eats away at my personal time* (MM - BE). The main result of not being able to overcome the demands was a higher level of stress, *the demands certainly create a lot of stress, like I'll argue with my partner over little things that are not worth arguing about but because my brain is thinking about something else it just turns into an argument* (Y - GE).

Participants who struggled to manage the demands found themselves worrying more than those that were able to better cope with the demands. Furthermore, those that had a lack of personal, social or protective resources, as identified in the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, experienced higher levels of stress as they didn't have enough resources to help combat the demands that came from work and home. Having a full resource reservoir, such as support from family, friends and the organisation, can be highly beneficial in helping maintain demands, as these participants explained:

> *Having the support of my family and friends along with the confidence I have of myself those demands are minimal. When you don't have physical or emotional support or the company you work for doesn't look after you then I can understand the demands having a greater impact on a person* (JJ - BE).

or

> *My partner has helped a lot with the demands…without him I wouldn't be able to cope with the lifestyle on my own, him being supportive of me has helped a lot* (T - GE).

or

> *The demands have some impact but the impact is very minor because I have a great deal of support from my father who gets me through hard times during work, my partner who supports me during work and at home, and my friends are always there to listen if I need to let something out* (HH - GE).

Some participants found that their work team and separating work and home life helped mitigate the impact of demands, *work demands never influence home and home demands never influence work…I have a good team and whatever issue we face we resolve together* (NN - BE). Others implemented personal routines to manage demands and cope with stress,

> *We have a routine in place that ensures demands are always at a manageable level…we'll keep in touch every night…Wednesday nights we have dinner over Skype…Friday nights we watch a movie through Skype…there is always something to look forward to throughout the week* (LL - HFE).

Additionally, when participants felt their current resources were being depleted and found they were using more resources than initially expected their emotional and behavioural response fluctuated, *I've seen my emotions change because the work was adding up and the people I was working with made my stress levels worse* (FF - LE),

and *I get really angry over things I can't control…this has to do with life pressure and releasing* [my] *emotions and feelings* (CC - LE).

In support of Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework, when demands became too difficult to manage, due to a lack of resources, the employees and their partners were generally more stressed as they were investing their current available resources into the job as well as using resources to maintain a healthy balance between work and home domains. While most struggled to cope with such dilemmas and a sense of loss typically led to an increase in feelings of depression and anxiety, there were some employees that felt the demands helped them at a personal level. A number of participants noted how their confidence in themselves strengthened and their behaviour changed for the better, becoming more tolerant of others and controlling their own emotions. There were also a few individuals that found stress *when handled correctly can be used in a positive way* (BB - GE), suggesting that a certain amount of stress increased their motivation to keep going because, *as soon as you let the demands take over, you lose enjoyment in the job, you aren't as motivated to get up for work each day* (DD - LE). These participants viewed demands as more of a motivator instead of a limitation. So the demands, while mostly seen as negative, can also be a positive as the ability to manage demands, through the use of resources, and control stress eventually leads to better overall life satisfaction, higher levels of work engagement, improvements in job performance, and an increase in awareness.

7.3.2 Human Resource Managers and Mine Site Manager

In addition to sampling FIFO employees and their partners, key stakeholders such as human resource managers (HRM), mine site manager and LGBT community representatives were also sampled. This allowed for a more comprehensive and detailed analysis to be conducted through thicker research that added another perspective to that of employees and their partners. There were a total of four human resource managers of which only one was a non-parent, one mine-site manager and two LGBT representatives sampled. The following first addresses the sampled human resource managers and mine site manager before detailing the views of the LGBT

representatives. Please refer to Table 7.6 for a more detailed background of the key stakeholders sampled.

Table 7.6: Demographic Profile of Key Stakeholders

Code	Stakeholder type	Age	Gender	Sexual orientation	Marital status	Parent/Non-parent
KS1	HRM	39	M	Hetero	Married	Parent
KS2	HRM	48	M	Hetero	Married	Parent
KS3	HRM	29	M	Hetero	Married	Non-parent
KS4	HRM	33	M	Hetero	Married	Parent
KS5	Manager	40	M	Hetero	Married	Parent
KS6	LGBT Rep	28	F	Lesbian	Couple	Non-parent
KS7	LGBT Rep	31	F	Lesbian	Single	Non-parent

7.3.2.1 Impact of FIFO Employment

When discussing the impact of FIFO employment on employees every human resource manager and mine site manager identified and recognised, similar to FIFO employees and their partners, the impact FIFO employment has on both the physical and psychological well-being of workers while also acknowledging the spill over these impacts can have on family members. They highlighted the challenges associated with employees' working long hours on extended periods of absence from home, and the stress resulting from job demands and working in inhospitable and geographically isolated locations. The mine site manager (KS5), in particular, discussed the influence of spill over on FIFO families and the impact this has on employee experiences of FIFO employment, as aspects from the home domain influence the work domain and vice versa,

> *If something happens at home it can affect the employee at work, in turn impacting the company…an unhappy employee lowers productivity…they become less motivated and engaged because their mind is elsewhere.*

He claimed that when an employee experiences stress at home they become less focused while on-site and *losing focus could be detrimental* to the safety of the

employee and those around them. He also claimed that, similar to the views of the sampled employees, workers commonly *hide issues as a fear of being judged,* suggesting that employees tend to have a perception that if they voice their concerns they will be labelled as *weak* or viewed in a lesser light.

Similarly, one human resource manager (KS1) claimed that the workplace is, *very much a group driven environment where if one person is lagging it slows down the rest of them.* Due to this group level thinking, many workers do not want to stand out or be labelled differently to their co-workers so they actively avoid raising issues or concerns they might have regarding FIFO working or living. Another human resource manager (KS4) claimed that, *as much as the job is a physical challenge it is also a job that tests the employee and their family.* He claimed to have witnessed employee's drift apart from their partners, especially with young couples that have been together for a short period and their relationship was still fresh. As such, due to a lack of physical contact and absence from home, he felt that individuals working in the mining industry will look for some form of physical contact elsewhere, thus potentially increasing conflict in their current relationship.

Another human resource manager (KS3) claimed that, *we are able to manage the physical side of the job but that mental is not as easy.* He suggests that when individuals are on-site they are focused on their task and duties but when they finish their shift and are alone in their room, often times they will *overthink* and question *why they are doing what they're doing.* However, he also felt that this a standard routine that all workers will go through because *everyone is in the same boat* and those that are able to better manage the psychological side of FIFO employment experience greater success in the industry than those that struggle with the mental aspects of working in an isolated environment.

While each human resource manager and mine site manager addressed the physical impacts of FIFO employment, it was the psychological side of the lifestyle they claimed most employees have difficulty with because, *people can manage the work but controlling their feelings, emotions and desires is another story entirely* (KS2). The job was considered physically draining but also psychologically exhausting and if exhaustion, according to the sampled stakeholders, was not managed appropriately it

could lead to an increase in turnover as employees simply leave FIFO employment because they cannot cope with the work demands.

7.3.2.2 FIFO Employee Hesitation

The sampled group of employees noted issues with communicating with their supervisors and managers, attributing their hesitation to workplace culture. In exploring this further the topic of hesitation was discussed with key stakeholders and they too agreed that hesitation to voice concerns was an issue among their employees. They, like the sampled employees, felt that hesitation was directly linked to workplace culture and hierarchy structure, *there is definitely a hierarchy and it is seldom that an employee would approach someone above their immediate supervisor* (KS2), and *there is a line between white collar staff working in offices and blue collar staff working in the sun* (KS3).

They suggest that because of workplace culture, employees from non-traditional backgrounds tend to be more reserved and if they have concerns they want to discuss with their supervisor or manager they typically contact them privately through *text message or email* (KS4). The work environment can create a culture where *the blue collar staff limits their communication with the office staff* (KS3). However, there were some human resource managers that purposefully went out of their way to encourage and help those employees by blurring the line between white and blue collar,

> *I try to come off as an employee just like them* [FIFO employees]...*I'm always walking around talking to them so they see me on their level and are comfortable in approaching me* (KS4).

It is clear that a division exists between manual labour workers and those in offices that, if not carefully addressed, can impact employee experiences and satisfaction levels while on-site. One human resource manager (KS1) claimed that fostering a work environment that encourages employees to approach supervisors and managers is the first step towards reducing employee hesitation.

7.3.2.3 Support Services

Every human resource manager and mine site manager suggested that there are support services in place for FIFO employees but these services are limited to only employees and not their family because, *families of employees are not supported under the policies and practices of the company* (KS4), and *they are not the ones under contract* (KS1). However, that is not to say that discussing family matters and employee personal life was not welcomed as nearly all human resource managers claimed that there are support services in place such as *counselling* to deal with family matters. There are also *programs, training and seminars to help with bullying at the workplace, social anxiety and safety* (KS1). If employees had a hard time adjusting to the work environment, if their performance was not as good as they wanted it to be, if they were struggling depression, going through a loss in the family or a divorce, or had difficulty balancing work and home life, there were support services for all those issues. The range of services offered covered everything from career, finance, and emotional support. However, accessing support was dependent on the employee and their willingness to seek assistance, *the employee also has to voice their concerns and come to us otherwise we won't know how to help them* (KS5). Furthermore, *employees are reluctant to ask for support because of the division between white and blue collar* (KS3). This further supports the notion that workplace culture influences the frequency of employees' accessing company support.

It is interesting to note that the majority of sampled employees were unaware of such services, thus how much the employer promotes support is questionable because the human resource managers and mine site manager all claimed to have a vast number of services but the majority of employees' do not know about such services. By not promoting support services, employees were heavily reliant on their loved ones at home for informal support while on-site. This disconnect may highlight a potential breakdown between employers in head office positions and managers of mine sites, as line managers are typically hired to manage production and not people. Therefore, implementing site management of HRM policies may be necessary in ensuring that each party involved in the daily operation of the mine site understands their responsibilities and that support services are promoted accordingly.

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7.3.2.4 Socialisation and Communication

Socialising with other employees while at the work site, according to the sampled human resource managers, is permitted but is to be kept professional during shift hours in order to *avoid hazards or injuries that can and have occurred due to chit chatting and not focusing on the work* (KS1). Communication with family at home while on-site was also available to every employee as, *each camp has phone line and internet access* which is *equally distributed and easy to access* (KS4). One human resource manager (KS1), in particular, let his employees' use his office telephone in case there was an emergency at home because, *I personally understand what happens at someone's home cannot be controlled by any single person…it is important to look after each other.*

7.3.2.5 Desire for Better Balance

When discussing whether they felt FIFO employees desired a better balance between work and home life all but the one mine site manager felt that they did because, *we are all humans and as humans we all desire physical contact and love from our partner and family* (KS4). Most agreed that those in relationships or who had children at home experienced greater desire for a longer home period but at the same time felt that the majority of employees were satisfied with their current roster, one that they claimed to be *fair to them* [employees] *as well as to the company* (KS3). The mine site manager that did not think employees desired a better balance felt this way because the roster his employees were working on was the best the company could offer and he never received any complaints regarding roster structure. The stakeholders were able to relate to employee desires because they too were parents or had a partner at home that they wanted to spend more time with, *missing family is an issue everyone struggles with* (KS1), and *we all want to have more time at home* (KS3).

However, in acknowledging employee desire for longer home periods, they also claimed that the company or employer can only offer certain roster structures and shift arrangements to certain employees as they *need to have a variety of rosters in*

place (KS1) in order to achieve output goals, meet demands and stay on schedule. Some employees work only days, others have night shifts, and some a mixture of both. There are employees that work longer rosters and spend longer periods of time on-site while others work a shorter roster because this is considered the *nature of the business* (KS1). Trying to accommodate employee desires while reaching company targets is not easily achieved and some employees will be less satisfied with their roster than others. However, with most sampled employees working shorter rosters (two or less weeks on-site) than their previous arrangements (three or more weeks on-site), the general consensus among the key stakeholders is that the majority of employees are satisfied with their current arrangement and work situation.

7.3.2.6 Personal Views on the FIFO Lifestyle

The human resource managers and mine site manager felt that the FIFO lifestyle of today is far better than what it was when Australia began to adopt FIFO practices in the 1980s, claiming that the lifestyle has become more common among Australian households as more people choose FIFO employment over traditional 9-to-5 employment. Some also claimed that the media's portrayal of FIFO focuses only on the negatives which is the *tiniest percentage of reality* because the employees are *happy to be working in a place where they are guaranteed to have food on their table every day, a bed to sleep in every night, and phones to call home whenever they want* (KS1). He adds that while the FIFO lifestyle might not be for everyone, those that adapt to it successfully will reap the benefits of FIFO employment.

Others felt that more people were satisfied with the lifestyle today than they were a decade ago but also recognised that there were still areas of improvement, as one human resource manager (KS4) highlighted, *they* [mining companies] *lump people into rosters without thinking about their personal life*. He described the uniqueness of each individual and how they are all at different points in their life, suggesting that the personal circumstances from person to person will vary based on their living situation or if they have or don't have children. He also adds that although it would be difficult to offer flexible rosters to each individual employee, the future of FIFO employment would benefit from such an approach because *employees should be viewed as a*

valuable resource instead of a number that can be easily replaced (KS4). However, the stakeholders were in agreement that *FIFO living has grown tenfold over the decades* (KS1) and although the mining industry is subject to regular negative publicity it is only a fraction of reality, as the industry continues to grow and attract more employees that are genuinely happy to be working in an environment where everything is supplied to them and all they have to do is show up and do the work.

7.3.3 LGBT Representatives

Along with the four human resource managers and one mine site manager, contact was also made with two LGBT representatives to detail their experiences when dealing with LGBT FIFO employees. Both of these representatives were from a non-government organisation (NGO) that were primarily employment related, and as such their knowledge was deemed valuable as providing additional information to participant perspectives. The main area of discussion focused on how they perceive, based on their experiences with LGBT FIFO employees, the FIFO lifestyle impacts employees. What they claimed is that although heterosexual male employees stereotypically dominate the mining industry, there are still a substantial number of LGBT FIFO employees working in the industry but because employees *fear being discriminated against* (KS6) they purposefully will act in a way that doesn't publicly draw attention to themselves and their sexuality. They don't want to *stick out* and feel as if they are *not part of the group* (KS7). FIFO employment is a psychological challenge and most LGBT FIFO employees will *go out of their way to avoid interacting with others at work because they feel they don't fit in* (KS7), and due to their perception of the industry it can be difficult to overcome these psychological challenges.

Discrimination and the unequal treatment of employees was the main concern of both LGBT representatives sampled with one representative (KS6) suggesting that discrimination was the *underbelly of the mining industry,* claiming that no one likes to talk about it but it does exist, as many of her clients have expressed concern with being treated unfairly based on their physical appearance, actions or gestures. The other representative adds that LGBT employees are discriminated against because, *in*

that specific group of male miners they would be a minority and more likely to experience unequal treatment (KS7). Issues pertaining to some form of discrimination and prejudice are brought up *9 out of 10 times* and *any minority group is prone to discrimination in any industry dominated by a specific gender* (KS6). However, what makes the FIFO experiences of LGBT employees different and more difficult to manage than non-LGBT FIFO employees is that,

> *LGBT employees will experience feelings of increased loneliness when they have no one to talk with* [at work]*, and not only do they have to deal with separation* [from loved ones] *but they are also more likely to be bullied…influencing their time at work and life at home* (KS6).

In discussing what mining companies can do to better improve the experiences of LGBT individuals working FIFO employment, the representatives had opposing views. One (KS6) suggested that there should be *more support* and *more training* to help *educate the wider mining population and reduce prejudice.* She felt that companies do have support and training in place but that *their commitment to support and training is minimal,* claiming that companies are *only looking out for themselves and not their employees.* She argues that most companies will prioritise their needs, and generally the needs of the wider organisation are to be met before that of the single employee, thus suggesting that the views of the employee are not held in the same level of importance as those of the company. While the other representative (KS7) suggested that no amount of training will help reduce discrimination and prejudice directed towards LGBT employees because the *workplace culture holds more weight than anything the company can do* and *the minority will always be treated differently…in the mining industry the minority are those that don't identify as heterosexual males or females.*

Both representatives claimed that there are LGBT support groups in local communities across Perth but no physical LGBT presence exists in remote areas where mine sites are located. However, they do have helplines that all LGBT employees are welcome to use and there has been fluctuation in the use of said helplines, which is both a positive and negative as *people are reaching out to us and not keeping their concerns to themselves* but *the company they work for is not doing enough to help them* (KS6). The other representative (KS7) similarly adds that they

encourage all mining employers to advertise and promote helpline numbers to their employees and because of this they *do receive calls from workers so employers are doing their job when it comes to bringing awareness to helplines.* They also agree that, like the sampled mine site manager (KS5), employees need to be comfortable with their employer so they *can ask for support instead of keeping concerns to themselves* (KS6)*,* because it is a *two way street* where employees have to communicate with their employer and the employer needs to promote the use of support services to their employees.

7.4 The Experiences, Benefits and Drawbacks of the FIFO Lifestyle by Non-traditional and Conventional FIFO Families

The following details the experiences of non-traditional and conventional Western Australian (WA) fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners in relation to the central themes that emerged during the data gathering and analysis portions of the study. Based on the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model in conjunction with Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework, themes covered various aspects of FIFO working and living such as reasons for adopting the FIFO lifestyle, the relationship between work and home life and the challenges that result from trying to maintain a healthy balance between the two domains, emotional, physiological and behavioural response to job and home demands, employee and partner stress response, and the influence of resources on FIFO family outcomes and well-being.

