

# The Costs and Benefits of Flexible Employment for Working Mothers and Fathers

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Date

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## List of Acronyms

Australian Bureau of Statistics	ABS
Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training	ACIRRT
Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification	ANZSIC
Australian Standard Classification of Occupations	ASCO
Department of Family and Community Services	FaCS
Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia survey	HILDA
Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development	OECD
Personal Questionnaire	PQ
Self-completed Questionnaire	SCQ

## **Abstract**

According to many researchers, the growth of flexible employment, or non-standard working arrangements has been driven by changing employer demands and recent government policies. These accounts emphasise the negative consequences of such changes for individual employees. In contrast, other researchers argue that the increasing prevalence of flexible employment stems from changes in labour supply and that such changes provide employees with real benefits. In this thesis, I explore the costs and benefits of flexible employment and test whether experiences vary by gender. Perceptions of work-family balance are used to gauge the positive effects of flexible employment, while perceptions of job insecurity are used to explore the negative implications. Employment flexibility is indicated by employment status, contract and type of work schedules. Analysis is based on 2313 employed parents from the first wave of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics on Australia (HILDA) project. Results show that few scheduling measures are significant determinants of work-family balance or of job insecurity. However, part-time employment is associated with improved work-family balance for both men and women and does not incur the cost of compromised job security. Casual employment, in contrast, incurs the cost of heightened job insecurity and, for men, poorer work-family balance. Ultimately, not all flexible employment necessarily entails the cost of high job insecurity and particular forms of employment can provide working parents with greater flexibility to balance paid work with family obligations.

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## **Chapter 1 - Introduction**

Across the last four decades, the Australian labour market has changed quite profoundly as employment practices and conditions have diversified and women, particularly married women with children, have increased their workforce participation (Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), 2003b; Office for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), 2003; Watson et al., 2003: 6). Like other industrial nations (Kalleberg, 2000: 342; Rosenfeld, 2001: 121-122), Australia has seen the development of a more flexible workforce. There is no single, precise definition of flexible employment as both employers and employees seek greater flexibility, though not for identical reasons (Glass and Estes, 1997: 307; Rosenfeld, 2001: 118). For employers, flexibility represents the ability to rapidly respond to changing market conditions, with labour activity closely matched to production and service demands (Tam, 1997: 23); whereas for employees flexibility signifies work practices that are accommodating to personal or household commitments (Rosenfeld, 2001: 109). Employment practices that potentially provide greater flexibility to both employers and employees include: temporary work, fixed-term employment, part-time work, shiftwork, home work, flexible scheduling, compressed work weeks, job sharing, flexible leave and multi-skilling (Baxter, 1998; Christensen and Staines, 1990: 455; Glass and Estes, 1997: 298; Kalleberg, 2000; Remery et al., 2002; Rosenfeld, 2001; Russell and Bowman, 2000). Given the breadth and diversity of conditions encompassed by the term flexibility, this thesis will concentrate on a subset of



the more prominent indicators of flexibility; first, flexible employment contracts (casual and fixed-term) and second, flexible scheduling practices, including part-time employment, shiftwork, weekend work and irregular rostering. The aim of this thesis is to consider the costs and benefits of flexible employment from the viewpoint of employees by investigating their perceptions of both the positive and negative consequences of flexible employment. Parents' perceptions of work-family balance in their jobs is utilised to explore the positive effects of flexible employment, while perceptions of job insecurity is used to consider the negative effects.

In the remainder of this section I will outline the two main theoretical approaches that have been applied to account for the increasing prevalence of flexible employment and detail how these different approaches depict the consequences of labour market change for individual employees.

### **The causes and consequences of flexible employment: Employer demand and labour supply**

The increasing prevalence of flexible working practices is frequently attributed to employer demands for a flexible workforce that will more efficiently match peaks and troughs in production and customer activity (Baxter, 1998: 277; Boreham, 1991: 91; Campbell, 2000: 75; Purcell, 1999: 120; Smith et al., 1998: 45; Watson et al., 2003: 69). Flexible employment is attractive to employers because labour costs can be lowered and, in many cases, employee benefits curtailed (Australian Centre for Industrial Relations Research and Training (ACIRRT), 1999: 4; Carre and Tilly, 1998: 1-2; Glass

and Estes, 1997: 307-308; Pocock, 2003: 164). While the growth of flexible employment can partly be attributed to the expansion of specific industries which historically have had a high density of part-time, casual and rostered employment (Baxter, 1998: 277; Smith and Ewer, 1999: 14), there is also convincing evidence that changing employer demands across all industries and occupations has driven the growth of flexible employment (Burgess and Strachan, 1999:125; Campbell, 2000: 73; Casey et al., 1997: 149; Hakim, 2000: 69; Smith et al., 1998: 43; Tilly, 1996: 6). Businesses' pursuit of greater flexibility, according to many accounts, has also been facilitated by the state's adoption of neoliberal economic policies, such as labour market deregulation, the decentralisation of industrial relations negotiations and the weakening of trade unions (ACIRRT, 1999; Peck, 1996).

Many social scientists, such as Pusey (2003), Pocock (2003) and ACIRRT (1999), who argue that changing employer demands and government policies have been the primary cause of recent labour market change, go on to portray part-time and casual employment as, in essence, secondary or peripheral employment offering substantially inferior rewards and conditions compared to permanent, full-time employment within the core labour market (Crompton, 2002: 555; Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998: 13; Rosenfeld, 2001: 108; Tam, 1997: 26). In these pessimistic accounts, employees are compelled to accept non-standard employment in secondary or peripheral positions because opportunities for good quality standard employment have deteriorated (ACIRRT, 1999; Pusey et al., 2003: 75).

Empirical research supporting the claim that flexible work constitutes a peripheral type of employment is frequently taken from surveys demonstrating the poorer objective working conditions of these employees (ACIRRT, 1999; Kalleberg et al., 2000), alongside quantitative and qualitative reports of employees' dissatisfaction with non-standard types of work (Pocock, 2003; Pusey et al., 2003).

Part-time employment, taken to be one to thirty-five hours of paid work per week, has consistently been found to offer poorer working conditions than full-time employment, such as reduced opportunities for promotion and vocational training, limited workplace autonomy and a higher likelihood of confinement to lower occupational grades, even after controlling for education (ABS, 1998: 3; Baxter, 1998: 278; Glass and Camarigg, 1992: 132; Harley and Whitehouse, 2001; Tam, 1997:129-131). Qualitative research with part-time women confirms that many part-timers are conscious of their marginalisation (Crozier-Durham, 1995: 15; Junor, 1998: 84), though comparative data regarding the experiences of part-time men is lacking. Debate continues as to whether part-timers receive relatively lower remuneration than full-timers, though undoubtedly interpretations depend upon how the comparison is constructed. A general association between part-time employment and low pay can be confounded by the tendency of part-time employment to be casual and to be concentrated in poorly remunerated occupations and industries (Baxter, 1998).

Irregular or non-standard work scheduling has also been found to have a detrimental effect on individuals' private lives (Walker, 1996), including work-family balance (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001: 1180). Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS, 2000a: 27) data show that whilst most shift workers are satisfied with their current work arrangement, one quarter to a third would rather a set number of days per week. However, it is increasingly acknowledged that shiftwork or irregular scheduling may not necessarily have a negative effect on workers lives, particularly when people voluntarily engage in such practices (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001; Walker, 1996).

Casual employees are, by definition, denied standard employment benefits and conditions, such as paid holiday and sick leave, parental leave and protection from termination and redundancy (Smith and Ewer, 1999). Given this legal standing, it is hardly surprising that casual employment is so often described as a secondary form of employment. While no consensus has been reached regarding the relative remuneration of casual workers, many social scientists remain sceptical of economists' claims that workers are attracted to casual work because of the pay loading attached to this type of contract. For instance, Campbell (2000: 73), Probert (2003: 164) and Smith and Ewer (1999: 35, 41), all contend that casual workers are poorly remunerated because the pay loading received in lieu of standard work entitlements does not accurately compensate for foregone benefits.

While the expansion of casual employment within the Australian labour market has stimulated much empirical research, fixed-term employment, defined as employment for a specified period or until completion of an explicit assignment, has remained a neglected subject (Watson et al., 2003: 66). To date, most Australian surveys have not classified fixed-term employment as a separate type of contract (Watson et al., 2003: 66; Wooden and Warren, 2004). The limited published research speculates that the working conditions of fixed-term employees are superior to casuals because fixed-term employees often have access to paid sick and holiday leave and have better prospects for career progression (Booth et al., 2002; Wooden and Warren, 2004). With respect to subjective outcomes, Wooden and Warren (2004) have recently reported that fixed-term employees, controlling for a number of work and demographic characteristics, are more satisfied with their work than permanent and casual employees. However, the superior working conditions of fixed-term employment may be connected to the concentration of this type of work contract within the public sector and highly skilled occupations (Watson et al., 2003: 67; Wooden and Warren, 2004). On the other hand, fixed-term employees are not employed continuously, thereby causing these workers to be more vulnerable to periods of unemployment (Watson et al., 2003).

More generally, it has been claimed that any type of flexible employment increases employees' vulnerability to job loss, compared to standard full-time employment (Beck, 2000: 89; Carre and Tilly, 1998: 4; Pusey et al., 2003: 80-81; Watson et al., 2003: 62). These arguments stem

from theories of labour market segmentation, which suggest that workers with peripheral positions of employment are more vulnerable to job loss than core employees because employers hire flexible staff on the understanding that they will be utilised only when they are needed to fulfil market demands (Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998: 9; Naswall and De Witte, 2003: 195; Tam, 1997: 106). A recent Australian survey confirms that casual employees experience greater job insecurity than permanent employees (ACIRRT, 1999: 153). In turn, it is argued that part-time employment is highly insecure because it is often offered on a casual basis (Pocock, 2003). Yet it is not clear whether part-time employment as a whole is associated with greater job insecurity (Junor, 1998: 77). British research has shown that part-timers feel no more insecure and are no more likely to lose their jobs than full-timers (Tam, 1997: 107). It seems likely that part-timers who are employed under a casual contract experience higher levels of job insecurity compared to permanent part-time employees, who have greater legal protection from instant dismissal (Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998: 9; Junor, 1998: 77; Purcell, 1999: 118). This hypothesis has not yet been explicitly tested using Australian survey data. Similarly, there has been no empirical research investigating the effects of non-standard work schedules - schedules that involve weekend work, evening work or varying days or shifts - on employees' perceptions of job insecurity. It could be expected that employees who work varying days or shifts may experience greater job insecurity because their labour activity is strongly conditional on market conditions.

The characterisation of all flexible employment as marginalised work in the secondary labour market has been challenged on many fronts, particularly by researchers with supply-side arguments about the preference of workers for part-time employment (Blossfeld, 1997: 323; Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998: 10; Hakim, 1997; Negrey, 1993: 19; Tam, 1997: 243; Tilly, 1996: 63; Watson et al., 2003: 49). It has been suggested that even if these new working arrangements serve employers' desire for improved efficiency, these types of work can also benefit employees with commitments outside paid work, such as the care of family members or education (Glass and Estes, 1997: 309; Rosenfeld, 2001: 109). For instance, while shiftwork is generally associated with poorer working conditions, employees may voluntarily seek unusual work schedules as a household strategy to reduce the outsourcing of childcare (Fagan, 2001: 1206; Fenwick and Tausig, 2001: 1180).

Moreover, critics of the demand thesis contend that supply-side mechanisms, particularly married women's rising participation in paid work, have contributed to the growth of flexible work, especially part-time employment and flexible scheduling (Blossfeld, 1997: 316; Campbell, 2000: 76-77; Hakim, 2000: 69; Tausig and Fenwick, 2001: 102). From this perspective, the sexual division of labour in the home, whereby women take responsibility for domestic work and childcare, has resulted in women deliberately seeking flexible types of employment (Crompton, 2002; Glass and Estes, 1997). Empirical support for the supply-side thesis is often based on quantitative and qualitative reports demonstrating that most women who

work part-time do so 'voluntarily' and that women who work part-time are more satisfied than full-time women with their work flexibility, their working hours and paid employment as a whole (Hakim, 1997: 35; Negrey, 1993: 114; Rosenfeld, 2001: 110; Tam, 1997: 197; Walsh, 1999; Wolcott and Glezer, 1995: 47, 90).

