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Recent Research Abstracts

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WORK LIFE BALANCE

Whitehouse, G. (2002) Parenthood and pay in Australia and the UK: evidence from workplace surveys. *Journal of Sociology*, 38 (4), 381-397, Dec 2002.

This article addresses the effect of parenthood on pay, examining potential reasons for differences between Australia and the UK that are evident in spite of their similarly minimalist, male breadwinner style approaches to work/family issues. Although cross-national differences reflect complex intersections of policy combinations, institutional frameworks, patterns of employment and gender contracts that cannot be assessed in a single analysis, the data used in this analysis uncover some of the factors that contribute to different outcomes. Motherhood penalties in the UK appear to be associated primarily with the comparatively low level of part-time earnings in that country, while higher premiums to fatherhood at least in part reflect a wider overall wage distribution. These findings reinforce the need to interpret earnings effects of parenthood within the context of national patterns of employment and wage distribution, and highlight the breadth of strategies needed to deliver more equitable outcomes.

Evans, M.D.R. & Kelley, J. (2002) Changes in public attitudes to maternal employment: Australia 1984-2001. *People and Place*, 10 (1), 42-56.

This paper investigates continuity and change in public attitudes towards paid work for mothers of young children between 1984 and 2002, using the wide range of measures on this topic available in the International Social Science Surveys of 6 large representative national samples of Australia. The results confirm earlier research suggesting that most Australians are generally supportive of female employment, but that most think full-time homemaking is better when there are preschoolers at home. Only around 1/3 of Australians feel confident that young children would not suffer as a result of maternal employment, and only about 1/5 think that full-time maternal employment does not make childrearing difficult. The authors probe more deeply into the reasons for people's concern and find that the most widespread concern is that maternal employment impairs mothers' teaching activities, but that there is also concern about the likelihood of emotional deprivation and concern that employment erodes the level of energy needed for good discipline. Attitudes toward maternal employment have remained broadly stable over almost 2 decades with, on many issues, a modest shift toward more supportive views of 4-8% per decade.

Hand, K. & Lewis, V. (2002) Fathers' views on family life and paid work. *Family Matters*, 61, 26-29, Autumn 2002.

Do working fathers think they have enough time to spend with their children? In 2001, The Australian Institute of Family Studies conducted research commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services which comprised interviewed with 47 Melbourne families about work and family life. As part of this Family and Work: The Family's Perspective project, the Talking to Fathers study explores the responses of 27 fathers from a variety of family types, occupations and income levels. This article focuses on fathers' response about whether they felt that they spent enough time with their children, the way they life to spend time with their children, and how they seek to balance work and family responsibilities.