

Contingent Work and Gender in Australia: Evidence from the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey

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Abstract

The decreasing prevalence of the standard model of employment embodied by the 'typical male full-time employee on a permanent contract' can be seen both as risking the erosion of hard won labour rights and as offering the potential for a more flexible, less 'male' model. This paper addresses some of the ways in which this tension is played out, drawing on data from the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations (AWIRS95) Employee Survey to examine the implications for women workers of recent trends in contingent employment in Australia. Our analysis suggests that the growth in contingent employment in Australia has had little positive impact on women's experience of work. We conclude that if the disadvantage faced by women in irregular employment is to be countered, greater regulation of such employment is required. However, key features of the Workplace

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Relations Act 1996 make the regulation of the conditions of contingent employment even more difficult to achieve than in the past. The result of current policy settings is likely to be the further institutionalisation of women's disadvantage at work and in the labour market.

Introduction

The decreasing prevalence of the standard model of employment embodied by the 'typical male full-time employee on a permanent contract' (European Commission 1997: 1) can be seen both as risking the erosion of hard won labour rights and as offering the potential for a more flexible, less 'male' model. This paper addresses some of the ways in which this tension is played out, drawing on data from the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations (AWIRS95) Employee Survey to examine the implications for women workers of recent trends in contingent employment in Australia. We begin with a brief overview of trends in, and forms of, contingent employment, and an outline of the main debates over their implications for gender equality in employment.

Contingent Employment: Trends and Implications

A great deal of literature has highlighted the magnitude of the overall trend away from full-time permanent employment and the changing gender balance in labour markets evident in most industrialised nations. In spite of significant cross-national variation in the extent and type of contingent employment, erosion of the 'standard' model appears ubiquitous.¹ By the mid-1990s, males in permanent full-time jobs accounted for less than half of all employees in a number of European countries² (European Commission 1997: ii). In Australia, a similar situation was evident by the late 1980s, and by 1997 permanent full-time males accounted for only around 42 per cent of all employees (ABS 1997; see also Campbell 1998: Table 6.1).³

A wide variety of 'contingent' forms of employment has taken the place of permanent, full-time jobs. These include all forms of temporary and casual employment (full-time and part-time non-permanent jobs including fixed-term employment), part-time employment (whether permanent or casual), and some forms of contracting out and outwork. Women predominate in some, but not all, these forms of contingent employment. Our paper focuses specifically on part-time work and casual work, as well as fixed-term employment, as the main categories of non-standard work for which suitable data are available. These types of employment (particularly casual

part-time employment) are most commonly analysed in terms of their risks for deteriorating conditions of employment, especially for those sections of the workforce considered to be most vulnerable. For women, whose disadvantage in the labour market may be partly explained by their (on average) more tenuous labour force attachment and the associated difficulties of career progression, forms of employment outside the traditional permanent full-time model may well exacerbate labour market divisions and reinforce their location outside the primary, career linked sections of the labour market. As noted above, however, there may also be the potential for a more flexible, less 'male' model of employment that remains within, or permits access to, primary sections of the labour market. Debates and evidence to date on these contrasting possibilities are examined below with respect to part-time and fixed-term employment.

Part-time employment provides a clear example of the contrasting possibilities within contingent forms of work. For example, working arrangements involving shortened, or greater flexibility and control over, hours of work hold some positive potential. Such arrangements may enhance prospects for advancement by facilitating the combination of work and family responsibilities without distancing workers from training programs and career ladders.⁴ Clearly this positive potential will be limited where the 'control' factor is absent, and working hours flexibility involves uncertainty and irregularity of hours, and/or separation from career progression within the organisation.

Variation in the conditions attached to part-time work will reflect the goals of employers and overall approaches to work organisation. The distinction between 'retention' and 'secondary' part-time jobs (Tilly 1992a, 1992b), in which 'secondary' jobs are inferior in terms of skills and training, compensation, turnover and links with promotional ladders (Tilly 1992b: 231), is one way of conceptualising this variation. Tilly's view has parallels with Christensen's (1995) distinction between strategies in the use of part-time or other contingent employment as fitting within either 'human investment' or 'human cost' paradigms. Essentially the former approach involves the provision of conditions to retain the skills of valued employees, while the latter is conceived as a strategy which views workers as costs to be cut when the need arises (Christensen 1995: 13). Tilly has argued that such divisions can best be explained by reference to the internal labour markets in which part-time jobs are located, and thus that 'part-time jobs are good or bad for the same reasons that full-time jobs are ... it is the secondary labour market embodied in the part-time jobs, not their shortened hours, that brands them as inferior' (1992b: 236).

Such a distinction suggests that contrasting possibilities within part-time employment will vary along occupation and/or industry lines.⁵ The use of working time flexibility to meet variations in demand in comparatively low-skill occupations is likely to be driven primarily by cost minimisation goals and is unlikely to offer benefits in terms of hours control or career continuity. In more highly skilled occupational groups (and to date most evident in public sector employment) part-time work may enable women to maintain labour market attachment and career progression while coping with life-cycle fluctuations in domestic demands. However, clear distinctions between two distinct 'types' of part-time work on the basis of skill may not always be apparent. For example, even in some comparatively skilled occupations, part-time workers may be segregated into job classifications that provide little or no access to advancement within an organisation. As Junor notes, for example, the use of permanent part-time employment in the banks has been designed primarily to retain the customer relations skills of mature-aged women, but these employees are explicitly locked out of career paths within the banks (Junor 1998: 207).

In evaluating differences within part-time work, one of the criteria which has been considered most important is permanency. Security of employment is lacking for temporary/casual workers, and permanency is frequently associated with a greater regularity of hours. Australian attempts to 'de-casualise' part-time work have focused on these problems of non-permanent employment, although a number of different motives for greater utilisation of permanent part-time (as opposed to casual part-time) workers can be identified. The move has been driven both by the union movement, seeking greater security of employment and regularity of hours for part-time workers; and by employers, seeking in some cases retention of skilled staff and in others enhanced flexibility. Again, variations are likely to be evident across occupations and industries, with males and females, and different age cohorts, clustered in different types of part-time work. Casual part-time jobs predominate in industries such as retail and hospitality, with many of these jobs occupied by young workers who are frequently studying for jobs elsewhere in the labour market. For mature aged women, however, a great deal of part-time employment growth has been in permanent jobs in industries such as finance and insurance, property and business services, and government and community services (Junor 1998: 205).