Classic economic theory argues that employers will offer flexible conditions to employees in tight labour markets where there is intense competition for employees (Glass and Estes, 1997: 385; Gray and Tudball, 2002: 8). In this context, part-time employment and flexible scheduling may be offered to a firms' core employees - those that are well trained or highly qualified - as means to attract and retain skilled staff (Junor, 1998: 87; Lewis, 1997: 14; Rosenfeld, 2001: 117; Smith et al., 1998: 67; Tilly, 1996: 8). Surveys have shown that employers do offer family-friendly work provisions as a means of recruiting and retaining valuable staff (Glass and Estes, 1997: 298; Williams, 2000: 85). Yet theoretically, even across lower occupation grades, flexible employment may be offered in highly feminised industries if employees are unable to recruit women who are prepared to work full-time (Casey et al., 1997: 116).

Labour supply accounts imply that the growth of flexible employment is a positive development because the contemporary labour market is now more responsive to the diverse working preferences of contemporary employees (Hakim, 1997; Rosenfeld, 2001: 108). From this perspective, pessimistic interpretations of the effects of flexible work are criticised for ignoring the real opportunities that such employment can provide, especially to women who



work part-time and who would otherwise leave the labour force entirely (Hakim, 1997; Watson et al., 2003: 49). In turn, it is believed that flexible employment has helped improve gender equity by facilitating the movement of women into the public sphere (Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998: 23; Watson et al., 2003: 49).

Although supply-side arguments provide a counterbalance to accounts emphasising changing employer demands, they suffer from a tendency to gloss over the detrimental effects of flexible employment. Qualitative research reveals that many women remain dissatisfied with the work options that are currently available and feel that they do not have access to the type of work flexibility that they really desire, such as the power to alter working days or shifts at short notice (Pocock, 2001; Smith and Ewer, 1999). On the other hand, women who are required to work irregular schedules report substantial difficulty arranging childcare and would prefer more predictable working hours and days (Junor, 1998: 83-84; Pocock, 2001: 89; Smith and Ewer, 1999: 75). Strong evidence that employees actually prefer casual rather than permanent employment is also lacking. Women accept casual work because it is part-time, not because the work is casual per se, and would actually prefer a permanent contract (Junor, 1998: 77; Pocock, 2001: 118; Smith and Ewer, 1999: 72-73).

Advocates of the labour supply thesis also ignore how patterns of men's and women's participation in flexible employment actually reinforce gender inequality, as by engaging in part-time employment women are conforming to expectations that they will take responsibility for unpaid work in

the private sphere. Finally, the increasing prevalence of flexible employment, according to the labour supply thesis, is attributed to the changing behaviour of women and young people, and thus, cannot provide a convincing explanation as to why prime-age men are also progressively participating in non-standard work (Campbell, 2000). For example, while women are still far more likely than men to be employed under a casual contract, the growth of casual employment between 1988 and 1998 has been attributed to the increasing prevalence of casual employment among men (ABS, 1999).

Negrey (1993) and Tilly (1996), however, have combined the supply and demand accounts of part-time employment, concluding that two qualitatively different types of part-time work are utilised by employers – 'good' or 'retention' part-time employment, which is characterised by access to fringe benefits, high remuneration and security of tenure, and 'bad' or 'secondary' part-time employment, which provides poor conditions, no benefits, low remuneration and high insecurity. Occupational status and education often distinguishes good part-time employment from the bad. While it has also been observed that casual employment is quite heterogeneous (Campbell, 2000: 72; Smith and Ewer, 1999: v, 23-24, 49), there is little evidence of 'good' casual employment in Australia.

Across the literature as a whole, most remain sceptical of the capacity of flexible employment to meet both employers and employees desires simultaneously and argue that flexible employment practices largely meet employer rather than employee needs (ACIRRT, 1999: 122; Carre and Tilly, 1998: 1; Glass and Estes, 1997: 309; Junor, 1998: 80; Pocock, 2001: 88;

Pusey et al., 2003: 65; Rosenfeld, 2001: 128; Tausig and Fenwick, 2001: 102). However, some employees, albeit a small proportion, do have access to good quality flexible employment, such that it is erroneous to classify all flexible employment as marginal. Overall, there tends to be a pattern whereby social scientists who present a negative view of flexible employment, from the viewpoint of employees, attribute this state of affairs to changing employer demands and recent economic policies of the state. On the other hand, those who contend that flexible employment provides employees with real benefits perceive that the increasing prevalence of flexible employment stems from changes in labour supply, that is from employees with new preferences for flexible, non-standard arrangements.

### **Research aims**

In this thesis, I aim to contribute to debates regarding the costs and benefits of flexible employment by examining both the positive and negative effects of flexible employment from the perspective of employees with children. To explore the positive implications of flexible employment I will examine experiences of work-family balance, while I will use perceptions of job insecurity to explore the negative costs. I focus on employees with children because the literature exploring the positive and negative consequences of flexibility often assumes that an important dimension to these work arrangements is the effect they have on workers' ability to combine paid work and childrearing. While these two indicators of job quality - job insecurity and work-family balance - are not exhaustive, they are prominent within the fields

of the sociology of work, labour economics and human resource management. My analysis is informed by two basic hypotheses about the relationship between flexible employment and work-family balance and job insecurity, as well as two secondary hypotheses regarding gender differences in parents' perceptions of flexible work. For the first three hypotheses there are plausible theoretical arguments providing both support and contradiction. My analysis provides empirical ground for adjudication. For the fourth hypothesis, theory and prior research tends to provide strong supporting evidence.

As noted earlier, a prominent cost incurred by flexible employment is increased subjective job insecurity, defined as “the worry that a person feels about the future of his or her employment situation” due to firm and market activities beyond the control of individual employees (Heery and Salmon, 1999: 2; Naswall and De Witte, 2003: 191). Following the thesis that flexible employment is a secondary or peripheral type of employment, I hypothesise that:

**1. Employees with flexible employment will experience greater insecurity regarding the future of their job.**

This hypothesis follows particularly from demand side depictions of flexible employment as contingent work that responds directly to market conditions.

On the other hand, some recent theorists have argued that perceptions of insecurity are becoming endemic across the entire labour force, rather than confined to those workers who are engaged in non-standard work (Burchell, 2002: 68; Heery and Salmon, 1999: 4-5; Pusey et al., 2003: 68). For

instance, Hudson (2002: 41) argues British employers can now fire a permanent employee with as much ease as a temporary worker, meaning that any employee is vulnerable to job loss. Moreover, the effects of job loss, including unemployment, wage cuts and downward occupation mobility, have become high for all employees and consequently all workers, regardless of their type of employment, now acutely fear job loss (Felstead et al., 1998: 181; Heery and Salmon, 1999: 3, 14). However, recent surveys show that most people still report that they do not feel particularly insecure about the future of their jobs (Manski and Straub, 2000; Pusey et al., 2003: 56; Tam, 1997: 107).

As a counterbalance to the analysis of costs, I shall explore how parents' experiences of work-family balance are benefited by flexible working arrangements. Given labour supply arguments that employees voluntarily seek flexible types of employment to improve work-family balance, I hypothesise that:

**2. Employees with flexible employment will experience less work-to-family strain.**

On the other hand, following from the employer demand thesis - that flexible employment is imposed on reluctant employees - it may be that flexible employment has no effect on work-family balance, or indeed may have a detrimental effect. Examining the impact of flexible employment on work-family strain allows me to adjudicate between these two positions.

## **Gendered orientations to work and the experience of flexible employment**

Although the prevalence of part-time or casual employment is growing among men, patterns of flexible employment remain highly gendered, with women over-represented in part-time and casual employment (Campbell, 2000: 90). These patterns of employment are structured by the traditional sexual division of labour, whereby women are expected to take responsibility for domestic chores and childcare while men fulfil the role of financial provider (Crompton and Harris, 1998; Glass and Camarigg, 1992: 132). Given that women are overrepresented in many types of flexible employment, it could be expected that women have more negative experiences of job insecurity than men. Gender, however, does not just structure men's and women's locations in the workforce; gender can also affect experiences of paid work. Catherine Hakim (2000: 158) controversially argues that most working women are not career oriented but rather are adaptive, being simultaneously committed to the traditional role of women as the main family carer as well as the role of paid worker. In contrast, most men are career-oriented and, as such, invest heavily in paid employment and identify as a primary income earner rather than the family carer (Hakim, 2000; Probert and Macdonald, 1996: 19). Critics of Hakim argue that women are not inherently less work-orientated, but rather gender discrimination in the workplace causes women to lower their expectations of and commitment to paid work (Crompton and Harris, 1998; Tam, 1997: 176). Regardless of the causes of gendered work-orientations, if the prioritisation of work *vis a vis* family is gendered, it follows that the

relationship between flexible employment and an individual's experiences of work will vary by gender. Thus, my third hypothesis is:

**3. Controlling for flexible employment practices, men will be more susceptible to feelings of insecurity because they are more work-orientated than women.**

To date research has not provided conclusive evidence in support or contradiction of this hypothesis, although some researchers have reported that women feel significantly less insecure than men (Borland, 2001: 156-157; Manski and Straub, 2000; Naswall and De Witte, 2003; Nolan, 2002: 118; Saunders, 2002:100-102; Tam, 1997).

Against hypothesis three, recent theorists, such as Beck-Gernsheim (2002), argue that traditional gender identities are no longer 'taken-for-granted' as individuals now actively construct their own identity without the influence of traditional norms and expectations. If this is the case, then work orientations and, in turn, experiences of paid work may no longer vary by gender. However, it is clear that gender still structures the sexual division of labour in the home (Baxter, 2002), as well as participation in paid employment (Pocock, 2003). In addition, feminists often dispute claims that women are more weakly attached to the workforce than men. Nickie Charles and Emma James (2003), using interview data, argue that not all men are work-orientated and that work-orientations are not gendered. More studies are needed to confirm this thesis, for other qualitative researchers have demonstrated that while both men and women value paid employment, women give greater priority to their family rather than their career, while the

reverse is observed among men (Lewis, 2001: 152; Probert and Macdonald, 1996).

The sexual division of labour in the home is also likely to affect the relationship between flexible employment and experiences of work-family balance. My final hypothesis, which has previously been confirmed by a number of researchers (Eagle et al., 1998: 690-691; Fenwick and Tausig, 2001: 1182; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000: 4, 34; Marshall and Barnett, 1993: 64, 73), is that:

**4. Women will be more susceptible to feelings of poor work-family balance, controlling for participation in flexible employment, because their role as a primary carer conflicts with the demands of paid employment.**

The next chapter of my thesis will outline the methods I have used to explore these four hypotheses, including the data source, the construction of variables and the analytic strategy. I will then present the results in Chapter 3, followed by a discussion of the findings in Chapter 4.



## **Chapter 2 - Methodology**

I investigate the hypotheses described in the previous chapter by analysing national data on relationships between flexible employment and employees' perceptions of job insecurity and work-to-family strain. I begin this chapter by describing the data source employed for my analysis and then move on to outline the characteristics of the sample. In the third section I explain the construction of all measures used in the multivariate analysis and present summary statistics for the central dependent and independent variables. I conclude the chapter with an outline of the analytic strategy used in the thesis.

### **Data source**

Data for this analysis came from the first wave of the Household, Income and Labour Dynamics on Australia (HILDA) project, a national household panel survey conducted on behalf of the Australian Department of Family and Community Services (FaCS). The reference population for this project was all members of private dwellings in Australia, excluding those living in remote and sparsely populated areas (Watson and Wooden, 2002b). Selection of households was by a multi-stage cluster sample, described in detail by Watson and Wooden (2002b). Fieldwork for the HILDA project was carried out between August and December 2001. The household response rate was 66%, with 7,682 participating households in total (Watson and Warren, 2002).

There are a number of advantages in using HILDA data to examine labour market experiences. First, the sampling design allows for statistical inference across the whole Australian population. The generalisability of previous Australian research investigating perceptions of job insecurity, and to a lesser extent work-family balance, has been limited because either sample selection has been non-random or the collection of data has been confined to a particular case study (eg ACIRRT, 1999; Nolan, 2002; Pusey et al., 2003). Second, the sample size allows for the statistical control of many potentially important independent variables, even on a subsample of employed parents. Third, data obtained through HILDA is of particularly high quality, with comparatively low levels of item non-response (Watson and Wooden, 2002a).

### **Sample**

HILDA employed multiple survey instruments to obtain both household and individual level data. Measures for this analysis are taken from the two surveys that obtained individual level data. The Personal Questionnaire (PQ), administered through face-to-face interview, elicited data regarding employment situation, education and general demographics, whereas the Self-Completed Questionnaire (SCQ) asked questions regarding personal attitudes, beliefs and experiences.