7.4.1 Reasons for Adopting the FIFO Lifestyle

Previous research (Beach, 1999; Gent, 2004; Reynolds, 2004) as discussed in chapters two, three and four, and apart from Sibbel and Kaczmarek's (2005) study on FIFO employee and partner lifestyle stages, had a central focus on the benefits and drawbacks associated with the FIFO lifestyle. However, in this study, to understand employee and partner experiences comprehensively it was necessary to explore reasons for their desire to adopt the FIFO lifestyle. Therefore, this became a primary theme of discussion throughout each interview and was given more depth than that of

previous research. It is important to detail the reasoning behind choosing FIFO employment over non-FIFO or residential based employment as it provides for a better understanding of individual life stage before and after entering into FIFO employment, thus illustrating the importance and impact of resource gains and losses. Due to the mixture of family types sampled there was a strong variation in participant responses. The majority of those with children based their decision to enter FIFO employment on their family's future and what they felt would benefit them in the long-term. Their choice was influenced by their current life stage and if the positives of FIFO employment outweighed the negatives in comparison to non-FIFO employment. Many of the employees put their family needs ahead of their own, with the impact of FIFO on their children, partner and parents having the greatest influence over their decision. The main driving force for choosing FIFO over other forms of employment was the above average remuneration offered from the job, and job security became key for employee retention, especially for those with young families. While values differentiated from person to person, all the participants had similar undertones with FIFO-related pay being the main driver for adopting the lifestyle.

When discussing the decision-making process behind choosing FIFO employment, both the non-traditional and conventional participants based their reasoning on the impact isolation would have on their work and home life, and how it would influence them at an individual and family level. The main attraction of the lifestyle related to financial security, career opportunities, personal growth, and above average pay. In comparing these four motivational drivers, those individuals that started working for financial security, career opportunities and personal growth were more long-term orientated in that they recognised the value of the job not only on themselves but also on their families and children, and in some cases their future children. In contrast, those that entered into FIFO employment to take advantage of the rewards and benefits that came with a strong income were more short-term orientated, as their primary goal was to make a good income in a short amount of time. These individuals were mainly on casual, part-time or temporary contracts that were employed in general operating and machinery roles with many of the young singlehood participants stating that they were only working FIFO employment for the money. However, one employee that had been involved in the FIFO lifestyle for five years

and had two children and a partner living in the city claimed that money was the least important aspect:

> *The problem with most people* [working FIFO] *is that they are only keeping score in one game, usually the financial success game, and as soon as they win that game they run out of games to play. That is a game I'm playing too but it's the least important of the games. My relationship game, my family game, my mental health game are games I consider more important than the financial success game* (C - HME).

Another key aspect of FIFO employment was the living and on-site housing conditions offered to employees. While some participants noted discomfort with the small room sizes, the value of having everything from accommodation and meals prepared for employees, on a daily basis, was seen as a great beneficial perk that came with the job. However, employees that currently or previously lived in a mining town claimed the main reason they lived there was because their partner was from the town and they valued physical contact. Those that lived on-site described the advantages of meeting new people and broadening their network of friends but these were mainly individuals working in administrative positions. There were some individuals that saw the benefit in using their downtime to apply for online university courses as a form of external study while working on-site as, *the level of disruptions is lower when studying on-site compared to studying at home* (A1 - BE). Some participants chose FIFO employment because of the challenging work environment. Having a variety of roles and tasks was seen as a positive by many of the employees, *its not like a standard job, there are many tasks involved with the position…you are never doing the same thing and you never truly get bored from the job* (H - GE). So while opportunities for career and personal growth were seen as major drivers for adopting FIFO employment, there were a variety of other benefits based on each individual's life stage.

The present study sampled a diverse group of participants with some having recently started FIFO employment to others that have been working in the mining industry for over 10 years. Age, life stage and sexual orientation (SO) all determined and had influence over the decision to enter into rural based employment. While most participants actively avoided living in remote locations, others saw the value in

residential employment. One employee (X - GE), who had previously resided in a mining town with his family before moving to the city, found that due to the low community population of the town everyone knew one another and there was a *one big happy family* mentality among the locals. Others chose to live in mining towns because they got to see their family every day, an option not available to those working FIFO employment. Some were able to make long lasting friendships with local community members as, *the community I lived in was very close-knit, three degrees of separation, everyone knew you and you knew everyone* (X - GE).

Most of the LGBT FIFO employees preferred city living with some only remaining in mining towns because their partner already had a job in the local community, as mentioned by one gay FIFO employee, *I prefer this option* [residential living] *as my partner also lives here* (B - GE). Others found that people from mining towns were hard to relate to, as one lesbian FIFO employee claimed,

> *In the city there are more queer people, there are more things to do, and because mining towns are small it immediately puts us FIFO people on the outs* (R - LE).

Then there were LGBT FIFO employees that experienced difficulties in forming relationships with local town members and moved to the city because they felt locals were less likely to commit to long-term relationships, as mentioned by one gay FIFO employee, *people from the town felt that the negative way the media shows FIFO that it would be too risky to start a relationship…the success rate of having a healthy relationship is not very high* (B1 - GE). Similarly, another transgender FIFO employee found that there were no *openly queer* people living in the mining town she stayed and remote mining communities were a *conservative place that valued traditional norms* (I1 - LE).

While living in a mining town does have benefits, the majority of participants preferred city to residential living as they felt they had a better chance of meeting other non-traditional or LGBT individuals in the city, starting long-term relationships, and generally felt more welcomed where their family and friends lived. Many of these individuals and families moved to the city when they realised the long-term advantages of city living. Living in a remote mining town was more expensive in regards to accommodation, food, medicine and petrol. Those with children claimed

the education options were limited and those with older children, studying at a university level, relocated because there was a lack of tertiary education programs available in remote locations. Finally, singlehood employees preferred city to residential living because all their friends resided in the city and nightlife in small mining communities was said to be non-existent.

Participants with a partner and/or children living in the city also claimed that working away required mental strength, as loneliness was a common battle for many individuals working away from their family. Additionally, those in the process of starting a new family and having their first child didn't want to miss major milestones such as the child's birthday, family get togethers, and religious holidays. There were a few participants that saw the value in saving and investing their income instead of wasting it in the mining town as they found daily survival essentials such as food, water and clothing to be more expensive when purchased from rural areas.

Many partners of FIFO employees claimed that the lifestyle was more beneficial than residential living because they got to live in the comfort of their own home, had loved ones they could visit on a regular basis, and had access to better health services and education programs for their children, which were all seen as being essential to choosing FIFO over residential employment. *Having a wider pool of schools to choose from was a huge factor in us choosing FIFO over residential*, said a mother of two children (IP - HFP). Residential employment was less favourable by partners because it was seen as only benefiting the employee unlike FIFO employment, which allowed more career opportunities for the partner living in a capital city as opposed to living in a rural community. So not only is the FIFO lifestyle beneficial to the employee but also to employee's partner and children.

Many of the decisions were also influenced by media coverage relating to FIFO employment, living conditions, health facilities, risks of the job, and lack of educational opportunities in remote mining areas. One participant, in making his choice to enter into FIFO employment, noted the influence of media but it was relatively minor when compared to the positives of the job, thus illustrating the strength of the industry in terms of being able to attract employees,

You see this stuff on the news all the time, people losing their jobs, poor working conditions, and even reports of death…at the end of the day all these things go through your head but the positives that come with the job are far better the negatives (P - HME).

Some participants chose FIFO over the alternative because they wanted to live near their family and had caring responsibilities, *I take care of my father and living in a mining town where health facilities are not as good would be too difficult* (CP - HFP). There were also employees that chose FIFO employment because their partner already had a well-established career in the city, therefore residential employment was not considered viable in meeting the demands of both employee and partner jobs, and the FIFO lifestyle offered more flexibility in meeting such demands. Others, especially those with children from a prior marriage, found FIFO employment to be better suited for them as their roster was structured in a way that allowed them to see and spend more time with their children during their off period, *not being able to see your children is very hard but not seeing them because of your roster is a whole other level…the week I get off I get to spend it with my boy* (D - HME).

Employees' with children preferred FIFO employment because it gave them more time to spend with their children, which was seen as being more beneficial than residential or traditional 9-to-5 employment that commonly only gives time to spend with children on the weekends or at night.

The great thing about working a fixed number of days at a time is that you get a fixed number of days at home, and instead of a weekend or a few hours a night with your children you get a whole week with them (K - HME).

This attitude was exhibited by a number of participants, thus highlighting their personal and social resources. They had more time to spend with their children, taking them to the beach, cinema or park. They were also able to participate in school activities, which is difficult to achieve when working 8-hour days Monday through Friday. Partners of employees also valued the physical presence of the FIFO employee and being able to *talk with someone that understands* (G1 - BP) them was important. Both employee and partner valued and understood the importance of spending time with their children but also the need to connect and have direct physical contact with one another. Similarly, there was value in separation between

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work and home life because once the work was finished an employee's entire focus would shift to their home domain, and being able to maintain separation between work and home was seen as having a healthy approach to the lifestyle. *When I'm at home I know I can't visit work or get called in if something needs doing, so I'm able to keep 100 per cent of my focus on my partner and myself* (B - GE), and another participant adds that *there are fewer distractions…there is more time to work on you* (M1 - HME). It is evident that choosing the FIFO lifestyle is not solely based on the desires of one person but instead both partners collectively make the decision on what they feel is best for them given their current life stage.

Single employees, especially younger individuals, valued socialisation, going out and meeting new people, and most felt that this was easier achieved living in the city instead of a rural community, thus opting for FIFO over residential employment. There were a select few that experienced the opposite and found that they had more luck meeting new people in small mining communities instead of the big city. However, because of the way FIFO was portrayed in the media, many of the singlehood employees noted difficulties in meeting and developing relationships with potential partners from mining towns while on-site. Most of the people from mining communities, according to some sampled singlehood employees, were said to be apprehensive as they felt the success rate of a FIFO relationship was minimal and *too risky* because the employee was not a permanent resident of the town (B1 - GE). This is not to say that all relationships failed as a result of FIFO employment, as there were a number of participants that were more successful in developing long-term friendships and relationships from rural areas but the majority were not.

Another benefit of FIFO over residential employment had to do with family stability. Due to the geographical location of the work site, travelling to and from the job requires flying from home to work and vice versa. A few people noted that this has led to fewer physical family disruptions compared to residential employment that required moving the entire family from town to town depending on the employee's project location.

> *If a residential site were to get shutdown the entire family has to move to the next site…if a FIFO site gets shutdown only the employee has to move* (IP - HFP).

Additionally, FIFO employment offered more opportunities for workers to find what best suited them and their family needs without disrupting daily routines. People sought a better balance between work and home life that ultimately led to improved personal and social resources, thus allowing FIFO families to meet various job and home demands.

There were some employees that used their time at home to work on other projects. One participant desired to establish his own restaurant and was going to use FIFO employment as a short-term gain to invest in a good location for the restaurant and eventually become self-employed after leaving his mining job. Then there were others that used their time to better balance work and home life. One individual in particular took full advantage of his time at home going camping and seeing other parts of WA because, *you have a whole week to enjoy yourself...you have more money to spend and not worry about petrol prices and accommodation costs* (C - HME). There was a perception amongst the majority of participants that they are able to enjoy more time with their family than those working traditional 9-to-5 employment.

The decision-making process was conducted in a supportive manner with both the employee and partner inputs taken into account before a decision to accept or decline FIFO employment was made. Often times it was ensuring that the needs of each partner were met before deciding whether or not to enter into the FIFO lifestyle. Those with children also took into account the impact such a choice would have on the lives of their children while others based the impact it would have on them given their current living circumstances and life stage. If one partner had a career in the city or family that needed caring this also influenced heavily on their decision. There were a few people who noted benefits associated with the above average pay that allowed them to start a family and have children, *without my partner taking this job I would never have been able to be a full-time mum* (IP - HFP). Some based their decision on how much access their children will have to health, education and social activities, which were determined to be better in the city compared to remote rural locations. There were a minority of partners that disliked the job taking away their partner from home life for extended periods at a time. However, these were mainly people that recently adopted the FIFO lifestyle and were still adjusting to the comings and goings associated with the job. They weren't able to properly immerse themselves in the

lifestyle, but also saw no value in changing to non-FIFO employment, as one partner described,

> *I don't know what I expected but I didn't think I would have been struggling as much as I have been…he* [FIFO employee] *is happy and we have no stress money-wise but it's hard and I don't want him to stop doing what he loves…why take him away from the job when it pays better than most jobs…we've only just started so hopefully it will get easier* (C1 - LP).

Based on the sampled participants, the reasoning behind choosing FIFO employment was based on the positives of the lifestyle outweighing the negatives, and that this type of living was found to typically lead to an increase in personal, social and protective resources. Therefore, resource gains were seen as exceeding any resource investments or losses made from FIFO employment. The decision to adopt the FIFO lifestyle was based on numerous factors but mainly as a result of individual or family life stage at the time of deciding. Other factors and resources that influenced the decision related to financial security associated with the strong income of the job, access to family and children health facilities, education programs and social activities, separation and isolation between work and home life, employment opportunities and career growth, and time at home to spend with loved ones. These findings are highly supportive of previous research (Gallegos, 2006; Reynolds, 2004; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009) and extend on the benefits of the FIFO lifestyle by highlighting the attractiveness of FIFO employment in relation to the influence it has on individual and family resources. The sampled participants based their choice to enter FIFO employment on what they felt would allow them the greatest opportunity to maximise their resources at that particular moment in time during a specific point of their life stage.

7.4.2 Isolation

One of the main challenges faced by both sampled non-traditional and conventional FIFO families had to do with feelings of loneliness associated with isolation due to the geographical location of the work site. However, those from a non-traditional family structure reported more severe experiences relating to isolation and loneliness.

A few of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) employees noted difficulties with social isolation as they felt they didn't *fit in* with the other workers and weren't comfortable being themselves in what they described to be a discriminative and prejudiced working environment,

> *People are cruel and maybe it's because of that* [group mentality] *but coming from an LGBT background it can be difficult for us in that type of environment…it saddens me to see how cruel some people in the industry truly are* (F - TSE).

Yet another employee claimed that, *being homosexual it can be difficult to adjust to the discriminative jokes…I have to remain silent* (H - GE).

According to the sampled LGBT FIFO employees, working in an environment commonly referred to as *macho* there was a certain mentality and approach needed in order to be successful. Many of the LGBT employees claimed that they were comfortable with their on-site surroundings and daily interactions but found that socialising with other workers was difficult as they couldn't be themselves. Not only were they isolated in the physical sense, being separated from their loved ones, but also figuratively isolated as they felt alone and distant and had no one to connect with at their place of work. *Being openly gay in a male dominated industry is not easy* (O - LE), and *that is a scary thought when you don't have someone to talk with* (L - GE), thus they felt more isolated than those from a conventional family background.

Partners of employees also noted issues with isolation, *it can be lonely when he* [FIFO employee] *is away compared to when he is home…your head is at a different place when you are together* (MP - BP). Another bisexual partner claimed that, *after years of this living I still get lonely* (LP - BP). However, it wasn't all negative as one employee described, *you do meet nice people that are genuinely caring and only look at work and not the person…if these people weren't around I don't know how long I would have stuck with it* (F - TSE). It is clear that not only does the FIFO lifestyle and geographical location of the work site influence employee ability to socialise and connect with other co-workers but it also has a strong impact on their partner or family living in the city. Pini and Mayes (2012) argue that the FIFO partner has to accept that loneliness is a natural part of the FIFO lifestyle in order for them to successfully manage the transition into FIFO living.

Similarly, those from conventional family backgrounds also experienced issues with isolation while at a somewhat less severe level than those from non-traditional family backgrounds. Issues relating to physical separation and not being with their partner in times of need were the main points of negativity highlighted by conventional FIFO employees, *I don't like the fact that I have to be away from my family* (C - HME). There was one individual that felt guilty working FIFO employment because he wasn't there for his partner, y*es we are financially in a very comfortable situation but I can't help but feel guilty as I'm never there for my wife and children…I've missed a lot of events* (I - BE). However, from a partner perspective, those without children found isolation to be less of a challenge compared to those with children, a finding similar to previous research by Gallegos (2006) and Reynolds (2004),

> *The main negative of FIFO is being separated from my husband…my family lives over East and all my friends are married with children…I don't know many others in my type of situation* (KP - HFP).

A number of partners with children were occupied throughout the day with caring duties and found that they felt lonelier at night when the children were sleeping, *during the day I am fine…but at night when I have no one to talk to it does get challenging and at times depressing* (PP - HFP). There were also those that described fearing a lack of a *father figure* in the children's lives,

> *I worry that my children will get used to growing up without a father figure…he has already missed a good chunk of their lives…when isolation starts to influence our children's behaviour I fear that their future upbringing might be unhealthy. As a family I don't like the long separation because he is not a part of their life. He still sees them on Skype and we talk over the phone all the time but it is not the same* (NP - HFP).

Those with older children, especially those with children that have moved out of their parent's home, found communication to be more valuable than those still caring for younger children. They described feeling lonelier when they had no one to talk with and one sampled partner started working away from home just so she could socialise with others on a more frequent basis, *I'm not a fan of isolation…one of the reasons I took on my current job was because I knew it would get me out of the house* (LP - BP). These findings, relating to at home partners seeking a sense of purpose through

social interaction, were supportive of previous research on FIFO absence and the desire for interaction (Reynolds, 2004; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009).

