

Gender and Employment-structure Patterns in Australia's Retail Workforce: An Intra-industry Analysis

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Abstract

Challenging conditions in Australian retail pose a threat to its retail workforce and are expected to change the retail employment landscape. This prompts a need to develop a contemporary knowledge of the retail workforce, which has a higher incidence of insecure employment than the general workforce. This study investigates gender and employment-structure patterns between different sectors within the retail industry by analysing the variables of employment status and gender between 40 Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) retail categories (for example groceries, clothing, automobiles, hardware, restaurants), using data from the 'Australia at Work' survey. The results show that while overall women dominate employment in the retail sector, retail employment among women tends to be part-time and lower-skilled, while men tend to be in more physical, skilled, prestigious, and full-time positions. Societal gender expectations such as the breadwinner role for men and child caring for women are also identified.

1. Introduction

The retail industry is the second largest employer in Australia (ABS 2011a) making up 11 per cent of national employment. A high incidence of casual employment in the industry reduces the security of employment (Corderoy 2011). Australian retail is experiencing unprecedented difficulties, causing the industry to report its worst results in 50 years (Martin and Lynch 2011) in the midst of declining consumer confidence (Deloitte Access Economics 2011). This is partly due to the proliferation of online retail outlets, which has reduced the use of traditional forms of retail and enabled shoppers to have international access to stores that offer lower prices than domestic outlets. This development has pushed traditional bricks-and-mortar shopping malls including Westfield, the world's largest shopping centre owner, to venture into

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online retail (Barwell and Packard 2011). Advancements in technology enable an unprecedented level of automation in retail, such as current self-service checkouts at supermarkets and forthcoming Radio Frequency Identification (RFID) equipped checkouts that enable shoppers to check out by simply pushing the shopping cart through a gantry without the need to scan items individually. Such developments continue to threaten the retail workforce, as retail systems become more efficient and require fewer workers to operate them. Changes stemming from these issues are expected to have a substantial impact on the retail employment structure.

Two prominent differences between the retail workforce and the general workforce are that retail has been reported to hire a larger percentage of the part-time and casual workforce and to employ a higher percentage of women (Sparks 1992; Brockbank and Airey 1994; WES Compendium 2001; Office for National Statistics 2006; Pilcher 2007). In the Australian context, retail has been reported to be one of the industries with the lowest hours of work (Pocock, Skinner, and Pisaniello 2010). Some authors (Hinton, Moruz, and Mumford 1999; Zeytinoglu et al. 2004) found that retail employment has shifted from a sector characterised largely by full-time jobs to a sector characterised by part-time and casual jobs, as more flexible employment options developed over time. Such employment differences make retail employment distinct from general employment to the extent that it should be studied separately. Furthermore, there is a paucity of research that investigates employment between sectors within the retail industry, as research in this area has more commonly been done by comparing different industries altogether. With these observations in mind, this article investigates gender and employment-structure patterns between different sectors within the retail industry, guided by the following research questions engendered by the literature review in the next section:

Do different retail subsectors have different patterns of male and female employment?

Do males and females working in retail subsectors have different patterns of part-time and full-time employment?

Do different retail subsectors have different patterns of part-time and full-time employment?

These research questions will be answered by analysing the variables of employment status and gender between 40 ANZSIC retail categories within Australia, using data obtained from a survey of Australian workers undertaken in 2009. Tied to the research questions, we propose a null hypothesis of there being no difference between retail subsectors in their employment patterns.

2. Literature Review

A substantial number of studies document gender differences in retail employment (Taylor and Tyler 2000; Korczynski 2002; Lynch 2002; Foster 2004; Pettinger 2005; Campbell and Chalmers 2008; Zeytinoglu and Cooke 2008). Such differences can influence the gender stereotyping of employees. Some articles suggest that gender stereotypes affect employers' perceptions of male and female workers (Cejka and Eagly 1999; Gabriel and Schmitz 2007; Ridgeway and Correll 2004). For instance, many occupations are segregated and almost wholly dominated by one sex (Cejka and Eagly 1999), with particular sectors known to be exclusively staffed by women, such as the retail industry (Brockbank and Airey 1994).

The ABS (2011b) reports that the majority (56.8 per cent) of those employed in the Australian retail industry are women. This corresponds with reports from outside Australia, which show that women account for the majority of retail employment (for example Sparks 1992; Brockbank and Airey 1994; Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich 2003; Office for National Statistics 2006; Pilcher 2007). While women dominate retail employment, they have been found to occupy the low-skilled positions in retail (Broadbridge 1997; McGauran 2000; Ngo 2000; Lynch 2002; Korczynski 2002; Pilcher 2007), with men dominating retail management positions (Brockbank and Airey 1994; Schmidt and Parker 2003; Harris, Foster, and Whysall 2007). Where women are employed in management, they are more likely to be represented in junior and middle management positions (Broadbridge, Maxwell, and Ogden 2007). Positions occupied by women have been reported to be lower paying, of lower status, and offer fewer advancement opportunities (Tikka 1999); where skill and knowledge were important, men prevailed (Broadbridge 1997). Similarly, Lynch (2002) highlights that retail jobs defined as 'peripheral' and 'low-skill' were predominately filled by women, whereas men filled occupations considered to be 'skilled', such as management positions.