Persons aged 15 years or over, who lived in an eligible household, were approached to participate in the two surveys. Personal information was obtained from all eligible household members in 88.2% of participating households (Watson and Warren, 2002). In total, 13,969 individuals were interviewed, with 94% (13,159) also returning the SCQ (Watson and Warren, 2002). Respondents who did not return the SCQ are excluded from this analysis due to missing data on key variables.

Conclusions from the analysis are intended to reflect the experiences of Australian parents or guardians. My analysis is restricted to a sample of employees between the ages of 18 and 65 with parental responsibilities for a child aged 17 years or younger. Persons with parental responsibilities are defined as those with a biological child, either living within or outside the respondent's household, and persons with a step or foster child usually residing within their household. This definition of parental responsibility is guided by the HILDA design, which uses these criteria to identify respondents for questions regarding parental experiences. One hundred and twenty-six parents in my sample have a biological child aged 17 years or younger not usually living in their own residence. Of the remaining 2187 parents/guardians with a dependent child in the household, 15 have responsibility for a foster or step child(ren) only, 2105 have responsibility for a biological child(ren) only and 67 have responsibility for both biological and step/foster children.

The total sample size is therefore 2313, of which 51% are male. One hundred and twenty-four respondents meeting the criteria for inclusion in the sample are excluded from all analysis due to missing data on one or more key variables.

## **Variable Construction**

### *Dependent Variables*

The two main dependent variables used in this thesis are experiences of work-to-family strain and perceptions of job insecurity. The HILDA survey includes multiple questions to measure both concepts, all taken from past survey research (Freiden et al., 2002). The **job insecurity** scale is composed from five questions. Three of these questions are elicited using a Likert type scale ranging from one to seven, with 1 being 'strongly disagree' and 7 being 'strongly agree'. These questions are:

- a. I have a secure future in my job (reverse coded)
- b. The company I work for will still be in business 5 years from now (reverse coded)
- c. I worry about the future of my job

The remaining two items are:

- d. What do you think is the per cent chance that you will lose your job during the next 12 months? (scored between 0 and 100)
- e. How satisfied or dissatisfied are you with your job security (0 to 10 point response scale with a higher number indicating greater satisfaction. This item was also reverse coded).

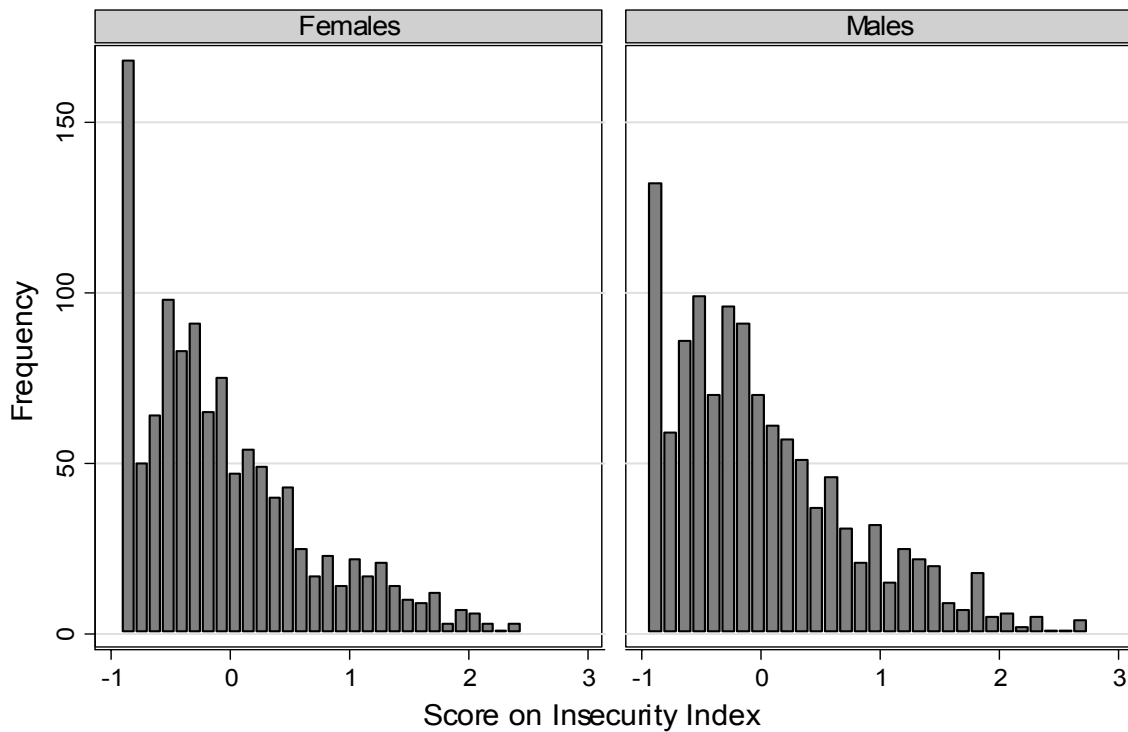
These items are all taken from previous labour market research (Freiden et al., 2002; Manski and Straub, 2000) and display satisfactory face validity.

Responses to the five questions are standardised to a mean of zero and standard deviation of one to give a common metric (De Vaus, 2002). Index scores are calculated by computing the mean of the five standardised items. This scoring implies that respondents who consistently score above the mean on individual items will have positive scores on the index. Respondents missing on one question (n=16) are assigned a scale score based on their remaining four valid responses. Scores on the job insecurity scale range from -0.94 to 2.75, with a higher score representing subjectively greater job insecurity. This index has a Cronbach's Alpha statistic<sup>1</sup> of 0.83 for working fathers and item correlation coefficients above 0.3. For working mothers, the Alpha statistic is 0.77, yet three of the ten correlation coefficients fall below 0.3. Low correlations between some question items may mean subjective job insecurity has a number of dimensions that are not experienced uniformly by working mothers (De Vaus, 2002).

The distribution of responses on the job insecurity scale is skewed to the right, with comparatively few respondents feeling particularly insecure (Figure 2.1). Previous research has also observed a right skew in the distribution (Manski and Straub, 2000). I do not attempt to normalise the distribution, as the Central Limit Theorem ensures that parameter estimates for linear regression will remain consistent and unbiased even with a skewed population distribution (Wooldridge, 2003:171).

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<sup>1</sup> All Cronbach's Alpha statistics are calculated using casewise deletion.



Data Source: HILDA Wave 1

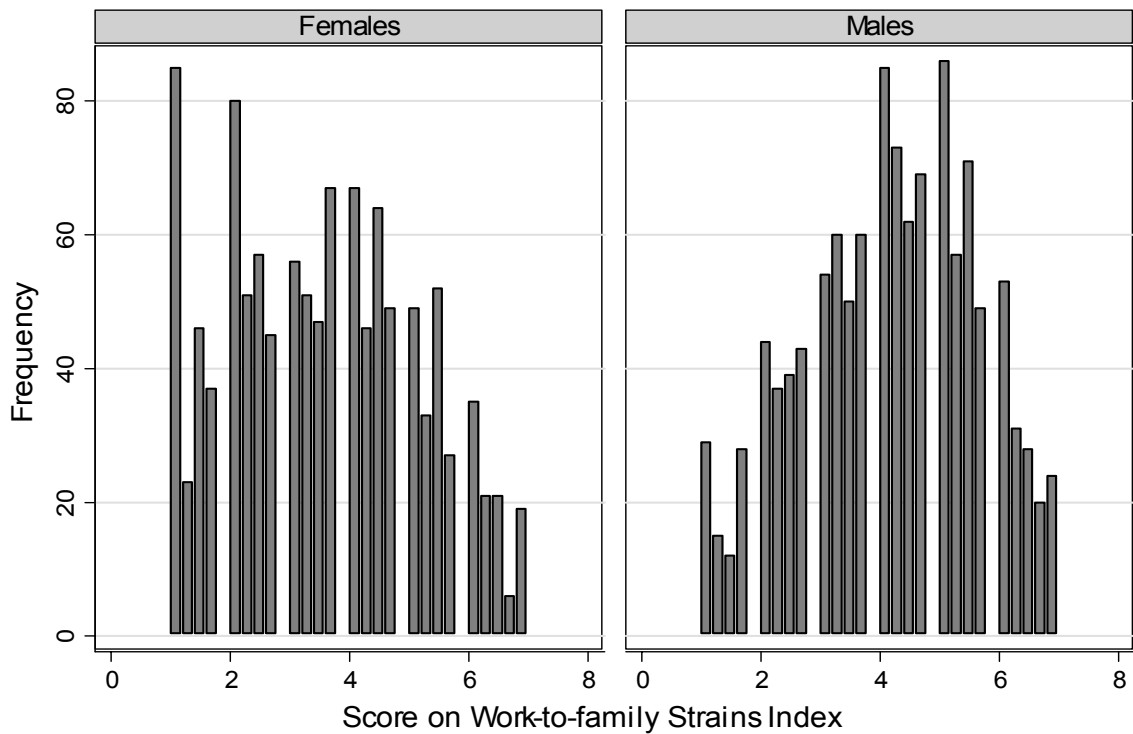
Figure 2.1: Distribution of Perceptions of Job Insecurity Index Scores for Working Mothers and Fathers

The second dependent variable, perceptions of **work-to-family strain**, is developed from the following four SCQ questions:

- a. Because of the requirements of my job, I miss out on home or family activities than I would prefer to participate in;
- b. Because of the requirements of my job, my family time is less enjoyable and more pressured;
- c. Working leaves me too little time or energy to be the kind of parent I want to be; and
- d. Working causes me to miss out on some of the rewarding aspects of being a parent.

Again, these items have been employed in similar research (Freiden et al., 2002; Marshall and Barnett, 1993), and have high face validity. All questions are Likert type items, with a strongly agree to strongly disagree response scale ranging from one to seven. The index is constructed by computing the

mean of the four responses. Again, those respondents missing on one item (n=10) are assigned a scale score based on their remaining three valid responses. The work-to-family strains scale ranges from one to seven, with a higher score indicating feelings of greater strain. Cronbach's Alpha statistic for the work-to-family strains index is 0.85 for women and 0.82 for men. The distribution of responses on the work-to-family strains scale is roughly normal for men and slightly skewed to the right for women (Figure 2.2).



Data Source: HILDA Wave 1

Figure 2.2: Distribution of Experiences of Work-to-family Strain Index Scores for Working Mothers and Fathers

### *Key Independent Variables*

In my analysis I use four separate measures of employment flexibility: employment status, employment contract, weekly work scheduling and daily hours scheduling.

#### Employment status

Employment status is based on the ABS definition, which classifies full-time employees as those working a minimum of 35 hours per week and part-timers as those working from one to 35 hours. In all regression analysis the reference category is set as full-time.

Consistent with past labour market research, patterns of full-time and part-time employment are highly gendered in my sample (ABS, 2003a; Baxter, 1998; Delsen, 1998). Among parents, 62% of women work part-time, compared to only 5.8% of men (see Table 2.1).

#### Employment contract

Employment contract is based upon a self-report item that distinguishes between permanent/on-going, fixed-term and casual employees. Two dummy variables are used to test differences between permanent employees, the reference group, and employees on fixed-term and casual contracts.

As expected, the proportion of men and women holding permanent and casual contracts differs substantially (ABS, 1999). Sixty percent of working mothers, compared to 82% of working fathers hold a permanent or ongoing contract, while 30% of women and only 10% of men are employed



on a casual basis. The proportion of men and women holding fixed-term contracts is quite similar, possibly because fewer respondents are employed under this type of contract.

Table 2.1: Employment status, employment contract, weekly work schedule and daily hours schedule by gender in sample of working parents

	Women %	Men %	All %
<b>Employment status</b>			
Full-time	37.9	94.2	66.6
Part-time	62.8	5.8	33.4
<b>Employment contract</b>			
Permanent	60.0	81.7	71.0
Fixed-term	10.5	8.7	9.6
Casual	29.5	9.7	19.4
<b>Weekly work schedule</b>			
Regular weekdays	73.6	70.2	71.9
Weekends	11.9	17.6	14.8
Days vary	14.5	12.2	13.3
<b>Daily hours schedule</b>			
Regular daytime	74.9	78.0	76.4
Regular evening/night	6.7	3.5	5.1
Irregular	18.4	18.6	18.5
<b>Number of observations</b>	<b>1134</b>	<b>1179</b>	<b>2313</b>

Source: HILDA Wave 1, 2003

### Weekly Work Scheduling

Weekly scheduling is condensed into three categories based on the timing and regularity of workdays (Stains and Pleck, 1986). The first category encompasses respondents who have a regular schedule that involves working between Monday and Friday only. This is the reference category, against which the other two categories are compared. The first dummy variable includes respondents with a regular schedule, but who work Saturday and/or Sunday, although most of these respondents (96%) also work at least one weekday. The second dummy variable comprises respondents who do not regularly work particular days of the week.

