

# **The Effect of Long Hours on Family and Community Life.**

**A Survey of Existing Literature.**

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**Dr Barbara Pocock**

**Centre for Labour Research**

**Adelaide University**

**Research Assistance: Dr Lou Wilson**

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## Introduction

Australian workers are increasingly working long hours in comparison with employees in other OECD nations. This is taking place at a time when the structure of Australian families and the labour market is changing. Dual earner families and female earner families have become more common than the traditional male breadwinner family. A transformation has occurred with a move away from the traditional male-headed household. There has long been a proportion of Australian households that are dual earner in structure, and time has always been in short supply in these households. However, the proportion of homes where both parents work has rapidly increased over the last few decades, spreading the pattern of time scarcity to a much larger proportion of Australian families. At the same time diverse family structures now exist in Australia with a growing proportion that are sole parent households with a wide range of income support and working arrangements. The increase in working hours in this context of transformed family and household structures, means that their effects are more widespread and pronounced.

The relationship between working hours and family life is complex. In some cases, earnings from longer working hours relieve stress and strain in family life that flows from financial difficulties. Research about children's views suggests that they value the things that their parents' earnings can buy. But they also want time with their parents, particularly time where their parents are focused upon them. The weight of international evidence suggests that long working hours create negative consequences for families. This effect is especially pronounced where jobs are demanding and pressure and extended hours exist in combination – as the literature suggests they frequently do.

There is a considerable international literature on the impact of work on family life. However, there is a much smaller – though growing – body of research addressing the specific issue of the effect of long or unreasonable hours on family life, which is the focus of this review. There are very public anecdotal cases of parental choices in favour of children over long hours jobs: for example, US Labor Secretary Robert Reich's declaration that 'there's no way of getting work and family in to better balance. You're inevitably shortchanging one or the other, or both.' (Shellenbarger 1999: 125) and Bill Galston's resignation advice to the US President that he find another domestic policy advisor 'because you can replace me but my son can't' (Shellenbarger 1999:130). The internet has a rapidly increasing number of sites offering fathers and mothers advice on how to hold everything together with titles like 'How to be a star performer at work, without working long hours, sacrificing time with your family or burning out' and 'Problems and solutions: family life when dad works 70+ hours per week'. Many of these focus on finding efficiencies in family time, and working at the individual level to 'get things right'.

However the academic research literature on the specific effects of long hours on family life is leaner. Australian material is especially scant. This paper reviews selected relevant literature on the linkages between, on the one hand, long hours and more demanding jobs and, on the other, family life. It provides analysis of key issues suggested by that literature. An extended bibliography is attached.

We conclude that the literature suggests that extended hours of work have serious negative effects on the institution of the family, on relationships and upon civil society and community. There is a tension between the demands of employers for workers to stay at their paid jobs longer and the needs of women and men in paid employment – and their children - to establish and maintain quality relationships, households and communities.

### **Working hours**

Longer working hours affect a growing number of Australians (ACIRRT 1999: 101-102). The proportion of full-time workers working standard working hours (ie about 40 hours a week) has dropped significantly since the late 1970s, whereas the proportion working very long hours has increased. Two thirds of full-time workers were working 35-40 hours per week in the late 1970s. Today employees working standard hours make up less than half of the full-time labour force. The proportion of full-time workers working very long hours (more than 48 a week) jumped from 19 per cent in the late seventies to 32 per cent in the late 1990s (ACIRRT 1999: 102).

In Queensland, 46 per cent of those working full-time are now working more than 45 hours a week compared to 33 per cent in 1981. What is more, much of the growth in long hours is at the upper end of the long hours spectrum (ACIRRT, 2001:6)

The people working extended hours are predominantly managers and professionals and some blue collar occupations. Research indicates that at the turn of the new millennium half of all managers are working 49 or more hours per week and another quarter are working between 41 and 48 hours per week (ACIRRT 1999: 103). Likewise more than a quarter of professionals work more than 49 hours per week and another quarter work between 41 and 48 hours. Many blue-collar workers in occupations such as sales representatives, miners and truck drivers also put in very long hours. For many workers, especially in the professions, their long hours are unpaid and 44 per cent of women who regularly worked overtime in their main job in 2000 were not paid for that overtime, compared to 28 per cent of similar men (ABS Cat no. 6342.0).

Australia parallels the United States among the OECD nations in the proportion of men working more than 50 hours per week (Jacobs and Gerson 1998: 5). More than 20 per cent of men in both countries work more than 50 hours a week compared to less than 10 per cent in Sweden, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

Changes in the Australian workplace over the last twenty years have been accompanied by changes in the gender composition of the labour force. Men's participation in paid work has declined by seven percentage points over the last twenty years. In contrast women's participation in paid work has increased strongly, making this rise one of the most profound changes in our labour market in recent decades. In 1980 45 per cent of Australian women worked outside the home, but by 2000, 54 percent of women worked outside the home. This increase, in combination with men's falling participation in paid work, has had a profound impact on Australian communities and families (Pocock 2001: 4).

## **The pursuit of family friendliness at work**

Hours issues are a critical aspect of work/family life. Where the fit between family life and the demands of paid work can be happily accommodated, real benefits arise for both households and workplaces. Employees with dependents are able to continue their contribution in workplaces, saving on employee turnover and training costs. In some cases, this will be accomplished by specific shift regimes, flexible start and finish times, and leave and return to work arrangements, and so on. The success of specific regimes will depend upon the local needs of families and workplaces. What works in some workplaces and families – for example longer but fewer shifts - may not work in others. And the outcomes for individual workers depend upon their specific circumstances and situation in the life-cycle.

The extent and nature of ‘family friendly’ changes in Australian workplaces has been subject to debate. There is frequently confusion about ‘flexibility for whom?’ It has become clear that ‘flexibility’ sometimes means different things to families and to employers. Workplace flexibility that gives the employer control over the size of the workforce through the use of casual employees or split shifts, for example, may bring a loss of predictability and inconvenience to many workers and their dependents.

Traditionally, a large slice of working parents – especially women – have dealt with the double load of children and paid work by working fewer hours - by working part-time. Indeed, one of the key indicators used to indicate ‘family friendliness’ is the opportunity for employees to elect to work less than full-time (OECD 2001).

In the Australian context, for the majority who attempt to juggle family and work by working part-time, this means accepting work on a casual basis. Around two-thirds of part-time workers are casually employed, most of them women. Casual work often brings with it a loss of control over working hours that does not confer family friendly flexibility. It can, on the contrary, result in unpredictable working hours – perhaps the least family friendly job attribute. Further, analysis of family friendly provisions in enterprise agreements suggests that while they have brought many changes in flexibility at work, not all of these favour the family. Instead many provide greater flexibility for the firm (ACIRRT 1999) with inflexibility for families.

However, some forms of flexibility are of great benefit to both families and workplaces, and it is these mutually beneficial arrangements that policy can usefully attempt to maximise. Working time is a critical aspect of any policy that aims to sustain both productive workplaces and stable households. While there are working time practices that favour both of these ends – like flexibility around sick leave, care of sick children or various forms of leave – there are also work-time habits that are not family friendly. For many families, long hours represent such a case. Given the popularity of part-time work as a solution to work/family conflict, it is not surprising, to find widespread evidence in the literature that the reverse of part-time hours - extended hours - are antithetical to caring and to family life.

Our communities are increasingly defined by their access to work, as are our families. The dual income family and the sole parent breadwinner family have challenged the traditional male breadwinner role as the dominant family mode. With a growing

number of sole parent and dual earner households, there are simply fewer hours for family time across our community. In households where parents are working very long hours, the time squeeze is very real. The growing role of paid work within our families and communities has implications for the reproduction of families, the labour force, human capital and social capital, and quality of life in Australia. It also has particular implications for women who continue to carry a disproportionate responsibility for care of children and other dependents. A shift to a more family-unfriendly practices – like long hours - carries penalties for women, as Evans writing for the OECD has recognised (2001:1).