A number of studies identify the link between emotional labour and women (Ngo 2000; Sirianni and Negrey 2000; Lynch 2002; Pilcher 2007; Kmec 2008). Pettinger (2005) explains that the gendering of retail employment lies with the feminisation of customer-service work due to the emotional management content. Kerfoot and Korczynski (2005) argue that women's presumed attachment to so-called 'softer' skills in service work acts to reinforce and reproduce gender division in the workplace, while Taylor and Tyler (2000) found that male managers recruiting telesales staff made stereotypical gendered assumptions about women possessing a 'natural' ability to 'chat' and build up a 'rapport' with others.

Aesthetic factors can also explain the dominance of women in retail. McGauran (2000) points out that women are more likely to be employed based on their appearance, and that women are considered better than men at cleaning and stocking goods, and at selling to other women. Kerfoot and Knights (1994) postulate that 'a nice mumsy face at the desk' would both increase sales and smooth the flow of production. Foster (2004) argues that certain retail sectors are 'gendered', that is, the products they sell have stereotypical male connotations such as car sales or men's fashion, or stereotypical female associations such as cosmetic sales and ladies' fashion and, quite often, the gender of customer-facing staff reflects this association. For example, research by Brockbank and Airey (1994) found that in one company which retails maternity and childcare products exclusively, 93 per cent of employees were female. In an example for do-it-yourself (DIY) stores, Sparks (1991) points out that male customers perceived male staff to have better technical knowledge and greater physical competence when handling products than female staff, and often preferred to seek advice from male staff. Similarly, Fischer, Gainer, and Bristor (1997) state that in some service settings, women expect to receive better service from women, and men from men. Pettinger (2005) found that female sales assistants tend to serve female customers with products that are culturally 'feminine'. Notwithstanding this, women were more likely to work in men's departments than men in women's departments because of the way the occupation of sales assistant is feminised. Hochschild (1983) suggested that women 'enhance the customer's status' while men 'deflate the customer's status', and that female staff serving male staff can imply a degree of sexualisation associated with their roles. The foregoing literature forms the basis for the first research question concerning gender-specific retail roles:

Research question 1: Do different retail subsectors have different patterns of male and female employment?

Part-time employment features as a common mode of employment in the Australian workforce structure, with the OECD (2009) reporting that Australia ranks third highest in occurrence of part-time employment among all countries surveyed. Employee gender can influence employment structure in the workforce. Sheridan (2004) reports that women dominate part-time employment in Australia; White (2007) states that the retail industry in Australia is somewhat dominated by part-time and casual employment and has been at least since the 1970s. The ABS (2011b) reports that the majority (61.4 per cent) of Australian female retail workers are part-timers. This corresponds to patterns observed outside Australia, where women in retail have been found to be more likely to occupy part-time positions (Sparks

1992; Anker 1997; McGauran 2000; Sirianni and Negrey 2000; Preston and Jefferson 2007).

There are several perspectives in explaining the popularity of part-time work. From a career-progression perspective, a possible driver of part-time and casual retail employment may be that in order to obtain full-time employment, employees must first be part-timers. As such, part-time positions can be considered 'try-outs' for full-time positions. For example, Tilly (2008) points out that many food retailers have a formal requirement that full-timers be hired exclusively from the part-time ranks, not from outside the company. Zeytinoglu and Cooke (2008) found that women in part-time jobs are more unlikely to be promoted, compared to women in full-time jobs. It is important to note that not all part-timers are seeking career progression. In their research, Harris, Foster, and Whysall (2007) found that 50.4 per cent of the female retail employees and 37.7 per cent of male retail employees who were working part-time were not seeking promotion.

From an employee's perspective, part-time and casual work offers flexibility for workers who have other commitments, such as child care and domestic responsibilities. McDonald, Bradley, and Brown (2008) suggest that part-time work is highly gendered and related to caring responsibilities, which is traditionally known to be more relevant for women. For example, Bu and McKeen (2001) found that women assigned greater importance to having a job which would accommodate family responsibilities, and to having more predictability and certainty on the job, than their male counterparts did. Similarly, Anker (1997) found that part-time work and flexible hours are associated with many female occupations. This can be explained by findings of Sirianni and Negrey (2000) that women are usually called upon to care for children, the ailing, and the aging. In addition, Warren (2004) points out that whether women had children or not had an impact on employment status, while Ngo (2002) found that many married women select part-time employment to cope with childcare and home-related activities.