As expected, most men and women regularly work weekdays only (see Table 2.1). Twelve percent of women and 17.6% of men regularly work weekends, while 14.4% of women and 12.2% of men work varying days across each week or month.

### Daily Hours Scheduling

Daily hours scheduling is divided into three categories, again based on the timing and regularity of respondents' working hours. The reference group consists of those working a regular daytime schedule. This group is contrasted with first, respondents working a regular evening or night shift and second, respondents working an irregular schedule. The irregular schedule encompasses employees on rotating shifts, split shifts, on call work and irregular arrangements.

Approximately three-quarters of respondents work a regular daytime shift (see Table 2.1). Among women, 6.7 % regularly work evenings or nights, compared to only 3.5% of men. Eighteen percent of respondents have an irregular shift. Overall, there are negligible differences between the proportion of men and women with different shifts.

*Control Variables: Additional Work-Related Characteristics*

Many types of flexible work are strongly associated with a number of other employment related characteristics, such as industry, occupation and workplace size. To ensure that any statistical relationship between flexible work and job insecurity or work-to-family strain is not spurious, a number of other work-related variables are included in the multivariate data analysis (Agresti and Finlay, 1997). Selection of these control variables is directed by theoretical reasoning, as well as the findings of previous research (ACIRRT, 1999; Burchell, 2002; Christensen and Staines, 1990; Clark, 2001; Eagle et al., 1998; Felstead et al., 1998; Fenwick and Tausig, 2001; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Glass and Camarigg, 1992; Glass and Estes, 1997; Manski and Straub, 2000; Naswall and De Witte, 2003; Saltzstein et al., 2001; Tausig and Fenwick, 2001; Wolcott and Glezer, 1995).

Initially occupation, based on the Australian Standard Classification of Occupations (ASCO) coding scheme (ABS, 1996), was collapsed into the four categories: managers and professionals, tradespersons, clerical workers and production, transport, labourers and related workers. However, post regression Wald tests, conducted after preliminary analysis, show that the

regression coefficients for tradespersons and other manual workers do not significantly differ. Further, no other parameters change in significance or substantive value when these two occupational categories are merged. Thus, for the final analysis tradespersons are combined with labourers into a single occupational group encompassing all manual workers (Table 2.2).

Industry, initially coded following the Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) scheme (ABS, 1993), is collapsed into six groups – primary industries, secondary industries and four service industries. Table 2.3 summarises the construction of the industry measure. Sector is divided into two categories: public and private, with the latter used as the reference.

Table 2.2: Construction of Occupation variable from ASCO Major Groups

<b>Occupation</b>	<b>ASCO Major Group</b>
<b>Managers and Professionals</b>	1 Managers and Administrators
	2 Professionals
	3 Associate Professionals
<b>Clerical workers</b>	5 Advanced Clerical and Service Workers
	6 Intermediate Clerical and Service Workers
	8 Elementary Clerical, Sales and Service Workers
<b>Manual workers</b>	4 Tradespersons and Related Workers
	7 Intermediate Production and Transport Workers
	9 Labourers and Related Workers

Table 2.3: Construction of Industry variable from ANZSIC Codes

<b>Industry</b>	<b>ANZSIC Division</b>
<b>Government, Education and Health</b>	M. Government Administration and Defence
	N. Education
	O. Health and Community Services
<b>Finance, Insurance, Property and Business</b>	K. Finance and Insurance
	L. Property and Business Services
<b>Utilities, Transport and Communication</b>	D. Electricity, Gas and Water Supply
	I. Transport and Storage
	J. Communication Services
<b>Trades, Accommodation, Food, Cultural and Personal Services</b>	F. Wholesale Trade
	G. Retail Trade
	H. Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants
	P. Cultural and Recreational Services
	Q. Personal and Other Services
<b>Secondary Industries</b>	C. Manufacturing
	D. Construction
<b>Primary Industries</b>	A. Agriculture, Forestry and Fishing
	B. Mining

Workplace size is a categorical variable, with the reference group set as a workplace with fewer than five employees. The three corresponding dummy variables are 5-19 employees, 20-99 employees and 100+ employees. Respondents (n=24) who were unsure of their workplace size, but knew there were over 20 employees, are assigned the modal category of 20-99 employees.

Previous research shows average weekly working hours is a particularly strong predictor of work-to-family strain (Tausig and Fenwick, 2001; Wolcott and Glezer, 1995). In my sample, weekly hours of work contains some extreme outliers (eg 90hrs, 120hrs), thereby requiring a transformation. I take the natural log of weekly working hours to narrow the range of this variable and minimise potentially influential outlying cases (Wooldridge, 2003: 188). This transformation is also theoretically sound, as I expect work-to-family strain will increase with percentage increases in weekly work hours, rather than absolute increases.

There is also empirical evidence showing that greater autonomy at work improves both work-family balance and perceptions of job security (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001; Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000; Hill et al., 2001; Wichert, 2002). For this analysis, autonomy at work is operationalised as an index, based on the mean of answers to three questions:

- a. I have a lot of freedom to decide how I do my own work <sup>2</sup>
- b. I have a lot of say about what happens on my job
- c. I have a lot of freedom to decide when I do my work

All of these questions are elicited on a response scale ranging from one (strongly disagree) to seven (strongly agree) and the Alpha statistic is 0.78 for both men and women.

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<sup>2</sup> All underlining follows the representation of questions in the HILDA questionnaire.

Following similar research, the job insecurity analysis also includes measures of union membership, job tenure and unemployment history (ACIRRT 1999). Respondents with union membership, based on the ABS definition, are coded as one on the union variable. Tenure in current position, given in years, is based on employee self-report. A quadratic term for tenure is included in regression equations to account for high levels of insecurity among those with both short and long tenure (Felstead et al., 1998). The quadratic term is a way of modelling curvilinear relationships in regression analysis. Experience of unemployment is a dummy variable indicating whether the respondent has ever been unemployed. Those who have already experienced unemployment may fear job loss more acutely than those who have not (Charles and James, 2003).

Three additional attitudinal measures are added to the final work-to-family strain analysis. These are satisfaction with working hours, perception of workplace culture towards employees' use of family friendly benefits and job stress. Satisfaction with working hours is based on the question 'If you could choose the number of hours you work each week, and taking into account how that would affect your income, would you prefer to work ... fewer hours, about the same hours or more hours than you do now?'. Respondents who are satisfied with their working hours are treated as the reference category.

Workplace culture, measuring attitudes towards employees who use family friendly benefits, is constructed by taking the mean of three Likert type questions (response scale ranging from one to seven):

- a. Where I work, male employees who take leave for family reasons are seen as less committed to their jobs than other male workers
- b. Where I work, employees who take leave for family reasons are less likely to get ahead in their jobs and careers
- c. Where I work, employees who work part-time are seen as less committed to their jobs than other workers

Scales scores on this measure range from one to seven, with a higher score representing a workplace culture that regards employees who organise work around their family as less committed. Cronbach's Alpha score for working women is 0.81 and for men 0.82. Item non-response is substantial on this measure, with just over 20% of respondents missing on at least one question item. Respondents with one missing value (n=288) are assigned a scale score based on the remaining two valid responses. The remaining respondents, missing on two or three items (n=193), are assigned a scale score of zero and given a score of one on a missing dummy variable associated with this index.

Job strain is based on the mean response to the two questions: 'My job is more stressful than I had ever imagined' and 'I fear that the amount of stress in my job will make me physically ill'. Both items are measured on the standard one to seven Likert style scale used in HILDA. Cronbach's Alpha is over 0.75 for both men and women.



### *Control Variables: Personal and Family Characteristics*

In addition to the theoretically salient independent variables just described, I include a number of control variables at the household and individual level. The household control variables are limited to marital status, financial comfort and the presence and age of children. Marital status is divided into two broad categories, married/de facto and single. Married and de facto are not distinguished as question wording on the marital status item is ambiguous (Watson and Wooden, 2002a). The non-married category encompasses never married, separated, divorced and widowed.

Age of youngest child and the presence of preschool aged child(ren) or younger are employed as de facto measures of family stage. Age of youngest child is measured in years, while the presence of preschool aged child(ren) in the household is added as a dummy variable. A dummy variable is also used to distinguish parents who have a resident child, coded as one, from those parents with a biological child not residing in their household.

A subjective measure of respondent's assessment of the household's financial situation is also included in both models. I anticipate that people who feel less prosperous are more likely to feel insecure because of the greater financial stress caused by job loss. In addition, those feeling less affluent may experience greater work-to-family strain because of the need to work additional hours to ensure all financial obligations are met. Perception of the household's financial situation is based on the single item: 'Given your current needs and financial responsibilities, would you say that you and your family are... prosperous, very comfortable, reasonably comfortable, just

getting along, poor or very poor?'. Due to the very small number of respondents who feel 'very poor' (n=4), 'poor' and 'very poor' are combined into a single category. In addition, the 89 respondents who felt 'financially prosperous' are combined with those feeling 'very comfortable' to give the category representing greatest financial satisfaction/comfort (coded zero). Financial situation is included in the regression models as a continuous variable, with the highest category of three indicating feelings of household poverty. A direct measure of income, often included in similar analysis (Saltzstein et al., 2001; White, 1999), is excluded because of the high level of missing data on the income questions in HILDA (Watson and Wooden, 2002a).

The HILDA question items available to construct an index measuring sex role attitudes are very poor. A number of different indices were tried, yet the Alpha scores remained below 0.7 for the various question combinations. Thus, sex role attitudes is operationalised with two separate variables, based on the questions:

- a. Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother
- b. It is much better for everyone if the man earns the money and the woman takes care of the home and children

Again, both questions are elicited using the standard one to seven Likert style scale. Inclusion of two sex role items rather than a single scale did not alter any regression parameters or the overall  $R^2$  value.

A measure of respondents' subjective perception of time constraint is integrated into the work-to-family strains analysis. Time constraint is based on the single question, 'How often do you feel rushed or pressed for time?', with the five response categories almost always, often, sometimes, rarely and never. The categories 'rarely' and 'never' are combined because only 18 people reported never feeling rushed. Time constraint is added to the regression models as a continuous measure ranging from zero (almost always rushed) to three (rarely or never rushed).

Education is added to all models as three dummy variables, with the reference category defined as primary or secondary education without the completion of year 12. The three comparison groups are completed Year 12, obtained a diploma or certificate and bachelor/postgraduate degree(s).

A continuous measure of age, implemented as a rough surrogate for career progression and family stage, is also included. The relationship between age and job insecurity and work-to-family strain is tested for non-linearity, with the results indicating that a quadratic age term should be included in the work-to-family strain model only.

Table 2.4 displays summary information for all control variables that are included in the regression analysis.