Having family living in the same capital city was also seen as an important and vital resource by partners of FIFO employees, as family members would commonly assist with child caring responsibilities when the at-home partner was away from home due to personal or work commitments. Family members were also crucial in providing emotional support during difficult times, *my parents always help out when I need them which is nice but they have their own lives and I always feel as if I'm intruding on that* (NP - HFP). There was also one mother that described experiencing an emergency while her husband was away on-site, and found that this emergency made her stronger and more confident in her abilities to cope with any future issues that could potentially emerge as a stay at home mother, *our son is prone to seizures so one night he started acting up and I didn't know what to do…I managed to get him to emergency on time but it was a scary experience without his dad* (G1 - BP). She explained how this wouldn't be the only time she would face an emergency of such a nature and how future problems that arose were handled with greater confidence. So isolation and separation from her FIFO husband actually led to a considerable amount of personal resources in the form of personal self-growth and confidence.

It is clear that not only does isolation impact FIFO employees but also their partners and families, maybe even more so than the employee. Isolation can have both a positive or negative influence over individuals and their resources depending on how people manage extended periods of separation. The participant (G1 - BP) that experienced a life changing moment with her son found that she gained more confidence in herself to approach daily life without her partner, while others sought socialisation and interaction by purposefully finding employment outside of their home. There were also those that struggled with isolation and, in the most severe of cases, depression. Due to the geographical location of the work site, isolation comes naturally with the job and while some managed it effectively others found difficulties in adjusting to extended separation. Those from conventional family backgrounds were only impacted by isolation at an external level, whereas individuals from non-traditional family backgrounds, especially those from LGBT backgrounds, were also impacted at an internal level, finding that they weren't as open to socialising with co-

workers as they didn't *fit in* and couldn't openly be themselves around other employees. The work environment was seen as being mainly heterosexual, thus increasing levels of loneliness experienced by non-heterosexual FIFO employees, especially for those that kept their sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI) to themselves. There was a mentality, based on employee actions and behaviour, that the majority of employees working in the mining industry were not welcoming of those that *went against the grain* which, in some instances, proved to be wrong as there were participants that claimed their fellow colleagues were more than accepting of their personal choices in relation to sexuality. However, for the most part, many LGBT FIFO employees experienced difficulties in successfully adapting to the FIFO lifestyle due to discrimination and prejudice commonly exhibited in male dominated work environments, and working in negative environments has been linked to poor concentration, reduced job satisfaction and lower productivity by LGBT workers (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2007).

7.4.3 Communication

The availability of various forms of communication influenced the impact remote isolation had on FIFO employees and their partners. Employees sampled valued and desired the opportunity for communication with their partner, family and friends living in the city. This, however, was dependent on the availability of communication, type of communication, quality of communication, access to communication facilities which in some instances was based on employee position and title, and the willingness of the partner, family and friends of FIFO employees to engage in communication which was often difficult to organise due to the limited flexibility of employee swing rosters. Employees had their own personal mobile phones that they were allowed to use to call family and friends; however, some individuals found the reception and signal quality to be poor. Others preferred to Skype and video chat with loved ones, *it's great knowing that at the click of a button you can see and hear your partner* (E - HME). A few participants noted that phone access at their work-site was restricted and trying to maintain communication with family and friends via internet was difficult given the poor connection quality which was commonly blamed on the employer, *they* [employers] *only look out for themselves as they cut costs at just about*

every corner (J1 - GE). Another employee claimed that, *for the most part the internet is okay but not good enough to have a proper chat; it cuts off a lot and is slow…a tedious task trying to connect with my partner* (B1 - GE). Those employees with strong internet connection and mobile phone reception reported higher levels of satisfaction with communication than those that had limited access, and therefore were better able to cope with isolation separation.

An older employee who identified as gay and bisexual, and had been working in some form of FIFO employment for nearly 30 years, described how change in the type of communication and availability of communication over the years had benefited him. He claimed it was harder to keep his sexuality hidden from other employees when he first started, as telephone access was *public* and everyone could hear each other's private conversations,

> *When I first started there were only one or two public phones, which everyone shared and you'd see long lines every day of people waiting to use the phone…everything was public and I couldn't talk freely with my partner. I was always worried that my personal choices would get overheard by others but now with private phone and internet that is gone* (L - GE).

Based on the views of the participants, communication and advancements in technology have benefited those that identify themselves as part of the non-traditional family structure and more particularly the LGBT community. Not only has the availability of communication helped reduce the impact of isolation and levels of loneliness but it also helped with people's fear of discrimination, prejudice and harassment.

The availability of certain communication types was in some cases dependent on the size of the work site, the physical location of the mine, employer attitude, organisational policies and the employee's role, responsibilities and position title, as one employee described, *I mainly work in the office where I have my own desk, phone and internet…I'm able to call other employees as well as family* (D1 - HFE). Furthermore, another employee stated that, *it would be good if we had the same telephone access as those working admin* (N1 - HME). While this wasn't necessarily a common case across the different mine sites, it does highlight the hierarchy present in the industry and how this impacts on individual ability to cope with family absence.

Partners of FIFO employees also addressed the emotional difficulties they face as a result of poor or lack of communication, thus leading to distress and higher levels of loneliness due to limited contact. Some partners found that regular communication helped cope with separation by lowering their feelings of loneliness, however if they were to miss a call or were unable to talk due to the employee's shift structure they were more likely to feel emotionally distressed. This was a greater issue among those that had recently adopted the FIFO lifestyle and had not experienced it for more than a few months. Those that had been a part of the lifestyle for a longer period found that communication difficulties were a natural part of the job and were more accepting of the fact,

> *Even though he* [FIFO employee] *has a phone I cannot just pick up the phone and call him whenever...sometimes he works night shifts, other times day shifts...there are times when I'll only get to talk with him once or twice a week...this was harder when he first started but now I'm used to it* (JP - HFP).

This regularity in communication was different from person to person and was highly influenced by individual life stage. Those that had children or were in the process of starting a family maintained regular daily communication, singlehood employees only communicated every other day or when they missed their family and friends, and those that were already part of the FIFO lifestyle for a number of years found that the amount of communication they had with their partner slowly decreased over time, *we try and keep in touch as much as we can but sometimes there's just not much to say or talk about or we're too busy to make time to properly sit down* (EP - HFP).

Those with children often had a structure in place where the FIFO employee would work into their schedule a time to communicate with their family. Most families were able to negotiate a time that suited both partners whereas others preferred a less structured approach for their *fast paced* lifestyles, *having an organised time to talk is good but it can get difficult to work in a time that suits both of us...we just Skype randomly whenever I'm free* (K - HME).

Based on these participants' experiences it is evident that communication has a strong influence on FIFO families. A lack of communication was seen as being emotionally difficult while regular communication helped reduce feelings of loneliness. Having

communication available helped with family functioning and lowered family disruption. The majority of participants valued communication but also understood that the nature of the job prevented them from regular communication with their partner, as their rosters offered limited to no flexibility.

7.4.4 Adjusting to Work and Home Life

Adjusting to work and home life was a common struggle by all FIFO employees and partners sampled. Both the employees and partners illustrated various challenges faced in relation to the division of household roles and responsibilities. The severity of challenges was higher amongst partners, especially those with children, as they regularly had to adjust to the FIFO employee coming and going, and in certain instances this had an impact on the children's lives. The findings were similar to previous research concentrating on children of FIFO employees (Gallegos, 2006; Reynolds, 2004; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009), as those with younger children experienced greater difficulty with adjustment. Furthermore, when dividing household duties and roles between partners both those with and without children noted difficulties with being able to successfully negotiate responsibilities while the FIFO employee was at home. Additionally, some partners found that they struggled with role division when the employee left for work as they had more responsibility as a single parent. The main adjustment issues related to child caring responsibilities, division of household tasks, and adequate and effective use of personal and family time when the FIFO employee was at home.

7.4.4.1 Child Caring

Successful division of roles, especially in relation to child caring responsibilities, for both non-traditional and conventional family households was seen as *important* and *crucial* towards child development. The majority of FIFO employees claimed that one of the main drawbacks of working FIFO employment was that certain milestones and special occasions were regularly missed, however, they understood and accepted that this was part of the lifestyle before entering into the industry,

I'm away on a regular basis and my wife is always on child caring duties, when I come home I try take some of that stress from her…I know how important it is to spend time with my children (K - HME).

Another employee, who was not the biological father of his child, claimed that,

Being a successful FIFO employee and a successful father at the same time is not easy…being a FIFO employee and a step-father is even more difficult. I'm already living two separate lives and having to raise a child that came from a previous marriage is like living a third life…the constant traveling and being away from home doesn't help (P - HME).

This separation between work and home and taking care of children was a challenge that many of the FIFO employees struggled with because *you're not only adjusting to work but also home life* (I - BE), thus making the adjustment process from work to home problematic for certain participants. Employees found it difficult to successfully adjust to home life without interfering with the daily routine established by the at-home partner,

My wife is with our children every day and is more connected to them and understands their routines…I'm careful and mindful of my behaviour when I get home because I don't want to disrupt her routines (N - HME).

Some employees described their own procedure they'd implement to readjust back into family and home life, such as using their time on the plane flight home to psychologically adjust *from a single to a family mindset,* (K - HME). Many employees, while working on-site, had the mindset of a single employee and it was important to avoid work attitude and behaviour spilling over into home life, thus they would leave that mindset at work which in turn helped facilitate readjustment for both the employee and their partner.

Similar to research by Robinson, Peetz, Murray, Griffin and Muurlink (2017), which showed that FIFO employees come home too tired and emotionally exhausted to participate in home activities and child caring duties, there were a number of partners from this study who noticed the FIFO employee would struggle to adjust to child caring responsibilities,

He [FIFO employee] *gets home tired and spends most of his time sleeping…he still takes care of our children but not without me asking for a hand…our children have gotten so used to mummy and everything they want is mummy*

> *this and mummy that, I don't want them growing up thinking that daddy is a stranger* (CP - HFP).

Another partner adds that, *I take care of the kids, I dress them, feed them, clean them and they've become so attached that they don't bother asking their father for anything* (G1 - BP). Due to the differences in lifestyle types from work and home, some employees simply didn't know how to properly readjust to family life or the time they had at home was not enough to absorb home life to its fullest. Being away from loved ones not only influenced how people behaved around others but how they behaved around their own family and children.

While there weren't many participants from LGBT backgrounds with children, those that did have children were able to successfully negotiate child caring responsibilities, as one partner explained, *when my partner* [FIFO employee] *is home she takes on the caring parent role but it's a shared role between us and we feel more like a family this was* (QP - LP). Based on this sample of participants the conclusion can be made that those from LGBT FIFO family backgrounds were closer to each other and more responsive to their children than those from conventional family backgrounds, and as such were better able to negotiate caring responsibilities. This is similar to previous research that found lesbian and gay parents were more connected and responsive to their children's needs than those from two-parent mother and father households (Johnson & O'Connor, 2002; Tasker & Golombok, 1998). People that were successful in sharing caring responsibilities generally reported a greater level of success in adopting the FIFO lifestyle.

7.4.4.2 Division of Household Duties

Another challenge faced by many of the FIFO employees and their partners was how household tasks and duties were divided. A number of employees found that they were constantly adjusting and readjusting from work to home life and vice versa, and adopting the family headspace, after weeks of working in an isolated area, took a day or two. One partner described the difference between the FIFO employee being home and away as *night and day* because, *don't get me wrong, I love having him* [FIFO employee] *around but I get used to doing things my way and then when he gets home*

my flow is messed up (KP - HFP). This example illustrates how separation from work and home influences daily activities already established by the at-home partner. It is not as severe as other issues but it is a common challenge faced by the majority of non-traditional and conventional FIFO families sampled, as one partner described,

> *This division of duties can at times be a challenge because I feel bad dropping a load of chores on him* [FIFO employee] *when he gets home…he comes home exhausted and I know all he wants is to relax but it's not like I don't want to relax too…there's just so much that needs doing* (CP - HFP).

However, there were some participants that highlighted the benefits of being able to successfully divide household duties,

> *As a mother of two children sometimes I get overwhelmed with trying to keep up with all their needs…it's always nice when my husband* [FIFO employee] *comes home as I know he is more than willing to help* (G1 - BP).

Even singlehood employees living on their own had to allocate certain duties to family or friends, *my mum visits the home every week to collect my mail and sometimes pay my bills…being away for six weeks at a time I can't afford to miss a payment…I always reimburse her when I get home* (F1 - HME).

Non-traditional families, similar to conventional family types, were able to implement various strategies and routines, based on their current living situation and life stage, to successfully manage the challenges that came with dividing household duties. The majority of FIFO employees would come home tired and in need of rest but at the same time recognised the importance their presence at home has on their family, using the home period to take on various responsibilities that were placed on their partner while they were on-site. This division of tasks helped strengthen relationships and improve general daily life of the at-home partner, as one bisexual mother of two children described, *when he* [FIFO employee] *is home, he is home twenty four hours every day, I can do the shopping or attend meetings without having to worry about a babysitter or day care* (G1 - BP). She claimed that when her partner was at home he would take on a variety of different duties that commonly took up most of her day, thus she was able to get more done when he was home while at the same time still being able to spend quality family time together.

There was no significant difference between non-traditional and conventional family types when it came to the division of roles as both acknowledged similar difficulties they faced when dividing household responsibilities. All FIFO families had to negotiate how they spent their time together and who was responsible for what. Families with FIFO employees on shorter roster structures were slightly more aware of the issues relating to frequent absence as they experienced the comings and goings of the employee on a more regular basis, and therefore were more likely to have a structured routine in place to manage said issues. Those on shorter rosters also felt that their lives were more normal than those working three or more weeks away from home, *I prefer the short option as it feels like I live a normal life* (U - LE). Similarly, another partner claimed that, *a longer roster is good for people without any responsibilities…a shorter one is preferable by those in relationships or people that have children…it lets you live a normal family life* (WP - BP). Furthermore, those on a shorter roster expressed higher levels of job and life satisfaction. A finding similar to previous research conducted by Beach (1999) who illustrated the relationship between long periods of home absence and the impact this has on work-home conflict. However, some participants that worked a shorter roster also noted that the due to the short roster they were travelling more frequently and as a result were more tired than those on longer rosters. These individuals also described issues with fatigue that interrupted their time at work and home.

7.4.4.3 Personal and Home/Family Time

When the FIFO employee was at home they aimed to use their personal and family time in the most effective and productive manner where both the employee as well as their partner would get the most enjoyment out of their time together. This was highly dependent on a number of factors such as the amount of resources available, life stage, children and other family members living with them under the same household, children's age, if the at-home partner was employed and required being away from home during certain periods of the day or week, and how much access they had to extended family members and friends in times of need. The way participants chose to spend their time while at home was heavily influenced by these factors, as one homosexual male partner who lives in a mining community and has no children

described, *we don't have any family here and only a few friends…even though I work we still spend all our time together* (BP - GP). He suggests that because both his partner and himself live and work in close proximity to each other, have no children or extended family, it is easier for them to maximise the use of their current resource reservoir as the only demands requiring resource use are those from their jobs. They don't have any other family to think about and as such are able to use their time together in a more effective manner, *there's less stress when I don't have to think about other people* (BP - GP).

Those with young children or family that need caring found the way they spent their time with their partner was somewhat disjointed as they were constantly thinking about other priorities occupying their daily activities. A married heterosexual female partner of two young children claimed that, *it's hard being a stay at home mother and taking care of my father at the same time…I'm always occupied* (CP - HFP). She still spends time with her partner but feels that their time together could be used more productively as, *my hands are always full, if it's not with our children it's with my father…I can't make time for everything* (CP - HFP).

Another partner who was studying to get her Master of Business Administration (MBA) degree highlighted how her university research and studies influenced her daily life, *the demands of my MBA do influence how I go about my day and can be emotionally challenging…I'm constantly thinking about my studies* (GP - BP). Each family negotiated how they spent their time together, and divided their roles and responsibilities in a way that was reflective of their needs given their life stage at the time. For some, as illustrated in the above example, this was more difficult to manage as they needed to meet the demands of each family member as well as the demands from their personal lives, and balancing these demands proved challenging at times.

There was some conflict in the way time at home was spent, as certain FIFO employees saw it as their time to relax while partners of FIFO employees saw the home period as a time for sharing household duties and helping around the house. *I like to come home and put my legs up* (E - HME) said one employee whose partner had a different view, *sometimes I feel like the house is a temporary rest period…as much as he'd like to rest for his entire away period I still have him take care of a few*

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things left undone (EP - HFP). This conflict of views shows the different mindsets between FIFO employees and their partners when it comes to using personal and home/family time.

A number of the younger FIFO employees and partners that were experiencing the FIFO lifestyle for the first time struggled with utilising their time resources in an effective manner, but most were able to adapt to the lifestyle successfully over time, *having only been part of the lifestyle for a few months this is all still very new to me and I'm still learning* (GP - BP). Participants that were new to the lifestyle took time to figure out how to best utilise their resources in order to make the most out of their time at home, a learning curve that those who were involved in FIFO employment for years also struggled with in the first few months of FIFO working and living. Despite the issues and challenges faced by employees and their partners, most were able to successfully manage their time together and were generally satisfied with how they divided their personal and home/family time.

7.4.5 Employee and Partner Life Stage Stress

The demands from work and home life, as highlighted by the sampled participants, have been shown to influence the resource reservoir of FIFO employees and their families. However, employee life stage and current living situation also impacted on their stress response that, based on the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, can include an emotional, physiological or behavioural response, or a combination of the three. Participants described times in which the FIFO lifestyle created or enhanced stress levels as a result of individual or family life stage. Their emotional, physiological and behavioural response was influenced by extended periods of separation from home life on a regular basis. This not only determined individual life satisfaction but also job satisfaction and its impact on outcomes such as job performance, career progression, and work and home engagement, amongst others.

