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# THE QUALITY OF PART-TIME WORK

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## 6.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, we explore trends over time in the quality of part-time (PT) jobs in comparison with full-time (FT) jobs in Britain. PT working is a key feature of the everyday working lives of millions of workers in Britain, but for many decades extensive research has shown that PT jobs in Britain are of substantially lower quality than FT ones. Part-time workers are more heavily concentrated in less skilled occupations that provide them with poorer working conditions than their FT counterparts. In this chapter we interrogate this dominant familiar depiction of the quality of PT work in Britain by assessing changes over time. We ask whether there was a reduction, expansion or stability in the PT/FT gap in job quality up to 2012, with a particular focus on the impact of the economic crisis of 2008/9.

For many decades, PT work in the UK has been criticised for its low quality. It has been associated with poorer access to development opportunities than FT work (e.g., Connolly and Gregory, 2008a), leading to lower career advancement in the longer-term (Hoque and Kirkpatrick, 2003). PT work has also been consistently shown to pay less than similar FT work (Connolly and Gregory, 2008b; Warren, 2003). In spite of these inequalities between FT and PT jobs, working PT is a common strategy used by many women across the UK. Women with caring responsibilities have dominated the PT labour market in the UK for half a century and, since 1986, a constant substantial minority of women workers (around 40%) have worked PT, with higher figures for women with dependent children (Figure 6.1a). There has been growth

over time in the proportions of men working PT, from 2% to 9% of male workers between 1986 and 2012, but women still accounted for the majority (79%) of the PT workforce in 2012 (Figure 6.1b).

INSERT FIGURE 6.1 AROUND HERE

Dominant theoretical explanations for this heavy concentration of women in PT jobs were traditionally split into two broad camps: one emphasising supply and the other the demand forces that shape the labour market. Theories stressing supply factors have included the neo-classical human capital based explanations of Mincer and Polacheck (1974), for example, the ‘new home economics’ of Becker (1985) and the ‘preference theory’ of Hakim (2000). All have been discredited for their fundamental assumption that PT employment for women is a natural development and/or a free and rational choice, with counter-arguments that structural constraints have a greater impact on women’s decisions to work PT (e.g. Beechey and Perkins 1987; Ginn et al., 1996; McRae, 2003; Procter and Padfield, 1998). Demand theories of PT employment focus instead on who creates PT jobs and why, and this ‘why’ element altered over time as the economy changed from boom to recession. So whilst an early demand-based explanation lay in employers’ attempts to fill labour gaps in times of economic expansion post war (Beechey and Perkins, 1987), times of economic crisis led to a theoretical focus on PT employment as providing a cheaper, more efficient workforce in processes of economic restructuring. Theorists thus stressed the role that PT work can play in increasing workplace flexibility: in employer initiatives to extend opening hours and to utilise cheaper and more readily replaceable employees (Applebaum 1992; Atkinson 1987).

We have returned to this older and rather simplified split between supply versus demand

theories of PT employment here because those early supply accounts assumed that, in a rational labour market, PT jobs differed from FT jobs only in their hours (Tam 1997). In contrast, demand-led theories began to see PT and FT jobs as potentially occupying qualitatively different labour market positions, with PT jobs being of much lower quality than FT. The demand-based explanations of PT employment were influenced by such writers as Doeringer and Piore (1971) and Barron and Norris (1976) and their elaboration of theories of 'primary' and 'secondary' labour markets. A primary labour market sector is characterised by high wages, job security, unionised firms and good promotional prospects whilst a secondary sector has low wages, reduced job opportunities and low security. The two labour markets were seen to be so separate that movement from the secondary to the primary market was difficult, if not impossible. Atkinson (1987) later proposed 'core' and 'peripheral' labour markets, the former dominated by FT employees on a career track and the periphery by part-timers and those on short-term contracts. Women workers, and female part-timers in particular, were seen to be over-concentrated, and even trapped, in the secondary and peripheral markets.