### **Family friendly frills versus family unfriendly core conditions**

There has been a considerable focus on family friendly policy and practices in workplaces in the industrialised world over the past two decades – upon the extent of maternity and parenting leave, leave to care for sick children, and so on. Some of these benefits have entered the statutory regime in Australia: unpaid maternity leave, for example, which permits many women to take extended periods of unpaid leave on the birth of a child. However, many benefits like flexibility in taking leave, or programs to assist women to return to work or to job-share after having a baby, are more informally adopted. Such benefits are frequently offered as ‘extra-statutory’ frills on the periphery of the employment contract. In other cases, family friendly *policies* have proliferated, while changes in actual behaviour have been much slower to evolve. Once, again, this has been an internationally observable fact as Wajcman’s study of family friendly multi-national companies reveals. Her study of exemplary family friendly companies showed that while they frequently had good policies, employees were reluctant to make much practical use of them where it ran against the stereotypical model of the successful, unencumbered worker who did not take family leave (Wajcman 1998). These experiences suggest that good policy on family friendly matters is a necessary *but far from sufficient* condition for real change in practice.

While much attention has focused upon ‘family friendliness’, much less direct attention has focused upon the *family unfriendliness* of other changes, like the extent and impact of intensification of work, the spread of unsociable hours, job precariousness, and growth in long hours of work which occur at the core of the employment contract. Research suggests that these have a much more significant effect on families and work/family conflict than the ‘frills’ (like the chance to job-share) or policies that sometimes are adopted without being implemented (Galinsky, Bond and Friedman 1996).

The barriers that long hours present to family life are clearly recognised in some workplaces: for example, in 1996 15 per cent of Japanese firms (38 per cent of large firms with more than 500 employees) listed ‘exemption from work in non-scheduled working hours’ as a measure to help workers handle both childcare and work. Similar proportions listed offering ‘shorter working hours’ as a family friendly benefit (Sato 2000 quoted in Evans 2001: 46). The problem created by long hours is also deliberately recognised in some countries. For example, the UK has particularly targeted its workplace culture of long hours through its annual ‘family-friendly’

employer of the year contest (Evans 2001:12). Nonetheless, the culture of long hours in the UK is taking greater hold.

Interestingly, researchers at the OECD point out that countries with the best statistical information about 'family friendly' frills like policies and 'special programs' often have poor public provision of statutory benefits like family leave and public childcare and are also sites of growing family unfriendly phenomena like long hours (Evans 2001: 12).

The family unfriendliness of the evolving core conditions and circumstances of employment has received scant research attention. It deserves more.

### **Families, work and time**

There are over 2.5 million families in Australia with dependents. The majority are couple families (2,592,200 in June 2001), and in most of these couple families there are two income earners. About 11 per cent of families are headed by a single parent, 90 per cent of whom are women. The traditional male breadwinner model of family structure characterises less than a third of households with dependents in Australia, down from 53 per cent in 1981 (ABS Cat No 6224.0). The dominant model is now the dual earner household: in 64 per cent of couple households with dependents both parents were in the labour force in June 2001 (either employed or unemployed, and excluding those households where neither is in the labour force) (ABS Cat. No 6203.0).

Dual earner households have always been pushed for time. However, the spread of dual earner family formation means that many more feel time pressures, contributing to the now widespread perception of a time squeeze for families.

It is well established that becoming a parent has radical effects on time-use, and that working parents face a particular time crunch. Long hours exacerbate that crunch as several studies show.

A 1994 Australian Bureau of Statistics survey 'on work and family (ABS 1994) found that the main reason given by parents who had difficulties managing work and care of children was that work hours were too long (34 per cent)' (cited in Wolcott and Glezer 1995: 15).

In Australia, Glezer and Wolcott point out 'For workers with family responsibilities, time appears to be the major juggernaut of those who are combining paid work with family responsibilities – time for children, time with partners, time for elderly parents, and time for household chores, personal leisure, and meeting the demands of work' (1999: 69). In their analysis, of the Australian Institute of Family Studies Life Course study involving 2688 respondents, Glezer and Wolcott find that work tended to interfere the most with home life for those with children whose career demands were also at a peak and especially where long hours were worked:

66 per cent of men and 23 per cent of women [in the Lifecourse study] were working more than 41 hours per week. The data confirm that the

hours of work, particularly long hours, influenced significantly how work affected home life.

Half of all employed men and 46 per cent of employed women who worked 41 or more hours felt work interfered with home life compared to less than one-quarter (22 per cent) of women and the small proportion of men who worked less than 30 hours a week (1999: 69).

These work/family conflict effects were most pronounced amongst higher status white collar workers, and many working long hours wanted to work fewer. This suggests – as do other studies – that many working long hours are not doing so because of their own choice: they are doing it because of the demands of the job and their employers.

Those working long hours in Australia would change things if they could: Glezer and Wolcott find in their analysis of almost 2000 Australians in 1996, that ‘men who worked long hours desired to work standard working hours’ (1997:2). This is consistent with an American study that shows that 80 per cent of those working long hours (more than 50 a week) would prefer to work less – and a lot less in many cases (Jacobs and Gerson 1998).

Recent Australian research by Pocock (2001: 9) suggests that lack of household time for women in paid work with children creates a constant feeling of juggling, not balancing. Sick children especially cause high stress and represent a repetitive pressure point in working women’s lives. This process is exacerbated by the shrinkage in accessible extended family and communities, as more and more citizens are drawn into paid work. There are fewer grandmothers and siblings who can be relied upon to provide additional informal support as more women and men enter paid work, and work longer hours. The continual responsibility for caring and nurturing children and household work alongside more paid hours takes a toll on relationships and intimacy (Pocock 2001: 9). It also has implications for voluntary work, and for community structures.

Research making the link between time paucity caused by paid work, and the quality of family life exists in a number of countries. A US study drawing on interviews of participants in the National Survey of Families and Households 1987-88 and 1992-4 found that:

Parenting is associated with a great time crunch for both husbands and wives, ranging from 20-40 hours more total work per week than their child-free counterparts. Child-free wives and husbands work about 8.5 hours per day in their various labors, whereas mothers work 14-hour days and fathers work 11-hour days. Extrapolating this time crunch suggests that mothers of young children spend more time in combined employment and family work than fathers by up to two full-time weeks per month (Sanchez and Thomson, 1997: 773).

Jacobs and Gerson (1998: 10) argue that ‘jobs that require very long hours are not family friendly’. Long hours restrict the hours that parents can spend with their



children, which may have an impact on the emotional and intellectual development of a child. Gender equity is undermined by long hours of work because it is women who are most likely to give up their careers for the sake of their children. Women who remain in paid work are required to make trade-offs between work and the time and energy devoted to domestic labour. Crouter and Manke also find evidence that long hours are disruptive to family life (1994).

In the UK, studies have found that 'half of full-time workers were concerned about having too little time with their families, and 25 per cent did not believe it was possible to have a good family life and get ahead in their current job. Those most concerned about too little time with family were professionals (67 per cent), those working in large companies (56 per cent), and those with small children (61 per cent) (WFD 1998, quoted in Glezer and Wolcott 1999: 74). These phenomena are not limited to industrialised countries: conflict between paid work and family crosses cultural and language boundaries (Aryee 1999, for example, documents work family conflict amongst Chinese workers in Hong Kong).

Nevertheless, there are rewards in paid work for women. Many women establish their identity through paid work, which gives them social and financial independence. Paid employment is a source of life satisfaction for women and the economic resources it brings can increase women's power in a relationship (Rogers 1996: 2). Longer hours may be sought by women as a way of increasing life satisfaction and improving their economic power in relation to a partner. The latter may be particularly important when there are more children in the family, which increases the strain on the family's economic resources (Rogers 1996: 2).