The main difficulties faced by FIFO employees and partners with children occurred when they were expecting their first child or had younger children that needed caring.

FIFO employees in these situations wanted to experience being a parent and provide their partner with emotional support but because of their roster structure weren't able to do so and missed a number of milestones in the child's life, as one employee described, *I've missed out on seeing my children walk and I can't even begin to imagine what it must've been like for my wife* (I - BE). This was similar to experiences from partners that wanted the FIFO employee physically present in their children's lives,

> *When I had my first child it was really hard because I had no one to support me. My husband was away…that emotional support non-FIFO parents get from one another I didn't have which made the experience even more stressful* (IP - HFP).

Those with two or more children described how difficult their lives became because they took on more responsibility trying to manage and balance the demands and needs of two or three children. Those with older children or children that were years apart in age difference were able to better cope with the demands of the lifestyle, whereas those with young children aged closer together found it more challenging due to a lack of support, as one parent of three young children separated by one year in age described, *as a mother of three children living FIFO, people don't realize how difficult it can get…running around from morning till night without support is one of the most difficult and stressful things I have ever experienced* (NP - HFP).

There were a number of FIFO employees that noted experiencing nervous energy and being worried when they were on-site as they couldn't support their partner emotionally or physically, *at times I've had nervous energy and felt blue…when I think about my partner and not being able to comfort her it does get me down* (J - HME). Another employee adds, *I do think about home often as I know how it can get for my wife taking care of two children on her own* (K - HME).

Partners' life stage also had an influence over their attitude towards FIFO employment. Some described disliking FIFO employment because they found it difficult to cope with the demands of their life while having minimal support from the employee when they were on-site. They described struggling with various aspects of the lifestyle such as being separated and how separation could potentially impact their children's lives growing up without a proper father/mother figure. However, almost

all claimed that there was nothing they or the FIFO employee could do as the job had limited flexibility.

Some participants fell into FIFO employment because their partner had already been working in the mining industry before they met. For these individuals the choice to enter the FIFO lifestyle was not made with their input. Therefore, they felt that power in their relationship was distributed unevenly, thus leading to a greater disliking of the lifestyle, as one transgender partner described, *I don't particularly like that I didn't get a say in this…I feel like the decision is one that should have been made as a couple* (HP - BP). He also adds that while his partner runs everything by him, *there is a clear division* and that every life decision is centred on the FIFO employee, and as such the FIFO lifestyle was not as appealing as he imagined it being.

Virtually all the partners sampled, both from non-traditional and conventional family backgrounds, described how FIFO employment gave them everything they had but at a cost. There were some employees that could negotiate their roster structure but for the majority there was no roster flexibility, which was a major factor in how well individuals managed the lifestyle. Some partners coped better through accessing various resource types, for example taking advantage of personal and social resources by seeking support from family and friends. The most difficult times for many partners were during the night when they felt most lonely. Some also found the day the employee was expected to depart for work to be a challenge, describing the days that followed as *depressing* because they would go from having a *lively* and *fun* household to a *mundane* and *empty* one (K1 - LP).

Partners of FIFO employees who worked longer away periods and had shorter home periods found it more difficult to cope than those with shorter away periods. They saw their partner on a less frequent basis and found that this contributed to their ability in adopting the FIFO lifestyle successfully. However, despite all the negatives of the lifestyle, most partners claimed that the positive impacts on their relationship were greater than the negatives, claiming that all employment types have some influence over personal and family life and that it was only a matter of learning and getting used to the comings and goings of the FIFO employee. It is clear that the impact of life stage stress influences work and home life of both the FIFO employee and their

partner. However, all the sampled families claimed that they were able to manage the job and home demands in a successful manner once they got accustomed to the FIFO lifestyle.

7.4.6 Physical and Emotional Contact

An area that posed an issue for both non-traditional and conventional families was the result of separation leading to less physical and emotional contact between partners. Being able to offer physical support as well as intimacy was a desire of many participants. However, due to the FIFO lifestyle and because of certain factors such as individual life stage, roster structure and awareness, the level of affection between partners was said to be considerably lower than what it was before they entered into FIFO employment.

When comparing roster structures, those on a longer roster exhibited more stress in their relationship than those on a shorter roster as they had fewer opportunities for contact with their partner. One transgender partner found she grew accustomed to and accepted the fact that she would be less physically intimate with her FIFO partner, *over time I kind of accepted that our sexual life would never be as good as it once was* (C1 - LP), and another lesbian partner found that, *the lifestyle has changed us, we still desire to be together but it's not like before* (K1 - LP). While not a major issue, it was a common area of concern that both those starting out in FIFO employment for the first time and those that have been working in the mining industry for years struggled with to this day.

There were some couples that desired having children and starting their own family but claimed that getting pregnant and raising a child without both partners present in the child's life was not something they wanted or could commit to doing. Not being able to physically and emotional support their partner was an issue many FIFO employees faced when contemplating having children, *I have to work my roster no matter what, and being away for so long I couldn't leave my partner to raise a child with all that responsibility* (E - HME). Another partner adds that, *even if we wanted to have children, the separation would make raising that child difficult…it has to be*

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done together (MP - BP). The isolation of the job not only impacted participant's current life stage but also had a strong influence over the direction of their future life stage.

Others that worked on shorter rosters found that the amount of time they had with their partner and family as a whole was not enough to properly reconnect with them, as one partner described, w*hen he* [FIFO employee] *gets home we only have two days to ourselves…our time together is not enough* (NP - HFP). Those few days the FIFO employee had at home were commonly spent sleeping, catching up with family and friends, completing household tasks or projects from previous away periods, or child caring, thus limiting the time for partners to reconnect with one another both at an physically intimate and emotional level.

Another challenge brought up by some partners had to do with trust. Given the extended periods of regular separation from one another, trust in the relationship was seen as being highly important, as one partner described,

> *You have to have complete trust in your partner and your relationship if you want to make the lifestyle work. It took me a couple of months to realise that I had nothing to worry about and that I could trust him* [FIFO employee]. *It's not that I didn't trust him, I did, I just didn't know who he'd be surrounded by at work, peer pressure and all that* (JP - HFP).

Trust in any relationship is a challenge, but for those living the FIFO lifestyle it is considerably more difficult to cope with because the at-home partner is regularly left alone thinking about what the FIFO employee was doing. This can become an unhealthy way to live, as one partner suggested, *I find myself thinking about what he* [FIFO employee] *is up to and when I don't hear from him I get stressed* (G1 - BP). However, another partner notes how trust due to FIFO employment has made her relationship stronger,

> *Our relationship is based on trust and that is a vital part of this* [lifestyle]…*he* [FIFO employee] *trusts me and I trust him, and this has made our relationship stronger* (GP - BP).

Trust was commonly seen as a challenge for those that had recently entered into the FIFO lifestyle, as they didn't know what to expect from the job and the surrounding

environment, whereas those that had been working FIFO employment for years found that trust in their relationship grew as the years progressed.

7.4.7 Relationships

A common challenge non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners faced was maintaining a healthy relationship with each other as well as with extended family, friends, social groups, and the local community. While many highlighted the difficulties that come with managing these different groups, there were some that claimed the FIFO lifestyle improved and strengthened their relationship. The newer employees and partners to FIFO employment were more unstructured in their approach to the lifestyle and therefore were less aware of the impact FIFO had on those around them. However, those that had been part of FIFO employment for more than a year had a greater understanding and awareness of the impact FIFO can have on their family, friends and community, thus recognising the need to implement strategies that would reduce these impacts.

> *Everything we do is planned out in advance, if we want to meet friends for brunch, visit family members or attend social events it's all discussed and organised before my partner* [FIFO employee] *gets home* (WP - BP).

Similarly, another partner claimed that,

> *We have a good idea of what we need to do when she* [FIFO employee] *is here* [home] *as well as what we want to do…time is split in a way where everyone gets the most out of being together* (RP - LP).

Some couples found that physical separation and time apart helped strengthen their relationship. Certain partners experienced an increase in confidence when they had to rely on their own abilities to overcome challenges,

> *I have more responsibility now that my partner works away…I work, get home, tend to her needs* [FIFO employees mother who lives in the same household as the FIFO couple] *before going to bed…I'm more confident now* (RP - LP).

Some partners valued separation as it allowed them to pursue their own interests and careers while also sharing common interests with the FIFO employee, as one gay

partner who paints as a hobby described, *I enjoy working on my art…when he* [FIFO employee] *is home we do everything together and I leave my art alone* (XP - GP).

While maintaining healthy relationships proved to be a challenge, the majority of participants were able to adopt strategies to mitigate the impact of these challenges. Partners became more resourceful, relying on their own abilities to resolve problems that arose when the FIFO employee was absent from home. Some experienced difficulties in maintaining relationships while others were more structured in their approach to keeping connected with family, friends and local community members.

7.4.8 Departure

The departure of the FIFO employee to the work-site was one that had a significant amount of influence over FIFO employees and their partner's emotions. A number of employees described feeling euphoric when they were scheduled to leave work for their home period, *the greatest feeling in the world is the day you leave for your return* [home]*, I no longer have to worry about work and can focus all my time on enjoying myself with my family* (E1 - BE). Another employee adds, *I work so hard in the sweltering sun and the day I'm supposed to leave is priceless, when I know I will get to see my children and wife…you can't buy that feeling* (M1 - HME). However, when FIFO employees were scheduled to return to work they were less enthusiastic, *the last day at home is always the hardest because I know I won't see them* [family] *tomorrow…by the time I've adjusted to home I have to go back to work* (D1 - HFE).

Similarly, partners also found that there was a difference in FIFO employee actions from when they arrive home to when they have to leave, as one partner described,

> *I always say my husband is the strong one in the family but I have noticed a gradual shift in emotions from when he arrives to when he leaves…he try's not to show it but I can tell he feels down when he has to leave the next day* (G1 - BP).

Another partner adds that, *FIFO is tricky; it takes you from the highest of highs to the lowest of lows in the span of a week* (K1 - LP). Partners also described differences in emotions associated with the comings and goings of the FIFO employee. This ranged

from happiness upon arrival to sadness with departure, but a few also claimed that they were keen to see the FIFO employee leave as this allowed them to resettle into their daily routine, as one partner described,

> [I get] *butterflies the day before he* [FIFO employee] *returns but we are different in that he has a lot of energy and sometimes it can be a sigh of relief when he has to go back* [to work]. *I like when he is around but I also like my time and am able to get more stuff done when he is away* (KP - HFP).

Unlike most FIFO employees there were some partners who found that a longer schedule was more beneficial to them than a shorter one. One couple in particular claimed that they preferred a longer roster because as the FIFO employee notes, *you don't have to deal with all the stress back home* (D - HME), and his partner, a university student, adds that, *I feel like when he is home for longer than a week it grinds into my routine…we focus on doing things as a couple so I don't get time to do my own things* (DP - HFP). She found that balancing university work with the needs of the FIFO employee was difficult and sometimes felt relieved when it was time for him to return to work.

While there were a few participants that preferred having their own personal time, the majority enjoyed being together with their partner and family on a regular basis and described going through various emotions associated with arrival and departure of the FIFO employee. Both those from non-traditional and conventional family backgrounds described going through feelings of happiness, anger, understanding, annoyance, and relief when it came to the comings and goings of the FIFO employee.

7.4.9 Physical Exhaustion

Physical exhaustion was a common issue associated with most of the sampled FIFO employees and some partners. For the employees, working long shifts exceeding 12 hours per day was a major challenge, influencing how they spent their time once the shift was completed. Employees' level of participation in social gatherings and activities, such as going to the gym or spending time with other co-workers, declined due to the demanding work environment draining them both physically and psychologically to the point of exhaustion. They were simply, *too tired to go out with*

friends (P - HME), and *would rather spend that time in my room, watching the television and surfing the net* (B - GE). Participation in non-work related activities was lower as a result of long working hours.

As for partners of FIFO employees, physical exhaustion was mainly exhibited by those with children that required caring as well as those with additional family members, such as parents or grandparents, living with them in the same household that required regular attention from the at-home partner. Caring for others, in most cases, was considered a 24-hour commitment and, as discussed earlier, influenced how partners chose to divide their time and household responsibilities when the employee was at home. Not only did the employee arrive home tired, but the at-home partner was also physically exhausted from taking care of all the household duties and meeting the needs of children and/or family members on their own. Both the FIFO employee and the partner desired a break when the employee was home, thus making it difficult to manage caring duties. However, the majority of employees acknowledged and understood the difficulties faced by their partner when they were away and, based on their particular life stage, were able to implement various strategies in managing said issues, as one employee described, *when I get home I try to take as much on as possible to give my partner time to rest* (K - HME), and another employee adds, *I know she* [partner of FIFO employee] *has a full plate with our children and I try to help in any way I can* (I - BE).

Similar to Gallegos's (2006) research, the most difficult time for both FIFO employee and partner, in terms of adjustment, was the first day of the employee's return home. Participants found that because the employee usually comes home exhausted all they want is to rest that first day or two upon arrival. The readjustment process from work to home usually resulted in a lack of quality time together as a family for the first 24-hours of the employee being home. However, most of the sampled couples were able to manage such time successfully once they established and implemented a proper routine. A routine many of the newer couples to the FIFO lifestyle were still figuring out and therefore experienced more difficulties with readjustment than those that have been part of FIFO employment for years. For example one partner, that has been part of the lifestyle for nine years, described,

> *He* [FIFO employee] *usually gets home in time to kiss the kids before bed,*
> *then the next day is spent sleeping until late…as soon as he gets up he is*
> *helping around the house and with the kids* (NP - HFP).

Those that were able to better organise their lives around each other and the needs of each family member experienced greater success in adopting the lifestyle than those that didn't have a routine for work to home readjustment.

FIFO employees working shorter rosters found that the time they had at home was not enough for them to properly readjust to home life, catch up on household duties, meet the needs of their children, be intimate with their partner and get an adequate amount of sleep, and negotiating how to manage this time effectively proved to be a challenge for most. Others found that because they only had the weekend to spend with their family, they were emotionally unavailable for the majority of those two days. Their time was spent working on various household tasks or caring for children, and as such the affection they showed towards their partner was subsequently lower when compared to FIFO employees who had longer home periods with their family. Future research on FIFO-related exhaustion should consider monitoring employees over their FIFO cycle in order to determine the impact of exhaustion on employees' physical and mental condition.

7.5 FIFO Lifestyle and Community Integration

Fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment is unique to any other employment type and there were a select number of participants both from non-traditional and conventional family backgrounds that noted difficulties with integrating the lifestyle to their local community, and the challenges that arose from local community member attitudes and perceptions of FIFO employment. Participants from conventional family backgrounds found that managing said challenges was not an issue as they could relate to other community members, whereas participants from non-traditional families, especially those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, experienced greater difficulties with integration. They claimed that a lack of community support created a hostile environment that made managing work and home life more problematic than what they imagined before entering into FIFO employment. Furthermore, those that lived or had previously lived in a mining

community described how the locals reacted negatively to their presence and use of town facilities. The following section details the experiences of FIFO families in relation to community member attitudes and community arrangements.

7.5.1 Community Member Attitudes

Mining and FIFO employment are among the leading contributors to the Australian economy with a contribution of 10.2 per cent of Australia's Gross Domestic Product (GDP), directly employing 2.3 per cent (267,700 employees) of the total workforce in 2014 (Australian Government Department of Employment, 2014). As a result of these high percentages it is also the cause of substantial debate in parliament and a common theme amongst media coverage. Due to this, along with the highest rate of employment growth in any industry over the last few decades, the attention garnered by the mining industry has had a strong impact on local community attitudes and perceptions of FIFO working and living. The media generally tends to portray the industry negatively and therefore many of the participants highlighted the lack of general FIFO employment knowledge from local community members, and how this has led to the creation of an *uneducated* society that was described as *dangerous* and *uncomfortable.* Some individuals found that attempts to shape or change the views of local community members were fruitless, as the media's coverage of FIFO had ingrained a certain biased perception onto them.

> *We live in a highly stressful world and the media only shows one side of the coin, the side that peaks the most ratings...usually the side that doesn't showcase the good of the industry. From pay cuts to death, but I suppose they're only doing their job and for me to say they are right or wrong is not my place but it does have an influence on my life when my own neighbour questions how I live* (Q - LE).

A transgender FIFO employee summed up the views of the majority of LGBT participants by stating that,

> *The support we have as LGBT individuals living in Australia is minimal, that along with our involvement in FIFO makes our lives uncomfortable because an uninformed society segregates us more than non-queer FIFO employees* (W - GE).

There was a sense, from non-traditional family types, that conventional families living the FIFO lifestyle were better off and had more options in relation to local community support than LGBT individuals working in the industry. Due to such perceptions, coupled with community attitudes towards FIFO living, most participants from non-traditional family backgrounds, especially those that had been part of the lifestyle for a number of years, described how their own attitudes towards the local community changed. The newer FIFO employees and their partners were still trying to cope and manage their own lifestyle and as such were not completely exposed to community perceptions of FIFO employment, *we don't think about our community, we don't have time to think about community as we are still trying to figure out our own lives* (GP - BP). Others that had been working in FIFO employment for years had different views on community attitudes claiming that over time they became less motivated to connect with local community members, and were more inclined to form relationships with people they could relate with, *there is no point in creating friendships with those that don't live the way we live…they don't understand the hardships I'll go through* (TP - GP).

Partners of FIFO employees from both non-traditional and conventional families, especially those with children or with a job away from home, were more prone to such community attitudes than others, as one partner of a bisexual FIFO employee described,

> *There are not many people around me that have children and a partner that is regularly away…most people think this life is easy but it is the furthest thing from easy…it can be difficult to relate to locals especially with how the news talks about FIFO* (IP - HFP).