It is certainly not clear, however, that this 'permanency' delivers significant benefits. In fact, the distinction between 'casual' and 'permanent' in describing Australian part-time jobs may provide little indication of job conditions. While there are clearly advantages attached to permanent status,

research to date shows a great deal of variability within both 'casual' and 'permanent' part-time employment, and an increasingly blurred boundary between them. Enterprise bargaining has delivered a range of what have been termed 'cocktail contracts' (Campbell and Burgess 1996: 39), involving mixtures of set hours under permanent conditions with additional hours under casual conditions, and in some cases divisions have been created among permanent employees in terms of regularity and spread of hours (Whitehouse et al 1997: 44-45; see also case studies reported in Smith et al 1997; Charlesworth 1996; Deery and Mahoney 1994; Junor, Barlow and Patterson 1993). In some areas of part-time employment, then, the conditions of permanent jobs have moved closer to those traditionally associated with casual work.

The quality of part-time employment is clearly variable, and measures to enhance permanency and predictability are countered in some areas by pressures for greater numerical flexibility and cost savings. Fixed-term employment, in contrast, appears comparatively advantageous in terms of working time predictability and continuity – at least in the short term. However, this type of employment generally has none of the hours flexibility that can be delivered through permanent part-time or job sharing arrangements, and hence it offers less to those seeking flexibility to assist with the combination of work and family responsibilities. Moreover, use of fixed-term, as opposed to permanent, employees is clearly a strategy designed to maximise options for cost containment. The lack of long term security in this type of employment may lead to a high level of pressure to perform in order to secure re-employment – thus tending to lock employees into long hours of work. Again, this type of employment is likely to be concentrated in particular occupations and industries, for example where highly skilled employees are required to devote regular hours to their tasks but where demand or style of service delivery may vary over time.

In summary, evaluation of the impact on women of the trend away from full-time, permanent work therefore requires recognition of the variety of forms of employment outside the standard model, the extent to which these are taken up differentially by men and women, and variations in the conditions of such employment across the labour market. We expect that, on average, there will be disadvantages attached to the more contingent working arrangements we investigate (that is, fixed-term compared with non-fixed-term full-time permanent employment, part-time compared with full-time, and casual compared with permanent), although on the basis of previous research, differences between permanent part-time and casual part-time may not be particularly marked. A number of possibilities exist

regarding the implications for women. Firstly, if the data do show clear disadvantages attached to these types of contingent employment, women will – on average – be disadvantaged to the extent that they are over-represented in such forms of work.⁶ Such a finding would be consistent with previous research which examines the relative access of men and women, and part-time and casual employees, to training in the Australian labour market (see Smith and Ewer 1995). It may also be the case, however, that women are disadvantaged compared with men within contingent forms of employment – that is, that contingency and gender combine to explain women's labour market disadvantage.

Evidence from the 1995 Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (AWIRS95)⁷

The availability of AWIRS95 gives us the opportunity to systematically investigate the incidence and character of contingent employment in Australia utilising recently gathered high quality data. Here we use the Employee Survey component of AWIRS95 which surveyed randomly selected employees from the 2001 workplaces that participated in the main workplace survey. In all 19,155 employees completed useable employee surveys resulting in a 64 per cent response rate. Further details concerning the methods employed for AWIRS95 can be found in Morehead et al (1997, Chapter 3).

In the following analysis we examine the prevalence of the various forms of contingent work and then investigate in greater detail fixed-term, part-time and casual employment. In particular we estimate the incidence of fixed-term, casual part-time, casual full-time and permanent part-time employment compared with the 'reference' category of permanent full-time employment. We then test the proposition that each of the categories of contingent work is characterised by lower pay, lower levels of autonomy, discretion and power at work, more negative views about work and lower levels of satisfaction compared with full-time permanent employees. Above we argue that some of the major issues for contingent workers include control over hours of work, access to adequate training, the existence of career paths, the adequacy of pay and levels of employment security. We are able to assess the extent to which each of these concerns appears to be a problem across each category of contingent work, but we also look further. Below we look at a number of indicators of autonomy and control at work, attitudes to work and levels of satisfaction with various aspects of employees' jobs.

As we note above one of the critical dimensions of contingent employment concerns the over-representation of women in part-time and casual employment. While this over-representation accounts for at least *some* of the disadvantage suffered by women in the labour market and at work we also ask whether female contingent workers appear to endure poorer conditions than male contingent workers do. In other words to what extent are the more adverse conditions and experiences of work reported by women caused by their over-representation amongst the ranks of contingent workers.

The Prevalence of Contingent Employment

The AWIRS95 Employee Survey allows us to identify three relevant categories of employees.⁸ Casual employees are identified on the basis that they report that they do not receive either paid holiday leave (E14A)⁹ or paid sick leave (E14B). Technically speaking, the lack of access to these forms of leave is not the *defining* feature of casual employment.¹⁰ However, it is an almost universal feature of casual working arrangements and for this reason has become the standard means of identifying casual employees (see Dawkins and Norris 1990). Using this measure 10.2 per cent of employees covered by the survey fell into this category.¹¹ Given patterns of casual employment routinely reported by the Australian Bureau of Statistics this figure is smaller than expected. However, it must be remembered that the AWIRS95 employee survey is restricted to employees in workplaces of 20 or more; small workplaces are therefore not represented and this should account for much of the discrepancy. Nevertheless the AWIRS95 figure is still lower than a comparable estimate provided by the ABS. When the ABS sample is restricted to employees in workplaces of at least 20 employees 16 per cent still emerge as casual (Morehead et al 1997: 58).

Part-time employees are those who report that they work less than 35 hours per week (excluding overtime). Such employees make up 23 per cent of employees surveyed in the AWIRS95 Employee Survey, which is slightly higher than the corresponding ABS estimate (21 per cent), but lower than that from the AWIRS95 Main survey (25 per cent) (Morehead et al 1997, 58).

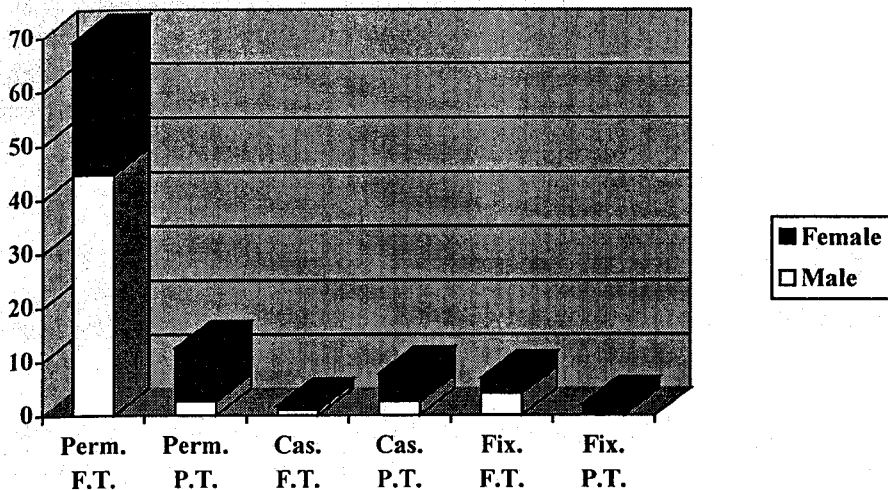
These are not mutually exclusive categories. In light of the possibility that a key determinant of the quality of jobs is whether they are casual or permanent, it is useful to divide part-time employees into permanent and casual categories. 63.5 per cent of part-time employees are employed on a permanent basis (14.1 per cent of all employees) and 36.5 per cent are casuals (8.1 per cent of all employees).