Table 2.4: Summary Statistics of all Control Variables used in Multivariate Analysis

Variable	Range	Mean
<b>Work-related variables</b>		
Occupation	Reference - Managers, Administrators, Professionals and Para-professionals	
	Clerical workers	0.29
	Tradespersons, production and transport workers, labourers and related workers	0.25
Sector	0 - Private sector; 1 - Public sector	0.34
Industry	Reference - Government, Education and Health	
	Finance, Insurance, Property and Business	0.13
	Utilities, Transport and Storage and Communication services	0.07
	Wholesale trade, Retail, Accommodation, Food, Cultural, Recreational and Personal	0.22
	Manufacturing and Construction	0.16
	Primary Industries	0.05
	Union membership	0 - No; 1 - Yes
Tenure	.019 to 34	6.6
Under or over employment	Reference - Work right amount of hours	
	Like to work fewer hour	0.3
	Like to work more hour	0.15
Hours of work per week (ln)	.69 to 4.79	3.5
Workplace size	Reference - Fewer than 5	
	5 to 19	0.26
	20 to 99	0.33
	100+	0.29
Experience of unemployment	0 - No; 1 - Yes	0.24
Workplace understanding of family role scale	1 (understanding) to 7 (poor understanding)	2.60
Autonomy at work	1 (low autonomy) to 7 (high autonomy)	4.2

Table 2.4: Summary Statistics of all Control Variables used in Multivariate Analysis  
- Continued

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>
Job stress	1 (low stress) to 7 (high stress)	3.1
<b>Family and household variables</b>		
Marital status	0 - Married or de facto; 1 - Not married or de facto	0.13
Presence of resident children	0 - No resident children; 1 - resident children	0.94
Age of youngest child	0 to 17 years	7.4
Presence of children 5 and under	0 - No child under 5; 1 - Child under 5	0.42
Financial situation of household	0 (comfortable) to 3 (poor)	1.3
Time constraint	0 (almost always rushed) to 3 (rarely/never rushed)	1.4
Sex role attitudes - Role of women as mother	1 (not traditional) to 7 (traditional)	5.7
Sex role attitudes - Sexual division in household	1 (not traditional) to 7 (traditional)	3.2
<b>Demographic variables</b>		
Education	Reference - Attended primary/secondary sch	
	Completed Yr 12	0.15
	Certificate or diploma	0.37
	Bachelor degree and/or higher degree	0.25
Age	18 to 62 years	39
Gender	0 - female; 1 - male	0.51

Source: HILDA Wave 1, 2003

**Analytic Strategy:**

Analysis in this thesis is divided into two main parts: an examination of perceptions of job insecurity followed by experiences of work-to-family strain. Most analysis is performed separately for each gender, as the significance of different predictor variables is expected to vary between men and women.

The next chapter commences with an overall comparison of men and women on the two main indices and then examines the mean scores on the key variables of employment status, employment contract and scheduling. For each dependent variable, a series of Ordinary Least Squares regressions is estimated to examine the importance of different sets of variables. This strategy allows me to concentrate on the specific impact of theoretically salient predictor variables, after including other likely predictors. The first baseline model includes the four key measures of work flexibility, with controls for age and education. The second intermediate model adds controls for various other employment characteristics, while the full model includes all work, household and demographic measures. Finally, gender differences are tested statistically through the use of interaction terms between gender and the four key measures of employment status, employment contract, weekly schedule and daily hours schedule. Early analysis examined other interactions but these were not statistically significant, and are not presented.

In most sampled households individual level data is collected from more than one household member, thereby violating the assumption of statistical independence between each observation. The effect of this violation is negligible for the regression analysis that is performed separately for working mothers and fathers. Yet statistical independence is violated for the combined analysis of all parents, as most households are represented by both parents. To account for the clustering of observations within households a robust estimator of variance, that adjusts for household clustering, is employed for the sample of all parents (Stata Corporation, 2003:339).

I also carried out graphical and statistical screening for influential outliers using Cook's Distance. Influential observations are those with a disproportionate influence on the value of the regression parameters and the magnitude of the standard error (Chatterjee and Yilmaz, 1992). These diagnostic procedures suggested that there were no influential observations in any of the analysis.

## **Chapter 3 - Results**

This chapter first presents results for the analysis of job insecurity, followed by results for the analysis of work-family strain.

### **Job Insecurity**

Given arguments that the prioritisation of paid employment relative to family life is gendered, it is expected that the relationship between flexible employment and individuals' experiences of work will vary by gender. More specifically, researchers (Hakim, 2000; Naswall and DeWitte, 2003) argue that women, who are less work-orientated than men, will place less emphasis on the continuation of paid employment and, thus, feel less insecurity regarding the future of their job. Consistent with these expectations, perceptions of job insecurity differ significantly between working men and women ( $t\text{-value}=-2.3$ ,  $p\text{-value}=0.020$ ). Overall, women report feeling less insecure about the future of their job than men. Yet the gender difference is moderate, with an average score on the job insecurity scale of  $-0.04$  for women compared to  $0.03$  for men. Both these scores are around the overall mean score of zero.

Table 3.1 compares mean scores on the insecurity scale for respondents with different types of work flexibility. These tests are based on regressing job insecurity separately on each set of dummy variables associated with the different aspects of flexibility. The results show that some forms of flexible work are associated with heightened insecurity, while others are not. Contrary to expectations part-time employment is linked to feelings



of greater job security among women. Although the overall difference between full-time and part-time women is only small, it is statistically significant at the 0.05 level. In contrast, men who work part-time report feeling greater insecurity, compared to their full-time counterparts.

Table 3.1: Mean Scores on Insecurity Scale for Male and Female Parents with Different Conditions of Work Flexibility

<b>Insecurity Scale:</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
<b>Employment status</b>		
Full-time (reference)	-0.10	0.02
Part-time	-0.0006*	0.28**
<b>Employment contract</b>		
Permanent (reference)	-0.21	-0.05
Casual	0.22***	0.64***
Fixed-term	0.23***	0.13*
<b>Day schedule</b>		
Regular weekdays (reference)	-0.02	0.06
Regular weekend	-0.09	-0.02
Days vary	-0.10	-0.008
<b>Hours schedule</b>		
Regular daytime (reference)	-0.03	0.02
Regular evening/night	-0.17	0.25 <sup>1</sup>
Irregular	-0.02	0.06
<b>Number of observations</b>	1143	1179

Source: HILDA Wave 1, 2003

\* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

<sup>1</sup> p-value of 0.056

Note: Statistical differences are tested between categories of employment for men and women, not between gender for each employment condition

As predicted, men and women who are employed under a casual contract experience greater insecurity than permanent employees. Casual men, with a mean scale score of 0.64, feel much more insecure than permanent men, with a mean score of -0.05. Among working women, the

contrast between permanent and casual workers is less marked, but still statistically significant. Men employed on a fixed-term contract occupy an intermediate position, feeling significantly less secure than permanent employees but more secure than casuals. On the other hand, women working under a fixed-term contract feel just as insecure as casuals.

With respect to scheduling practices, the bivariate results are less conclusive. Type of day schedule has no significant effect on men's or women's perceptions of job insecurity. However, men who work regular evening or night shifts, on average, feel more insecure in their jobs than men who work a regular daytime schedule ( $p=0.056$ ). For women, shift scheduling has no impact on job insecurity.

Table 3.2 displays the results from a series of regressions with job insecurity as the dependent variable. These multiple regression models allow for an examination of the relationship between job flexibility and perceptions of insecurity, net of other work and household related variables that may also impinge on feelings of job insecurity. The baseline regression model, performed separately for men and women, contains the four measures of job flexibility, plus controls for age and education. An intermediate model adds other occupational controls, and the full model adds family and household variables.

Beginning with the baseline model, the significant bivariate association between employment status and job insecurity, in which part-time employees are shown to feel more insecure than full-time employees, disappears when the effects of employment contract, work scheduling, age and education are

controlled. The spurious bivariate association is probably the result of the high correlation between part-time and casual employment.

Employment contract remains a strong determinant of job insecurity, with both casual men and women reporting greater insecurity than permanent employees, though the coefficient value is greater for men. Thus, the difference between permanent and casual employees, with respect to job insecurity, is more pronounced for men than for women<sup>3</sup>. This finding is consistent with the hypothesis that working women will be more impervious to feelings of insecurity than men.

Somewhat surprisingly, varying working days is linked to decreased insecurity for both working men and women. Controlling for employment status, contract, shift schedule, age and education, workers with a varying weekday schedule feel significantly less insecure than workers with a regular Monday to Friday schedule. Moreover, fathers with regular weekend work report greater job security than men who only work regular weekdays. Weekend work has no effect on job insecurity for working mothers and shift scheduling is not an important predictor of job insecurity once other types of flexibility are controlled.

Consistent with previous research (Borland, 2001: 155; Saunders, 2002: 101-102), age has a positive effect on perceptions of job insecurity in the baseline model. The regression coefficients, significant for both men and women, confirm that job insecurity rises with age. This relationship reflects the additional difficulties that older workers face as job seekers because of

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<sup>3</sup> These gender differences will be statistically tested in later multiple regression models.

Table 3.2: Regression Analysis of Job Insecurity among Male and Female Employees with Parental Responsibilities

Independent variable	Baseline model		Intermediate model		Full model		Full model with gender interactions
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	All
<b>Employment status</b>							
Part-time	-0.03	-0.15	0.08	-0.23	0.08	-0.20	0.05
<b>Employment contract (Reference: permanent)</b>							
Fixed term	0.44***	0.18*	0.44***	0.21**	0.44***	0.22**	0.45***
Casual	0.47***	0.72***	0.45***	0.65***	0.43***	0.63***	0.42***
<b>Day schedule (Reference: weekdays only)</b>							
Regular weekend	-0.08	-0.15*	-0.10	-0.14*	-0.12	-0.14*	-0.12
Days vary	-0.17*	-0.18*	-0.14*	-0.19*	-0.14*	-0.17*	-0.13*
<b>Hours schedule (Reference: daytime)</b>							
Regular evening/night	-0.13	0.19	-0.20*	0.08	-0.19*	0.08	-0.23**
Irregular schedule	0.04	0.10	0.01	0.08	0.01	0.07	0.001
<b>Occupation (Reference: managers/professionals)</b>							
Clerical			-0.03	-0.04	-0.03	-0.05	-0.04
Manual			0.02	-0.06	0.01	-0.07	-0.03
<b>Industry (Reference: Govt, Health, Education)</b>							
Finance, Insurance, Business, Property			0.27***	0.34***	0.27***	0.34***	0.31***
Utilities, Transport, Communication			0.19	0.38***	0.19	0.38***	0.33***
Wholesale, Retail, Accommodation, Food, Recreation, Culture			0.20**	0.19*	0.21**	0.18*	0.19***
Manufacturing and Construction			0.42***	0.35***	0.42***	0.37***	0.40***
Primary			0.37*	0.32**	0.37*	0.30**	0.31**
<b>Sector</b>							
Public			0.06	-0.14*	0.07	-0.14*	-0.02
<b>Workplace size (Reference: fewer than 5)</b>							
5 to 19			-0.10	-0.008	-0.09	0.01	-0.03
20 to 99			-0.11	0.01	-0.10	0.04	-0.01
100 plus			-0.03	0.07	-0.0001	0.11	0.06
<b>Union membership</b>							
Union member			0.02	0.09	0.02	0.09*	0.06
<b>Tenure</b>							
Linear			-0.03**	-0.04***	-0.03**	-0.04***	-0.033***
Tenure squared			0.0008	0.001**	0.0007	0.001***	0.001***
<b>Hours (ln)</b>							
			0.10*	-0.13	0.11*	-0.08	0.06
<b>Unemployment</b>							

Have been unemployed			0.12*	-0.005	0.09	-0.01	0.04
<b>Autonomy</b>			-0.07***	-0.10***	-0.06***	-0.10***	-0.08***
<b>Marital status</b>							
Not married or de facto					-0.02	-0.07	-0.04
<b>Resident children</b>							
Resident child					-0.02	0.09	0.10
<b>Age of youngest child</b>					-0.01	-0.02**	-0.01**
<b>Presence child under 5</b>							
Child 5 and under					-0.02	-0.11	-0.04
<b>Financial situation of household</b>					0.12***	0.15***	0.13***
<b>Sex roles</b>							
Role of women as mother					-0.04**	-0.007	-0.02*
Sexual division in household					0.003	0.004	0.006
<b>Education (Reference: not completed year 12)</b>							
Completed year 12	-0.03	-0.27**	0.02	-0.16	0.10	-0.16	-0.05
Certificate or Diploma	0.06	-0.07	0.05	-0.001	0.05	0.004	0.03
Bachelor or Higher Degree	0.02	-0.13	0.10	0.05	0.08	0.06	0.07
<b>Age</b>	0.007*	0.007*	0.01***	0.014***	0.017***	0.02	0.02***
<b>Gender</b>							0.006
<b>Interaction terms</b>							
Male: Part-time							-0.15
Male: Fixed-term							-0.25*
Male: Casual							0.22*
Male: Weekends							-0.03
Male: Days vary							-0.04
Male: Evening shift							0.33*
Male: Irregular							0.07
<b>Constant</b>	-0.45	-0.21	-0.75	0.30	-0.82	-0.25	-0.81
<b>Adjusted R2</b>	0.097	0.086	0.159	0.182	0.171	0.201	0.187
<b>Number of observations</b>	1134	1179	1134	1179	1134	1179	2313

Source: HILDA Wave 1, 2003

\* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

the tendency of employers to hire younger staff. Overall, education does not have a strong impact on perceptions of job insecurity, though among men completion of Year 12 is linked to feelings of greater security compared to the reference group of men who did not complete secondary school.