Whittard and Burgess (2007) describe a collision between employers' interests and employees' family commitments, pointing out that the traditional way to reconcile work and care is through part-time work. The OECD (2009) reports that Australian part-time workers have poor financial incentives to move into full-time work because benefits in the welfare system are means-tested and are clawed back as incomes rise. This stems from the lack of work and family reconciliation in Australian industrial agreements—as suggested by Burgess, Henderson, and Strachan (2007)—which can be expected of a liberal market economy with an emphasis on market-based resource allocation (Connell, Burgess, and Hannif 2008). Simpson, Dawkins,

and Madden (1997) suggest that women use casual work to maintain their skills and to supplement the family income; they argue that an increase in the proportion of women in the workforce is observed to coincide with an increase in the proportion of casual employment. Therefore, employees in such positions may accept inferior terms and conditions to accommodate their domestic obligations, as suggested by Brockbank and Airey (1994). Such employees are not likely to seek career progression as, according to the aforementioned finding of Harris, Foster and Whysall (2007), half of female part-time retail employees were not seeking promotion anyway.

From an employer's perspective, part-time and casual workers offer the availability and flexibility to deal with fluctuating demand and business conditions, which enable a competitive advantage. For example, Fagan (2001) points out that part-time work is perceived to be cost-saving and O'Reilly (1992) suggests that in periods of recession it is easier for employers to dispense with the services of non-permanent staff. Furthermore, Zeytinoglu et al. (2004) found that employees in cashier, store clerk, or bakery jobs are often scheduled to work in shorter shifts so that the employer may eliminate the costs associated with giving the legally required lunch and (or) rest breaks. Such part-time workers are likely to be women (Crompton 2002; Atkinson and Hall 2009). Brockbank and Airey (1994) point out that part-time employment for married women provides retail employers with a readily available pool of labour, while Ngo (2002) states that cost-conscious employers in the service sector increasingly recognise the benefits of using female part-timers. Consequently, the use of part-time and casual labour may be viewed negatively by employees. Those opposed to part-time work argue that part-time staff are employed because they are less costly, can be offered reduced benefits, and are treated less favourably (Browell and Ivers 1998). Although part-time employment is concentrated in (objectively) poor jobs, the opportunity to work part-time is interpreted positively by female part-timers, because it can be seen as a beneficial way for women with domestic responsibilities to be engaged in paid work and to maintain their work skills (Warren, 2004). Therefore, a trade-off exists in that what is gained by employees by way of flexibility may be lost in the terms and conditions of employment (Negrey 1990; Ferber, Farrell, and Allen 1991; Brockbank and Airey 1994). The literature reviewed forms the basis for the second research question concerning gender-based employment status differences:

Research question 2: Do males and females working in retail subsectors have different patterns of part-time and full-time employment?

Within the retail industry, skilled positions have been found to be more likely to be occupied by full-timers, while less-skilled positions are more

likely to be occupied by part-timers. Men are more likely to be in full-time retail employment (Sparks 1992; Anker 1997; McGauran 2000; Sirianni and Negrey 2000). Pini and McDonald (2008) postulate that full-time work may be considered a symbolic expression of masculinity, and other research reveals that societal gender expectations exist concerning employment (Beck 2000; Sheridan 2004; Smithson and Stokoe 2005). Women are usually overrepresented in clerical, sales, and service work, while men predominate in production and managerial occupations (Charles 1992). Tomlinson (2007) suggests that part-time work is highly gendered and often of low-status, which has serious consequences for women's economic independence, financial security, and quality of working life. Ngo (1997) suggests that prestigious jobs are considered to be male-typed. Neoclassical human capital theories illustrate how women are less qualified than men for certain occupations owing to differences in their education and years of experience (Anker 1997). These findings are longitudinally similar to research conducted over two decades ago when Bielby and Baron (1986) found that women are most likely to be excluded from jobs that are specialised, involve variable tasks, and require spatial skills and eye and hand or eye and foot coordination.

Tilly (2008) points out that in retail stores, the more-skilled and responsible tasks tend to be covered by full-timers, while low-skill tasks are handled by part-timers. Tilly gives the example that most supermarkets use only full-time workers in skilled meat-cutting jobs and part-time workers for relatively unskilled roles, such as cashiers and baggers. Departments such as checkout and administration tend to be dominated by women in part-time positions (Lynch 2002). Campbell and Chalmers (2008) point out that the proportion of part-time workers varies somewhat according to the particular branch of retailing; for example, motor-vehicle retailing relies less on part-time workers than food retailing does. In particular, food retailers are known to employ part-time staff due to the flexibility required to meet unpredictable peaks and troughs in demand (Browell and Ivers 1998). Shackleton (1998) suggests that the food-retailing industry is manipulating labour into part-time work. The literature reviewed forms the basis for the final research question concerning employment-structure differences between retail sectors:

Research question 3: Do different retail subsectors have different patterns of part-time and full-time employment?