Finally, we are able to identify fixed-term contract employees using a question that simply asks them if they are employed on such a basis (E15). Such employees make up 8.6 per cent of the Employee Survey respondents and there are no alternative sources of data for comparison.

In the case of fixed-term employees, the distribution between full and part-time status matched exactly that for the survey population, with 23 per cent reporting that they worked fewer than 35 hours per week. The degree of overlap between fixed-term status and casual status is a little more difficult to make sense of. While a fixed-term employee does not, by definition, have permanency, most receive pro-rata benefits consistent with full-time permanent employment and thus are classified as 'permanent' rather than 'casual'. Given our definitions some in the AWIRS95 sample do classify themselves as casual because they don't get paid holiday and sick leave. Thus, 7.1 per cent of fixed-term employees reported that they were employed on a casual basis and the remaining 92.9 per cent that they had permanent status. This suggests that contract employees are, in fact, slightly more likely than the employee population as a whole to be offered paid holiday and sick leave. However, since the degree of overlap between casual and fixed-term employment status is small, and almost certainly an artefact of the definitional system employed, we regard the two populations as for all intents and purposes separate. Reflecting this, the figures presented in Figure 1 treat Fixed-term employees as separate from Permanent and Casual regardless of whether they had access to sick leave and holiday pay.

Almost 70 per cent of the AWIRS95 sample can be classified as permanent full-time employees, 12.4 per cent are permanent part-time, just 1.8 per cent are casual full-time, 7.7 per cent are casual part-time, 6.9 per cent are fixed-term full-time, and 2.1 per cent are fixed-term part-time. Figure 1 also shows the proportion of male and female employees falling into each of the categories of contingent workers and the category of permanent full-time workers. Women are over-represented in all the part-time categories (permanent, casual and fixed-term) and are most strikingly under-represented in the large permanent full-time classification. Women make up just 35.7 per cent of full-time permanent employees yet constitute almost 44.9 per cent of respondents to the AWIRS95 Employee Survey. In all, almost 45 per cent of female employees worked in something other than a permanent full-time job compared with just fewer than 20 per cent of men who could be classified as 'contingent' according to the definitions employed here. The gender breakdown for each of the classifications is discussed in more detail below.

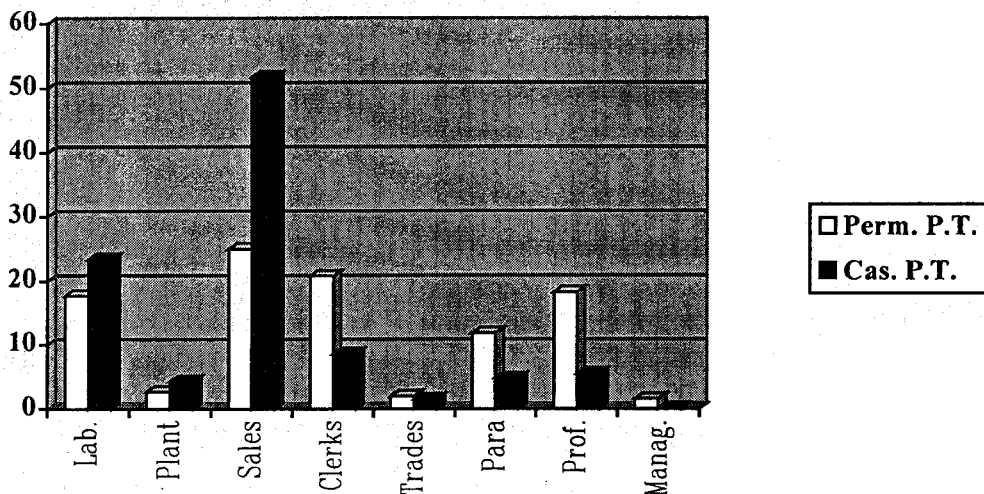
Figure 1 Employment Status by Gender (Percentage of all Employees in Permanent Full-time, Permanent Part-time, Casual Full-time, Casual Part-time, Fixed-term Full-time and Fixed-term Part-time Employment, by Gender)



(Weighted to population [Empwt1] N=3,442,644)

NB: for the purpose of this analysis, employees who identified themselves as Fixed-term were excluded from the figures for Permanent and Casual.

Figure 2 Permanent and Fixed-term Employment Status by Occupation (Percentage of Permanent Employees and Fixed-term Employees in Each of the ASCO Major Groups)



(Weighted to population [Empwt1] N=3,442,644)

Fixed-term Employment

We have argued above that fixed-term employees represent a distinct population, in the sense that they do not fit comfortably into the definition of either 'permanent' or 'casual' employment. The only dimension on which they overlap with other categories of contingent work is that of working hours; that is, fixed-term employees can be classified as either full-time or part-time workers. On this dimension the ratio of part-time to full-time fixed-term employees is virtually identical to that of permanent part-time to permanent full-time employees.

There does not seem to be any noteworthy over-representation of either gender in fixed-term employment. Our analysis shows that 51.1 per cent of fixed-term employees were female and 48.9 per cent were male. (Women make up 44.9 per cent of all AWIRS95 employees and men constitute 55.1 per cent). Further, as illustrated by Figure 1, the distribution of male and female workers within the category of permanent full-time employees is very similar to that for fixed-term full-time employees, and the same holds true for permanent part-time and fixed-term part-time categories. On these dimensions, there is a striking lack of difference between fixed-term employees and permanent employees.

On the basis of these findings, we devote this part of the paper to exploring the extent to which fixed-term and permanent employees differ from each other on a range of other dimensions, with a view to assessing whether these employees can legitimately be placed within the category of 'contingent' workers. Traditionally, fixed-term employees have been regarded as a critical part of the labour force that has been able to provide numerical flexibility. The limited tenure of fixed-term contracts has allowed employers to deploy and dismiss these employees as dictated by fluctuations in demand.

The other traditional category of fixed-term employees were thought to be more in the character of contractors brought in for a specific task for a specified period. In either case the proponents of flexible specialisation and the flexible firm have not normally seen fixed-term employees as part of the core workforce. For example, Atkinson (1987, 95), after defining core workers as male, full-time, permanent employees that tend to enjoy long job tenures, classifies fixed-term workers as either part of the periphery or part of the external workforce. While Atkinson concedes that this external workforce is likely to be 'more varied' than the other two groups there is no suggestion that fixed-term workers can be part of the core and can enjoy the level of discretion, autonomy or influence exercised by the full-time, permanent, long tenure workers in the core.