Long hours of paid work have implications for the leisure time of family members. That is, the time spent in restoring strength for paid work and unpaid domestic labour. This is particularly so for dual income families where additional hours in paid labour conflict with contemporary expectations of the modern intimate relationship (Bittman and Wajcman 2000: 1).

It is widely recognised that the ability to work less than full-time hours, and the capacity to negotiate hours, are significant components of 'family friendliness' at work. As Evans writing for the OECD put it:

Rigid adherence to fixed working hours, or the imposition of time demands without notice, may deny employees the flexibility that is needed to deal with the day-to-day pressures and emergencies of family life, and lead to considerable stress (Evans 2001:8).

Rogers suggests that long hours of work are one way amongst several by which firms can be 'positively unfriendly' to employees with family responsibilities (1996: 10).

Having found that in Australia long working hours are one of the main predictors of work interfering with home life, Glezer and Wolcott argue:

There are only so many hours in a day and days in a week. Families require time and energy to nurture and enjoy. Work requires time and

effort to earn essential income and keep businesses profitable. If families are important to an individual's well-being as parents and partners and to the community in the form of involved citizens, then a better way has to be found to enable these commitments to be integrated. The current trend to long and pressured hours at work, the ubiquitous presence of work at home with laptops, faxes and mobile phones, combined with fear of potential redundancy if work doesn't take priority over family demands, does not engender a positive or satisfying environment for family and community life (Glezer and Wolcott 1999:75).

### **'Feeling overworked' and stressed: a consequence of long hours and bad for families**

Jobs that involve long hours frequently are jobs that have high work demands, including for example multiple complex tasks and pressures. Barnett has pointed out that analysis of the effects of long hours on family life needs to take account of the fact that multiple effects are frequently at work in long hours jobs: 'jobs with long hours tend to be more substantively complex than jobs with short hours' (Barnett 1998:133, quoted in Crouter, Bumpus, Head and McHale 2001).

Very recent research by Galinsky, Kim and Bond (2001) finds a close relationship between long hours and 'feeling overworked' – a condition that studies find affects marital relationships and children's welfare. Their study of 1003 waged adults in the US found that '45 per cent of those working 50 or more hours per week experience high levels of feeling overworked versus only 6 per cent of those working fewer than 20 hours per week' (2001: 3). The same effect is evident for those working more hours than they would *prefer*, more *days* than others, and for those who *involuntarily* are working those long hours and days, and amongst those who believe that they *cannot change* their work schedule to meet their preferences. Interestingly, women feel more overworked than men, reflecting their multiple tasks and greater rate of interruption (2001:6).

This study finds that feeling overworked is associated with significant personal and work effects. The more overworked people feel, the more work-life conflict they experience; the less successful they feel in relationships with their spouse or partner, children and friends; the more likely they are to be neglecting themselves; and the more likely they are to lose sleep because of their work (2001: 7). Those feeling overworked experience worse health and a lesser ability to cope with everyday life events.

Issues related to the *length* of hours and *employee control* over hours have also been shown through Australian research as significant in creating job-related stress (Whitehouse and Zetlin 1999). Stress, in turn, has been found to negatively affect families:

[I]n general, higher levels of job-related stress were associated with employees working more hours than were preferred, and having no influence over start and finish times of work. Conversely, higher levels of

job satisfaction were linked with working the weekly hours employees preferred... Women part-timers tended to report relatively low levels of stress, and high levels of job satisfaction (Evans, 2001:14).

There is some evidence of an association between rising pressures at work and the requirement that employees put in more effort, and declining employee satisfaction with the work family balance. The Work and Family Unit has analysed employee data from the Australian Workplace Industrial Relations Survey 1995, finding that the proportion of employees indicating decreased satisfaction with work/family issues over the preceding year is much greater than the proportion that were more satisfied (Work and Family Unit, 1999). This result led Evans to suggest:

This may be linked to results from the same survey showing that around 60% of employees with caring responsibilities reported that they had been required to put more effort into their jobs over the previous year (under 5% said the opposite). The corresponding figures relating to changes in stress levels were just over 50%, and just under 7% (Evans, 2001:13).

In their analysis of the Australian Institute for Family Studies Life Course study (of 2688 respondents), Glezer and Wolcott find that:

Around 49 per cent of all employed men and 59 per cent of women often felt too rushed. Men aged 30-60 years and women aged 30-50 were affected. Similarly, 43 per cent of men and 53 per cent of women often felt tired and run down... Feeling rushed and tired were positively correlated with work interfering with home life for both working men and women (1999:72).

Despite the introduction of some family-friendly measures in the US and Australia, these changes have not prevented a deterioration in work and family balance for many employees. In his review of these countries, Evans concludes that 'It is plausible that this reflects the longer working hours and increased work pressure reported by employees in these two countries' (2001:19). Evans points to the successful examples of national legislation to limit economic behaviour like the persistence of long working hours 'that is harmful to family life, and to encourage firms to support families':

Many countries have been able to reduce the proportion of the workforce working very long hours through policy action – for example, average hours of work in Japan and Portugal have fallen significantly as legislation in favour of the 40-hour week has taken effect (Evans, 2001:31).

### **The cost for the individual – and its spillover into the family**

Australia shares a pattern of increasing work hours with the US. *The 1997 National Study of the Changing Workforce* presents evidence about the effect of changing patterns of work on US workers and their workplace between 1977 and 1997. It

suggests that employed married men and women have less time for themselves in the late 1990s than 20 years before, and that this 'is associated with lower personal well-being and greater susceptibility to negative spillover from job to home' (Bond, Galinsky and Swanberg 1998:2). These patterns also have an impact on workplace productivity.

When workers feel burned-out by their jobs, when they have insufficient time and energy for themselves and their families, when work puts them in a bad mood - these feelings spill back into the workplace limiting job performance (1998:1).

They also have a significant effect upon family life, the US researchers found:

Of particular concern are the negative spillover effects that demanding and hectic jobs can have on the quality of workers' personal lives and well-being. When job demands exceed some individually defined level, it seems that not even the most supportive workplaces can fully protect workers from negative job spillover into their personal lives. This spillover is reflected in high stress, poor coping, bad moods, and insufficient time and energy for people who are personally important, creating 'problems' that, in turn spill over into work and impair job performance. Therefore, actions by employers to not only increase the supportiveness of workplaces, but urge and help employees 'get a life' off the job may be crucial to improving employee productivity over the long run - not to mention the obvious benefits to workers and their families (1998:13).

This study found that US fathers' total work time grew by 3.1 hours between 1977 and 1997, and mothers' grew by 5 hours. The changing patterns of work in the US mean that both mothers and fathers are spending less time on themselves - and on household work - in order to find time to be with their children 'despite longer hours on the job' (Bond, Galinsky and Swanberg 1998:6).

Nonetheless working parents are, in the majority, not happy with the time that they spend with their children. Despite an increase in the amount of time that US fathers spent with their children between 1977 and 1997 (at 2.3 hours it remains well short of the 3.2 hours mothers spend with their children), seventy percent of both fathers and mothers in the US feel that they do not spend enough time with their children (Bond, Galinsky and Swanberg 1998:6).

In the US, employed mothers spend around 10 hours a week less in paid work than employed fathers (Galinsky and Bond 1996). Not surprisingly, research also shows that working parents - both women and men - would like to work fewer hours than their non-parent co-workers (Galinsky, Bond and Friedman 1996). Non-parents tend to have more time for themselves than parents.

Long hours have potentially a lethal effect especially when they are in combination with long hours of family care: Vernarec (2000) for example sets out instances of

nurses who, having spent the day with children, are then asked to work extended long hours in paid work with risks to the health and welfare of patients as a result.