3. Data and Methodology

The data used for this study are derived from the 2009 *Australia at Work* survey carried out by the Workplace Research Centre at the University of Sydney. This is a longitudinal survey tracking the experiences of the

Australian labour force over the period 2006 to 2011. The study is funded by the Australian Research Council and Unions New South Wales, and is advised by a board consisting of labour market and industrial relations academics from around Australia. The survey is compliant to privacy principles under the Association of Market and Social Research Organisations. The 2009 survey tabulated the findings from 6801 respondents' telephone interviews of up to 20 minutes. Participation was anonymous and voluntary, and the incentive for participating was a one in 40 chance of winning an iPod. The sample is weighted—using population estimates from the ABS *Labour Force Survey*—according to age, sex, location, labour force status, and union membership. The relevant subset of the data used for this study consists of 630 respondents (262 men and 368 women; 258 full-time and 372 part-time) who were employed across 40 ANZSIC categories within the retail industry. Only data from selected questions in the survey are relevant for use in this study; they include gender, industry classification (within retail), and employment status. Chi square (χ^2) testing was employed to determine the statistical significance between variables within the tables used in the analysis. This tests the association between two categorical samples for the likelihood that the distribution is due to chance. Statistical significance at the conventionally accepted $p < 0.05$ (5 per cent) level was attained in all three tables analysed, which confirms that these results are acceptable as statistically conclusive findings and are unlikely to have occurred by chance. A limitation of the data is that the number of respondents within some categories is inevitably small due to the highly specific division of the sectors.

4. Results

The data show that the majority (58.4 per cent) of Australian retail workers are women. Men occupy 58.9 per cent of full-time retail positions, with the vast majority of these male full-timers (84.0 per cent) being in permanent positions. Women occupy 70.4 per cent of part-time positions, with the majority of these female part-timers (67.9 per cent) being in casual positions (Tables 1 and 2).

Some retail sectors were found to be gender-specific. The most male-dominated sector is Computer, Electric, and Electronic goods, with 81.0 per cent of the sector occupied by male employees, followed by Motor Vehicles and Parts at 80.4 per cent, Garden Supplies at 80.0 per cent and Hardware at 63.0 per cent (Table 1). Female employees dominated the retail sector of Clothing with 91.7 per cent, followed by Pharmaceutical, Cosmetics, and Toiletries at 85.2 per cent, Newspaper and Books at 81.3 per cent, Department stores at 70.3

per cent, Takeaway food at 66.7 per cent, Supermarkets at 64.8 per cent, and Cafes and Restaurants at 63.8 per cent (Table 2). In the Accommodation sector, employee gender was found to be more evenly balanced (46.2 per cent men and 53.8 per cent women), with the majority of male employees (58.3 per cent) occupying full-time positions and the majority of female employees (67.9 per cent) occupying part-time positions.

Only 40.9 per cent of retail employees were in full-time positions, with 59.1 per cent in part-time positions, thus revealing the dominance of part-time positions in retail employment (Table 3). Within full-time positions in retail, the vast majority (89.1 per cent) are permanent full-time, as opposed to casual full-time. As for part-time positions in retail, the majority (71.8 per cent) are casual part-time, as opposed to permanent part-time. Regarding the size of retail sectors according to the number of employees, the Grocery and Supermarkets sector was found to be the largest employer, accounting for 19.8 per cent of all retail employees sampled (Table 3). This is followed by the Cafes and Restaurants sector (9.2 per cent), Accommodation (8.3 per cent), Takeaway food (7.1 per cent), and Department stores (5.9 per cent).

Different sectors within the retail industry were found to have different employment structures. The sector hiring the highest percentage of full-time employees is Motor Vehicles and Parts at 79.6 per cent, followed by Furniture Retailing at 77.8 per cent, Hardware and Building Supplies at 77.8 per cent, and Computer, Electric, and Electronic Goods at 64.7 per cent (Table 3). The sector hiring the highest percentage of part-time employees is Newspaper and Book Retailing at 93.8 per cent, followed by Pubs, Taverns, and Bars at 76.5 per cent, Department Stores at 75.7 per cent, Takeaway Food at 75.6 per cent, Sport and Camping at 73.3 per cent, Cafes and Restaurants at 72.4 per cent, and Supermarket and Grocery Stores at 61.6 per cent (Table 3).

5. Findings and Discussion

These results reveal gender and employment-structure patterns in retail from analysing employment status and gender variables between various categories within the retail industry. Based on Chi square (χ^2) testing, statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ (5 per cent) level was attained in all three tables analysed, which rejects the null hypothesis that there is no difference between different retail subsectors and employment patterns. The findings are now discussed according to the three research questions investigated in this article.

Do Different Retail Subsectors Have Different Patterns of Male and Female Employment?

Some retail sectors were found to be gender-specific. Categories that require a higher degree of technical knowledge such as Computer, Electric, and Electronic goods and categories that involve a greater degree of physical work such as Motor Vehicles and Parts, Garden Supplies, and Hardware were found to be largely staffed by men, which corresponds with the findings of Broadbridge (1997), Sparks (1991), Korczynski (2002), and Foster (2004). Female employees were found to dominate sectors where customers are more likely to be female, such as Clothing, and Cosmetics and toiletries, consistent with research by Fischer, Gainer and Bristor (1997) and Pettinger (2005). Female employees also dominated the sectors of Takeaway Food, Supermarkets, and Cafes and Restaurants, which tend to be less skilled, checkout related, and part-time posts, consistent with findings from Broadbridge (1997), McGauran (2000), Lynch (2002), Korczynski (2002), and Pilcher (2007). Price (2009) found that the changes in the labour process brought about by technological change have narrowed the skill requirement of most of its employees. This suggests that the narrow division of labour limits employee skills in specific retail sectors, such as the aforementioned sectors, which can explain the dominance of women in those sectors.