We question whether fixed-term workers can be placed alongside most part-time and casual employees in the periphery or dismissed simply as contractors providing the necessary 'distance' required by the flexible firm. If the flexible firm perspectives are right then we should expect fixed-term workers to exhibit either the characteristics associated with the periphery (low pay, low levels of autonomy and relative dissatisfaction with aspects of their work), or those associated with external contract workers (low levels of integration with the firm and staff, and limited opportunities for participation in decision-making).

Our reference group for comparisons is permanent employees, on the basis that the key dimension differentiating fixed-term employees from other employees is their lack of ongoing employment. We commence by comparing permanent and fixed-term employees in terms of their distributions by industry, occupation and public/private sector, before moving to comparisons of a range of outcomes for employees.

While there are broad similarities between the populations of fixed-term and permanent employees, they differ significantly on a number of key dimensions. Figure 2 shows the percentages of fixed-term and permanent employees, respectively, which fall into each of the ASCO Major Groups. The most striking finding is that almost one third of fixed-term employees (30.1 per cent) are Professionals, compared to only 17.6 per cent of permanent employees. In contrast, significantly greater percentages of Clerks, Salespersons and Personal Service Workers and Plant and Machine Operators and Drivers are employed on a permanent basis.

Comparisons by industry sector (ANZIC) and public/private sector also turned up some noteworthy differences between the populations. In terms of the former, the more significant differences were that: nearly one quarter of permanent employees worked in Manufacturing (20.6 per cent) compared to only 10.5 per cent of fixed-term employees; 4.3 per cent of permanent employees worked in wholesale trade compared to 1.5 per cent of fixed-term employees; and 5.3 per cent of permanent employees in Finance and Insurance compared to 1.4 per cent of fixed-term. On the other hand, over one quarter of fixed-term employees were employed in Education (25.1 per cent) compared to only 10.5 per cent of permanent employees.

Finally, 68.5 per cent of fixed-term employees were employed in the public sector, compared to 46.9 per cent of permanent employees. How then can we characterise fixed-term employees? These findings suggest that they are disproportionately likely, compared to permanent employees, to be professionals working in education in the public sector. Indeed, we calculate that 15.9 per cent of fixed-term employees fell into this category.

The findings show clearly that fixed-term employees differ from permanent employees in a number of ways, but not in the ways that are conventionally associated with contingent employment. We now turn to consider a number of outcome measures, as a means to explore differences between fixed-term and permanent employees' experiences of work.

As a means to identify systematic differences on a range of dimensions, we chose to conduct bivariate correlation analysis. Accordingly, we constructed a dichotomous dummy variable whereby fixed-term employees were assigned a value of 1 and permanent employees a value of 0. Other employees were coded as missing and not included in the analysis. Correlation analysis (Kendall's tau_b) was then conducted to explore possible associations between fixed-term status and measures of pay level, employee autonomy, attitudes to work and satisfaction with work.

Pay level was captured by a scale variable taken directly from the Employee Survey, in which employees were asked to assign themselves to a pre-tax income category (E47). The lowest category was 'Less than \$100 per week' (1) and the highest was '\$1150 or more per week' (23), with each gradation in between being \$49. For the purposes of correlation analysis, the variable was simply used as a scale with a range from 1 to 23.

Autonomy was captured by six items based on a question which asked employees 'In general, how much influence or input do you have about the following?' and listed: 'The type of work you do' (E28A); 'How you do your work' (E28B); 'When you start and finish work' (E28C); 'The pace at which you do your job' (E28D); 'The way the workplace is managed or organised' (E28E); and 'Decisions which affect you at this workplace' (E28F). Each response was scored on a scale from 'None' (0), 'A Little' (1), 'Some' (2) and 'A Lot' (3). These items were also used as scales.

Three additional items were included as measures of autonomy. The first asked 'If you needed ... would you get the chance to work from home sometimes?' (E17D). The second asked 'Were you consulted about any changes that have happened at this workplace over the last 12 months?' (E23). The third question was 'Do you think that you were given a fair chance to have a say about the changes that have happened at this workplace over the last 12 months?' (E25). All items were coded as dichotomous dummy variables (1= 'yes' and 2= 'no')

Attitudes to work were based on a question which asked 'Do you agree or disagree with the following statements?' and then listed: 'I get paid fairly for the things I do in my job' (E29A); 'I do lots of different tasks in my job' (E29B); 'I feel insecure about my future here' (E29C); 'My job is very stressful' (E29D); 'This is a good place to work' (E29E); 'I often think

about leaving this job' (E29F); and 'I put a lot of effort into my job' (E29G). Each item was scored as 'Disagree' (0), 'Neither agree nor disagree' (1) or 'Agree' (2). Generally, we contend that these attitudes help tell us something about the quality of the employee's working life, although not all the measures are necessarily easy to interpret. For example, we include the diversity of tasks variable (E29B) assuming that employees will normally gain more from jobs which are diverse rather than mundane and repetitive. However, it should be recognised that this variable could be interpreted differently: greater task diversity may be tantamount to job intensification. Given the recent history of retrenchments and downsizing in many different organisations it is likely that many workers have had to take on more tasks owing to fewer employees and, as a result, their jobs might have become much more demanding and unpleasant rather than more diverse and enriched.

Finally, satisfaction was based on a question which asked 'Are you satisfied with the following aspects of your job?' and listed: 'The job related training you get at this workplace' (E30A); 'The chances you have to get a more senior job in this organisation' (E30D); 'The way management treats you and others here' (E30E); 'The safety and comfort of the conditions that you work in' (E30G); and 'Your job overall' (E30H).

Bivariate correlation analysis of each of these measures with the fixed-term status dummy produced no statistically significant correlation with a value higher than 0.08 and the majority of associations were not even statistically significant. On this basis, we conclude that there is little significant difference between fixed-term employees and permanent employees in terms of pay rates, autonomy, attitude to work or satisfaction with work.

In conjunction with our findings about the occupational, industrial and sectoral characteristics of fixed-term employees, these findings suggest that while these workers may legitimately be classified as 'contingent', they do not share the characteristics of other contingent workers. This is not to say that fixed-term employment is as desirable as permanent employment. It is more the case that a significant proportion of fixed-term jobs tends to be found in relatively high status occupations (eg: professionals) and in white-collar industries (eg: education) and these employees' responses might counteract the more negative picture presented by the more marginalised fixed-term workers. Evidently the fixed-term population is very diverse and the implications of their contingent status are felt differently by different workers. It is clearly problematic to classify all fixed-term workers as

'peripheral' given the lack of distinction between them and permanent employees.