As there were usually only a handful of people in similar situations living in the same local community that they can relate with, partners typically preferred seeking support from loved ones such as their parents or close friends while the FIFO employee was on-site.

7.5.2 Community Arrangements

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Another area of concern faced by many FIFO families was that they had no choice but to integrate their lifestyle with the lifestyle of their local community and the 9-to-5, Monday to Friday, workweek; a traditional employment style that is not catered around the needs of FIFO families. Trying to integrate the FIFO lifestyle to match traditional employment arrangements proved challenging for most participants as the FIFO employee was away from home on a regular basis, thus they were frequently absent from many family and community activities. For example, participating in weekly social events such as community meetings, sporting associations and children's school activities that required regular attendance was not plausible by FIFO employees, as one lesbian employee and parent described, *it's not that I don't want to be there for my child and partner; I just can't be there because my job doesn't allow it* (Q - LE). Another bisexual FIFO employee and father of three children adds that, *I've missed so many school events and carnivals…my children struggle to grasp why their friends parents are there but not their dad* (I - BE). There were also some employees that, due to their lack of personal and time resources, were reluctant and unenthusiastic about devoting large amounts of their home period attending social events, as one gay FIFO employee described, *I'd rather spend my time at home with my family instead of going out with friends* (X - GE).

Employees valued how they spent their time both at home and at work, in most cases opting to forgo social events to spend more time with their partner and family members. However, desire to partake in community activities was not possible for virtually all the sampled FIFO employees as their roster was not flexible. Those from non-traditional FIFO families further experienced greater difficulties with integrating their lifestyle with local community arrangements and many partners, especially those with young children, felt that a lack of community support made their experience living the FIFO lifestyle more challenging when compared to individuals from conventional FIFO family backgrounds.

7.6 Expectations of the FIFO Lifestyle

The vast majority of participants had a good idea of what to expect from the fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) lifestyle and, for the most part, those expectations were met, *I didn't know what to expect from this lifestyle but it is, in a way, what I imagined it being* (RP

- LP). However, there were a number of employees and partners that claimed their initial expectations of the FIFO lifestyle were different to their actual experiences. Some partners *fell into the lifestyle* while others made the decision to enter FIFO employment as a couple, but both noted that their experiences were different to their expectations, as one bisexual partner described, *I didn't expect it to have such an impact on me…I don't have a normal life like non-FIFO families and there is not much I can do or say to change that* (WP - BP). Another gay partner claimed that *you just get used to it,* explaining the struggles he went through in his adjustment to the frequent periods of absence when his partner started working in FIFO employment and how he *got used to these periods of away and home time* (XP - GP). Similarly, another gay partner adds that, *it was a slow process of adjustments that got us to where we are today* (TP - GP). Some participants highlighted the impact of life stage and how changes in life such as having children, leaving parent's home, starting a new job or getting assigned a different roster influenced their experiences of living the FIFO lifestyle, as one bisexual employee of two children described, *I think when you have children it changes everything. I always knew I'd end up working in FIFO employment but I never once thought how difficult it would be when I had children* (L - GE).

These experiences and FIFO lifestyle adaptation processes are supportive of the "Continuum of Emotions" model as proposed Watts (2004), which states that in the span of six months, since commencing FIFO employment, workers will go through four stages of adaptation (e.g., changing concept of self-identity, changing emotions, changing relationships, and acceptance or rejection of the FIFO lifestyle), that are influenced by relationship strength, personality, and support availability, when adjusting to the FIFO lifestyle. Participants, based on their individual experiences, all exhibited some change in their expectations of the lifestyle and virtually all accepted the lifestyle and the positives and negatives that result from FIFO employment. However, unlike Watts's (2004) model, participants from this study found that they were not locked to a specific adaptive stage but instead their adaptation to the lifestyle was influenced by changes in their personal circumstances and life stage. For example, partners of FIFO employees that had jobs away from home adapted to the lifestyle more efficiently than those that were stay at home parents taking care of their children full-time. Being able to socialise and interact with other employees and

people when the FIFO employee was away helped partners adjust to the lifestyle more efficiently as they spent less time alone. The influence of life stage on the adaptation process illustrates the impact of personal circumstances and suggests an additional branching to the "Continuum of Emotions" model as proposed by Watts (2004).

7.7 Resource Access

As highlighted from the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model in chapter five, fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners have a resource reservoir consisting of three main resource types, personal, social and protective resources that they, depending on their circumstances, will use to help with various challenges and demands relating to work and home life. Non-traditional as well as conventional FIFO participants described their use of resources to assist with daily life. For example, partners will often rely on personal and social resources, such as family support, for practical and emotional support when the FIFO employee was away from home. Many of the partners with children found that coping with children's needs was at times too stressful and would seek support from family members or close friends who would assist with child caring and provide emotional support and companionship to the partner when the FIFO employee was absent. As mentioned earlier, the importance of having such resources was highlighted by the partner of two children whose son was prone to seizures and one night had to be taken into hospital while the FIFO employee was away, *thankfully I had a friend who lived close and stayed with my daughter while I took my son to hospital* (G1 - BP). Others, similarly, found that living with family members or in close proximity of their family increased their confidence to manage any emergencies that may arise, as they could call on family members to assist them in times of need. Even singlehood employees were often reliant on family members to help with household duties such as regularly checking the mail when they were at work. Most participants felt that they had to have proper routines and procedures in place to manage any issues that could arise; procedures they believed would not be necessary if they worked non-FIFO employment.

There were a number of individuals that appreciated having the resources for support but preferred being self-reliant. They valued their partner, family, and friends input but also saw the benefits in solving problems on their own, as one partner described

self-reliance making her, *more confident in my abilities as a parent* (U1 - HFP), and another lesbian partner similarly adds that, *I try to avoid asking for help as working on things on my own has helped me grow* (QP - LP).

A major difference between non-traditional and conventional FIFO families was access to local community support. Non-traditional families felt that there weren't a vast number of support groups they could join in their community. They claimed that because of how the media portrayed FIFO along with the way government viewed lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) rights there was no positive overlapping between the two. Therefore, they were less likely to meet other employees and partners in similar situations as them, thus making their experience of the FIFO lifestyle more challenging than those from conventional FIFO families who were part of and had support of local community groups. However, there were some non-traditional employees that were part of social groups outside of work and acknowledged the difficulties associated with attending regular meetings and activities, as they were frequently on-site during said events, *I have to shift my entire life around my job, I miss out on being with my partner, attending events, and weekly* [cricket] *games* (V - GE).

7.8 Coping Routines and Strategies

As has been discussed, individuals from non-traditional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) family backgrounds experience various fluctuating emotions associated with irregular comings and goings of the FIFO employee, shift work arrangements, and social connections. Similar to previous research conducted by Gallegos (2006) on the unique coping styles of FIFO families, the present study also explored the strategies adopted by participants to help mitigate challenges associated with the comings and goings of the FIFO employee. The majority of non-traditional employees, especially those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, illustrated the negative impacts they experienced when trying to fit in and be accepted by a group of individuals that were predominately masculine males, and how they *couldn't relate* to other co-workers and were hesitant in freely expressing their sexual orientation (SO) and/or gender identity (GI). However, depending on their individual SO, GI and personal circumstances, they implemented their own specific coping strategies to

combat these challenging moments. Some simply accepted the lifestyle for what it was, while others actively avoided certain people that brought negativity to their work experience. They also implemented strategies for getting through the working period, as one transgender and gay FIFO employee described,

> [The job] *requires the right amount of balance between the two* [physical and mental strength]*…in finding the right balance I have daily rituals I follow…I might read one book chapter per day, little things like that make time fly* (V - GE).

Another gay FIFO employee similarly claimed that,

> *There are not many openly gay employees so it takes longer to adjust to the* [work] *environment. As soon as I get back* [to the mine site] *I start counting the days until my return* [home]*, always crossing each day off the calendar* (Y - GE).

The partners of FIFO employees also implemented their own coping strategies for when the employee was away at work, as these participants explained:

> *The hardest part is when she* [FIFO employee] *has to leave because I know I will be driving home to an empty house and my motivation to do anything kind of plummets, but then I go through the motions and tell myself to get up and go to work and carry on* (SP - LP).

or

> *There is nothing I can do to change his* [FIFO employee] *or my employment, I know I have to go to work every day so I try not let my partners absence impact my own job* (YP - GP).

or

> *I will always count the days before he* [FIFO employee] *returns and set aside tasks that need to be done beforehand. If he is coming back on a Friday, I will clean the house the Thursday before, get the shopping done that Wednesday and Tuesday we usually spend time online…after that we won't talk until we see each other on Friday* (TP - GP).

Those with children also employed additional routines when dealing with children's reactions and behaviour associated with the comings and goings of the FIFO parent. Some had routines to manage the needs of children when the FIFO employee was

away and when they were at home, with one partner specifically noting how the employee's presence actually hindered on his personal home routine,

> *The routine I have in place when my partner* [FIFO employee] *is away is simple yet effective, our child knows when to eat, play and sleep but when his other parent comes home this has to change to accommodate both myself and my partner. For our child it takes time to adjust from a one-parent to a two-parent system* (XP - GP).

While others found that the presence of the FIFO employee had no influence on their routine because they would incorporate the employee into the routine when they were at home and at work, therefore making it feel like the employee was part of home life even when they were on-site,

> *The way we do it is we try to keep in touch every day…that way when my partner is at work she is never left out of life at home. This makes her transition* [to home life] *smoother as she is never truly absent for more than two days* (QP - LP).

Although participants employed various routines and strategies to manage the challenges that arose from FIFO employee absence or presence in the household, the range of emotions experienced by those from LGBT FIFO family backgrounds was more extensive than those from conventional family types. This was a direct result of not only being impacted by the FIFO lifestyle from a work level but also at a more personal level, with some participants noting difficulties with discrimination and prejudice exhibited towards them from other workers or even local community members. As such, the range of emotions they experienced was more distinct than the emotions described by individuals from conventional FIFO family backgrounds. In further detailing the impact of the FIFO lifestyle it is important to illustrate the influence various conditions of the lifestyle have on employees and partners. The following section highlights how, based on the unique circumstances of each participant, FIFO employees and partners adapt to the lifestyle and the influence this has on their resource reservoir, stress, relationships, outcomes, and overall well-being.

7.9 Conditions of FIFO Employment that Influence FIFO Lifestyle Experiences

The fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) lifestyle is one with many positives and negatives that requires the use of a substantial amount of personal, social and protective resources in order to meet the demands of work and home life, thus leading to better outcomes such as higher levels of satisfaction, improvements in engagement, greater awareness, and stronger relationships. FIFO employees and their partners are diverse individuals and based on their life stage and personal circumstances the way they adapt to the benefits and limitations of the lifestyle is unique to each person and depends on various interactions between individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions. How these conditions are intertwined and relate to each other ultimately impacts employee and partner experiences of the FIFO lifestyle. Their psychological strength is challenged, attitude and behaviour changes, relationships alter, and family engagement and commitment is tested. The following explores these conditions and describes how they impact non-traditional family experiences of the FIFO lifestyle. Please refer to Table 7.7 for a more detailed view of the individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions.

Table 7.7: Conditions Influencing the Experiences of Non-traditional FIFO Employees and Partners

Individual and Family

- Sexual orientation
- Sexual identity
- Gender
- Age
- Marital status
- Parent or non-parent
- Reasons for entering FIFO employment
- Reasons for remaining in FIFO employment
- Coping strategies
- Home and work routines

- Access to support
- Willingness to seek support
- Presence of children
- Age of children
- Number of children
- Relationship difficulties
- Division of household roles and responsibilities
- Life stage

Community and Government

- Governmental support
- Local community support groups
- Local community perceptions
- Knowledge of local community members
- Attitude of local community members
- Social networks

Workplace

- Roster flexibility
- Shift arrangements
- Food
- Time spent working each day
- Size of the mine site
- Projected life of the mine site
- Projected length of the job
- Type of job
- Type of contract
- Physical location of the mine site and work area

- Travel time from home to work and vice versa

- Working environment

- Working conditions

- Quality of on-site accommodation

- Workplace facilities

- Opportunities for growth

- Socialisation with other workers

- Employer attitude

- Employer practices

- Workplace support

- Family support

- Availability and quality of communication

The conditions range from individual values, sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI) to the physical location of the mine site and roster flexibility. The way these different conditions interact with one another impacts on employee and partner well-being. For example, shift arrangements and roster flexibility were valued by both employee and partner and ultimately influenced their well-being as individuals and couples. The employer commonly determines the shift arrangement and roster structure an employee is on, with the employee's position in the company having some influence over the employer's decision. Some employees have office jobs that allow for the use of telephone calls during work hours while others have to wait until their shift is finished to call home. If they were assigned night shift and their at-home partner worked day shifts, communication was minimal as finding a time that suited both partners was difficult to arrange. Others found that employer attitude towards workplace and family support also influenced their experience. If the mine site was relatively small with a limited budget it made getting support from the employer virtually impossible as it cost the company more than it was making. Partners of FIFO employees also found that their life stage, such as having children, impacted their experiences as they took on more responsibility when the FIFO parent was away from home.

While individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions can stand on their own, they are also not fixed but instead work together with individual circumstances to determine the well-being of FIFO employees and partners. Participants that were successful in adopting the FIFO lifestyle were generally able to identify links between the various conditions, and implemented strategies to address any challenges that came from conditions interacting with each other.

7.9.1 Factors Impacting on FIFO Employee and Partner Well-being

The following section, using the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model in conjunction with Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework, summarises how individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions influence the experiences of FIFO employment and well-being of the FIFO employee and their partner. Based on previous literature discussed in chapters two, three and four and the findings from the present study, this study improves our understanding of the impact FIFO employment has on non-traditional FIFO families and how individuals adapt to the positives and negatives of the lifestyle.

Since the implementation of FIFO employment and shift based working arrangements by Australian mining companies in the 1980s, research has primarily focused on employee attitudes towards FIFO, the influence perception of FIFO employment can have on work and life satisfaction, and the impact of irregular working hours on employee and partner well-being (Gent, 2004; Gillies, Wu & Jones, 1997; Limerick, Crane, Roberts & Baillie, 1991; Pollard, 1990). The current study aimed to address the experiences of FIFO working and living by non-traditional FIFO families. As a result of this central focus on non-traditional family types, the findings did not necessarily challenge previous research but instead provided an additional layer in extending previous research findings.

The findings showed that non-traditional FIFO families are impacted by FIFO employment in the same way as conventional FIFO families but the impacts are

considered as being more severe in that they are influenced not only by individual, family and work conditions but also local community and government conditions. LGBT participants felt that they faced a higher level of challenge relating to FIFO employment and FIFO lifestyle integration because of their SO or GI. They claimed to having less support from local community groups, couldn't relate to other employees while on-site and some noted issues of discrimination and prejudice, all of which, as per the JHDR model, work together to impact employee and partner well-being, relationships, job and life satisfaction, engagement levels, awareness, and perceptions of family functioning. Most reported healthy relationship levels while others found the long periods of absence impacted their emotional, physiological and behavioural response.

In relation to family functioning, both FIFO employees and partners claimed that the adjustment process associated with the comings and goings of the FIFO employee created various challenges for them and their family. However, the majority of families were able to develop and implement strategies, such as regular communication when the employee was on-site, dividing roles and responsibilities when the employee was at home, seeking support from family and friends in times of need, and maintaining affection and intimacy with one another, that helped mitigate such challenges. Their experiences were based on how much they valued their job and financial security that came with the above average remuneration, the benefits and downsides of extended periods of separation, access to health services for family members, educational programs for children, employment opportunities for the at-home partner, challenging work environment, and the availability of social support, all of which had either a positive or negative impact on their overall well-being.

Unlike previous research that found certain conditions of FIFO employment to be detrimental to relationships (Gallegos, 2006; Taylor & Simmonds, 2009), the participants from the present study viewed these conditions as fitting into personal, social or protective resources that they could use to enhance their experiences of the FIFO lifestyle. For example, absence from home was seen as a major issue for both the employee and their partner but they also understood that separation was a natural part of the lifestyle. Therefore, having a greater awareness of the challenges that came with isolation such as loneliness and potential periods of depression, and as such

participants were better able to prepare for these difficult times by implementing daily routines that increased their personal confidence. Those with children were also aware of the impact an absent parent from the household could have on the child's life and the difference in child caring responsibility when one parent was at home compared to when both parents were home. Some found that when the FIFO parent returned home that the at-home partner's routine had to alter in order to accommodate the presence of the FIFO employee. Others developed strategies that involved the sharing of roles and responsibilities between partners to achieve goals they set out to complete during the FIFO employee's home period as well as using home time to spend together as a family. The length of time spent at home and at work also determined how aware employees and their partners were of the challenges and demands that came with the lifestyle. For example, employees on shorter rosters were able to maintain an overall healthier physical and emotional attachment with their partner, were more united as a family unit, and were more successful in allocating household tasks, duties and responsibilities when both partners were at home. Those on longer rosters, however, experienced higher levels of difficulty in relation to physical and emotional attachment to their partner, were generally more exhausted and therefore were less accepting of household responsibilities when at home, and some felt detached from their child's life due to the long periods of home absence. However, each participant was aware of these challenges and demands and most were able to successfully turn any difficulties that arose into personal, social or protective resources that they used to improve their well-being.