Men were found to dominate sectors that require more technical skills, such as those acquired by substantial training, while women dominate sectors that require so-called 'soft' skills such as those requiring a higher emotional quotient (EQ) in directly interacting with customers. Such soft skills are generally categorised as 'less skilled' in the relevant literature, as they do not convey the status and prestige often associated with professional and technical skills. This therefore suggests that men are more likely to occupy positions of higher status and prestige.

It was interesting to find that in the Accommodation sector where the gender distribution of employees is quite evenly balanced, the majority of male employees are full-timers, while the majority of female employees are part-timers. This suggests that even within the same retail sector, men dominate the full-time positions, which are more likely to be more important or of higher status, such as managerial positions, while women may dominate part-time positions, which are more likely to be of lower skill and status, such as room attendants. This implies that occupational segregation can exist even within data already disaggregated, such as industry subsectors. The finding that men predominate in full-time and higher-skilled positions, despite the overall predominance of women in retail employment, highlights the view of full-time work as a symbolic expression of masculinity (Pini

and McDonald 2008) and the expectation that men are more likely to be accepted in skilled or prestigious positions (Bielby and Baron 1986; Charles 1992; Anker 1997; Ngo 1997; Tomlinson 2007).

Do Males and Females Working in Retail Subsectors Have Different Patterns of Part-time and Full-time Employment?

Retail employment was found to be dominated by part-time positions, with the majority of these part-time positions being casual. Women made up the majority of retail employment. Men were found to dominate full-time positions, with the vast majority in permanent full-time positions; women dominate part-time positions, with the majority in casual part-time positions. The finding that women make up the majority of retail employment is consistent with prior research conducted outside Australia (Sparks 1992; Brockbank and Airey 1994; Cranford, Vosko, and Zukewich 2003; Office for National Statistics 2006; Pilcher 2007). This is explained by research that links women to service roles (Sirianni and Negrey 2000; Lynch 2002; Kerfoot and Korczynski 2005; Pettinger 2005; Kmec 2008) and research that reports the predominance of part-timers in retail (Sparks 1992; Anker 1997; McGauran 2000; Sirianni and Negrey 2000; Sheridan 2004; White 2007). The dominance of women in part-time positions implies that they are likely to have domestic roles such as childcare and are hence more likely to seek flexible work, similar to findings from previous research (Brockbank and Airey 1994; Simpson, Dawkins, and Madden 1997; Bu and McKeen 2001; Warren 2004; McDonald, Bradley, and Brown 2008). The finding that men dominate full-time positions corresponds with some previous research (Sparks 1992; Anker 1997; McGauran 2000; Sirianni and Negrey 2000). This is again explained by Pini and McDonald (2008) who report that full-time work can be considered a symbolic expression of masculinity, and that societal gender expectations exist in employment, such as the male breadwinner role (Beck 2000; Sheridan 2004; Smithson and Stokoe 2005).

Do Different Retail Subsectors Have Different Patterns of Part-time and Full-time Employment?

Different sectors within the retail industry were found to have different employment structures. Sectors that hired more full-time employees included Motor Vehicles and Parts, Furniture, Hardware and Building Supplies, and Computer, Electric, and Electronic Goods. Sectors that hired more part-time employees included Newspaper and Book Retailing, Pubs, Taverns, and Bars, Department Stores, Takeaway Food, Sport and Camping, and Cafes and Restaurants. The findings show that retail sectors that are more likely to require specialised knowledge tend to hire full-time employees. This corresponds with the findings of Campbell and Chalmers (2008), who

reported that particular branches of the retail industry, such as motor-vehicle retailing, rely less on part-time workers than food retailing, which was found to hire more part-time employees. The results also correspond with Browell and Ivers (1998) and Shackleton (1998) who report that food retailers are more likely to employ part-time staff for the advantage of flexibility. It is interesting to note that the category of Sport and Camping, which can be considered as specialised, employs more part-time staff. This does not align with the construct that specialised retail sectors hire more full-time staff, but it can be explained by the likelihood that these are younger employees who work part-time due to study commitments—such younger individuals can be expected to be more involved in sport and camping activities. This finding raises the potential for further research regarding the age of retail employees, given its paucity compared to the amount of research on gender.

The finding that knowledge-based retail sectors (for example, Motor Vehicles, Furniture, and Hardware) hire more full-time employees can imply a scarcity of skilled retail staff, compared to part-time and relatively unskilled retail workers who are more readily available. It can thus be said that from an employer's perspective, a trade-off exists between the availability of skilled labour to deal with fluctuating demand and employment cost efficiency. Similarities were observed between the sectors that hire more full-time employees and the sectors that are male-dominated, and between the sectors that hire more part-time employees and the sectors that are female-dominated. This syllogistically reiterates earlier findings, which shows that part-time work is more likely to be female-dominated and that full-time work, which is more knowledge-dependent, is more likely to be male-dominated.