### *General effects of work on parents and non-parents*

The general effects of work on parents are likely to be exaggerated where working hours are longer. In this light, it is interesting to note research that finds parents are negatively affected, relative to non-parents, in relation to some work effects, including how hectic and demanding their work is and how much control they have over work schedules. A study of around 3000 working parents and 1700 non-parents in the US found that parents and non-parents were equally likely to consider themselves successful, or to feel burned-out. However, working mothers were much more likely to feel tired when they got up in the morning, or to feel emotionally drained, than working fathers.

The study also found that working parents generally were somewhat less satisfied with their marital relationships than working non-parents (33% of parents reported feeling 'delighted' with their relationship compared with 43% of non-parents) and they coped less well than non-parents. Further, the study found that 'of greatest importance in predicting conflict between work life and family/personal life were job characteristics...Specifically, employed parents experienced less conflict and less stress when they had greater job autonomy, *less demanding and hectic jobs*, and more job security' (Galinsky, Bond and Friedman 1996: 19, my emphasis). Compared to the fundamental characteristics of jobs (including job demands and control over work schedule), factors like special family policies or fringe benefits made little difference to work/family conflict.

This suggests that factors like long or unreasonable working hours are likely to be associated with greater stress, conflict and poorer coping amongst those who work them, and that – further – the effects of these job characteristics outweigh 'family friendly' programs and policies which do not address the fundamental characteristics of jobs like how 'hectic and demanding' they are, and how their hours are scheduled.

### **The shorter working week in France and its impact on families**

A number of working time initiatives have been undertaken around the world in relation to working time. One of the most recent, in France, reduces working hours as a means to create employment. The first initiative reduced the working week to 35 hours for employees in larger enterprises (more than 20) and this will flow to those in smaller enterprises from 2002.

The first round of reductions in working hours, affecting around half of employees in France (or 6 million employees), took effect in February 2000. There are already some positive reports in relation to its effects. Largely motivated by a desire to reduce unemployment, early anecdotal evidence of its impact suggests that reduced hours have had a positive effect on employment. Unemployment fell from 12.6 per cent in 1997 to 8.5 per cent in June 2001, or an 18 year low (Lichfield, *The Independent*, 19 June 2001). Around 285,000 new jobs are estimated by government reports to have

been created to mid-2001. These effects of shorter hours on the family are likely to be significant on two fronts: benefits will arise for families through reduced unemployment, as well as from reduced hours for previously long hours workers. French government reports and newspaper accounts provide anecdotal evidence that workers are delighted with the effects on their family of shorter working weeks: 'Two-thirds of people on a shorter week say that it has improved their lives. Working women, especially, say that a four-day week, or shorter working day, has made their lives tolerable for the first time' (Lichfield, *The Independent*, 19<sup>th</sup> June 2001).

Other reports document that the leisure time available to French families has increased with positive results for families. An opinion poll for *L'Express* magazine in 2001 showed that more than two-thirds of those interviewed felt that their lives had improved as a result of working less, and a clear majority (54 per cent) said that time off was 'now more important to them than wage rises' (*New Statesman*, April 2, 2001: 35). French employees report more time for leisure, holidays, family activities, and childcare. As one put it:

I have a 15 year old daughter, so I try to take the school holidays to be with her...it has been a great bonus for me and for our family life, and I can firmly recommend the 35 hour week to the British. You should try it. (*New Statesman*, April 2, 2001: 35).

### **The lengthening workweek in the US and its impact on families**

A large debate is evident in US literature about the nature of changes in the length of the working day in that country. There are those who argue that the length of the working day has grown, particularly Schor 1991, and more recently Bond, Galinsky and Swanberg 1998, Hochschild 1997, Mishel, Bernstein and Schmitt 1996. Others disagree and argue that in fact leisure time has increased (for example Robinson, Werner and Godbey 1997 argue this case using time diary data).

Jacobs and Gerson (2001) offer a recent assessment that finds that the working week has not changed significantly in length for Americans, on average, but that annual hours have increased with more weeks in the average working year. However, Jacobs and Gerson argue that the more useful way to examine change is to analyse the sectoral patterns that underlie averages. They point to the bifurcation in hours in the US, with 'one segment of the labor market ...putting in more hours at work than ever before, whereas another segment consists of workers who are unable to find jobs that provide enough hours of work' (Jacobs and Gerson 2001: 42). Averages conceal this bifurcation – as they do in Australia (Buchanan and Bearfield 1997).

Further – and most relevant to our purposes – they point to the growth in total hours worked out of households with the growth in two-income households, which has contributed to the sense of growing time poverty amongst workers in the US. Jacobs and Gerson also note a sharp rise in the proportion of Americans working very long working weeks. Dual earner households have always experienced time pressures they argue. However, the growth in the proportion of dual earner households has

generalised this effect across the workforce in the US so that more people experience the pressures that arise from households that 'devote more joint time to work'. Between 1970 and 1997:

The largest increase in working time occurred among dual-earner couples who also constitute the fastest growing group. Husbands and wives in these marriages jointly devoted 81.3 hours per week in paid employment, up just more than 3 hours per week from the 78.0 hours per week reported in 1970. In addition the proportion reporting very long work weeks rose sharply from 8.7% to 14.4%. Notably it is wives' working time that provides the major cause of the growth in combined working time for these couples. Whereas husbands' mean hours at work rose by only 0.8 hours during this period, wives' time at paid work rose by 2.5 hours (2001: 51).

They also found that men's working hours 'increased slightly with the presence of children and as the number of children rose' while the reverse was true for women. This research highlights the time and household squeeze that increasingly affects families. The transformation in family formation, with the erosion of the single breadwinner family structure, is likely to continue but does not, in Jacobs and Gerson's view 'indicate that parents prefer work to family life. They suggest, instead that adults, and especially women, are seeking a balance between home and work that is increasingly elusive' (Jacobs and Gerson 2001: 60). While men's attachment to work remains strong, women's is also growing, with little increase in domestic involvement from male partners which has 'left dual-earning families to cope with persisting family demands in the context of rising work obligations for the couple, and it has left employed, single mothers facing even greater time squeezes' (2001: 60). These disruptions are more extreme for those working irregular hours, or whose jobs are becoming more intensified, and they occur against a background of cultural pressures for "intensive mothering" (2001: 61). Jacobs and Gerson end with a plea for shorter hours:

The problem of family time deficits cannot be solved by chastising parents for working too much. Instead, the time has come to create a more flexible and family-supportive workplace, including more options for reducing working time, commensurate with the family transformation that has already taken place (2001: 61).

There is a considerable and growing body of literature out of the US suggesting that long hours negatively affect individuals, families and relationships. For example, Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman (2001) summarise:

Judge, Boudreau and Bretz (1994) found a strong relationship between the number of paid work hours and work family conflict, especially for those with preschool children. Shamir (1983) reported that working more than 9 hours a day resulted in much greater conflict between work and nonwork facets of life. In addition, the number of hours spent on the job has been shown to relate to the degree to which spouses choose to participate in family work (Almeida, Maggs, and Galambos, 1993),

especially men's involvement in childcare (Aldous et al., 1998). Longer work hours by husbands also has been shown to be associated with greater marital conflict (Kluwer, Heesink, and Van de Vliert, 1996) (Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman 2001).

### **Hochschild: The Time Bind**

One of the most significant US books that explores the effect of work on family and home life is Arlie Russell Hochschild's 1997 book, *The Time Bind*. In it, Hochschild explores the effect of long hours of work in a large US company, Amerco, on communities, couples, children and communities. She interviewed 150 employees in Amerco, followed 6 families intensively and undertook a survey of 1446 other parents using childcare across the US, mostly employees in Fortune 500 companies where 'family friendly' policies are generally more common (Evans 2001).

