

Fab Abs

Recent Research Abstracts

Vol. 34 - September 2005

PART-TIME WORK

Van Ours, J.C. & Booth, A. (2005). *Does part-time work make the family happy?* Paper presented at HILDA Survey Research Conference, Melbourne, September 2005.

This paper investigates the relationship between part-time work and: satisfaction with working hours, overall job satisfaction and life satisfaction. The data used are the first three waves of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia Survey. In the analysis, the authors take into account the possibility that, for couples, the distribution of paid work may be related to the distribution of home work. Our results indicate that, conditional on observed characteristics and accounting for potential selectivity into the state of part-time work, part-time women are more satisfied with their hours of work than full-time women. For men there is no such relationship. However, life satisfaction is not influenced by working part-time or full-time for either men or women. Thus while the choice of part-time work would seem to be in line with the preferences of partnered women, it does not make them any happier.

Warren, T. (2004). Working part-time: Achieving a successful work-life balance? *British Journal of Sociology*, 55(1), 99-122.

The role of part-time employment in the balancing of women's employment and family lives has generated an immense literature. Using data on women working part-time and full-time in different level occupations in the British Household Panel Survey, this paper argues that it is now vital to move these balancing debates on from their location within work-family rhetoric and to re-position the study of women's working time in broader work-life discussions. Examining the financial situations and the leisure lives of female part-timers in lower level jobs reveals a less positive picture of their 'life balancing' than is portrayed in much work-family literature. Instead, they emerged as the least financially secure employees and, linked to this, less satisfied with their social lives too. It is important, therefore, to move beyond the work-life argument in relation to part-time employment and examine how all life domains interrelate with each other. In this way, we would be in a better position to begin to assess all the benefits and disadvantages associated with working part-time.

Morgan, L. (2005). *Quality part-time work: 'It shouldn't be so hard!'* Paper presented at Ninth Australian Institute of Family Studies (AIFS) Conference, Melbourne, February 2005.

Part-time work is one of the most frequently used flexible work arrangements in Australia to support work family balance. However not all of these part-time work arrangements offer 'quality' work. Many such arrangements are casual, with unpredictable hours. Even those who work on a permanent basis may have little or no access to promotion or training, and moving between part-time and full-time work may be difficult. Drawing on data analysis, a literature search and consultation with employer and employee organisations, the Quality Part-Time Work project investigates the characteristics and barriers to the creation of 'quality' part-time work in different sectors. It aims to provide information and guidance to employers on the creation of better quality part-time work, through the development of case studies and best practice guidelines. (Author abstract)