6. Conclusion

This paper sought to investigate gender and employment-structure patterns in retail by analysing employment status and gender differences between various categories within the Australian retail industry. The findings largely correspond to previous studies carried out outside Australia. These include findings that retail employment roles among women tend to be relatively less-skilled and part-time, while men tend to be in more physical, skilled, prestigious, and full-time positions. Therefore, these findings serve to corroborate previous findings, given the paucity of research within these parameters in the Australian context. Notwithstanding the similarities between these findings and previous studies, the comparison of gender-based employment differences between retail sectors has revealing implications. The finding that men predominate in full-time and higher-skilled positions, despite the overall predominance of women in retail employment, suggests that societal gender expectations such as the full-time breadwinner role

as a symbolic expression of masculinity exists in the perceived egalitarian society of Australia. The finding that women dominate part-time work, and the sectors which tend to be less technically skilled, implies that their jobs are more likely to be replaced by the outcomes of technological advances in retail such as automated self-service checkouts.

From the employees' perspective, the finding that women predominate in part-time and lower-skilled positions may suggest that women choose less work involvement because of a trade-off between working and their domestic and child-caring responsibilities. This is a likely consequence of the lack of work and family reconciliation in Australian industrial agreements (Burgess, Henderson, and Strachan, 2007), which offer poor financial incentives for workers to move back into full-time work (OECD 2009). This is likely to change with recent policy updates, such as that of the National Employment Standards that enabled flexible working arrangements and leave for parents and carers from 1 January 2010 (National Employment Standards 2010) and the Australian Government's Paid Parental Leave scheme from 1 January 2011, which provides working parents with 18 weeks of parental leave pay at the minimum wage (Paid Parental Leave Scheme 2011).

From the employers' perspective, these findings reveal that gender stereotypes may exist in Australian retail employment, which might be influenced by discrimination against women as being less competent at skilled jobs and in full-time positions. Given this ambiguity, further research is recommended to reveal whether female employees are constrained into part-time and lower-skilled work due to employer discrimination or lifestyle choice. Such research should be qualitative in nature to reveal women's insights on the work-life balance and its influence on employment choices. Another recommendation for further research is prompted by the substantial variations found between the different retail subsectors in this study. This serves to justify the value of further disaggregation in industry analysis by way of conducting intra-industry analyses in other industry sectors.

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Table 1: Male Respondents Classified by Retail Sector and Employment Status

		Employment Status Category							
		Casual				Perm			
		PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT
Retail Sector: Men		Count	0	0	0	0	12	12	12
Car	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Motor Cycle		Count	0	0	0	3	3	3	3
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Trailer and Other Motor-Vehicle		Count	0	0	0	4	4	4	4
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Motor Vehicle Parts		Count	2	0	0	11	11	13	13
	%	15.4	.0	.0	.0	84.6	84.6	100.0	100.0
Tyre		Count	0	0	0	3	3	3	3
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Fuel		Count	2	0	1	0	0	3	3
	%	66.7	.0	33.3	.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Supermarket and Grocery Stores		Count	13	9	1	21	21	44	44
	%	29.5	20.5	2.3	47.7	47.7	47.7	100.0	100.0
Fresh Meat Fish and Poultry Retailing		Count	0	0	0	3	3	3	3
	%	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Fruit and Vegetable	Count	0	0	0	0	3	3
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
Liquor	Count	2	0	0	0	5	7
	%	28.6	.0	.0	.0	71.4	100.0
Other Specialised Food	Count	0	0	0	0	2	2
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
Furniture	Count	1	0	0	0	4	5
	%	20.0	.0	.0	.0	80.0	100.0
Electrical Electronic and Gas Appliance	Count	2	0	0	0	5	7
	%	28.6	.0	.0	.0	71.4	100.0
Computer and Computer Peripheral	Count	1	0	0	0	4	5
	%	20.0	.0	.0	.0	80.0	100.0
Other Electrical and Electronic Goods	Count	1	0	0	0	1	2
	%	50.0	.0	.0	.0	50.0	100.0
Hardware and Building Supplies	Count	2	1	1	1	13	17
	%	11.8	5.9	5.9	5.9	76.5	100.0
Garden Supplies	Count	0	0	0	1	3	4
	%	.0	.0	.0	25.0	75.0	100.0
Sport and Camping Equipment	Count	6	1	1	0	2	9
	%	66.7	11.1	11.1	.0	22.2	100.0

		Employment Status Category									
		Casual		Perm		Casual		Perm			
		PT	FT	PT	FT	FT	FT	FT	Total		
Retail Sector: Men											
Entertainment Media	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1	1	1		
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0		
Toy and Game	Count	1	0	0	0	0	0	1	1		
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0		
Newspaper and Book	Count	2	0	0	0	1	1	3	3		
	%	66.7	.0	.0	.0	33.3	33.3	100.0	100.0		
Clothing	Count	1	0	0	1	0	0	2	2		
	%	50.0	.0	.0	50.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0		
Department Stores	Count	6	1	0	0	4	4	11	11		
	%	54.5	9.1	.0	.0	36.4	36.4	100.0	100.0		
Pharmaceutical Cosmetic and Toiletry Goods	Count	1	1	0	0	2	2	4	4		
	%	25.0	25.0	.0	.0	50.0	50.0	100.0	100.0		
Stationery Goods	Count	1	0	0	0	2	2	3	3		
	%	33.3	.0	.0	.0	66.7	66.7	100.0	100.0		
Other Store-based nec	Count	1	0	0	0	3	3	4	4		