The baseline model, including the four measures of job flexibility and two additional demographic controls, has moderate explanatory power. The adjusted  $R^2$  is 0.097 for mothers and 0.086 for fathers, indicating that just under 10% of the variability in perceptions of job insecurity is explained by these six variables.

The intermediate model adds several other work related variables. The explanatory power of the intermediate model improves substantially, with the adjusted  $R^2$  rising to 0.16 for women and 0.18 for men. Thus, 15% to 20% of the variability in job insecurity is accounted for by work related variables, age and education.

Overall, the regression coefficients for employment status, employment contract and weekly work schedule do not change in significance or substantive value once the other work-related controls are added. Yet in contrast to the baseline model, mothers who regularly work evenings or nights report greater security in their current job than those women who regularly work daytime shifts. With fewer controls in the earlier analysis, the relationship between regular evening shiftwork and job insecurity remained suppressed.

Many of the additional work related variables in the intermediate model also prove to be significant predictors of job insecurity. Industry, in particular, has a strong impact on perceptions of job insecurity. As expected, government, health and education workers (the reference category) feel less insecure. For men, levels of insecurity are similar in other industries, whereas for women, levels of insecurity are particularly high in manufacturing and primary industries, which historically have been very masculinised (ABS, 2003a: 55).

Men working in the public sector are significantly more likely to feel secure than men in the private sector, though the magnitude of the difference is small. Public sector employment has no impact on job insecurity for women.

In contrast, experience of unemployment is a significant predictor of job insecurity for working mothers, but not fathers. This is an unexpected result given the hypothesis that working fathers would find involuntary job loss a greater threat because of their traditional role as family breadwinner.

Tenure is negatively associated with job insecurity. For men, the quadratic term for tenure is significant and positive while the linear trend is negative, indicating that both very short and very long tenure is associated with a greater sense of job insecurity. The turning point is around 20 years, indicating that after controlling for a number of work related characteristics, men feel the most secure at 20 years of tenure. After 20 years, job insecurity increases and before it job insecurity declines with tenure. For mothers, tenure is not significant. This is probably because working mothers, who

often interrupt their career for childbirth and the care of young children, have comparatively shorter tenure than men.

Among working mothers, there is a significant, positive relationship between hours worked per week and job insecurity. Consistent with theoretical expectations, autonomy at work is negatively associated with job insecurity, with greater autonomy resulting in increased job security. Workplace size, union membership and occupation all have no effect on perceptions of job insecurity. It is surprising that manual work does not positively affect perceptions of job insecurity, given that previous research has observed such a relationship (Borland, 2001: 155) and that traditional male blue-collar work has been disproportionately affected by job redundancies over the past decade (ABS, 2001: 4; Saunders, 2002: 94). However, much of this occupational effect may be picked up in the controls for industry.

The full model includes all of the variables discussed above, as well several additional measures controlling for a range of household and family characteristics. The adjusted  $R^2$  improves only slightly after the six family and household characteristics are introduced, indicating that household and family characteristics are comparatively less salient predictors of job insecurity.

On the whole, the parameters representing various employment characteristics do not change in value or significance after the family related controls are added. Moreover, none of the parameters relating to job flexibility change at all. However, in the full model, age no longer has a significant effect on job insecurity for men. Given that age is a proxy measure



of family and career stage, it is not surprising that age becomes insignificant once other life stage measures (age of youngest child, child five and under and tenure) are entered into the equation. For working mothers, however, age remains an important predictor of job insecurity, with increasing age associated with increasing insecurity. This suggests that older women feel particularly vulnerable regardless of other age-specific life-course factors, such as children and job tenure.

Union membership becomes a significant predictor of job insecurity for men in the full regression model, with male union members appearing to feel slightly more insecure than non-members. Previous research has also found a similar association (ACIRRT, 1999; Borland, 2001: 155; Naswall and De Witte, 2003).

With respect to the family and household variables, only the financial situation of the household is significant for both genders. Increasing financial insecurity is associated with rising job insecurity. For men, age of youngest child is negatively associated with job insecurity, with insecurity declining as children get older.

There is weak evidence that sex role attitudes have an effect on perceptions of job insecurity. Women who more strongly agree that the most important role in a woman's life, whatever career she may have, is still that of being a mother, report significantly less job insecurity than women who disagree with this statement. This finding is consistent with the argument that women who are more strongly home-oriented will have a weaker attachment to the labour market and thus feel less trepidation at the prospect of job

dismissal. Marital status, presence of a resident child and a youngest child aged five or under all have no effect on job insecurity.

Results from the final model, with interaction terms between gender and the four key employment measures, are displayed in the far right column of Table 3.2. Gender alone is not a significant predictor of job insecurity, controlling for all work, household and demographic variables. Interaction tests confirm that the effects of some flexible work practices vary by gender. The two interaction terms between gender and employment contract are significant, verifying that the effects of casual and fixed-term employment on job insecurity are gendered. Controlling for all other factors, the difference between men on fixed-term contracts with men on permanent contracts is much smaller than the difference between women on fixed-term with women on permanent contracts. In addition, the difference between casual and permanent employees' perceptions of job insecurity is greater for men than it is for women.

The interaction term between gender and evening shift schedules is also significant. The positive coefficient value of this term indicates that differences in insecurity between men working evening shifts and day shifts is greater than the difference between women working evening and day shifts, net all other factors. No remaining interaction terms are significant.

## **Work-to-Family Strain**

In this second section I examine whether flexible work practices are associated with experiences of work-to-family strain and if these associations vary by gender. Overall, men with a mean scale score of 4.2, report significantly higher work-to-family strain than women, with a mean score of only 3.6 (t-value=-9.6, p-value=0.000). This finding is somewhat unexpected, given the hypothesis that women, with greater domestic responsibilities, would find it harder to balance paid work with family responsibilities. However, this finding may reflect the behaviour of women, many of whom 'choose' to work reduced hours in order to achieve an acceptable balance between work and family (Hakim, 2000).

Table 3.3 compares the mean scores on the work-to-family strains scale for men and women working under different employment conditions. Following earlier analysis, these results are obtained by regressing work-family strain on the different flexibility variables and examining the significance of the relevant dummy variable coefficients. Compared to part-time women, full-time women do report feeling significantly poorer work-family balance. The magnitude of this difference is quite high at 0.9 scale units. This contrasts sharply with men, where the difference in work-to-family strain between full-timers and part-timers is less marked and not statistically significant.

Casual women also feel significantly less work-to-family strain than women employed under a permanent or ongoing contract. However, for men there are no differences by type of employment contract.

Table 3.3: Mean Scores on Work-to-Family Strain Scale for Male and Female Parents with Different Conditions of Work Flexibility

<b>Strains Scale:</b>	<b>Women</b>	<b>Men</b>
<b>Employment status</b>		
Full-time (reference)	4.1	4.2
Part-time	3.2***	3.9
<b>Employment contract</b>		
Permanent (reference)	3.7	4.2
Casual	3.1***	4.2
Fixed-term	3.8	4.2
<b>Day schedule</b>		
Regular weekdays (reference)	3.6	4.0
Regular weekend	3.6	4.8***
Days vary	3.6	4.3**
<b>Hours schedule</b>		
Regular daytime (reference)	3.6	4.1
Regular evening/night	3.4	4.4
Irregular	3.6	4.6***
<b>Number of Observations</b>	1143	1179

Source: HILDA Wave 1, 2003

\* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001

Note: Statistical differences are tested between categories of employment for men and women, not between gender for each employment condition

Flexible scheduling is significantly associated with slightly higher work-to-family strain for men, but not for women. Compared to men working regular daytime shifts, men who work irregular shifts report greater work-to-family strain. Moreover, men with regular weekend work experience significantly more strain than their counterparts who work regular weekdays only. Surprisingly, varying workdays improves work-family balance for fathers, although post estimation Wald tests reveal that the difference between weekend and varying days schedules is not statistically significant.

Overall, the bivariate results indicate that flexible work arrangements are associated with different experiences of work-to-family strain with gender influencing the effect of work flexibility.

Multivariate modelling, however, allows for an examination of the effects of flexible working conditions, net other factors that may also affect work-family balance. The results of a series of four multiple regressions are presented in Table 3.4. Satisfaction with working hours, workplace culture, job stress and perception of time constraint are added into the work-to-family strain analysis, while union membership, tenure and experience of unemployment are excluded on theoretical grounds.

Consistent with earlier bivariate analysis, the baseline multivariate model shows that part-time work, compared to full-time work, is associated with less work-to-family strain for both genders. With respect to employment contract, only casual employment among women is a significant predictor of work-family balance. Women employed under a casual contract, controlling for the three other flexible work measures, age and education, feel significantly less work-to-family strain than women employed on a permanent basis.

Few scheduling measures are important determinants of parents' work-family balance. Yet weekend work does impact on experiences of work-to-family strain among employed fathers, with men who work weekends reporting more adverse effects of paid work on their family lives than the equivalent men who only work between Monday and Friday. Significant differences in work-family balance are also evident between men who work

Table 3.4: Regression Analysis of Work-to-Family Strain among Male and Female Employees with Parental Responsibilities

Independent variable	Baseline model		Intermediate model		Full model		Full model with gender interactions
	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	All
<b>Employment status</b>							
Part-time	-0.77***	-0.47*	-0.03	0.22	-0.03	0.20	0.005
<b>Employment contract: (Reference: permanent)</b>							
Fixed term	-0.004	0.03	0.06	0.08	0.02	0.08	0.02
Casual	-0.28*	0.22	0.05	0.31*	0.005	0.25 <sup>1</sup>	0.03
<b>Day schedule (Reference: weekdays only)</b>							
Regular weekend	0.11	0.78***	0.10	0.50***	0.08	0.51***	0.08
Days vary	0.08	0.06	0.05	0.12	0.06	0.23	0.06
<b>Hours schedule (Reference: daytime)</b>							
Regular evening/night	-0.05	0.11	-0.12	0.16	-0.12	0.15	-0.16
Irregular schedule	0.21	0.44**	0.14	0.34**	0.12	0.25*	0.08
<b>Occupation (Reference: managers/professionals)</b>							
Clerical			-0.003	-0.23*	0.0007	-0.29*	-0.14
Manual			0.12	-0.09	0.09	-0.10	0.02
<b>Industry (Reference: Govt, Health, Education)</b>							
Finance, Insurance, Business, Property			0.08	0.20	0.10	0.16	0.11
Utilities, Transport, Communication			-0.34	0.27	-0.24	0.32*	0.12
Wholesale, Retail, Accommodation, Food, Recreation, Culture			-0.12	-0.02	-0.08	-0.02	-0.09
Manufacturing and Construction			-0.20	-0.07	-0.13	-0.06	-0.14
Primary			-0.07	0.36*	-0.10	0.29	0.20
<b>Sector</b>							
Public			-0.25*	-0.22	-0.17	-0.18	-0.18*
<b>Workplace size (Reference: fewer than 5)</b>							
5 to 19			-0.02	-0.18	0.005	-0.15	-0.06
20 to 99			0.18	-0.12	0.18	-0.11	0.04
100 plus			0.07	-0.09	0.09	-0.05	0.04
<b>Satisfaction with work hours (Reference: work right amount of hours)</b>							
Prefer fewer hours			0.26*	0.36***	0.23*	0.36***	0.32***
Prefer more hours			0.04	0.06	-0.05	0.02	-0.01
<b>Hours (ln)</b>							
Workplace culture			0.53***	0.78***	0.55***	0.71***	0.59***

Regression coefficient			0.14***	0.19***	0.13***	0.17***	0.15***
Missing			0.22	0.33	0.19	0.22	0.20
<b>Autonomy</b>			-0.04	-0.16***	-0.03	-0.15***	-0.09***
<b>Job stress</b>			0.36***	0.27***	0.30***	0.21***	0.25***
<b>Marital Status</b>							
No married or de facto					0.11	0.004	0.11
<b>Resident children</b>							
Resident child					-0.24	-0.02	0.03
<b>Age of youngest child</b>					-0.04*	-0.007	-0.02
<b>Presence child under 5</b>							
Child 5 and under					-0.27	0.12	-0.05
<b>Financial situation of household</b>					0.23***	0.13*	0.18***
<b>Sex roles</b>							
Role of women as mother					-0.01	0.01	0.003
Sexual division in household					0.11***	0.04 <sup>2</sup>	0.07***
<b>Time constraint</b>					-0.32***	-0.32***	-0.32***
<b>Education (Reference: not completed year 12)</b>							
Completed year 12	0.27*	0.08	0.16	0.15	0.19	0.13	0.15
Certificate or Diploma	0.22	0.08	0.15	0.07	0.15	0.07	0.10
Bachelor or Higher Degree	0.47***	0.34**	0.19	0.13	0.30*	0.08	0.18
<b>Age</b>							
Linear	0.04	0.17**	-0.02	0.10*	-0.02	0.12**	0.06
Age squared	-0.0007	-0.002***	0	-0.002**	0.0001	-0.002**	-0.001*
<b>Gender</b>							
<b>Interaction terms</b>							
Male: Part-time							0.12
Male: Fixed-term							0.04
Male: Casual							0.22
Male: Weekends							0.44**
Male: Days vary							0.22
Male: Evening shift							0.29
Male: Irregular							0.18
<b>Constant</b>	3.4	1.1	1.2	-1.3	1.6	-1.3	-0.01
<b>Adjusted R2</b>	0.082	0.079	0.278	0.329	0.331	0.362	0.366
<b>Number of observations</b>	1134	1179	1134	1179	1134	1179	2313

Source: HILDA Wave 1, 2003

\* p<0.05 \*\* p<0.01 \*\*\* p<0.001 <sup>1</sup> p-value of 0.065 <sup>2</sup> p-value of 0.072

irregular shifts and men who work a regular daytime shift, with the latter group experiencing less stress. Contrary to expectations, regular evening or night work is not linked to poorer work-family balance.