Part-time and Casual Employees

In this part of the paper, we consider the other two main forms of contingent work: part-time and casual employment. We explore differences between part-time and full-time employment, between permanent and casual employment and between permanent part-time and casual part-time employment. Again, we identify differences between populations of employees in terms of occupation, industry and sector, and then turn to outcome measures. Since we have argued that fixed-term employees represent a discrete population of workers we exclude them from this analysis.

Numerous previous studies have shown that part-time employees are clustered in particular occupations and industries and that women are over-represented in part-time work (Tergeist 1995; Warne et al 1992; Lewis 1989) and thus our results are not surprising. Our analysis shows that 74.9 per cent of part-time employees are female compared to only 35.8 per cent of full-timers. Further, 35.2 per cent of part-time employees are Salespersons and Personal Service Workers (compared to 8.7 per cent of full-time workers), 19.8 per cent are Labourers and Related Workers (13.8 of full-time employees), while only 1.1 per cent of part-time employees are Managers and Administrators. Similarly, part-timers are over-represented in particular industries relative to full-timers. Almost 23 per cent (22.9) work in Retailing (6.8 of full-timers), 22.3 per cent in Health and Community Services (8.7 of full-time), 15.5 per cent in Education (8.3 of full-time) and 12.3 per cent in Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants (2.8 of full-time). The only dimension on which there is no difference is public and private sector employment where the distribution of part-time to full-time employees was identical.

A very similar pattern emerged when we compared permanent and casual workers which was, again, consistent with the findings of previous studies (Campbell and Burgess 1996; Wooden 1996). Our results showed that 62.7 per cent of casual employees were female compared to 42.3 per cent of permanent employees. There was even more striking occupational clustering than for part-time workers, with 46.4 per cent of casuals employed as Salespersons and Personal Service Workers (10.8 per cent of permanents) and 23.6 per cent as Labourers and Related Workers (14.1 per cent of permanents). On the other hand, only 0.8 per cent of casuals were Managers and Administrators (7.7 per cent of permanents), 6.2 per cent were Professionals (17.6 per cent of permanents) and 5.1 per cent Para-Pro-

professionals (10.6 per cent of permanents). The major industries for casuals were Retailing (29.0 per cent, compared to 8.2 per cent of permanents) and Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants (22.7 per cent compared to 2.9 per cent of permanents). Finally, the data suggest that casual employment is predominantly a private sector phenomenon, with three-quarters (74.9 per cent) of casuals employed in private sector workplaces.

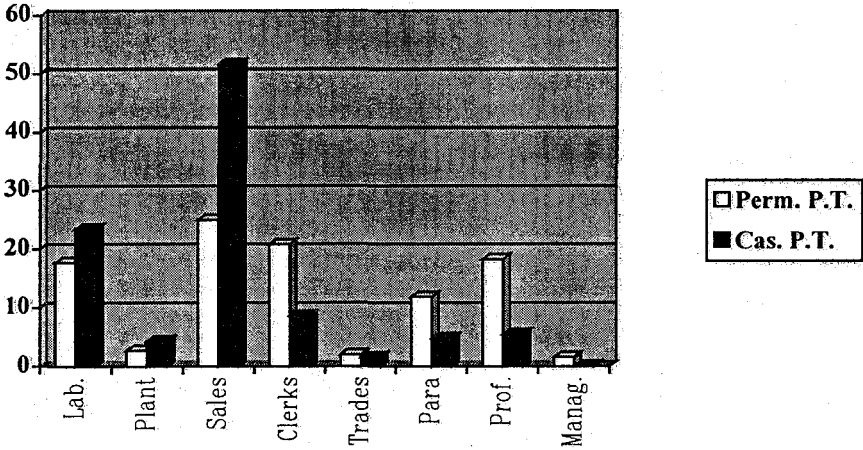
The final division to be considered here is that between permanent part-time and casual part-time employees. That is, we examine variations within the population of part-time employees, and again we compare the distributions of these two groups by gender, by occupation, by industry and by sector. Dealing firstly with gender, our analysis shows that 79.5 per cent of permanent part-time employees are female, compared to only 67.4 per cent of casual part-timers. That is, within the category of part-time workers, where women are significantly over-represented, they are more over-represented among permanent part-time employees than casuals. Secondly, a greater proportion of casual part-time employees worked in the private sector (73.9 per cent) than did permanent part-time employees (44.1 per cent).

These findings are consistent with previous research. Young part-time workers predominate in hospitality and retail where casual work is very common and where employment tends to be reasonably split between the sexes. Older part-timers tend to be more often found in finance and banking and government. Here older women are much more common and the provision of permanent part-time work is much more established (Junor 1998).

Turning to occupation, Figure 3 shows the distribution of the two categories of workers across the ASCO Major Groups. The majority (51.7 per cent) of casual part-time employees is in sales and personal service jobs. It is in these occupations that casualisation appears to be most entrenched although it is also quite prevalent amongst labourers and related workers. More permanent forms of part-time work are more common in the white-collar, higher status and higher paying occupations: amongst professionals, para-professionals and managers and administrators. However, permanent part-time work is also more common than casual part-time work amongst clerical workers.

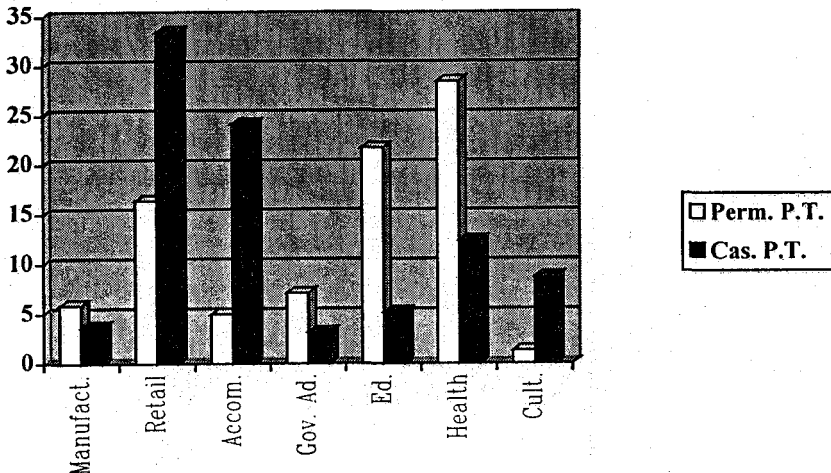
Figure 4 presents distributions across selected industries (only those where there were noteworthy differences between the two categories of employees are included).