	%	25.0	.0	.0	75.0	100.0
Non-store	Count	1	0	0	1	2
	%	50.0	.0	.0	50.0	100.0
Accommodation	Count	8	2	0	14	24
	%	33.3	8.3	.0	58.3	100.0
Cafes and Restaurants	Count	12	1	4	4	21
	%	57.1	4.8	19.0	19.0	100.0
Takeaway Food Services	Count	7	4	0	4	15
	%	46.7	26.7	.0	26.7	100.0
Catering Services	Count	5	0	0	2	7
	%	71.4	.0	.0	28.6	100.0
Pubs Taverns and Bars	Count	8	1	1	1	11
	%	72.7	9.1	9.1	9.1	100.0
Clubs (Hospitality)	Count	3	0	1	3	7
	%	42.9	.0	14.3	42.9	100.0
Total	Count	89	21	11	141	262
	%	34.0	8.0	4.2	53.8	100.0

A chi square test carried out on this table produced a value of 139.57 ($p < 0.001$), indicating statistical significance at the $p < 0.05$ level.

Table 2: Female Respondents Classified by Retail Sector and Employment Status

	Employment Status Category								
	Casual		Perm		Casual		Perm		
	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	
Retail Sector: Women									
Car	Count	1	0	0	0	5	6		
	%	16.7	.0	.0	.0	83.3	100.0		
Motor Vehicle Parts	Count	0	2	0	0	1	3		
	%	.0	66.7	.0	.0	33.3	100.0		
Fuel	Count	1	1	0	0	0	2		
	%	50.0	50.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0		
Supermarket and Grocery Stores	Count	26	29	1	1	25	81		
	%	32.1	35.8	1.2	30.9		100.0		
Fresh Meat Fish and Poultry	Count	4	0	1	1	1	6		
	%	66.7	.0	16.7	16.7		100.0		
Fruit and Vegetable Retailing	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1		
	%	.0	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0		
Liquor	Count	0	2	0	0	1	3		
	%	.0	66.7	.0	33.3		100.0		
Other Specialised Food	Count	5	0	0	0	1	6		
	%	83.3	.0	.0	16.7		100.0		

Furniture	Count	0	1	0	0	3	4
	%	.0	25.0	.0	.0	75.0	100.0
Houseware	Count	1	1	0	0	1	3
	%	33.3	33.3	.0	.0	33.3	100.0
Electrical Electronic and Gas Appliance	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Computer and Computer Peripheral	Count	0	0	0	0	1	1
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
Other Electrical and Electronic Goods	Count	0	1	0	0	0	1
	%	.0	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Hardware and Building Supplies	Count	0	3	1	1	6	10
	%	.0	30.0	10.0	10.0	60.0	100.0
Garden Supplies	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Sport and Camping Equipment	Count	3	1	0	0	2	6
	%	50.0	16.7	.0	.0	33.3	100.0
Entertainment Media	Count	2	2	0	0	0	4
	%	50.0	50.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Toy and Game	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0

		Employment Status Category									
		Casual				Perm					
		PT	FT	FT	Total	PT	FT	FT	Total		
Retail Sector: Women											
Count	10	3	0	0	0	0	0	13			
%	76.9	23.1	.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0			
Count	15	3	0	4	4	22					
%	68.2	13.6	.0	18.2	100.0						
Count	2	1	0	0	0	3					
%	66.7	33.3	.0	.0	100.0						
Count	1	2	0	0	0	3					
%	33.3	66.7	.0	.0	100.0						
Count	3	0	0	0	0	3					
%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0						
Count	13	8	0	5	26						
%	50.0	30.8	.0	19.2	100.0						
Count	6	7	1	9	23						
%	26.1	30.4	4.3	39.1	100.0						
Count	1	1	0	1	3						
%	33.3	33.3	.0	33.3	100.0						

Flower	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Other Store-Based nec	Count	6	1	1	3	11	11
	%	54.5	9.1	9.1	27.3	100.0	100.0
Non-Store Retailing	Count	2	0	0	0	2	2
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
Retail Commission-Based Buying and/or Selling	Count	1	0	0	0	1	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0
Accommodation	Count	14	5	4	5	28	28
	%	50.0	17.9	14.3	17.9	100.0	100.0
Cafes and Restaurants	Count	26	3	2	6	37	37
	%	70.3	8.1%	5.4	16.2	100.0	100.0
Takeaway Food Services	Count	18	5	3	4	30	30
	%	60.0	16.7	10.0	13.3	100.0	100.0
Catering Services	Count	2	0	2	2	6	6
	%	33.3	.0	33.3	33.3	100.0	100.0
Pubs Taverns and Bars	Count	4	0	0	2	6	6
	%	66.7	.0	.0	33.3	100.0	100.0
Clubs (Hospitality)	Count	6	1	1	1	9	9
	%	66.7	11.1	11.1	11.1	100.0	100.0
Total	Count	178	84	17	89	368	368
	%	48.4	22.8	4.6	24.2	100.0	100.0