Of the demographic controls, age has a significant effect on work-to-family strain among men only. The relationship between age and work-to-family strain is non-linear, with work-to-family strain rising with men's age until about 42.5 years, after which strain begins to decline again. A possible explanation for this trend is that many men's careers begin to peak in their early 40s, thereby making work-family balance harder to achieve. Alternatively, fathers in their early 40s, whose child(ren) are likely to be of school age, may feel obligated to partake in more activities related to their child(ren)'s upbringing, such as sports. For women, age has no effect on work-family balance. A tertiary education is also linked to greater work-to-family strain for both men and women, compared to the reference group of those who have not completed senior school.

The baseline regression model explains little variation in work-to-family strain, with only about 8% of the variance explained by the four work flexibility measures, age and education.

The intermediate model includes employment-related variables for occupation, industry, sector, workplace size, satisfaction with working hours, hours per week, workplace culture, workplace autonomy and job stress. With the addition of these controls, employment status no longer remains a significant predictor of work-to-family strain for either women or men. However, the effect of part-time work is primarily attenuated by the addition of



the weekly work hours term. Exclusion of the working hours term from the intermediate model results in employment status remaining a significant predictor of work-family balance for women<sup>4</sup>. In other words, part-time work is associated with improved work-family balance; however, working hours has an effect above and beyond the simple distinction between part-time and full-time status. The significant hours term indicates that parents who work longer hours per week feel the negative impact of work on family life more acutely than parents working shorter hours per week.

In the intermediate regression model, casual employment appears to influence work-to-family strain among men only. Compared to men employed under a permanent contract, casual men feel slightly more strain. The effect of regular weekend work and irregular scheduling remains significant for men, although the regression coefficients decline somewhat in value after additional controls are introduced. Age also remains significant for men in the intermediate model.

Many employment characteristics are also important predictors of work-family balance. Satisfaction with working hours, workplace culture and job stress are all significantly related to work-to-family strain for both men and women. Satisfaction with current working hours is related to improved work-family balance. Compared to those satisfied with their current working hours, workers who would prefer fewer hours of paid employment report experiencing more strain. Organisational culture is positively associated with work-to-family strain, with parents who say that their workplace does not

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<sup>4</sup> These regression results are not shown.

accept employees who take advantage of family friendly provisions reporting more strain than parents with more supportive workplace cultures. The data also show that increasing job stress results in greater work-to-family strain for both men and women, controlling for all other work-related characteristics.

For men only, a clerical occupation, rather than a managerial or professional job, is linked to improved work-family balance. This result may be caused by the greater demands on managerial and professional employees, which were not explicitly controlled in the regression model.

Industry does not strongly affect parents' work-family balance, though men who are employed in a primary industry feel more strain than those employed in government, health and education, wholesale, retail and personal services, and manufacturing and construction. Public sector employment is associated with reduced work-to-family strain, though the effect is significant for working women only. Autonomy at work influences work-family balance for men, with less autonomy related to increased work-to-family strain.

The explanatory power of the intermediate model is a substantial improvement on the baseline model. With the nine additional controls for various work characteristics, the variability explained by the model parameters rises to 28% for women and 33% for men. The introduction of a further seven variables, measuring household and family characteristics, for the full model only slightly improves the adjusted  $R^2$  over the intermediate model.

By and large, the parameter values of all employment related measures do not alter when additional household related controls are included. The exceptions are public sector employment for women and primary industry employment for men, both no longer significant predictors of work-family balance in the full model. Of all household measures assessed, only perceptions of time constraint and financial situation are significant predictors of work-to-family strain for both genders. As expected, greater financial difficulty is linked to increasing work-to-family strain, though the coefficient is somewhat greater for women than men. This result is not unexpected, given that women may increase their labour market involvement, perhaps at the expense of domestic work, to improve the households' financial situation (Pusey et al., 2003: 98; Tam, 1997:26, 175). Time constraint is negatively associated with experiences of work-to-family strain, with feelings of greater busyness resulting in greater strain.

Among working mothers, only one of the two measures of sex role attitudes has an effect on work-family balance. Women who more strongly agree that it is better if the man earns the money and the women takes care of the home, report feeling greater strain. This same parameter is much smaller in value for men and does not quite reach statistical significance at the  $p=0.05$  level.

Age of youngest child has a significant, negative effect on work-to-family strain for women. Working mothers with younger children report higher levels of work-to-family strain than those whose children are older. There is

no evidence that either marital status, the presence of resident children or a child aged five and under influences work-family balance for men or women.

The final analysis, undertaken with the sample of all parents, shows that gender is not a significant predictor of work-to-family strain when all other work, household and demographic variables are controlled. The only significant gender interaction term is between gender and weekend work, indicating that working weekends rather than weekdays is associated with greater work-to-family strain for men than women. In the next chapter of the thesis I consider the implications of these results.

## **Chapter 4 - Discussion**

### **Flexible employment, job insecurity and work-family balance**

The aim of this thesis has been to explore the costs and benefits of flexible employment from the perspective of employees. To this end, the analysis has examined both the positive and negative consequences of flexible employment. With respect to the costs of flexible employment, it was hypothesised that employees with a flexible working arrangement would experience greater insecurity regarding the future of their jobs than permanent employees with regular, full-time, Monday to Friday, daytime work. This hypothesis was based on arguments that flexible or non-standard work is a peripheral or secondary form of employment. In turn, peripheral employees are more vulnerable to job loss compared to firms' core employees because employers specifically hire flexible staff on the pretence that their tenure will continue only insofar as the market demands (Fagan and O'Reilly, 1998: 9; Naswall and De Witte, 2003: 195; Tam, 1997: 106). Overall, my analysis does not support this assertion, as job insecurity is not substantially higher for male and female employees with a flexible work arrangement. This situation cannot be attributed to a proliferation of feelings of insecurity throughout the labour force, as most men and women feel quite secure. Past survey research has likewise refuted claims that all employees, regardless of employment type, now feel very insecure (Manski and Straub, 2000; Pusey et al., 2003: 56; Saunders, 2002: 101; Tam, 1997: 107). Overall, my results reveal that the main types of flexible work with a negative effect on

employees' perceptions of job security are casual and fixed-term employment.

Given the supply-side argument that workers seek flexible employment to improve work-family balance (Blossfeld, 1997: 316; Campbell, 2000: 76-77; Hakim, 2000: 69), it was predicted that employees with flexible work will experience less work-to-family strain. Overall, I found that part-time employment does improve work-family balance, while casual or weekend employment for men is associated with poorer balance. In contradiction to my expectations, women do not experience significantly more work-to-family strain than men. I will now discuss these results in more detail.

### **Casual and fixed-term employment, job insecurity and work-family balance**

Given that casual employees, by definition, are denied the same protection from job termination as permanent employees, it was expected that casual workers would experience heightened job insecurity. Past analysis by ACIRRT (1999: 153) has observed a significant relationship between casual employment and job insecurity with a sample of employees. My results confirm that casual employment is associated with higher job insecurity for both men and women than permanent employment, even after controlling for a number of other employment characteristics, including industry, occupation and tenure. However, the difference between casual and permanent employee's perceptions of job insecurity is significantly greater for men than women.

Moreover, contrary to the claims of some researchers and politicians (Stratchan and Burgess, 2001: 57), casual employment does not provide parents with the benefit of improved work-family balance. Indeed, my results show that casual employment results in poorer work-family balance for working fathers, but not for mothers. These two findings are consistent with my hypothesis that men, being more work-oriented, would experience greater job insecurity and work-to-family strain when engaged in a form of flexible employment. Symbolically men may find the conditions of casual employment more threatening than women because of the traditional familial role of the father as the continuous primary income earner. Alternatively, men with casual employment may be concentrated in types of jobs that are physically demanding, involve long shifts or are associated with overtime. Measures of occupation and industry may not accurately control for these other job characteristics.

My results show that casual employment has no effect on work-family balance for women. This contradicts qualitative reports investigating the experiences of women employed under a casual contract, which have concluded that casual employment does not accommodate family responsibilities (Pocock, 2001). These qualitative findings are based on interview data taken from a comparatively small number of women and, as such, may not accurately reflect the experiences of the wider population of working mothers. The heterogeneity of casual employment (Smith and Ewer, 1999) may mean that casual work provides working mothers with greater

flexibility in some contexts, while in other contexts it may have a detrimental effect.

Recent research suggests that fixed-term employment is probably similar or equivalent to that of permanent employment (Booth et al., 2002; Wooden and Warren, 2004). My results are mixed, suggesting that fixed-term employment is an intermediate form of work that is not equivalent to permanent status, but is also not associated with as many costs as casual employment. Concerning experiences of work-family balance, the multivariate analysis showed that parents with fixed-term contracts did not significantly differ from parents with permanent contracts.

On the other hand, my research also reveals that employment under a fixed-term contract is significantly associated with increased job insecurity for both men and women. This finding supports theoretical expectations that fixed-term employees, holding a contract that covers a specific, finite period, will feel more insecure about the future of their employment than permanent employees. Unexpectedly however, the effect of fixed-term employment on job insecurity is greater for women than men. Perhaps women only engage in fixed-term employment when a permanent position is not available, and consequently feel greater insecurity about their future employment, whereas men are prepared to utilise successive fixed-term contracts as a long-term employment strategy. Men's higher earnings, relative to women, may also mean that they can remain financially comfortable during the 'down-time' between contracts. Alternatively, subtle forms of gender discrimination by



employers may cause women to feel more insecure about the prospect of contract renewal than men. Future research is needed to examine the reasons men and women accept fixed-term employment and whether conditions of fixed-term employment vary by gender.

### **Part-time employment, job insecurity and work-family balance**

Following theories of labour market segmentation, it was hypothesised that part-time employees, who are more peripheral than a firm's full-time employees, would be more vulnerable to job loss and thus feel greater insecurity (Tam, 1997: 106). While the preliminary bivariate results displayed a positive relationship between part-time employment and job insecurity, the association disappeared in the regression analysis. Given the strong correlation between part-time and casual employment, it is likely that the overall difference between full-time and part-time workers is caused by the strong association between part-time and casual employment in Australia. Past quantitative research investigating perceptions of job insecurity has likewise reported that part-time status does not increase feelings of job insecurity (Felstead et al., 1998: 183; Harley and Whitehouse, 2001; Naswall and De Witte, 2003: 203).

There are two main reasons part-time and full-time employees experience approximately the same degree of job insecurity. First, part-time and full-time employees may perceive roughly the same chance of job loss and, therefore, feel just as secure about the future of their employment. This scenario is likely if the objective risks of job dismissal are similar regardless of

employment status. Alternatively, part-time and full-time workers may feel just as secure in their employment, though for quite different reasons. Men and women who work part-time may perceive the risk of dismissal to be quite high, but feel that the consequences of such an event to be less severe than full-time workers because of the relative ease through which a replacement job may be obtained. Table 4.1 represents this typology. Given the current labour market, it is plausible that full-time employees may find it is especially difficult to secure new employment with equivalent rewards and benefits, and consequently feel just as insecure as part-timers even though the risk of dismissal is lower. While some researchers make the distinction between these two sources of job insecurity (Manski and Straub, 2000), such analysis has been restricted to an examination of the effects of demographic predictors on each dimension. Clearly future research examining how experiences of these two dimensions of job insecurity vary across different employment types is warranted. Unfortunately, the HILDA questionnaire did not provide ideal measures of job insecurity and has not allowed me to examine these two aspects of job insecurity separately.