Hochschild finds that work – even in a large company that is renowned for its family friendliness - increasingly encroaches on people's families. Employees talk of work becoming their community, their friends being 'worker bees' and of the internalisation of a 'work' culture that is hungry for time. Hochschild's analysis of individual families reveals the replacement of domestic intra-family exchanges with commercialised services (bought birthday parties, childcare, all types of domestic services); of work becoming managers' 'mistress' to the neglect of marital relationships; and of the effect of long hours on many children in Amerco households:

Everywhere in Amerco's factories parents were working long hours while their children put in long hours at daycare. Everywhere parents were having the same problems of meshing schedules and creating their own versions of the [family] childcare conveyor belt. Everywhere there were children who in their own way were living on corporate time, through for them there would be no Total Quality systems of care, no recognition ceremonies, and no empowerment (1997: 191).

Her research shows that the male breadwinner model of time hungry jobs, does not work where a 'wife' is lacking, and is replaced by 'opposing shifts' in lower income households where one parent walks in the door from work, while another walks out to it. The motivations for longer hours in the US are traced to multiple sources: a culture of long hours to 'get ahead' and get the job done, fear of job loss if long hours aren't worked, the need to work long hours to earn a livable income, and the pleasures associated with work:

a tired parent flees a world of unresolved quarrels and unwashed laundry for the reliable orderliness, harmony, and managed cheer of work. The emotional magnets beneath home and workplace are in the process of being reversed (1997: 44).

Hochschild makes an argument for shorter working hours, and that there needs to be a public solution as countries other than America have adopted, in recognition of the



private experience of many of the negative effects of long working hours. She argues that in such time hungry workplaces as Amerco:

the politics of time has been almost totally personalized in recent decades. A giant public issue appears to us as millions of individual problems, each to be solved privately at home. Companies have far more power over families than families have over companies. So time demands at work come to seem implacable while those at home feel malleable. Workers focus on that aspect of the whole scene that they feel they can control – constantly organizing and reorganizing odd fragments of increasingly fractured domestic time, while long hours in the plant and the organization of shift work go unchallenged (1997: 192).

Hochschild finds through her wider survey that the Amerco experience of work encroaching upon families and individuals with negative effects, extends well beyond that company. She rejects the ‘quality argument’ (that children need quality time, not quantities of it) and points out that many children ‘want more time with their parents than they get, and they protest the pace, the deadlines, the irrationality of ‘efficient’ family life’ (1997: 218). Overall she finds that most employees did not resist Amerco’s steady pressure on its employees and as a result ‘they were giving their children, their marriages, their communities, and themselves far less time than they imagined giving. They were, in a sense, leading one life and imaging another (1997: 219).

### **The effect of long hours on children**

Studies of children’s views about working life are rare. The most significant of these was published by Ellen Galinsky in 1999. This study draws together the results of several studies as well as analysis of relevant literature. Included in the analysis is a comprehensive look at the views of children, and a comparison of their views with those of their parents. The study asks 1000 children from school years 3-12 (about 8-18 years old) about their views of their parents’ work.

Unfortunately, in terms of hours effects, the analysis is largely confined to a comparison of the effects of full-time versus part-time work on children and parents, with little direct analysis of long hours. However, discussion of the effects of issues like the availability of parents, tiredness, and moods are relevant to consideration of the effects of long hours.

Galinsky finds that children (over the age of 8 years) are highly attuned to the work-induced moods of their parents (1999: xxi). They are very alert to their end-of-work state and compensate and ‘manage’ themselves around their parents’ moods. Two thirds of children 8-18 years ‘worry’ about their parents, especially about their stress levels. The children of overworked parents (ie those working 6-7 days a week) don’t want to follow in their footsteps: they plan to work fewer hours and they do not like what they see of the effect on their parents.

### *Working mothers and the effect on children*

The research confirms some important general conclusions about the effects of mothers' work status on children: whether mothers work or not is not a significant determinant of outcomes for children. More important is a range of other factors including the quality of relationships and their mother's 'state' (whether mothers are able to be responsive to their children), along with the role of fathers and the general tenor of households.

Much more critical than a mother's paid work pattern to children's welfare is a broad range of other factors, including both a mother's and father's 'warm and responsive' involvement with children (Galinsky 1999:14). Of course if long hours create tiredness and stress, these are likely to impact upon parental responsiveness and Galinsky's study shows that these have a very significant effect upon children.

### *The importance of the presence of fathers*

The presence of fathers is also relevant to the discussion of linkages between long hours and family, in view of the impediment that long hours present to fathering (and mothering). While there has been a focus in the literature upon the effects of working mothers on children, the effects of the absence of fathers has been, until recently, less studied. However, new studies suggest that the involvement of fathers has a very positive effect on children (Levine and Pittinsky 1997). When fathers are involved in the parenting of new babies, these children are likely to score better on tests of their motor and mental development and they are more capable of managing difficult events in their school years (Parke 1996). Work by Harris, Furstenburg and Marmer (1996) also suggests that the involvement of fathers is associated with lower risk of teenage pregnancy, drug use, and delinquency. It has also been shown that fathers' involvement in parenting results in a greater capacity to take initiative in children (Radin 1981). The implication of this literature is that where long hours take a father away from the home for extended periods, as they frequently do, there are risks for children. Further, if long hours impair the 'warm and responsive' affect of a parent, they are likely to affect the long term welfare of children.

### *Time with children matters*

Galinsky's survey of parents reveals that overall, 50 per cent of parents with children 0-18 years 'say that they have too little time with their child; however, beneath this overall figure *fathers* – much more so than mothers – seem to be yearning to be with their child: 56 per cent of fathers versus 44 percent of mothers feel deprived of time with their child!' (her emphasis).

Interestingly, parents were more concerned about lack of time with their children, than the reverse. The majority of children in the study felt that they had enough time with their mothers (67 per cent) or with their fathers (60 per cent). However, 53 per cent of parents felt that they had too little time with their child. More children felt that they had too little time with their fathers. Further, 'teenage children are more likely than younger children to feel that they have too little time with their fathers' (1999:

70) suggesting that any assumption that older children require less time from their parents is misplaced.

Time spent with their parents matters to children:

Does the quantity of time matter? Again and again – in fact, in all but one of the analyses conducted to address this issue – we found that the quantity of time with mothers and fathers does matter a great deal. Children who spend more time with their mothers and fathers on workdays and on nonworkdays grade their parents higher, feel their parents are more successful at managing work and family responsibilities and see their parents as putting their families first (1999: 72).

This finding undermines the ‘quality’ time argument that some use to ‘rationalise’ limited family time. It suggests that parents who work long hours face a major difficulty in giving children what they need (and what parents also want to give): time together. Galinsky’s study suggests that children *also* need ‘quality’ time – which she calls focussed time, when the parent has good attention for children. But a first and necessary condition is *time itself*, the thing that parents working long hours have least to offer.

While many children see financial benefit from their parent’s paid work and value this, they also greatly value the presence of their parents in their school, and at sporting and other events:

Children judge their parents on whether or not they are “there for me”. Although the definition of “being there for me” shifts as the child grows, becoming less and less limited to the parent and child’s being physically together, we heard repeatedly from parents and children about two crucial issues. It is important to both parents and children that parents be present at the important events in the child’s life and that parents be there for the child when the child is sick (1999:26).

These results suggest that ‘hang around time’ that is *not rushed* is very important. When children have less rushed time with their parents, they tend to see them more positively (1999: 310). Spending ‘focused’ time with children also emerges as very important. This focus means ‘being attuned to the child’s cues and clues. It means paying attention...being responsive’. Of course such focus requires - apart from raw time itself- energy and freedom from worry. This is especially relevant to parents who are working long hours: ‘Our study has shown that we have a hard time focusing on our children when work is consuming us’ (1999: 313) and many children find that their fathers have more difficulty focusing on them, than their mothers – not least because they are more likely to be working longer hours.

These results have particular implications for parents who work long or unreasonable hours. These parents are more likely than most to be rushed, to be time pressured, and to be less likely to have good ‘focused’ attention for their children. They are also more likely to be stressed and tired. Each of these factors stands out as an issue affecting the quality of life for children.