Figure 3 Permanent Part-time and Casual Part-time Employment Status by Occupation (Percentage of Permanent Part-time Employees and Casual Part-time Employees in Each of the ASCO Major Groups)



(Weighted to population [Empwt1] N=3,442,644)

Figure 4 Permanent Part-time and Casual Part-time Employment Status by Selected ANZIC Industry Divisions (Percentage of Permanent Part-time Employees and Casual Part-time Employees in Each of the Divisions)



(Weighted to population [Empwt1] N=3,442,644)

Casualisation of part-time work is most pronounced in three industry classifications: Retail Trade, where more than one in three casual part-time employees work, Accommodation, Cafes and Restaurants, which employs almost a quarter of part-time casuals, and Cultural and Recreational Services. Permanency of part-time work is more established in Health and Community Services, Education, Government Administration and Manufacturing. The extent to which an industry's part-time workforce has been casualised appears to be related to union strength. Health, Education, Government and Manufacturing are all industries that enjoy above average union density rates while the more casualised industries are relatively lowly unionised.

The incidence of part-time and casual employment is not distributed evenly across the Australian labour market. Generally speaking contingent employment is more common in jobs in lowly unionised industries and in the lower reaches of occupational hierarchies. Women are under-represented in permanent, full-time jobs (where core jobs are most likely to be found) and over-represented in all forms of part-time work, whether permanent, casual or fixed-term.

Contingent employment might be more common in lower grade occupations, in poorly unionised industries and in relatively feminised areas of the labour market but is there evidence that employees in these jobs report adverse conditions and a less rewarding experience of work than their colleagues in permanent, full-time employment?

As a means of answering this we examine the extent to which the outcome measures described in the section on fixed-term employees (measures of pay level, employee autonomy, attitudes to work and satisfaction with work) were associated differentially with different employee status. Again we utilised bivariate correlation analysis (Kendall's tau_b). The employee status dummy variables were constructed to allow comparison between the two groups utilised in the analysis above. That is: full-time and part-time status; permanent and casual status; and permanent part-time and casual part-time status.

We first considered associations between employment status and pay level. The correlation between full-time status and the 23-point pay scale was 0.39^(p). The figure for permanent status was 0.34^(p) and for permanent part-time was 0.43^(p). The finding that part-time employees tend to earn less than full-time workers is hardly surprising since by definition they work fewer hours. The disparity between permanent and casual employees might also be explained, in part at least, by the over-representation of part-time employees among casuals. As a means to explore this possibility partial

correlation analysis, controlling for full-time status, was undertaken and produced a coefficient of 0.21^(p). This suggests that while hours worked accounts for *some* of the difference it certainly does not account for all of it. This almost certainly reflects the fact that part-time casuals tend to be employed at lower levels in occupational hierarchies than part-time permanents. We conclude therefore that part-time and casual work tends to be concentrated in the lower paid sections of the labour market, with, presumably, fewer opportunities for career progression. For example a great number of casual part-timers work in sales or as labourers or clerical workers in the retail and the accommodation, cafes and restaurants sectors.

Secondly, we examined possible associations between employment status and our measures of employee autonomy. Table 1 presents the results for the autonomy variables. The figures in italics, which are the partial correlation coefficients calculated when controlling for gender, are discussed later.

Table 1 Bivariate Correlations between Employment Status and Control over Work (Kendall's tau_b/Partial coefficient controlling for gender [*fem=1*])

| | How Work is Done | Pace of Work | Start and Finish Times | Type of Work | Workpl. Decisions | Workpl. Manag't | Consult. over Decisions | Given a Fair Say | Ability to Work at Home |
|----------------|------------------|----------------|------------------------|----------------|-------------------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------------------------|
| Full/Part-time | 0.09** | 0.06** | 0.09** | 0.08** | 0.09** | 0.10** | 0.09** | 0.03** | 0.14** |
| (FT=1, PT=0) | <i>0.10***</i> | <i>0.09***</i> | <i>0.10***</i> | <i>0.09***</i> | <i>0.09***</i> | <i>0.09***</i> | <i>0.09***</i> | <i>0.04***</i> | <i>0.11***</i> |
| Per/Cas | 0.11** | 0.05** | 0.06** | 0.09** | 0.09** | 0.11** | 0.12** | 0.05** | 0.10** |
| (Per=1, Cas=0) | <i>0.13***</i> | <i>0.08***</i> | <i>0.08***</i> | <i>0.11***</i> | <i>0.11***</i> | <i>0.12***</i> | <i>0.12***</i> | <i>0.05***</i> | <i>0.09***</i> |
| Per/Cas PT | 0.14** | 0.07** | 0.06** | 0.14** | 0.15** | 0.16** | 0.18** | 0.12** | 0.08** |
| (PPT=1, CPT=0) | <i>0.16***</i> | <i>0.07***</i> | <i>0.06***</i> | <i>0.16***</i> | <i>0.16***</i> | <i>0.20***</i> | <i>0.17***</i> | <i>0.10***</i> | <i>0.09***</i> |

Weighted to effective sample size (Rempwt1)

** = significant at 0.01 level; *** = significant at 0.001 level.

Given that contingent workers are likely to be marginalised at work in many different ways we would expect employment status to be related to the capacity to influence outcomes at work. The proposition we are testing is that, on average, part-time workers, casuals and casual part-timers will have less autonomy, discretion and ability to influence decisions at work than full-timers, permanents and permanent part-time employees. As can be seen from the bivariate correlation results presented in Table 1 there is indeed an association between employment status and every one of our measures of autonomy, discretion and influence at work. The stability and consistency of the results is quite remarkable; in every case non-contingent status is positively associated with greater control at work. While this

confirms our expectations it must be conceded that the correlation coefficients are small suggesting that contingent status makes a notable but not dramatic difference to workers' sense of control over their jobs and work environments.

For example the correlation coefficient for the association between permanent part-time status and consultation over decisions (0.18^(p)) reflects the pattern illustrated by Table 2. The table shows that only 43.1 per cent of casual part-time employees reported that they had been consulted over workplace change in the past twelve months, compared to 60.5 per cent of permanent part-time employees.