Table 4.1: Typology of Potential Causes of Insecurity for Part-time and Full-time Employees

		Risk of job loss	
		High	Low
Difficulty of obtaining new employment	High		Full-time
	Low	Part-time	

Given the supply-side argument that workers seek flexible employment to improve work-family balance, it was predicted that part-timers would experience less work-to-family strain than employees with standard, full-time arrangements. The baseline multivariate model shows that part-time work, compared to full-time work, is associated with less work-to-family strain for both genders. However, after controls for various employment characteristics are introduced, part-time employment no longer remains a significant predictor of work-family strain. Total weekly hours of work and satisfaction with work hours – both correlated with part-time employment - become important determinants of work-family balance and thus, attenuate the effect of part-time employment. Exclusion of the hours term from the intermediate model results in the term for part-time employment becoming significant for women. Previous quantitative research has also shown that a preference for working fewer hours (Moen and Yu, 2000: 306) and longer working hours (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001: 1189; Glass and Camarigg, 1992: 140; Hill et al., 2001: 53-54; Marks et al., 2001: 1090-1091; Marshall and Barnett, 1993: 73; Tausig and Fenwick, 2001: 110-111) are both linked to poorer work-family balance. Thus, part-time employment can indirectly help parents improve work-family balance by offering employment with reduced working hours. However, as indicated by the significance of the continuous working hours term, working hours has an effect above and beyond the distinction between part-time and full-time employment.

### **Flexible scheduling, job insecurity and work-family balance**

With respect to scheduling, I expected that employees whose working schedules are matched to customer or production demand would be more vulnerable to job insecurity because their labour activity is strongly conditional upon market conditions. Yet contrary to such an assertion, my results suggest that working irregular days is not associated with reduced insecurity for either men or women. Indeed, those who report working varying days feel significantly more secure in their jobs, even after controlling for a number of work and family characteristics. Perhaps employees with varying working days do not witness substantial variation in production or customer demand in the medium term and perceive that work within the same firm will remain available. It may also be that irregular schedules are not associated with variations in the amount of work performed (ie hours spent working) in a given time period, and variations in the amount of work might be more crucial for insecurity. This is also an avenue for further research.

In addition, working varying days each week or month does not incur the cost of poor work-family balance. This may be because varying work days are arranged by employees to suit their domestic or personal desires, rather than simply reflecting employers' scheduling preferences. Moreover, varying working days may involve a form of regularity that the HILDA questionnaire does not explicitly address. Again this proposition is only suggestive and more research exploring whether irregular work reflects employees' preferences is justified.

In contrast, weekend work negatively impacts upon experiences of work-to-family strain for men, with men who work weekends reporting poorer balance than the corresponding group of men who only work between Monday and Friday. This mirrors the results of Fenwick and Tausig (2001), who found that American workers with non-Monday through to Friday schedules experienced greater work-home conflict and poorer work-family balance, net a number of demographic and employment characteristics. A likely reason for this finding is that since weekends have traditionally been classified as 'family time', fathers may find weekend work compromises family involvement more than weekday work. I would tentatively suggest that mothers do not experience greater strain when required to work weekends because, as the primary carer (Baxter, 2002), they are already heavily involved with their children throughout the week.

While weekend work incurs the cost of poorer balance, this type of employment is also associated with the benefit of improved job security for men. Theoretically there is no convincing explanation for this finding, though it may be that employers experience difficulty recruiting staff who are prepared to work weekends and that, in turn, those parents willing to work weekends may be especially valued by their employers and perceive dismissal to be highly unlikely.

Overall, my results show that type of daily hours schedule has a marginal effect on workers' perceptions of insecurity and experiences of work-family balance. However, the regression analysis did reveal that women who work regular evenings or nights feel significantly more secure than women with regular daytime work. This is a surprising result, though again it may be that this type of work is unpopular and that employers are unlikely to dismiss employees who are prepared to work such non-standard hours. Alternatively, the result may simply be an artefact of the sample given that only 76 women (6.7%) work evenings or nights.

Contrary to expectations, regular evening or night work is not linked to poorer work-family balance, controlling for various employment, household and demographic characteristics. Fenwick and Tausig (2001: 1189-1190) likewise report that non-day shiftwork does not have a significant negative effect on work-family balance for Americans. Evening or night work may not disrupt family life when such work is regular because parents are able to plan childcare ahead. Such workers may also feel that they have adequate time to interact with their children in the mornings after arriving home from work or in the afternoons before leaving for work.

My regression results also show that work-family balance is significantly poorer among men, but not women, who work irregular shifts rather than a regular daytime shift. However, the full model with gender interactions shows that the difference between regular daytime work and irregular shiftwork does not significantly vary by gender. Thus, there is only

weak evidence that irregular shiftwork negatively impacts parents' work-family balance.

Across the multivariate modelling, no significant relationship was observed between irregular shiftwork and job insecurity. As with irregular day scheduling, it may be that even though the timing of shifts is irregular, paid work may still be continuously available over the medium term.

### **The role of gender**

I initially hypothesised that women would experience poorer work-family balance, controlling for participation in flexible employment, than men because of their role as a primary carer (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000). By and large, previous research has reported that women experience significantly more difficulty balancing paid work with their family obligations than men do (Friedman and Greenhaus, 2000: 35; Glass and Camarigg, 1992: 140; Marshall and Barnett, 1993: 73; Saltzstein et al., 2001: 459). Contrary to these past findings and theoretical expectations, my analysis found no significant difference between men's and women's experiences of work-family balance, after controlling for a number of employment and family characteristics. Furthermore, the overall gender comparison revealed that men experience greater work-to-family strain than women. Although this finding is unusual, it is not entirely unprecedented as both Eagle *et al* (1998) and White (1999) have also reported finding poorer work-family balance among men.

There are two main explanations that address why women do not experience more strain than men: either men are finding it increasingly more difficult to balance paid work with family life or women are finding it increasingly easier to combine paid work with their family responsibilities. Considering the first explanation, it has been argued that traditional gender roles are being disrupted in contemporary society, one consequence of which is that men are beginning to take a more active role in their child(ren)s upbringing. However, Baxter (2002) has shown that while men's participation in housework and childcare has proportionately increased, this has only occurred because women have reduced their participation in housework and that there remains a substantial gender gap in men's and women's contribution to housework. Yet perhaps contemporary men desire greater involvement with their child(ren), but find current employment structures and workplace cultures inhibit conversion of these preferences to a reality (Eagle et al., 1998: 706; Hochschild, 1997). For instance, men may find it harder to utilise family friendly benefits, such as flextime or parental leave, than women because workplace cultures view family friendly practices as benefits intended for less-committed female employees only (Hochschild, 1997; Pocock, 2003: 147). Alternatively, even without attitudinal change, it may be that increasing average weekly work hours for full-timers (Watson et al., 2003: 86-87) may be making it harder for men to be even marginally involved in family life compared to a decade ago (Eagle et al., 1998).



The second explanation that may address why women do not feel greater work-to-family strain than men highlights changes in women's rather than men's experiences of paid employment and/or the family. Women's changing work or family behaviours may be allowing women to balance work and family with greater ease. This analysis has concentrated on particular types of flexibility and it may be that other practices are more important for women when it comes to balancing work and family, such as flexible hours initiatives and access to short-term leave. Flexible hours initiatives (flexitime, flextime, etc) are the most common family-friendly provisions offered by employers (Glass and Fujimoto, 1995: 383; Russell and Bowman, 2000: 27; Williams, 2000: 86; Wolcott and Glezer, 1995: 34). If women are more likely to use flexitime than men, then this could explain why women experience similar levels of work-family balance as men, despite performing the bulk of housework and childcare. However, past research provides no evidence that women are more likely to access flexible start and finishing times (ACIRRT, 1999: 123; Gray and Tudball, 2002: 20; Saltzstein et al., 2001: 457) and there is also evidence that access to flexitime does not substantially improve parents' work-family balance (Christensen and Staines, 1990: 475; Clark, 2001: 362; Saltzstein et al., 2001: 461). Clearly, there are a number of potentially valid explanations for my finding that women do not experience poorer work-family balance than men. Future research may pursue this topic further by trying to untangle each of the possible causes.

I initially hypothesised that even after controlling for flexible employment, men would feel more insecure than women because of their role as primary income earner and because they have traditionally been more work-orientated than women (Hakim, 2000: 71; Naswall and De Witte, 2003: 194). The bivariate analysis revealed that overall perceptions of job insecurity do differ by gender, with men feeling slightly more insecure. However, gender is not a significant predictor of job insecurity in the full model with gender interactions, indicating that the overall difference between men's and women's perceptions of job insecurity is related to gendered employment locations and work experiences<sup>5</sup>. Also, in the full model, similar parameters are significant predictors of job insecurity for both men and women. These results are not especially novel, as other quantitative survey evidence has also shown that job insecurity does not vary substantially by gender (Felstead et al., 1998: 183; Manski and Straub, 2000: 461).

## **Conclusion**

While this thesis has been able to explore a number of different aspects of employment flexibility, the research still has a number of limitations. First, HILDA only provided questions that allowed for the construction of global measures of job insecurity and work-family balance. Clearly, there are different dimensions to job insecurity and work-family balance and the effects of flexible employment may vary across these different dimensions. A second

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<sup>5</sup> For simplicity, the intermediate model with gender interactions was not presented, though results with the pooled data for men and women showed that gender was not a significant predictor in the intermediate model.

limitation has been that I have not distinguished between voluntary and involuntary scheduling practices. The effect of flexible scheduling practices is undoubtedly mediated by whether or not such work arrangements are voluntarily chosen by employees (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001).

Finally, this thesis has ignored how job insecurity and work-family balance may mutually affect each other. Stress caused by high job insecurity may create strain within the household. On the other hand, parents may compensate for the stress caused by job insecurity by seeking personal satisfaction through greater participation in family life. Exploring the direction of causality remains the task of future researchers.

The costs and benefits of non-standard scheduling vary by schedule type and by gender. Few scheduling measures are significant determinants of parents' experiences of work-family balance. Moreover, work schedules that involve working different days each week or month do not have any effect on parents' experiences of work-to-family strain and are associated with feelings of greater security for men and women alike. Overall, these results are consistent with Tausig and Fenwick's (Fenwick and Tausig, 2001; Tausig and Fenwick, 2001) conclusion that, "the negative effects of working non-standard shifts ... appear to be more limited than what previous studies have found when looking at specific occupations and types of workers". However, it is clear that the effects of unusual scheduling practices has received much less attention than part-time and casual work (or temporary work overseas), and more research is warranted in this area. In particular, it would be interesting to explore whether and how different work schedules are

negotiated between employers and employees. Moreover, there are likely to be other costs associated with working unusual schedules, particularly relating to leisure and social contact, which were not examined in this thesis.

Part-time employment by offering parents fewer hours of work per week, is associated with improved work-family balance for both men and women and does not incur the cost of compromised job security. However, it is not readily apparent whether men who currently work part-time voluntarily seek this type of employment to improve work-family balance or are involuntary part-time workers, who have incidentally found this type of employment to improve their work-family balance. An examination of this issue would be a logical extension to the research reported in this thesis. In addition, this analysis has overlooked the objective indicators of work quality, such as income, autonomy, prospect for training and promotion, which are likely to affect part-time employees' experiences of work.

Overall, casual employment does not benefit men's or women's work-family balance and is associated with the cost of heightened job insecurity about the future. These results are consistent with past Australian labour market research, which has concluded that casual employment is a form of second-rate employment promoting labour market inequality (Baxter, 1998; Pocock, 2003; Watson et al., 2003). From the perspective of working parents, the promotion of casual work as a policy to improve work-family balance is likely to fail given current conditions. Finally, government policies that curtail the process of casualisation within the Australian workforce are likely to be of great benefit to both current and future employees. In

conclusion, not all flexible employment necessarily entails the cost of high job insecurity to employees and particular forms of employment can provide working parents with greater flexibility to balance paid work with family obligations.

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