Greenhaus and Beutall (1985) discussed the sharing of roles and responsibilities, and how when an individual has more than one role to perform, for example being an employee, parent and active community member, the demands from each role combined can become overwhelming and impact well-being. In order to maintain a healthy level of well-being, resources need to be used but this can also lead to higher levels of conflict and stress as resources become insufficient in meeting the demands of each role. Previous studies (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Voydanoff, 2004) have illustrated that a negative link commonly exists between work-home conflict and individual and family well-being. However, despite the challenging long periods of absence and irregular working hours and shift arrangements associated with the FIFO lifestyle, most of the participants viewed such challenges as avenues for access to

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greater resources that could help reduce job and home demands. They agreed that the benefits and rewards offered from FIFO employment outweighed the negatives of the job. For example, while physical separation and isolation did increase periods of loneliness and in some cases depression, the above average remuneration resulted in better access to material resources and financial security, thus leading to lower levels of stress.

The relationship between work and home life showed that a spill over can and does exist between the two domains. It can either be a negative spill over that leads to higher levels of stress or a positive spill over in which resources from one domain help improve performance, reduce demands and gain further resources in the other domain. This is similar to previous studies that explored the link between work and home domains and found that stressors from work can impact satisfaction at home and vice versa (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 2002). Spill over was also strongly influenced by individual life stage, SO, GI, age, and personal circumstances that impacted well-being as well as how involved FIFO employees and their partners were in community and social activities.

The FIFO lifestyle is about meeting the demands of work and home in order to reach a balance between the two domains, and the majority of participants found that they were successful in managing the demands of each domain. While most participants did not prefer to be separated from their partner and families, some found that isolation helped limit spill over as they were able to separate work and home life and focus on one domain at a time. At work they were mainly focused on completing daily and weekly tasks while at home they were committed to their role and responsibilities established with their partner. This helped reduce stress as participants felt that there was less time to think about the other domain when they were able to separate work from home and home from work.

7.9.2 Influence of Context

Research has shown that the way in which work and home domains interact with each other are heavily influenced by various conditions such as life stage, gender and age

(Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Voydanoff, 2008). The present study reaffirmed these findings but also expanded on the conditions to include individual SO and GI, thus further illustrating the diversity of conditions influencing non-traditional FIFO family experiences of the FIFO lifestyle. These conditions, as detailed in Table 7.7, interact with one another at an individual and family, community and government, and workplace level. For example, life stage, such as having children or the at-home partner also being employed outside of home, can impact on the experiences of both FIFO employee and partner when they are at work and at home. Participants with younger children living with them in the same household found it more difficult to cope with the lifestyle than those with older children. They had more caring responsibilities and most of their time was spent around the children. Some participants with older children also undertook employment away from home, as a means of accessing social resources that they found were not as full as they were before entering the FIFO lifestyle. Individual work conditions, job type and shift arrangements impacted FIFO employee access to communication, thus influencing how well they maintained a healthy family relationship. Employees with less access to communication were more likely to feel detached while on-site from their partner or family at home. This study also illustrated the impact of local community member attitudes and perceptions of FIFO employment. Participants noted difficulties in relating to community members because they felt members didn't understand the FIFO lifestyle from a non-traditional family perspective. Furthermore, similar to the findings form Beach's (1999) research, the roster structure had a strong impact on family relationships, as the roster commonly influenced family functioning. While this study does provide additional insight into these conditions, it is evident that in order to understand the role of such conditions in greater depth further research on the relationship between various conditions and the work/home link is needed.

7.10 Chapter Summary

Based on the findings from this study it can be concluded that Western Australian (WA) fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners from non-traditional family backgrounds experience similar and at times different challenges from the FIFO lifestyle than individuals from conventional FIFO family backgrounds. However, their experiences tend to be at a more intense level, as FIFO challenges not only

impact their job but also their home domain. They face issues that conventional FIFO employees and partners don't experience first-hand, simply because of their sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI). The mining industry is highly male dominant and therefore it can be difficult for people from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds to relate to other co-workers and the general work environment.

The workplace environment was perceived as fostering a group mentality that favoured those from conventional FIFO backgrounds, thus the majority of non-traditional participants avoided socialising, outside of a professional manner, with other co-workers. In addition, most felt that their employer did not adequately communicate and encourage the use of formal support services and therefore the participants had to rely on informal support from friends and family. However, FIFO employment was said to be highly beneficial in terms of the personal opportunities it offered to participants, such as the opportunity, due to financial stability and security, to start a family and have children. In certain instances it strengthened family relationships and allowed individuals to support themselves, their immediate families and loved ones. Furthermore, while the demands of FIFO employment were viewed as negatively straining and stressful, thus leading to anxiety, they were also valued by some participants. These participants viewed the demands as motivators to gain more personal confidence, and when stress was managed correctly it increased individual motivation to keep going.

The findings also showed that having a full resource reservoir containing personal, social and protective resources helped mitigate the difficulties faced by non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners, thus reducing the impact of job and home demands and leading to a lower stress response that in turn improved employee and partner well-being. These experiences were moderated by a number of different individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions. Therefore, work and home domains were seen as being separate from one another but also complementary of each other, where involvement at one domain can spill over and influence the experiences in the other and vice versa. Despite the negatives of the FIFO lifestyle, all the participants chose to remain in the mining industry because

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they felt that the benefits and rewards associated with the job outweighed the negatives that came from FIFO employment.

Chapter eight discusses the research question, highlights the contributions of this study to wider FIFO literature, details recommendations at an individual and family, organisation, and community level, and highlights potential future directions of FIFO-related research, before presenting concluding remarks.

Chapter 8
Conclusion

8.1 Introduction

This study explored non-traditional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employee and partner experiences of FIFO working and living in the context of Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (C0R) theoretical framework and the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model. The following addresses the research question, highlights the contributions of the study to wider FIFO-related literature. Recommendations are detailed on the future direction of FIFO employment, in particular how support for non-traditional FIFO families can be improved at an individual and family, organisational, and community level. The strengths and limitations of the study are discussed before potential avenues for future research are detailed and concluding remarks are presented.

8.2 Research Question

Through the application of the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model in conjunction with the Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework as described by Hobfoll (1989) and detailed in chapter five, this study explored the experiences of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment by non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners from the Western Australian (WA) minerals and resources industry. In exploring how changes in personal, social and protective resources impact job and home demands, stress response and well-being, the research addressed the following question:

> *How does fly-in fly-out (FIFO) employment influence the work-home*
> *interaction of non-traditional Western Australian employees and their*
> *partners working and living FIFO?*

Based on this research, non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners are impacted by FIFO working and living in the same way as conventional FIFO families but at a more severe. Non-traditional FIFO participants, especially those from lesbian,

gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, are influenced by various individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions. LGBT participants noted greater challenges with FIFO lifestyle integration because of their SO or GI. They claimed to have less informal support from their local community, and some found it difficult to relate to their co-workers due to direct or indirect discrimination and prejudice, thus influencing their experience of FIFO working and living.

The emotional, physiological and behavioural stress response exhibited by FIFO employees illustrated that while non-traditional FIFO families face similar stressors, resulting from job and home demands, as those from conventional FIFO family backgrounds, they described these stressors to be more severe, as they were influenced by various individual, community, and social factors. The participants were generally aware of the challenges that came with the lifestyle, thus were able to implement strategies in adapting to the lifestyle successfully and, through the use of personal, social and protective resources, improved individual and family well-being. Having a fuller resource reservoir helped buffer the impact of challenges and demands on stress. When participants attempted to integrate work and home life and develop a balance between the two they found that a low resource reservoir impacted their well-being, relationship and family functioning, along with their ability to meet job performance demands, family commitments and community and social activities. This led to a higher stress response that in turn influenced various outcomes such as job and life satisfaction. In addition, the regular periods of extended FIFO employee absence, in certain instances, created conflict between work and home domains that led to more stress at both domains and employee and partner well-being was impacted negatively.

Despite the negative limitations of the FIFO lifestyle, the participants still reported high levels of well-being, strong family functioning and were able to implement strategies for successful adaptation to the lifestyle. Participants valued and recognised the benefits of personal, social and protective resources in meeting job and home demands, and found that when resource depletion occurred their stress levels increased. These findings are supportive of Hobfoll's (1989) COR theoretical framework, which states that people have a natural desire and need to create, conserve

and protect resources, and that stress is a result of potential or actual resource loss or when resource expectations are not met (Grandey & Cropanzano, 1999; Hobfoll, 1989).

By essentially living two separate lives some individuals experienced higher levels of satisfaction that led to improvements in personal resources and higher levels of engagement at both work and home. The roster an employee worked also influenced their satisfaction as those on longer rosters found that they had less time to actively engage in home life because they were absent for longer periods at a time and when they were home all they wanted to do was relax instead of completing household roles, thus leading to lower levels of engagement. However, the strong income associated with FIFO employment, opportunities for growth, access to education and health facilities, and informal support services helped lower the demands of work and home life and generated further resources, thus reducing stress and improving individual and family well-being. Knowing that employees had guaranteed job and financial security while their family at home had resources to access health, career and social needs helped increase retention rates and nearly all participants found that once they entered FIFO employment it was difficult to leave and find a job elsewhere that had the same benefits as those offered from the mining industry. Similarly, partners of FIFO employees claimed that they benefited from the lifestyle when they knew they could access resources to progress their own career away from home. They also found that the above average remuneration helped create better support for their children and in some cases allowed couples to start their own family. Both employees and partners recognised the benefits of the FIFO lifestyle and as such were able to maintain or increase their resource reservoir.

8.3 Contributions of the Study

The study contributes to a growing and broad understanding of the relationship between resources and individual stress response, and how connection between a full or depleted resource reservoir can either lower or increase stress that can influence various individual and family outcomes such as work and home satisfaction, engagement, family functioning, and relationships, amongst others. Furthermore, the study has illustrated the benefits of a having a variety of different resource types in

terms of managing and coping with job and home demands and how different resources impact individual and family well-being. It has helped highlight the difference between non-traditional and conventional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) families and in particular the influence that sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI) can have on the experiences of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) FIFO employees and their partners while on-site and at home. The JHDR model heightened the awareness and importance of personal, social and protective resources. Participants, as highlighted by Hobfoll (1989), had a natural desire to create, conserve and protect their resources, thus allowing them to better manage the difficulties faced from the FIFO lifestyle. The study extends our understanding of the FIFO lifestyle by addressing the impact that regular periods of extended absence can have on FIFO families, and more specifically the impact FIFO employment can have on non-traditional employees and their partners both from a physical and psychological sense.

Since the adoption of FIFO work arrangements and practices by the Australian mining sector in the 1980s there has been a substantial number of studies on the relationship between work and home domains, balance between professional and personal time, attitudes towards non-standard work arrangements, motivations for FIFO employment, and the impact of absence on FIFO families (Clifford, 2009; Gallegos, 2006; Gillies, Wu & Jones, 1997; Limerick, Crane, Roberts & Baillie, 1991; Pollard, 1990). However, the studies to date have been primarily based on conventional household types (e.g., two-parent mother and father nuclear families) with a strong focus on macro issues pertaining to local economies, environment and infrastructure (Iverson & Maguire, 2000; Mostert & Rathbone, 2007; Wilkinson, 2008). In the main the studies are descriptive in nature with limited speculation given to the theoretical framework that assists to understand FIFO working and living. Despite the rise in FIFO employment and the growing number of Australian households adopting the FIFO lifestyle (CMEWA, 2008a), there still remained a gap in FIFO-related literature in that it did not address the views and experiences of non-traditional FIFO families. The present study acknowledged this gap by exploring the impact FIFO employment has on non-traditional Western Australian (WA) FIFO employees and their partners as well as the influence the FIFO lifestyle can have on individual and family well-being.

The study illustrated the different experiences of FIFO working and living between non-traditional FIFO families and those from conventional family backgrounds, and the influence SO, GI or life stage has on individual and family perceptions of FIFO employment and well-being. When examining these experiences both sampled groups reported similar difficulties and challenges relating to the FIFO lifestyle as well as describing similar levels of relationship satisfaction, family functioning, and overall well-being. However, when comparing non-traditional FIFO family experiences with conventional FIFO families, those from non-traditional households, even though they described facing the same type of challenges as conventional families, experienced the same challenges with greater intensity, and in turn these challenges had an influence on their time at work and home. Furthermore, they detailed different psychological challenges simply based on the fact that they did not identify as the stereotypical heterosexual male or female FIFO employee. In mitigating these challenges, the study showed the influence a full resource reservoir with various resource types, such as personal, social and protective resources, could have on individual stress and well-being. Those that reported having a greater reservoir of resources also experienced lower stress levels and were more satisfied with their family functioning and relationships than those with limited resources, thus supporting the findings and statements made by Hobfoll (1989) in relation to the COR theoretical framework. Non-traditional family experiences were also influenced by various individual and family, community and government, and workplace conditions. The COR theoretical framework and the JHDR model detailed the relationship between resources and well-being, and while partially supporting previous research that found a negative link between work-home conflict and well-being (Kossek & Ozeki, 1998; Voydanoff, 2004), the views of the sampled participants suggest that challenges from work and home provide an avenue for further resource creation that could be used to manage job and home demands, thus reducing stress and improving individual and family outcomes. This presents a new and unique view of the relationship between resources and well-being, and in turn provides for a more in-depth understanding of FIFO employment.

In addition to various individual, community and workplace conditions influencing FIFO employee and partner experiences of FIFO working and living, the present study also highlighted the diversity of participants based on how their role in the

organisation influenced their perceptions of FIFO employment. The study builds on Hobfoll's (1989) COR theoretical framework by addressing the way individuals adapt to challenges from work and home and the impact a full or depleted resource reservoir can have on individual experiences of FIFO employment. The study provides another layer to our understanding of the impact of FIFO employment and how non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners adapt, manage and cope with these impacts. Furthermore, it highlights the role of resources in mitigating challenges, job and home demands, and how individuals respond to stress in order to conserve resources and maintain healthy levels of well-being.

The findings offer a foundation for future research in this area. The study showed that a difference does exist between non-traditional and conventional employee and partner experiences of the FIFO lifestyle, illustrating a need for further research that addresses the relationship between specific family types and different working arrangements. Furthermore, it offers organisations in the mining industry potential avenues for the instigation of workplace policies that acknowledge individuals that don't identify as heterosexual and those at different life stages, thus increasing support for all FIFO employees. Having policies that address various challenges faced by all employee types and promoting a workplace that encourages the use of support services has shown to lower turnover and absenteeism while increasing productivity and organisational commitment, as employees are more motivated when they have an employer that publicly supports them (Behson, 2002; Bourg & Segal, 1999). In addition, working in a gay-friendly environment has been linked to greater openness that in turn leads to enhanced job satisfaction, improved productivity and effectiveness (Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2007). The findings also illustrate a need for further community support for non-traditional FIFO families that could potentially lead to more united communities where non-traditional and conventional families can support each other. The study showed that the awareness of local community support groups was not as high among non-traditional family types as it was with conventional FIFO families, thus highlighting a need for local communities to work on promoting support groups among non-traditional FIFO families.

8.4 Recommendations

The following recommendations for improving the experiences of non-traditional fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employees and their partners working and living the FIFO lifestyle are made at an individual and family, organisational, and community level. These recommendations are based on the findings from the present study. They are formulated with the intention of improving FIFO family experiences of FIFO working and living and strengthening individual and family well-being.

8.4.1 Individual and Family

The study revealed that sexual orientation (SO) and gender identity (GI) can and does influence how non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners experience FIFO working and living, and in certain instances, based on their life stage and personal circumstances at the time of sampling, can have a negative impact on individual well-being that in turn influences both work and home domains. The study illustrated the role of resources in terms of managing challenges and difficulties that can arise from work and home and suggests that how individuals adapt to the FIFO lifestyle can change throughout their lives depending on their current living situation, life stage, and needs at a particular moment in time. If they are planning on having children or have parents that need caring, this can influence the suitability of FIFO employment for the employee at any given time. Therefore, the importance of having a full resource reservoir is reaffirmed in the current study and as such a number of recommendations can be made to assist FIFO employees and their partners in ensuring their resources are maintained at a high level, thus leading to better management of job and home demands, lower stress levels, and higher individual and family satisfaction through the strengthening of employee and family well-being. The main recommendation, and one agreed upon by many of the participants sampled, being the consideration of the impact FIFO employment will have on the employee as well as their family and even friends both at a short and long-term level. *It is important to consider the impact of FIFO on yourself, your family and friends…it will impact everyone and that cannot be ignored* (OP - HFP) and, *if anyone is considering*

FIFO employment they must think about their future...it is a commitment that
influences everyone (KKP - HFP).

In addition to considering the wider impact of FIFO employment on loved ones it is also necessary to recognise the impact of regular extended periods of absence on relationships and family functioning. While most people choose to remain in FIFO employment due to the "golden handcuff" (Gillies, Wu, & Jones, 1997), it is important to have a plan in case FIFO employment becomes an unviable option as a result of the negatives outweighing the positives that come with above average remuneration typical of FIFO employment. Some participants described having yearly appraisal systems that they used to judge the appropriateness of FIFO employment based on their current life stage. Having a formal system in place where both the FIFO employee and their partner can, for example once a year, sit down together and evaluate their resources and examine their coping abilities with the FIFO lifestyle and weigh the positives and negatives of FIFO employment to determine whether to remain or leave the lifestyle. Each individual is unique and everyone will be at a different point in their lives, so having an annual meeting where both partners get to voice their opinions on FIFO working and living could be beneficial in determining the appropriateness of FIFO employment based on current life stage and future direction. These strategies, if followed correctly, may lead to or assist in improving FIFO employee and family well-being both at a short and long-term level.