Table 2 Permanent Part-time and Casual Part-time Status by Whether Consulted Over Change in Last 12 Months (Row %/N)

| | Not Consulted | Consulted |
|---------------------|-----------------|-----------------|
| Permanent Part-time | 39.5% (147,334) | 60.5% (225,454) |
| Casual Part-time | 56.9% (125,092) | 43.1% (94613) |
| Total Part-time | 46.0% (272,426) | 54.0% (320,067) |

Weighted to population (Empwt1)
N=592,492

Table 3 Bivariate Correlations between Employment Status and Attitudes to Work (Kendall's tau_b)

| | I put a lot of effort into my job | This is a good place to work | I feel insecure about my future | I often think about leaving | I get paid fairly | My job is very stressful | I do lots of different tasks |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|---------------------|--------------------------|------------------------------|
| Full/Part-time (FT=1, PT=0) | -0.01 0.02* | -0.07** -0.06*** | 0.03** 0.01 | 0.07** 0.06*** | -0.09** -0.08*** | 0.12** 0.14*** | 0.10** 0.09*** |
| Per/Cas (Per=1, Cas=0) | 0.03** 0.04*** | -0.05** -0.05*** | 0.01 -0.00 | 0.05** 0.05*** | -0.10** -0.09*** | 0.16** 0.18*** | 0.11** 0.12*** |
| Per/Cas PT (PPT=1, CPT=0) | 0.12** 0.09*** | -0.05** -0.06*** | 0.02 0.03 | 0.05* 0.05* | -0.12** -0.14*** | 0.24** 0.25*** | 0.17** 0.15*** |

Weighted to effective sample size (Rempwt1)

*=significant at 0.05 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; *** = significant at 0.001 level.

Thirdly, we considered links between employment status and attitudes to work. Table 3 presents the results.

Contingent work status might be thought to be associated with less enthusiastic, positive and secure feelings about one's work. Generally, as demonstrated by the data presented in Table 2, the anticipated patterns prevail. However there are some interesting exceptions. First, there is no evidence of any correlation between contingent status and a feeling of

insecurity in the respondent's present employment – full-timers and permanent employees are just as likely to feel insecure (or secure) as contingent employees. In fact full-timers are a little more likely to express insecurity than part-timers ($\tau_{b} = 0.03^{(p)}$), perhaps reflecting fear of retrenchment and the high level of competition for scarce (full-time) work. It is also plausible that this reflects some full-time employees' recognition of the trend from full-time to part-time employment, and the fear that they may be replaced by a part-timer. Second, full-time and permanent workers appear to be slightly more likely to be regularly contemplating leaving their job than contingent workers are. Alongside the finding that full-timers and permanents are less likely to believe that their workplace is a 'good place to work' this suggests that spending more time at work might not be associated with positive feelings about work. Contingent workers are less likely to say that they put in a lot of effort, less likely to complain about their pay and less likely to see their jobs as stressful. Their jobs are also a little less likely to be seen as diverse.

Finally, we examined associations between employment status and satisfaction with a range of features of work.

Table 4 Bivariate Correlations between Employment Status and Satisfaction with Work (Kendall's τ_{b})

| | Satisfied with Job Overall | Satisfied with Manag't | Satisfied with chances for Promotion | Satisfied with Safety & Comfort | Satisfied with Training | Like to Work Less Hours | Like to Work More Hours | Happy with Hours |
|--------------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|--------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|
| Full/Part-time (FT=1, PT=0) | -0.08** | -0.08** | -0.05** | -0.01** | -0.07** | 0.15** | -0.20** | 0.00 |
| | -0.04*** | -0.05*** | -0.05*** | 0.01 | -0.03*** | 0.12*** | -0.25*** | 0.05*** |
| Per/Cas (Per=1, Cas=0) | -0.05** | -0.07** | -0.04** | 0.00 | -0.04** | 0.11** | -0.19** | 0.03** |
| | -0.03* | -0.04*** | -0.03*** | 0.00 | -0.02* | 0.09*** | -0.22*** | 0.05*** |
| Per/Cas PT (PPT=1, CPT=0) | -0.04* | -0.08** | -0.04 | 0.00 | -0.03 | 0.10 | -0.18** | 0.11** |
| | -0.04 | -0.07** | -0.00 | -0.03 | -0.03 | 0.12*** | -0.21*** | 0.12*** |

Weighted to effective sample size (Rempwt1)

* = significant at 0.05 level; ** = significant at 0.01 level; *** = significant at 0.001 level.

Consistent with the lack of an association between full-time or permanent status and positive feelings about work, full-timers, permanents and permanent part-timers are slightly less likely to report satisfaction with their jobs. This holds for evaluations of their jobs overall, of the performance of management, and of their opportunities for promotion and training.

Much of the literature and our interpretation of the contemporary patterns of labour market change point to the likelihood that contingent

workers are often not in part-time or casual employment because they want to be, but because they are unable to find full-time or permanent work. The finding that contingent workers generally would like more hours of work is consistent with this as well as with the claims that many full-time, permanent workers have experienced an intensification of their work and, presumably, an increase in hours they are required to work. It is unsurprising then that contingent workers are more likely to indicate that they are unhappy with the hours they are given and to express a desire for more hours.

These findings underline the impact of two very important trends that have been shaping labour market and work experience in Australia and other Anglophone countries in recent times. First, most of the jobs growth in Australia in the past decade has been in casual and part-time work (Norris 1996: 10, 193). The relative loss of full-time permanent jobs in the context of excess supply in the labour market has led to significant increases in underemployment as well as unemployment (Wooden 1993). This underemployment appears most pronounced amongst casual part-timers compared with permanent part-timers although it is present amongst casuals as compared to permanents generally.

Second, while contingent workers appear increasingly dissatisfied with the amount of work available full-time permanent workers appear unhappy with the stress and intensification of their work. Previous research has demonstrated work intensification as perceived by employees generally. According to the Department of Industrial Relations 1995 Annual Report work intensification over the preceding 12 months had increased for more employees than it had decreased whether measured by change in effort, stress or pace of work. Fifty-eight per cent reported that effort had increased (compared to 36 per cent claiming no change and 4 per cent reporting less effort). Fifty per cent claimed they felt more stress now than a year ago (compared to 41 per cent claiming no change and 7 per cent claiming less stress). Finally, 46 per cent said that the pace of their job had increased while 48 per cent felt no change and just 4 per cent reported a fall in the pace of their work (DIR 1996: 153).¹² The analysis reported here indicates that work intensification has been more significant for full-time, permanent and permanent part-time workers than for other workers.

The Role of Gender

In the first section we highlighted some of the interrelations between contingent work status and gender in the Australian labour market. We

know that women continue to suffer significant disadvantage and discrimination in the labour market. We also know that women tend to be over-represented in contingent work – casual employment, whether full-time or part-time and permanent part-time work. One of the key questions remains the extent to which the disadvantage suffered by women in the labour market and at work is a function of their contingent status, their gender or both.

In order to investigate this question we tested the hypothesis that the modest correlations between employment status and the autonomy and satisfaction measures noted above are actually caused by gender. In other words we asked whether, within categories of contingent work, women tended to report more negatively than men. Is it the case that female contingent workers tend to have less control at work and tend to exhibit less satisfaction with their jobs than male contingent workers? In other words, do the correlations hold up when we control for gender?