### *Growing pressures at work: bad moods and bringing work home*

In her research, Galinsky points to the significant effect of work pressures on children, especially those of parents working long hours (1999: 103-108). These long hours are a significant contributor to work stress. Her earlier research with others establishes that 'employed parents whose jobs were more demanding – both objectively and subjectively – were much more likely to feel burned out by their jobs, to be in worse moods at home, and to have less energy for their families' (Bond, Galinsky, and Swanberg, 1997). Such demanding jobs are likely to include those involving long hours:

Employees who work fewer hours, who work fewer days per week, who travel less frequently, who do less work at home before or after their workdays, and who experience less job pressure typically experience less stress at work. Some of these numbers are very dramatic: Only 15 percent of employed parents who work fewer than 35 hours a week report a large amount of stress at work compared with 36.5 per cent of parents who work more than 50 hours a week (1999:124).

This stress has a very significant impact upon the views of children, who are very alert to the stress and tiredness of their parents and name these issues most frequently as the downside of their parents working lives. Work demands, including long hours and travel, affect our moods, and that the moods 'we experience while we are working seem more durable and more likely to spill over into our moods at home than our moods from home are to spill into our work situation. Further 'negative moods move across boundaries of work and home, but positive moods have little spillover' (1999: 173).

### *What children don't like:stressed and tired parents*

This result is reinforced by a study of air traffic controllers in the US which found that fathers who suffered greater stress on certain days were likely to be more withdrawn from their children on these days 'they expressed less affection and described less warmth and closeness with their child' (Repetti 1994, quoted in Galinsky 1999: 173). This study also found that air traffic controllers were more likely to withdraw from their wives on high stress days.

Repetti's research has also included studies of the impact of work stress on mothers which reinforce these findings: when women's workload is higher and the stress among colleagues higher, they are more withdrawn from their children, likely to pay less attention to them and appear to be less caring and responsive (Repetti and Wood 1997).

The negative effects of work are exacerbated when parents 'have jobs that demand more time' and when parents feel that they can't get everything done at work (1999: 189). Galinsky concludes that four issues are likely to reduce the negative effects of work on children: spending time together, spending unrushed time, spending focused time, and spending unstressful time (1999: 208-213). Each of these is likely to be more difficult to provide when parents are working long hours and simply have fewer

hours to give to their children, as well as frequently being stressed and rushed as a result, further undermining the quality of their time with children.

In sum, this research raises significant concerns about the effect of long/unreasonable hours upon the quality of relationships between children and their working parents. The key thing that children need from their parents is time – both ‘hang around time’ and ‘focused time’. This is exactly what parents’ working long hours lack: enough time, and enough fresh attention to be fully focused upon children. Further, children are very concerned and alert to the stress and tiredness of their parents. They rate these effects very highly in terms of the negative outcomes of their parents’ work. This study shows that work arrangements that create stressed and tired parents – and long hours are clear contributors - create serious consequences for children. They make the crucial task of having ‘warm and responsive’ relationships between parents and children more difficult.

### **Australian research about the effects of work on children**

Australian research on the effects of long hours on children and parent/child relationships is sparse. A recent smaller study of Australian children’s and parents’ views supports some of Galinsky’s US results, especially the significance of time spent together to both parents and children and the value children attach to having their parents available to attend school and other events.

Lewis recently undertook interviews with parents and children from 47 families in Melbourne. The non-random group included ‘only a couple of families having a parent who reported working more than 50 hours a week’ and probably under-represents families who are having trouble coping with work/family challenges (2001: 13-14). Lewis concludes that ‘time’ is only *one* of the critical factors that influence quality of family life’ (2001: 14). Nonetheless it is critical, and ‘time was a major and recurring theme in the interviews’ (2001:1). As in Galinsky’s study the majority of children in the study felt that the parents worked ‘about the right amount of time’. However, most of the children talked about the impact that work has on the time that parents spend with them and ‘the responses were divided roughly evenly between those saying that they wished their parents spent more time with them and those who said their parents currently spent enough time with them’ (2001: 7). Just under a third of parents in the study wanted to have more time with their children and ‘some parents had changed jobs to reduce pressure, although they lost work status and income’ (2001: 8). Some children in the study showed great delight when their parents’ hours became more reasonable (eg they gave up shift work).

The authors conclude that there are more important issues than just ‘length of time’ that affect children’s relationships with their parents. However, ‘time’ was important in the views of both children and parents in the study. This extended to primary school children and beyond:

It was clearly the case that children in primary school prefer to have parents participate actively in their school lives. Some of the younger children who were interviewed expressed this directly, and openly acknowledged that they felt bad if parents did not participate (2001: 9).

Lewis finds ‘that it is important to children that parents share significant moments in their lives’ – whether the children are primary or secondary school age. While children valued the incomes that their parents earned, some ‘talked about lack of time spent with their parents as a negative consequence of their parents working’ and nearly all the children referred ‘to the impact of work, on [parents’] time spent with children’ (2001: 11).

### **Long hours and couple relationships**

Couple relationships are affected by diverse factors one of which is paid-work related issues. A review of the literature by Hill, Hawkins, Ferris and Weitzman (2001) suggests that there is a relationship between working longer hours and conflicts in family relationships, especially for those with pre-school children. They (2001: 3) illustrate the cost of such conflicts to the workplace by citing findings that absenteeism due to marital stress results in US\$6.8 billion worth of annual work loss in the United States.

There are reports that effects of long hours on couples are rising in significance in economies like the US. Shellenbarger summarised these studies:

Overwork is surfacing as a point of conflict in more relationships. Many people are working harder, and personal relationships are often the first casualties. Yankelovich Partners [a research consultancy firm] says half the 1,000 workers it surveyed have much more to do at work than two or three years ago; 42% of those surveyed report spending less time with their spouses in the same period.

Bonnie Michaels of Managing Work & Family, an Evanston, Illinois, consulting firm, says that among 150 couple she sees each year in workshops and focus groups, those troubled by one partner’s long work hours have doubled in five years. (Shellenbarger 1999: 89, first published in *Wall Street Journal*, 1997).

Other studies suggest that time shortages from long hours at work for women and men have negative effects on relationships with partners. While many positive effects flow from women’s participation in paid work (both for themselves, their children and their partners), a growing body of research suggests that long hours have a range of negative effects for women workers. In particular, extended working hours decreases the time couples have together. As Rogers summarises:

Previous research provides evidence that the time shortages created by the employment of married mothers have negative effects on the marital relationship. When wives work more hours per week, it affects marital quality by decreasing couples’ time together (Hill 1998, Kingston and Nock 1987; Spitze and South 1985), increasing feelings of role conflict and overload amongst wives (Voydanoff 1988, 1989), and raising wives’ awareness of inequity in the household division of labor (Booth et al. 1984, Hochschild 1989, Spitze and South 1985). (Rogers 1996: 607).

The presence or absence of children – not surprisingly – is quite critical. Crouter, Bumpus, Head and McHale (2001) find a few studies that suggest that long work hours alone are not enough to negatively affect marital relationships. The character of those hours emerges as important along with their indirect effect within families. However, they point out that in these studies this may reflect ‘selection effects’: relationships that are negatively affected by long hours may not survive into such studies as couples either separate or reduce their work hours *because* of their negative effects.

Some studies have found that the negative effects of long hours on marital relationships work themselves through indirectly. For example, Hughes, Galinsky and Morris (1992) found that ‘extended time demands’ amongst pharmaceutical employees did not directly affect marital tension or companionship but that they ‘increased individuals’ perceptions that their jobs interfered with their emotional states; these in turn, were linked to higher marital tensions and less marital companionship’ (quoted in Crouter, Bumpus, Head and McHale 2001:406). Other US studies suggest that examining the effect of long hours on, for example, the quality of marital relationships must take account of both men’s and women’s perceptions about long hours and their effects. For example, a study of male army officers found no direct association between husbands’ working hours and marital tension but ‘husbands’ work hours were linked to marital tension through wives’ satisfaction with their husbands’ hours and wives’ view of the overall ‘fit’ between their husbands’ work demands and the needs of the family’. (Pittman 1994, cited in Crouter, Bumpus, Head and McHale 2001).