8.4.2 Organisations

One of the main advantages of FIFO employment for mining employers is that, due to employee separation between work and home, they are able to disassociate with the impact isolation and absence has on partners and family members of the FIFO employee. As the family is not under contract by the mining organisation, the support services provided by employers is limited to only their employees. However, according to the sampled key stakeholders, the support offered to employees usually does take into account family matters and personal concerns as well as addressing various other non-work related difficulties employees face outside of the workplace. For example, if the partner of a FIFO employee was having a child or the employee's

parents needed medical attention, the organisation would typically take into account such situations and offer greater roster flexibility to that particular employee. Furthermore, if an employee were experiencing high levels of stress or depression from their work or home domain most organisations will provide counselling services to combat these issues. In addition, the sampled human resource managers and the mine-site manager claimed that each of their organisations ensures that every mine location, where employees' live while on-site, is equipped with internet and telephone access so that employees can keep in regular contact with their loved ones at home. Technological advancements have resulted in communication improvements where mine sites have shifted from having publicly shared telephones to more private telephone and online internet access available from each employee room.

This study also found that how much and what type of support services an organisation can provide is limited to the size and location of the mine site, mine profitability and the employers' commitment to support. There is no set standard of practices that mining organisations can follow to ensure that the support they offer to employees are implemented accordingly. The issue of discrimination and prejudice was a common concern among the majority of non-traditional FIFO employees. By having standard practices in place, these concerns, through proper employee and manager training, can be mitigated as the current mining workforce, according to the sampled participants and specifically those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, was said to be uninformed about SO and GI differences. This was a challenge faced by many non-traditional employees but one that, with proper practices in place, can be lowered. If the Chamber of Minerals and Energy of Western Australia (CMEWA) or the Minerals Council of Australia (MCA), the main representatives of WA and Australia's mining and minerals processing industry, were to adopt a standard set of practices and initiate a benchmark across all mine sites it could benefit both the FIFO employees and employers. The employees through improved support services and employers through a more efficient and effective workforce. Employers could use these practices to train their human resource managers, mine-site managers and supervisors on effective management of the diverse FIFO workforce, thus leading to more cohesive work teams as employee motivation, job performance, work and life satisfaction increase. Through proper anti-discrimination training, communication, and policy promotion, organisations can

move from policy to practice, promote awareness and enhance LGBT worker inclusion (Colgan & McKearney, 2012; Colgan, Creegan, McKearney, & Wright, 2007). A gap was found between policy and practice in relation to how SO and GI was identified across the mining sector, across different workplace cultures and even within the same mine location. Therefore, SO and GI within these organisations lends to support of Colgan, Creegan, McKearney and Wright (2007) who argued that policy implementation should be selective and focused on where business and equality needs coincide. However, organisational change in terms of equality policy does not necessarily guarantee a working environment that will engage and embrace minority groups. As such, the way in which the organisation responds to SO and GI can significantly impact the working lives of minority groups, such as lesbian FIFO workers, in traditionally male dominate work environments. The stressors faced by sexual minorities, in comparison to the heterosexual mining population, are not only influenced by individual SO and GI but also by other factors such as ethnicity, class and organisational culture (Wright, 2011). Therefore, organisational response to SO and GI is considered highly important in shaping the realities of working lives for sexual minorities in traditionally male dominate work environments. Organisations should implement quality policies at all levels of their business and actively communicate their desire for the equal treatment of all employees.

Organisational understanding of the impacts FIFO employment has on families is growing but is still limited due to a lack of research undertaken to understand the impact the FIFO lifestyle has on direct family members of FIFO employees. Research studies to date have primarily focused on conventional two-parent households with the present study exploring the experiences of non-traditional FIFO households, thus providing an additional layer and further depth into our understanding of the impacts FIFO employment has on employee and partner well-being. This study enhances our current understanding of FIFO employment by illustrating the different needs of individuals based on their SO, GI and life stage, as well as highlighting the role of resources in terms of maintaining job and home demands, individual stress response, and overall well-being. It also showed how different individual, community and workplace conditions influence individual and family well-being. Moreover, the uniqueness of each employee, according to the sampled stakeholders, made it difficult to accommodate to the different needs of every single person. However, mining

companies should implement regular annual evaluations and reviews of employees to better understand the impact FIFO employment is having on their well-being. For example, having a standard survey that each employee completes once a year to update the organisation's records and modify their strategies and practices in order to address the needs of the workforce, thus potentially leading to higher employee satisfaction and organisational commitment through public support and recognition of issues faced by FIFO employees.

Offering pre-employment and post-employment support services are also recommended as they can give the potential employee an understanding of what to expect from FIFO working as well as helping highlight reasons why employees leave FIFO employment. Most of the sampled participants were unaware of support services and as such organisations need to promote greater awareness of the services they offer. It is recommended that organisations implement site management of HRM policies to help ensure that each party involved in the operation of the mine site understands their responsibilities, as line managers are generally hired to manage production and not people. This is particularly important, as this study has indicated that the psychological distress associated with FIFO employment is higher among non-heterosexual FIFO employees when compared to heterosexual employees. It is also recommended that organisations offer pre-employment support and training on expectations of FIFO employment, coping strategies that show how to practically address the demands of FIFO working and living, the types of support available and how to access them, and how to recognise symptoms relating to health problems. These should also be available as accessible HRM policies. In offering such services the organisation would be promoting support and encouraging the use of support services, thus improving effective coping and self-care. This may also help provide employees formal assistance for any distress they might be experiencing and therefore could lead to early detection of issues that can be mitigated before escalating and potentially causing more harm to the employee and employer.

The present study also illustrated the severity of negative media publicity on FIFO employment and how misrepresented statements made by a few FIFO employees should not be generalised to the wider mining population. The participants noted difficulties associated with negative local community backlash based on comments

made by the media, specifically relating to social and economic impacts FIFO working has on regional mining communities (Lambert, 2001; Storey, 2001). Additionally, the continual media coverage of accidents and suicide incidents at mine sites is, according to the sampled FIFO employees, only a small and rare percentage of occurrences. Furthermore, while the introduction of FIFO employment practices has contributed to the depopulation of small mining towns and limited investment and expenditure across some regional mining communities (Lambert, 2001), due to the media's focus on the negativities of FIFO employment, this has led to the misrepresentation of the mining industry and negative community perception regarding the FIFO lifestyle. As such, it is recommended that a regularly updated online central hub or database is established where all research pertaining to FIFO employment can be maintained, thus offering a gateway that accurately represents the mining industry and the FIFO lifestyle. Regular industry bodies such as the CMEWA, the MCA or the Australian Mines and Metals Association (AMMA) could help establish such databases. In addition, organisations and trade unions should work together to explore the most appropriate way of developing and utilising such groups, especially in relation to the workplace context, environment and culture, and establish the necessary communication channels that would allow for the views and perspectives of LGBT FIFO workers to be addressed in an efficient and effective manner, such as an online database of contact point.

8.4.3 Community

Perhaps the greatest in-direct difficulties faced by non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners was integrating the FIFO lifestyle with their local community, finding support groups that associate with non-traditional FIFO families, and adjusting to general local community member attitudes towards FIFO living. Findings showed that a lack of resources impacted individual and family well-being and in many instances FIFO families that could not access social or protective support from their local community found that they struggled more with the lifestyle and meeting job and home demands. They had higher stress levels and lower well-being than those that were part of a supportive community. Some participants described feelings of loneliness and isolation from other community members due to their community not

having a well-versed understanding of FIFO employment, and as such the participants were hesitant in reaching out for community support. Furthermore, community based activities and events are scheduled around traditional employment, thus excluding those that work non-standard hours and therefore increasing feelings of separation among families part of the FIFO lifestyle. In addition, the media's focus on reporting only negative situations relating to FIFO employment created a biased perception of FIFO families by other local community members.

It is evident that such community attitudes need to change and in order to achieve these changes, community members need to be educated and informed on the lives of FIFO families and the impact of FIFO employment. Local community organisations that arrange activities and community events should try to accommodate to those working non-standard employment and hold functions when they are present, thus more families would be likely to partake in community gatherings. This could potentially, through a wider pool of individuals participating in the community, lead to more supportive communities and improve FIFO employee and family satisfaction.

8.5 Strengths and Limitations of the Study

Common in grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006), the semi-structured interview style adopted in this study allowed participants to share their unique experiences and perspectives of the fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) lifestyle. Through the implementation of semi-structured interviews the study focused on specific issues relating to resources, job and home demands, stress, and organisational and home outcomes across all interview types while also maintaining consistency. The qualitative approach allowed for detailed and rich data to be gathered as the interview process was informal, thus lowering participant hesitation to discuss answers in greater depth. While following a pre-determined set of questions, the interview process was more of a friendly conversation between two people rather than a formal interview. However, the study was cross-sectional and therefore only examined participants at one moment in time.

The Australian mining industry consists of a vast number of different sectors, ranging from on-shore mining to off-shore oil and gas industries, with each having their own policies and practices regarding FIFO employment. The sampled group of participants

were specifically recruited from on-shore mining companies, thus generalising the findings to the wider mining population needs to be approached with caution. The study focused only on Western Australian (WA) residents and did not include those from other states or countries, and therefore generalisation of findings to the wider mining population might not be applicable. In addition, due to inaccessibility and time constraints, there were no trade union representatives interviewed. Future research looking to explore the mining industry in greater detail should aim to address the views of trade unions in order to achieve a deeper study with a greater pool of participants.

The study could also be unrepresentative as it is likely, due to self-report bias, that the most dissatisfied and distressed individuals were more willing to partake in the research and as a result potentially influenced the validity of the study, as participants could have purposefully illustrated an image that may not have been an accurate reflection of their true experiences. Additionally, the researchers own demeanour, sex, age, appearance, and reaction to answers could have impacted the interview as participants and the researcher have their own beliefs regarding FIFO employment and their expectations may differ to one another. However, all attempts, through paraphrasing answers back to participants, keeping a journal to record personal thoughts, summarising the main points of each interview, detailing notes on the interview process and maintaining an audit trail, were made to ensure that personal beliefs of the researcher were kept unbiased.

Participants were all permanent Australian residents with families residing in the south-western region of WA. As a result of focusing on a specific group of people, how generalised the findings are to regional WA employees as well as FIFO employees from other Australian states is questionable given the differences in living circumstances, environment, cultures and demographics. However, despite these limitations, all efforts were made to ensure that the qualitative methods implemented in this study were comprehensive, thus confidence could be given to the accurate portrayal of the sampled group of non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners from the on-shore WA resources sector.

8.6 Future Research

This study, using a cross-sectional design, explored the experiences of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) employment by non-traditional Western Australian (WA) FIFO employees and their partners who work and live FIFO, and how the role of resources influences job and home demands, stress, and individual and family well-being. Due to the cross-sectional approach the data gathered from participants was taken at a single moment in time and as such there is no consideration for what happened before or after that moment. Therefore, it is suggested that future studies on non-traditional or conventional FIFO families take a more longitudinal approach to research that highlights, due to the virtue of scope attributed to longitudinal studies, the cause-and-effect relationships, as researchers can observe participants over a period of time instead of a single moment. This could potentially detect any changes or developments from the sampled participants, thus establishing a refined sequence of events that extends beyond one moment in time. Due to continual growth in the adoption of FIFO employment across Australian households and the rise in non-standard work arrangements, such longitudinal research may illustrate areas of improvement in the FIFO lifestyle and lead to better support for individuals and families that work in the mining industry. Future research could highlight the impact of FIFO employment on people at a particular life stage or from a specific residential area or cultural group, thus extending our understanding of FIFO working and living. It is evident, based on the findings from this study, that further research into the experiences of non-traditional FIFO families is needed, as FIFO employment does have a clear impact on this group of individuals that is different to conventional FIFO families.

Due to the scope of this study, research was limited to FIFO employee and partner perceptions. Another group that could benefit from qualitative as well as quantitative research are the children of FIFO parents and the impact the FIFO lifestyle has on their lives. Although research on children does exist (Macbeth, Kaczmarek, & Sibbel, 2012; Sibbel, 2001), it is limited and future studies on children's perceptions of FIFO employment and the impact living in a FIFO family has on a child's life development could extend our knowledge of the FIFO lifestyle. The present study offers a glimpse into the impact of FIFO employment on children but is based solely on the opinions

of the child's parents and not the child themselves. Therefore, future research that specifically focuses on children could provide for a more in-depth understanding on how FIFO employment impacts a child's well-being and development.

This study has provided a strong foundation for future research to continue exploring and developing our understanding of FIFO working and living, specifically in relation to non-traditional FIFO employees and their partners. Future research that examines the correlation between FIFO employment and individual employee and family lives could benefit FIFO employees and their families, FIFO employers and mining organisations in general, local communities and the wider government.

8.7 Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the experiences of fly-in/fly-out (FIFO) working and living by non-traditional Western Australian (WA) FIFO employees and their partners. Using Hobfoll's (1989) Conservation of Resources (COR) theoretical framework in conjunction with the Job and Home Demands Resources (JHDR) model, the study highlighted the role of resources, such as personal, social and protective resources, in managing job and home demands, stress response and overall well-being. It also illustrated the different challenges faced by non-traditional FIFO families in comparison to conventional FIFO families, the impact a discriminative work environment has on their experiences, and the influence of local community attitudes on FIFO living. The severity of challenges was detailed and how perceptions of FIFO employment and family functioning altered based on individual and family experiences was highlighted. Even though non-traditional FIFO families faced similar challenges to conventional FIFO families, the impact of those same challenges was more severe on individuals from non-traditional backgrounds, especially for those from lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) backgrounds, as it influenced them at an individual work level, family home level, and community and government level. As a result, their satisfaction with the lifestyle was slightly lower than those from conventional FIFO backgrounds. However, the sampled participants were able to cope and manage such challenges and remained in FIFO employment as they felt the benefits, rewards and remuneration offered from FIFO employment outweighed the drawbacks and limitations that came from the FIFO lifestyle.

The rapid industrialisation of China and other Asian countries has increased the demand for mining employees, and non-standard work arrangements are becoming more common across all Australian industries. This diversity of work schedules offers different advantages and disadvantages to FIFO employees and their families depending on their life stage and personal circumstances. Since the 1980s, when Australian mining companies began to implement FIFO employment as the norm, there has been a steady increase in the number of Australian residents adopting the FIFO lifestyle. As such, there is a need for future researchers and academics to continue examining and analysing the impact FIFO employment and non-standard work arrangements have on non-traditional and conventional FIFO employees, partners and children of FIFO employees, FIFO employers, the wider mining population, general community and government.

Research has shown that FIFO working and living has become more prevalent in WA than in any other state, reaching a point where it impacts on the lives of not only the FIFO employee but also their family and children, as well as the broader local community and the state as a whole. This puts WA in a unique position to lead the charge in developing a more sustainable work system that minimises the negative impacts of FIFO working and living while maximising the benefits for employees and their families, local communities and the mining industry in general. The recommendations presented could help monitor FIFO employment and ensure the sustainability of the system moving forward.

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Appendix A: Demographic Profile of Participants

Code	Employee/ Partner	Gender	Sexual Orientation	Age	Marital Status	Parent/Non-parent	Industry	Years at Current Mine	Years in FIFO Employment
A	E	F	Lesbian	37	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	3yrs
AP	P	F	Lesbian	35	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
B	E	M	Gay	34	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	10mths	5yrs
BP	P	M	Gay	32	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
C	E	M	Heterosexual	34	Married	Parent	Mining	2yrs	5yrs
CP	P	F	Heterosexual	29	Married	Parent	Mining		
D	E	M	Heterosexual	29	Couple	Parent	Mining	2yrs	3yrs
DP	P	F	Heterosexual	25	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
E	E	M	Heterosexual	33	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	1mth	5yrs
EP	P	F	Heterosexual	30	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
F	E	F (Trans)	Two-spirited	42	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	12yrs
FP	P	F (Trans)	Bisexual	37	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
G	E	M	Bisexual	27	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	3mths	3mths
GP	P	F	Bisexual	25	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
H	E	M	Gay	39	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	3.5yrs	9yrs
HP	P	M (Trans)	Bisexual	38	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
I	E	M	Bisexual	34	Married	Parent	Mining	2yrs	9yrs
IP	P	F	Heterosexual	30	Married	Parent	Mining		
J	E	M	Heterosexual	31	Married	Non-parent	Mining	1yr	7yrs
JP	P	F	Heterosexual	28	Married	Non-parent	Mining		
K	E	M	Heterosexual	35	Married	Parent	Mining	3yrs	10yrs
KP	P	F	Heterosexual	29	Married	Parent	Mining		
L	E	M	Gay/Bisexual	51	Married	Parent	Mining	8yrs	29yrs
LP	P	F	Bisexual	47	Married	Parent	Mining		
M	E	M	Gay	26	Couple	Non-parent	Iron Ore	4mths	4mths
MP	P	F (Trans)	Bisexual	23	Couple	Non-parent	Iron Ore		
N	E	M	Heterosexual	34	Married	Parent	Mining	3yrs	9yrs
NP	P	F	Heterosexual	31	Married	Parent	Mining		
O	E	F	Lesbian	22	Single	Non-parent	Mining	10mths	10mths
OP	P (Mum)	F	Heterosexual	44	Married	Parent	Mining		
P	E	M	Heterosexual	28	Couple	Parent (not biological)	Mining	3yrs	5yrs
PP	P	F	Heterosexual	25	Couple	Parent	Mining		
Q	E	F	Lesbian	36	Couple	Parent	Mining	10mths	4yrs
QP	P	F	Lesbian	31	Couple	Parent	Mining		
R	E	F	Lesbian	29	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	9mths	4yrs
RP	P	F	Lesbian	24	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
S	E	F	Lesbian	34	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	7yrs
SP	P	F	Lesbian	29	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
T	E	M	Gay	38	Couple	Parent	Mining	3yrs	11yrs
TP	P	M	Gay	31	Couple	Parent	Mining		
U	E	F	Lesbian	29	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	7mths	3yrs
UP	P	F	Lesbian	28	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
V	E	M (Trans)	Gay	35	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	1yr	8yrs
VP	P	M	Gay	32	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
W	E	M (Trans)	Gay	29	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	5yrs
WP	P	M	Bisexual	27	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
X	E	M	Gay	30	Couple	Parent	Mining	7mths	3yrs
XP	P	M	Gay	30	Couple	Parent	Mining		
Y	E	M	Gay	41	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	5yrs	14yrs
YP	P	M	Gay	37	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
Z	E	M	Gay	39	Couple	Parent	Mining	6yrs	11yrs
ZP	P	M	Gay	37	Couple	Parent	Mining		