Table 3: All Respondents Classified by Retail Sector and Employment Status

Retail Sector	Employment Status Category								
	Casual		Perm		Casual		Perm		
	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	
Car	Count	1	0	0	0	17	18		
	%	5.6	.0	.0	.0	94.4	100.0		
Motor Cycle	Count	0	0	0	0	3	3		
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0		
Trailer and Other Motor Vehicle	Count	0	0	0	0	4	4		
	%	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0		
Motor Vehicle Parts	Count	2	2	0	0	12	16		
	%	12.5	12.5	.0	.0	75.0	100.0		
Tyre	Count	0	0	0	0	3	3		
	%	.0%	.0	.0	.0	100.0	100.0		
Fuel	Count	3	1	1	1	0	5		
	%	60.0	20.0	20.0	20.0	.0	100.0		
Supermarket and Grocery Stores	Count	39	38	2	2	46	125		
	%	31.2	30.4	1.6	1.6	36.8	100.0		
Fresh Meat Fish and Poultry	Count	4	0	0	1	4	9		
	%	44.4	.0	.0	11.1	44.4	100.0		
Fruit and Vegetable	Count	0	1	0	0	3	4		
	%	.0	25.0	.0	.0	75.0	100.0		

Liquor Retailing	Count	2	2	0	0	6	10
	%	20.0	20.0	.0	.0	60.0	100.0
Other Specialised Food	Count	5	0	0	0	3	8
	%	62.5	.0	.0	.0	37.5	100.0
Furniture	Count	1	1	0	0	7	9
	%	11.1	11.1	.0	.0	77.8	100.0
Housewares	Count	1	1	0	0	1	3
	%	33.3	33.3	.0	.0	33.3	100.0
Manchester and Other Textile Goods	Count	1	0	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Electrical Electronic and Gas Appliance	Count	3	0	0	0	5	8
	%	37.5	.0	.0	.0	62.5	100.0
Computer and Computer Peripheral	Count	1	0	0	0	5	6
	%	16.7	.0	.0	.0	83.3	100.0
Other Electrical and Electronic Goods	Count	1	1	0	0	1	3
	%	33.3	33.3	.0	.0	33.3	100.0
Hardware and Building Supplies	Count	2	4	2	2	19	27
	%	7.4	14.8	7.4	7.4	70.4	100.0

Employment Status Category

Retail Sector	Casual		Perm		Casual		Perm		Total
	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	PT	FT	
Garden Supplies	Count	1	0	1	3	5			
	%	20.0	.0	20.0	60.0	100.0			
Sport and Camping Equipment	Count	9	2	0	4	15			
	%	60.0	13.3	.0	26.7	100.0			
Entertainment Media	Count	2	2	0	1	5			
	%	40.0	40.0	.0	20.0	100.0			
Toy and Game	Count	2	0	0	0	2			
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0			
Newspaper and Book	Count	12	3	0	1	16			
	%	75.0	18.8	.0	6.3	100.0			
Clothing	Count	16	3	1	4	24			
	%	66.7	12.5	4.2	16.7	100.0			
Footwear	Count	2	1	0	0	3			
	%	66.7	33.3	.0	.0	100.0			
Watch and Jewellery	Count	1	2	0	0	3			
	%	33.3	66.7	.0	.0	100.0			
Other Personal Accessory	Count	3	0	0	0	3			
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0			
Department Stores	Count	19	9	0	9	37			
	%	51.4	24.3	.0	24.3	100.0			
Pharmaceutical Cosmetic and Toiletry Goods	Count	7	8	1	11	27			
	%	25.9	29.6	3.7	40.7	100.0			

Stationery Goods	Count	2	1	0	3	6
	%	33.3	16.7	.0	50.0	100.0
Flower	Count	1	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Other Store-Based nec	Count	7	1	1	6	15
	%	46.7	6.7	6.7	40.0	100.0
Non-Store	Count	3	0	0	1	4
	%	75.0	.0	.0	25.0	100.0
Retail Commission-Based Buying and/or Selling	Count	1	0	0	0	1
	%	100.0	.0	.0	.0	100.0
Accommodation	Count	22	7	4	19	52
	%	42.3	13.5	7.7	36.5	100.0
Cafes and Restaurants	Count	38	4	6	10	58
	%	65.5	6.9	10.3	17.2	100.0
Takeaway Food Services	Count	25	9	3	8	45
	%	55.6	20.0	6.7	17.8	100.0
Catering Services	Count	7	0	2	4	13
	%	53.8	.0	15.4	30.8	100.0
Pubs Taverns and Bars	Count	12	1	1	3	17
	%	70.6	5.9	5.9	17.6	100.0
Clubs (Hospitality)	Count	9	1	2	4	16
	%	56.3	6.3	12.5	25.0	100.0
Total	Count	267	105	28	230	630