Crouter, Bumpus, Head and McHale (2001) undertook a study of 190 dual earner non-divorced households in 1995 and 1996 where the men work long hours and the families are raising adolescent offspring. Their sample is small and suffers from the kind of selection effect discussed above. The study found that long hours (more than 60 per week) *alone* did not result in poorer marital relationships, but that ‘role overload’ (the feeling of being overwhelmed by multiple commitments and not having enough time for themselves’) did (2001: 404):

When husbands experienced higher overload, partners felt less loving, saw themselves as less able to take the spouse’s perspective, saw the spouse as less able to take their perspective, and reported more conflict (2001:412).

Turning to relations between fathers and adolescent children, their study found that the combination of both long hours and a feeling of job overload results in poorer relationships. They argue that it is the combination of overwork and overload that is problematic in this sample of relationships between fathers and adolescents. They conclude:

Employers and human service providers need to be aware of the possible drawbacks of both overwork and overload. Employer practices such as mandatory overtime represent potential risks for families, especially when parents are employed in stressful work circumstances...The American economy needs more jobs in which workers can support their

families without having to work very long hours. Long work hours do not tell the whole story, however, employers need to develop strategies to reduce employees' feelings of overload. Strategies should not only include training in stress management, an approach which puts the burden of responsibility on the worker, but also reducing the pace, deadlines, interpersonal tensions and pressures at work that may generate feelings of overload (2001: 417).

### **Long hours and unpaid domestic work: the cost for relationships**

The continuing imbalance in domestic work falling to women – both in Australia and elsewhere - is well established (Bittman and Pixley 1997, Bittman and Wajcman 2000). While there have been some changes in the distribution of that work over recent decades, the gender division of domestic work remains firmly in place with the larger share falling to women, and sharp segmentation in the jobs the women and men do at home:

On the best evidence available, unpaid domestic labour is assigned on the basis of gender. On average, the time that men devote to paid family responsibilities is half that spent by women. Almost regardless of their position in the life course, men's weekly hours of unpaid work is far more likely to be a fixed quantity. The time women spend in unpaid work varies through the life course, expanding and contracting in accordance with their responsibility for others (spouse, children or frail relative) (Bittman 1998: 31).

There has been some change in men's and women's contribution to domestic labour in recent years. However, much of the change that has occurred is the result of women's decisions to reduce their housework, rather than through significant changes in men's contribution to that unpaid work traditionally done by women. With men concentrated in long hours jobs in Australia, it is likely that these jobs result in lower domestic contributions from these men. A considerable body of research exists making a link between marital relationships and the sharing of domestic work. For example, Stevens, Kiger and Riley find that:

the division of household tasks and emotion work and their contributions to household and status-enhancing tasks were the most significant predictors of marital satisfaction. Satisfaction with the division of labour around both emotion work and housework were significant predictors for men's marital satisfaction (2001: 514).

For some women, this inequality in workloads is accepted, especially where men do long hours at work outside the home (Pocock 2001: 8). However, in many households, especially where women are working full-time outside the house and their hours parallel those of men, this issue is of significant concern to women – and men, and affects relationships detrimentally as studies in many countries show (Stevens Kiger and Riley 2001 summarise some of this extensive literature).



Long hours for either women or men living in families are likely to exacerbate the pressures that these issues – and inequities – create in families and relationships. Where male partners are working long hours, they are likely to mean even less contributions of work to households and to growing emotional distancing that women talk about in this qualitative study – resulting in some cases in family breakdown and divorce. In this study women found they had more success with lowering standards, contracting out, training of children and use of technologies than with changing their partner's behaviours when it came to domestic work: 'Many are angry about this – from factory workers through to professional doctors, managers and lawyers' (2001:8):

Some pointed out a direct linkage between sex and housework: anger and tiredness affected intimacy and in one focus group women laughingly discussed the withdrawal of sex as punishment for the failure to 'help'.

The issue of the impact of paid work on intimacy and sexuality for women – and thus for their partners – emerged as a larger theme in this study:

For a significant number, an absence of intimacy, sexual activity and physicality exists in their relationships. For some this was a source of guilt, regret and pessimism. While some women talked about a need for closeness, that didn't include sexual intimacy, for many there was a general absence of interest due to tiredness and lack of both personal and relationship 'space' because of the demands of children and work. Some women took purposeful steps regularly to enable intimate communication and connection. Others saw it as a past pre-occupation that had no place or time in busy stressed lives (2001:63).

Tiredness and the demands of busy paid work recur as contributors to a lack of intimacy for women in this study. Where women work long hours, they frequently name penalties for themselves and their children. Women managers, lawyers and doctors in this study who frequently work long hours 'talked about the incompatibility of their professions with maternity and caring'. These professional women questioned the compatibility of their professional demands with domestic responsibilities.

### **Unequal opportunities for women: subordinating family to work**

For these professional women in the above study 'making it' generally meant working long hours – or consistently liaising with colleagues to avoid them, or changing jobs to evade them. Many participants in the study identified growing pressures in paid work, including pressure to work longer hours, as further complicating the tasks of motherhood, relationships and caring (Pocock 2001: 98-101). Others pointed to the impact of growing hours in paid work – for both women and men – in eroding the capacity for voluntary work in schools and communities (83-87).

Other research internationally supports the impact of ‘long hours professionalism’ on women. Wajcman in her study of managers in multinational companies in the UK found that women who reached senior levels in these organisations invariably adopted well established patterns of household life (hiring ‘wife’ substitutes to do cleaning, cooking and self-maintenance) or staying childless: ‘most of the women up against the infamous glass ceiling have already found it necessary to forgo having children’ (1999: 105). Many senior employees in large companies facing international competitive pressures ‘feel the need to demonstrate their commitment by staying late, by learning to display the requisite behaviours and by subordinating leisure, family and domestic concerns to the pressures of work’ (1999: 163).

The spread of long hours is inimical to caring and carries particular penalties for women who continue to take major responsibility for all forms of caring work in most societies. Wajcman’s study is one in a large literature that demonstrate that work and workplaces are gendered, and that work regimes result in differential impacts upon women and men, with women frequently adversely affected (Acker 1992, Bacchi 1996, Cockburn 1991, Hearn et al 1989, Collinson and Hearn 1994, Mills and Tancred 1992, Hearn and Parkin 1987, Hearn, Sheppard, Tancred-Sherriff and Burrell 1989).

Regimes which include long hours are particularly disadvantageous to women, especially women with responsibility for children. However, their impact extends more widely to all women, in that in many circumstances all women – regardless of their actual caring responsibilities – are assumed to have lower ‘commitment’ and are ‘at risk’ of caring responsibilities in the future. Action based on this assumption by employers, managers and co-workers reinforces and consolidates long established gendered patterns of occupational segregation, job access and promotion. The extensive literature on gendered workplaces and jobs suggest that the existence and spread of long hours in workplaces will reinforce women’s secondary labour market status and further disadvantage them at work. Strengthened long hours work cultures create work models that are increasingly at odds with the caring work that many women do. The literature suggests that they are counter to equal opportunities for women.

### **The effect on social and human capital: the externality effects of households’ longer hours of (paid and unpaid) work**

Long working hours affect social life and the citizenship of individuals who work them. They mean that many employees cannot devote time to voluntary activity that sustains sporting clubs, schools, care of the extended family and social institutions. Recent Australian research amongst women suggests that components of community fabric - like the extended family, community resources and capacity for voluntary work - are being undermined by the growing paid work attachment (Pocock 2001).