AA	E	M	Gay	28	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	8yrs
AAP	P	M	Gay	29	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
BB	E	M	Gay	28	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	1.5yrs	6yrs
BBP	P	M	Gay	27	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
CC	E	F	Lesbian	35	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	5yrs
CCP	P	F	Lesbian	31	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
DD	E	F	Lesbian	38	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	6yrs	13yrs
DDP	P	F	Lesbian	38	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
EE	E	M	Gay	42	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	4yrs	16yrs
EEP	P	M	Gay	37	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
FF	E	F	Lesbian	29	Couple	Non-parent	Iron Ore	3yrs	6yrs
FFP	P	F	Lesbian	27	Couple	Non-parent	Iron Ore		
GG	E	M	Gay	30	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	7yrs
GGP	P	M	Bisexual	30	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
HH	E	M	Gay	33	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	5yrs	10yrs
HHP	P	M	Gay	31	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
II	E	M	Gay	31	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	8yrs
IIP	P	M	Gay	27	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
JJ	E	F	Bisexual	36	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	4yrs	10yrs
JJP	P	M	Bisexual	43	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
KK	E	M	Heterosexual	49	Married	Parent	Mining	7yrs	21yrs
KKP	P	F	Heterosexual	44	Married	Parent	Mining		
LL	E	F	Heterosexual	36	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	8yrs
LLP	P	M	Heterosexual	40	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
MM	E	M	Bisexual	43	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	7yrs	14yrs
MMP	P	M	Bisexual	41	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
NN	E	M	Bisexual	41	Married	Non-parent	Mining	6yrs	16yrs
NNP	P	F	Bisexual	34	Married	Non-parent	Mining		

A1	E	F (Trans)	Bisexual	26	Single	Non-parent	Mining	1.3yrs	3yrs
B1	E	M	Gay	29	Couple	Non-parent	Mining	8mths	2yrs
C1	P	F (Trans)	Lesbian	24	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
D1	E	F	Heterosexual	27	Married	Parent	Mining	1yr	2yrs
E1	E	M	Bisexual	44	Married	Parent	Mining	2mths	12yrs
F1	E	M	Heterosexual	25	Single	Non-parent	Mining	1yr	1yr
G1	P	F	Bisexual	30	Married	Parent	Mining		
H1	E	M	Heterosexual	48	Single	Parent	Mining	4yrs	15yrs
I1	E	F (Trans)	Lesbian	29	Single	Non-parent	Mining	8mths	3yrs
J1	E	M	Gay	29	Single	Non-parent	Iron Ore	1.3yrs	2.8yrs
K1	P	F	Lesbian	24	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
L1	P	F	Heterosexual	25	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
M1	E	M	Heterosexual	32	Married	Parent	Mining	2yrs	4yrs
N1	E	M	Heterosexual	27	Single	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	3yrs
O1	E	M	Bisexual	28	Single	Parent	Mining	8mths	5yrs
P1	E	F	Lesbian	42	Single	Non-parent	Mining	2yrs	15yrs
Q1	E	M	Bisexual	28	Single	Non-parent	Mining	5yrs	6yrs
R1	P	M	Gay	24	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
S1	E	F	Heterosexual	37	Single	Non-parent	Mining	4yrs	9yrs
T1	P	F	Bisexual	27	Couple	Non-parent	Mining		
U1	P	F	Heterosexual	28	Married	Parent	Mining		
V1	E	M	Gay	24	Single	Non-parent	Mining	1yr	1yr

Note:
"P" after a letter represents partner of employee.
"1" after a letter represents participants that were interviewed separate from their partner or were singlehood individuals that did not have a partner.

Appendix B: Employee Interview Questions – Part 1

Gender:
Sexual orientation:
Age:
Marital status:
Parent or non-parent:
Industry type:
Position title:
Years involved with company:
Highest level of education:

1. How many years have you lived in Western Australia?

2. Have you lived in any mining towns? (List them and which do you prefer)

3. If you have a child or children, what are their age/s?

4. Who in the family is currently employed? (Self, partner, child)

5. Briefly describe your job?

   - What is your job title?
   - Do you hold a supervisory or managerial position?
   - Do you currently work for a company or divisional group?
   - Please describe your current work position and tasks.
   - What type of contract are you on?

6. Which geographical region best describes your employment location?

7. How much time (on average) does it take you to travel to your work site? (From the time you leave home until the time you arrive in your work accommodation. Travel time to and from the airport, airport waiting time, and flight time).

8. Approximately how long have you been in FIFO employment?

9. Approximately how long have you been in your current role?

   - How much do you enjoy the work you do in your current position?

10. How long do you want to continue in FIFO employment?

    - How long do you think you will continue in FIFO employment?

11. In what ways does FIFO work influence your lifestyle?

12. How do you feel about the FIFO lifestyle?

13. Is the FIFO lifestyle what you thought it would be?

14. How satisfied are you with the following:

    - Current roster
    - Socialisation in work environment (friendship, activities etc.)
    - Support services provided for non-work issues (family and personal)
    - Quality of on-site accommodation
    - Availability of communication from work site to family
    - Impact of FIFO on family members

15. What are some aspects of FIFO that you are satisfied with?

16. What are some aspects of FIFO that you are not satisfied with?

17. Describe your swing roster?

    - Have you experienced any other swings?
    - Which swing do you prefer, why?

18. Why did you take on a FIFO job?

19. Do you desire a better balance between work and personal time, why? (How do you think this can be achieved?)

20. Have you ever thought about quitting? (What made you change your mind?)

21. Do you feel your work/life demands impact you in anyway? (e.g. emotionally, physiologically or behaviourally).

22. What advice would you give to someone considering FIFO employment?

23. Is there anything else you'd like to mention about your experiences?

    - Adjusting to work or social aspects about the FIFO lifestyle
    - Emotional wellbeing as a FIFO worker (depression, anxiety, stress)
    - Accessing support as a FIFO worker (formally or informally)

Appendix B: Employee Interview Questions – Part 2

For the following please leave a comment under the bullet points of each section.

How much/to what extent do you adjust to the following factors while on roster?

- General living conditions
- Housing conditions
- Food
- Recreation/entertainment facilities
- Socialising with work colleagues
- Living away from family and friends
- Length of time spent working each day

Over the last week to month have you experienced any of the following?

- Struggled to work up initiative to do things
- Experienced trembling
- Dryness of mouth
- Difficulty breathing
- Difficulty winding down
- Tended to overreact to situations
- Had nervous energy
- Worried about situations
- Felt as if there was nothing to look forward to
- Felt agitated
- Had difficulty relaxing
- Felt blue
- Intolerant
- Unable to become enthusiastic
- Self-worth
- Touchy
- Scared without good reason
- Felt that life was meaningless

When experiencing an emotional or personal problem from whom would you typically seek help?

- Partner (girlfriend, boyfriend, husband, wife, de facto)
- Friend
- Parent
- Relative/family member
- Mental health professional (psychologist, social worker, counsellor)
- Phone helpline (Lifeline)
- Doctor/GP
- Minister or religious figure/leader
- Wouldn't seek help from anyone
- Other

How do you think these people would react to your problem?

- Positively
- Negatively
- Think bad things of you
- Think you are disturbed
- Think less of you
- Think you pose a risk to others

Appendix B: Partner Interview Questions

Gender:
Sexual orientation:
Age:
Marital status:
Parent or non-parent:
Highest level of education:

1. Please describe your current work position and tasks either at home or at work?

2. In the last year, how many months (total) have you been away from home due to work commitments? (Has this pattern been different from other years?)

3. How many years have you lived in Western Australia?

4. Have you lived in any mining towns? (List them and which do you prefer)

5. If you have a child or children, what are their age/s?

6. Who in the family is currently employed? (Self, partner, child)

7. How long have you been part of the FIFO lifestyle?

8. How long has your partner been in FIFO employment?

   - How long do you want your partner to continue in FIFO employment?

   - How long do you think your partner will continue in FIFO employment?

9. Do you prefer a longer or shorter swing roster and why?

10. How satisfied are you with the lifestyle?

    - Individual satisfaction?

    - Family satisfaction?

11. Why did you and you partner enter into FIFO employment?

    - Relationship with partner?

12. How has your daily life changed since entering into the FIFO lifestyle? (Career?)

13. Are you aware of the support services available to you and your family?

14. How is it like in the household when your partner is away compared to when they are home?

15. Is the FIFO lifestyle what you thought it would be?

16. What are some aspects of FIFO that you are satisfied with?

17. What are some aspects of FIFO that you are not satisfied with?

18. What aspects of FIFO could be changed to make it a better experience for you?

19. Do you feel your work/life demands impact you in anyway? (e.g. emotionally, physiologically, or behaviorally).

20. What advice would you give to someone considering the FIFO lifestyle?

21. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the FIFO lifestyle?

Appendix B: Key Stakeholder Interview Questions

Gender:
Sexual orientation:
Age:
Marital status:
Parent or non-parent:
Industry type:
Position title:
Years involved with company:
Highest level of education:

1. How many years have you lived in Western Australia?

2. Have you lived in any mining towns? (List them and which do you prefer)

3. Which geographical region best describes your employment location?

4. How do you feel FIFO working impacts your employees?

5. Do employees come to you if they have any concerns? (Do you feel as if some employees are hesitant to approach those higher up?)

6. What type, if any, of support services do you offer to employees and their families?

7. Are employees given time to socialise with other workers?

8. Is communication available for employees to contact family while at the work site? (Is this communication limited, equally distributed and easy to access?)

9. Do you personally think that employees desire a better balance between work and home? (Why do you think this way?)

10. How do you feel about the FIFO lifestyle? (Do you think anything needs changing?)

11. What advice would you give to someone considering FIFO employment?

12. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the FIFO lifestyle?

Appendix B: Key Stakeholder Interview Questions – LGBT Representative

Gender:
Sexual orientation:
Age:
Marital status:
Parent or non-parent:

1. How many years have you lived in Western Australia?

2. Do you feel there is any discrimination directed towards LGBT people working FIFO employment in the mining industry and why?

3. Do you think LGBT people are more, less or equally prone to discrimination in the mining industry than non-LGBT people?

4. How do you feel LGBT people are impacted by FIFO employment?

5. What do you think mining companies can do to better improve the experiences of LGBT people working FIFO employment?

6. Are there any support groups available to LGBT FIFO families?

7. Are there any other comments you would like to make about the FIFO lifestyle?

Information Sheet

This study has been approved under Curtin University's ethical review process (Approval Number HR88/2015).

Title of Study:

Our 52 Weeks: An Exploration of Non-traditional Family Structures in the Western Australian Fly-in/fly-out Minerals and Resources Industry

PhD Investigator:

Name   Mirsad Bahtic
Department   School of Management (Curtin University)
Phone   0448035704
E-mail   mbahtic@hotmail.com

Background:

You are being invited to take part in a research study that is being undertaken for my doctorate of philosophy at Curtin University under the supervision of Professor John Burgess and Dr Scott Fitzgerald (in the School of Management). Before deciding to participate in this study it is important that you understand why the research is being undertaken and what it will involve. Please take the time to read the following information carefully. If you need further information or have any questions please ask the researcher.

The purpose of this study it to examine how fly-in fly-out (FIFO) working and shift arrangements impact and influence non-traditional mining families living in Western Australia.

Study Procedure:

The procedure will involve a simple half hour interview. Questions covered will focus primarily on how you perceive FIFO working and how this impacts on your lifestyle.

Risks:

The risks of this study are minimal. These risks are similar to those you experience when disclosing work-related information to others. Your opinion is voluntary and you may choose not to answer any question or terminate your involvement at any time. It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part in this study. If you decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. You are free to not answer any question or questions if you choose. This will not affect the relationship you have with the researcher.

Benefits:

There will be no direct benefit to you from this research. However, the information obtained from this study may lead to better integration, development and/or updating workplace policies and practices in mining industries. Potentially leading to overall improvement in employee and family support and work programs where both work and home domains are addressed equally. The spill over benefit to the wider community may include improvements in the Australian economy due to increases in overall organisational productivity attributed to motivated employees experiencing a healthier balance between work and home life, thus increases in commitment will lead to higher productivity and improvements in imports and exports from the mining industry.

Confidentiality:

For the purpose of this research your name, organisational affiliation and comments will be kept anonymous. Every effort will be made by the researcher to preserve your confidentiality including the following:

- Assigning code names/numbers for participants that will be used on all researcher notes and documents.

- Any other data identifying participant information will only be accessed by the researcher. After five years of project completion the materials will be shredded and destroyed.

- The researcher will review the collected data. Information from this research will be used solely for the purpose of this study and any publications that may result from this study. Participants involved in this study will not be identified and their anonymity will be maintained in the final publication.

Participant data will be kept confidential except in cases where the researcher is legally obligated to report specific incidents. These incidents include, but may not be limited to, incidents of abuse and suicide risk.

Should you have any questions about the research or related matters please feel free to contact the researcher. If you wish to make a complaint on ethical grounds please contact the Human Research Ethics Committee (Secretary) (phone: 9266 2784 or hrec@curtin.edu.au or in writing C/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University of Technology, GPO Box U1987, Perth WA, 6845).

Appendix C: Informed Consent Form

Curtin University

Informed Consent

This study has been approved under Curtin University's process for lower-risk Studies (Approval Number HR88/2015). This process complies with the National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (Chapter 5.1.7 and Chapters 5.1.18-5.1.21). For further information on this study contact the researchers named above or the Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee. C/- Office of Research and Development, Curtin University, GPO Box U1987, Perth 6845 or by telephoning 9266 9223 or by emailing hrec@curtin.edu.au.

PhD Researcher:

Mirsad Bahtic

Title of Study:

Our 52 Weeks: An Exploration of Non-traditional Family Structures in the Western Australian Fly-in/fly-out Minerals and Resources Industry

Supervisors:

Professor John Burgess & Dr Scott Fitzgerald
Department School of Management (Curtin University)

By signing this consent form, I confirm that I have read and understood the information and have had the opportunity to ask questions. I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving a reason and without cost. Any information that might potentially identify me will not be used in published material. I voluntarily agree to participate in the study as outlined to me.

The Australian NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research, to which Curtin University adheres, covers all information and material collected from you. This statement is considered to ensure that your interests are fully protected:

- No information can be used unless you provide consent;
- Any information collected must be presented in a form that maintains your anonymity unless expressly permitted by you;
- The information will be held securely;
- The information will be disposed of after completion of the research study;

More information on the ethical code of conduct can be found at the following location:

http://www.nhmrc.gov.au/publications/synopses/e72syn.htm

Only the research student and his supervisors will have access to the collected information. Note that data will be stored securely at Curtin University for a minimum of five years. In order to facilitate data access when needed, it will be stored with the research supervisors in soft and hard copies both during and after the study is complete. Such practices also protect the legal rights of the candidate and participants.

Name   _____

Signature   _____

Date   _____

If you have any enquires or need of further information about this study please contact Mirsad Bahtic by telephone (0448035704) or email (mbahtic@hotmail.com).

Thank you for participating in this study.

Appendix C: Ethics Clearance

MEMORANDUM

 Curtin University

To:	Prof John Burgess
	School of Management
CC:	Prof John Burgess
From	Dr Karen Heslop, Deputy Chair HREC
Subject	Ethics approval
	Approval number: HR88/2015
Date	04-May-15

Office of Research and
Development
Human Research Ethics Office

TELEPHONE	9266 2784
FACSIMILE	9266 3793
EMAIL	hrec@curtin.edu.au

Thank you for your application submitted to the Human Research Ethics Office for the project: 6080

Our 52 Weeks: An Exploration of Non-traditional Family Structures in the Western Australian Fly-in/Fly-out Minerals and Resources Industry

Your application was reviewed by Human Research Ethics Committee at Curtin University at their meeting on the   14/04/2015

Thankyou for providing the additional information requested by the Human Research Ethics Committee. The information you provided was satisfactory and your proposal is now approved.

Please note the following conditions of approval:

1. Approval is granted for a period of four years from   **05-May-15**   to   **05-May-19**
2. Research must be conducted as stated in the approved protocol.
3. Any amendments to the approved protocol must be approved by the Ethics Office.
4. An annual progress report must be submitted to the Ethics Office annually, on the anniversary of approval.
5. All adverse events must be reported to the Ethics Office.
6. A completion report must be submitted to the Ethics Office on completion of the project.
7. Data must be stored in accordance with WAUSDA and Curtin University policy.
8. The Ethics Office may conduct a randomly identified audit of a proportion of research projects approved by the HREC.

Should you have any queries about the consideration of your project please contact the Ethics Support Officer for your faculty, or the Ethics Office at hrec@curtin.edu.au or on 9266 2784. All human research ethics forms and guidelines are available on the ethics website.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Karen Heslop
Deputy Chair, Human Research Ethics Committee