We recalculated the correlation coefficients controlling for gender by partialling in a gender dummy variable. The results are shown in italics in Tables 1, 3 and 4. Generally the inclusion of the gender variable in the calculation of partial correlation coefficients makes no difference to the coefficients. The direction of most relationships remains stable and the relative magnitude of the coefficients remains very similar. Importantly there is no evidence that the coefficient magnitudes are reduced at all when controlling for gender; gender is not masking the modest relationships between contingency and autonomy, control or satisfaction at work.¹³

This does not mean, of course, that gender doesn't matter. It means that the effects of gender are mediated by the contingent work status that is much more likely to characterise women's work than men's. Women are disadvantaged at work and in the labour market in many ways. Amongst other things women are likely to report having less control over their jobs, less autonomy and influence at work and less satisfaction with the hours they are given. However this appears to be more because of women's over-representation in casual, part-time and permanent part-time positions than simply because they are women.

We also considered the effect of gender in mediating the rather stronger negative relationship between contingent status and pay that we reported above. Again, we relied on partial correlation analysis in which we controlled for gender. When we controlled for gender, the correlation between full-time status and the pay scale increased slightly. Bivariate correlation analysis generated a coefficient of 0.39^(p), compared to 0.45^(p) when gender was included in the equation. The coefficient for permanent status also

increased slightly from 0.34^(p) to 0.39^(p) as did that for permanent part-time status (0.43^(p) to 0.47^(p)). What these findings suggest, again, is that the relatively lower pay of women in contingent work is not primarily a function of gender. Rather, it is a function of contingent jobs, in which women are over-represented.

All of this raises the question of why some forms of contingent work are less rewarding and less empowering than others. Again, we would suggest that much of the disadvantage that characterises many forms of contingent work is related to the feminisation of these jobs. It is no accident that contingent jobs in which women are over-represented tend to be less well paid, happen to be characterised by fewer opportunities for control over how work is done, little control over the pace and design of the work and limited access to decision-making, workplace management or consultative opportunities. At least part of the explanation for the valorisation of part-time and casual work is the fact that it has traditionally been seen as women's work.

Discussion and Conclusion

The growth in contingent employment in Australia has had little positive impact on women's experience of work. On the contrary our analysis suggests that contingent work (particularly casual part-time work) continues to be characterised by low pay, limited control and discretion, relative exclusion from workplace decision-making, a lack of task diversity and a high level of dissatisfaction with the amount of work provided by employers. The disadvantages that continue to be endured by women in the Australian labour market are profoundly structurally based: women are over-represented in contingent employment and they suffer disproportionately, as a consequence, the disadvantages of contingent employment status. We do not deny that there is significant direct discrimination against women at work and in the labour market however our study has revealed that *within* particular categories of contingent work women and men report very similar levels of exclusion, powerlessness, dissatisfaction and low pay.

Casual and part-time jobs might well be worse than full-time and permanent jobs because of their tendency to be in secondary labour markets, however, our analysis confirms that they do remain disproportionately secondary sector jobs and that the lack of hours does indeed create its own problems in this sort of work. Overwhelmingly part-timers (compared to full-timers), casuals (compared to permanents) and casual part-timers (compared to permanent part-timers) all express a desire for more hours.

Increasing underemployment (as well as unemployment) is one of the practical results of the labour market policies pursued by governments of both political persuasion over the past fifteen years. Employers' search for greater flexibility, the deregulation of labour markets, deindustrialisation and the growth of lower-end services sector employment has combined to see strong jobs growth in part-time and casual employment. While in some cases workers might have welcomed this greater availability of part-time and casual employment our analysis suggests that these employment arrangements are less than adequate for many workers.

The data analysed also attest to the impact of work intensification on Australian employees. The smaller proportion of the labour force that is able to work on a permanent, full-time basis is working harder, faster and under more stress. More casual and part-time employees report an increase in work intensity, pace and stress than report a decline as well, however work intensification appears to be more pronounced amongst full-time permanents.

Given that women continue to be over-represented amongst the ranks of contingent workers and given that contingent work is associated with low pay, limited control and autonomy at work and exclusion from workplace and organisational decision-making the current trends have serious repercussions for employment equity. One of the most important dimensions of disadvantage suffered by women continues to be associated with their over-representation in part-time and casual work. If this disadvantage is to be effectively confronted greater regulation of the incidence and circumstance of part-time and casual employment is needed.

Current legislative and policy trends seem to be promoted in ignorance of the central lessons of this research. Provisions in the Workplace Relations Act 1996 make the careful regulation of the conditions of contingent employment even more difficult to achieve. Indeed, the Act and the associated marginalisation of the role of the Commission (and the awards process) is likely to facilitate even greater casualisation of employment. The result will be the further institutionalisation of women's disadvantage at work and in the labour market.

Notes

- 1 The trend reflects both supply and demand factors in industrialised nations (see Lewis 1989, 34ff). While cross-national differences may derive from different cultural expectations about women's roles and different regulatory regimes, a recent analysis of Australia and New Zealand suggests that in these otherwise similar nations, the extent of non-standard work appears to be linked more to production and operational factors than the system of labour regulation (Allen et al 1998).
- 2 Including Denmark, Spain, France, Netherlands and the United Kingdom.
- 3 These figures do not permit accurate cross-national comparisons, however, as definitional categories may vary between countries. Their purpose is simply to illustrate similar trends within countries.
- 4 It should be noted, however, that women tend to be clustered in occupations and industries which are not characterised by well-established career paths (see Junor 1998).
- 5 The effects of these phenomena may themselves reflect other phenomena, such as relative levels of union density in different industries and occupational groups.
- 6 This scenario underpins the British efforts to regulate the conditions of part-time employment through sex discrimination channels, given women's over-representation in this type of work.
- 7 The authors acknowledge the roles of the Department of Workplace Relations and Small Business and the Social Science Data Archive in making available the AWIRS95 data.
- 8 Hereafter, any data presented is drawn from the AWIRS95 Employee Survey, unless otherwise stated.
- 9 E14A is the item number in the AWIRS95 dataset. The convention of appending the item number in parentheses if followed hereafter.
- 10 The distinction between casual and permanent refers fundamentally to the ease with which an employer can terminate the employment relationship. As these details are often concealed in awards, enterprise bargains, individual contracts or ingrained in the custom and practice of particular occupations and industries the absence of holiday and sick leave provisions is an easier test to consistently apply (See also Wooden 1996).
- 11 All frequencies reported using the AWIRS95 Employee Survey are based on data weighted to population (N=3,647,367). The weight employed is Empwt1.
- 12 Consideration of work intensification is beyond the scope of this paper and has not been pursued in our data analysis.
- 13 The only cases in which there is a notable reduction in the magnitude of the correlation coefficient when controlling for gender concern the negative correlations between full-time (rather than part-time) and satisfaction with the job and management and the negative correlation between permanent (rather than casual) and satisfaction with management. These relationships are partly explained by gender: it appears that women are more likely to express satisfaction with management and their job regardless of their employment status.

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