Long working long hours affect women’s and men’s capacities to nurture. They undermine social fabric and relations in households, families and communities. Family members provide non-market services that sustain the family structure as a social unit, reproducing labour for the paid work sector, and the provision of a stable

consumption unit which regularly buys the goods and services provided by the paid work sector. As Heath, Ciscel and Sharp summarise, drawing on other literature, it is not only individuals who are affected by the encroachment of paid work into non-working life:

Society is stressed as well, as the interaction of these three forces [family organisation rooted in patriarchy; the market system; and the social policies of the state] diminishes the family's ability to perform the unpaid work that forms the basis of community: the production of social capital and the performance of caring labor (Folbre 1995, Himmelweit 1995, Hewlett and West 1998) (Heath, Ciscel and Sharp 1998a: 502).

Himmelweit in particular has argued that the encroachment of paid work into communities (exacerbated by long hours) has effects that are largely hidden because the activities that increase social fabric take place outside of the work/consumption cycle: 'they remain invisible, and hence, unvalued and unsupported' (cited in Heath, Ciscel and Sharp 1998a:504). Heath et al. find in their study of US families that the intensification of both paid and unpaid work is impairing the capacities of families to provide the social fabric that – whilst lying outside the market and therefore unvalued – is critical to social and economic life:

Families are left struggling to resolve one of the most insidious paradoxes of market encroachment. The market benefits from the family's production of social capital, which is made more difficult by the market's commodification of some discrete aspects of this labor. At the same time, however, the market fails to value the provision of the entirety as an uninterrupted, seamless entity, Paradoxically, then, the market becomes a free rider with respect to the very activity it fails to value (Heath, Ciscel and Sharp 1998a).

In other words, society and the economy benefit from the hidden, social, reproductive work that households do. However, they 'free ride' on it. Because they are hidden and private and outside the market system, the social and family structures that underpin work can be run down. Long hours therefore represent an important means by which families and society – through the run down of family and social infrastructure – subsidize the economy and labour markets. In this argument, in the same way that environmental degradation sometimes represents an externality flowing from economic behaviour, the intensification of work and longer hours create externalities, or hidden costs, for the family and social infrastructure.

At the same time, families struggle to allocate and reallocate paid and unpaid work equitably; under the strain of intensification. However many cannot, and family tension rises as a result.

For parents and especially women, increasing hours at work (whether by men or women) hinders the production of human and social capital. The web of social relationships with extended family members, members of clubs, churches and community organisations that form social fabric become increasingly difficult to maintain for both women and men working long hours:

Extra-long jobs threaten our civil society. Participation in community clubs and activities is undermined by 50 or 60 hour per week jobs. The nation should see the promotion of a balance between work and the rest of life not as simply a private choice between employers and employees, but as a matter of great importance to the public interest (Jacobs and Gerson 1998:8).

The household's role as the basic unit of communities is placed under threat by extended hours in paid labour. Heath, Ciscel and Sharp (1998b: 8) argue that 'the family as a social institution is an important source of the social cohesion that is the basis of community'. This cohesion sustains social life through a range of separate activities, which include the socialisation of children, volunteer activities and civic engagement. These activities are bound together by interpersonal relationships, which require time to maintain. The web of trust and stability that social fabric provides is critical to society.

It is ironic that as hours spent in the paid workforce increase, the economy itself becomes vulnerable to the effects upon family life. Societies need households: to reproduce labour, underpin consumption and economic demand, and to sustain communities. The market relies on the family to reproduce the labour force, rear and socialise children, provide a basic unit of consumption and to form a stable social fabric. In return, it seems that at least some working-hours regimes – like those in Australia and the US – require that significant proportions of family members work increasingly long hours, which create conflictual tensions within the household and family structure. Heath et al.'s discussion and the general literature on the impact of long hours on family life raise important questions. Do rising hours of paid work damage the social fabric of society through damage to families and communities? What are the costs of this damage – in terms of the privately experienced damage to personal health, relationships, children, the extended family and community life? And what are the public economic costs in terms of health and other community services that arise from damage to families, children and community?

These costs are not quantified in the literature. Nonetheless, the literature does suggest that long hours are associated with stress and tiredness in family members, that there are more signs of growth in that stress and strain in countries like the US and Australia where hours in paid work are growing, and that this stress affects employees, parents, and children badly. The key requirement for good family outcomes – warm and responsive relationships that require *time* to be maintained – is put at risk by a regime of long working hours. Unfortunately this requirement is at risk in a growing number of families where at least one member is working long hours.

## **Conclusion**

Overall, powerful evidence exists in a growing body of research that long hours are bad for individuals, couple relationships, children, and community fabric. Many of the effects of long hours and more intensive work patterns are privately experienced: in the language of economists, they are the externalities of changing work patterns. They frequently affect those who can least speak for themselves: our dependents.

Children are revealed through this literature as frequently accepting of their parents' hours of work, though research shows that stressed busy parents are impaired in their capacity to offer children what they most want: unstressed, unrushed parents with time on their hands, and the energy to give focused attention to their children.

Women are especially affected by long hours in paid work – whether they work them, or live with a partner who works them. The load of domestic work falls more to women, regardless of household patterns of paid work. However, the intensification of paid work patterns exacerbates tension about the inequitable sharing of domestic work, contributing to relationship tensions. Alongside this, the increasing prevalence of long hours jobs in a wide range of workplaces, makes the working lives of carers more problematic. If the only way to get ahead is to work long hours, then equal opportunity for women retreats further.

Economies with the weakest regulatory regimes in relation to paid work hours – like the US – are the site of most research on the impact of long hours on family life. Two types of literature are most common. First, there is a large literature that concentrates on 'family friendly' initiatives like flexitime and activities at the margin in 'good' firms (the Harvard Business Review compendium of 2000 represents just one example). This literature extols 'good practice' and encourages the individual to find his/her own solutions. At the same time, a second and growing body of academic research suggests that long hours are spreading in the US, and that these hours are having important negative consequences for couples, children, and community. They are the family unfriendly under-story. Social and statutory initiatives to interrupt these family unfriendly initiatives are buried under waves of 'family friendly' ephemera.

After leading the world on working time reduction in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, Australia's pattern of hours now most closely resembles that of the US and sits amongst those with the longest average working hours in the industrialised world. What is more, many want to work fewer hours, and find that their hours are not only longer, but more pressured, more demanding.

This literature reveals a tension between the demands of the market for Australian employees to work longer hours and the maintenance of the family – in all its diversity - and the community.

Unless there is some protection and relief from pressures for employees to work extended hours, the literature suggests that the equilibrium of many families affected by long hours is at risk. More and more households contribute a growing proportion of hours to the market economy, and less to the private reproduction of themselves, children and community as the dual income household form spreads. Research suggests that many find benefits through their paid work: women's health frequently improves with paid work, and family members benefit from more economic resources. However, long hours damage many families as many studies in this review suggest.

Long hours place particular stress on women with families who must work double shifts in paid work and domestic labour. Extended hours at work undermine relationships with partners through loss of time spent together and loss of intimacy.

Long hours at paid work may result in role conflict, work overload and exacerbate awareness of inequities in the division of housework. The presence of children further exacerbates these processes because of the need to juggle responsibility for caring and nurturing children with more paid hours.

The erosion of leisure time by long hours in paid work can also lead to family tension as the hours spent in restorative activities decrease. The loss of time for restorative activities also has implications for performance in paid work.

Further, extended hours in paid work undermine human and social capital formation. Social capital building activities, which include the socialisation of children, volunteer activities and civic engagement are affected by longer hours. The decline in social fabric that results from these processes has implications for social cohesion.

While there is plenty of scope for more study of the effects of long and unreasonable hours on the Australian community, the existing body of evidence provides convincing argument that long hours damage society, families, children and individuals. Changes in the composition of the Australian labour force, with a growing role for women and those with dependents, mean that these issues will become more, not less, significant in coming years. In this light, they demand policy responses that directly address the effects of unreasonable hours on family and community life.

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