These early labour market theories were very influential in explaining the expansion of PT employment, but they have been criticised (Pollert 1991). A key limitation is that they approached the PT workforce as a homogenous group, disregarding variation amongst part-timers by sex or by hours worked. Their usefulness in explaining the female dominance of PT employment is a well-recognised problem, with influential writers pointing to the fact that the theorists took the sexual division of labour as given, assuming women were more suited to working PT than men (Beechey 1978). Variation in job quality within the PT category was also a key omission: a far more complex picture emerges when the PT/FT dichotomy is disaggregated (Fagan and Rubery 1996; Warren and Walters 1998).

An important factor generally thought to underlie women's dominance of the PT labour market is their caring responsibility. Women with caring responsibilities are more likely than other

women (and men) to work PT in the UK, and this picture has remained constant over many years. The more children a female employee has, the more likely she is to work PT, rather than FT (Lyonette et al., 2010). Although childcare costs have been subsidized for working parents on lower incomes since the late 1990s, when the New Labour government introduced a range of measures to reduce child poverty by enabling low-income mothers to go out to work, UK families still spend more on childcare than any other OECD country (OECD 2010). Unable to cover the expense of full-time formal care, lower-paid women with pre-school children have been forced to rely heavily upon grandparents and other relatives to provide informal childcare while they work PT hours to contribute to the household income (Crompton and Lyonette, 2010; Warren et al. 2010).

Women in higher occupational groups have been more likely to work FT, however. For example, research using LFS data from 2008 demonstrated that 60 per cent of mothers working PT were employed in only four occupational areas: ‘elementary administration and service’, ‘sales and customer service’, ‘caring personal service’ and ‘administrative’ jobs (Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010; Tomlinson et al., 2009). At the same time, only three per cent of mothers working PT were corporate managers (Tomlinson et al., 2009). Indeed, the majority of women working PT in more senior roles had managed to negotiate a reduction in hours after working FT, rather than being hired as a PT employee (Tilly, 1996; Tomlinson, 2006). The lack of ‘good’ PT jobs available has meant that many professional women in demanding FT jobs end up crowding into lower-level PT jobs after having children (Grant et al., 2005), working below their skills and capabilities (Darton and Hurrell, 2005; Women and Work Commission, 2006). These low quality PT jobs can then ‘trap’ the women who take them into long-term inferior labour market positions with serious ramifications for lifetime earnings and economic wellbeing (Connolly and Gregory, 2008; Warren 2001, 2004, 2008).

The above depiction of PT work in Britain is a very familiar one, emerging from large-scale

surveys and in-depth studies across multiple disciplines over many years (e.g., Burchell et al., 1997; Gallie et al., 1998; Gallie et al., 2004; Walters 2005). Here we add to the body of research on the quality of PT jobs by responding to the criticisms of early labour market theorists who treated PT workers as a homogeneous group. Accordingly, we examine not only the differences in quality between FT and PT jobs, but also explore the differences in quality between part-timers who work shorter and longer hours.

There have been more recent developments that may have led to the improvement of part-time work. For example, pressures from Europe have been leading to significant changes to regulations protecting PT workers' rights in the workplace, such as the Part-time Workers (Prevention of Less Favourable Treatment) Regulations in 2000. In addition, the Labour government under Tony Blair pushed further forward with policies to create more and better PT posts as part of European-wide gender equality campaigns (e.g., Department for Communities and Local Government 2006). Due to long-term problems with recruitment and retention in certain sectors and occupations, and the need for greater diversity within workforces, there has been some optimism from researchers that recognition by employers of a business case for increasing flexible working arrangements would lead to more 'quality' PT jobs (e.g., Edwards and Robinson, 2004).

As a result of more family-friendly working arrangements, it was hypothesised that employees would reciprocate with greater commitment and loyalty (Cegarra-Leiva et al., 2012). Moreover, institutional theory suggests that organizations also adapt to societal values, responding to pressures to maintain their legitimacy (DiMaggio and Powell, 1983). For example, in certain sectors and in particular occupations such as accountancy, companies have been increasingly promoting themselves as family-friendly in order to attract and retain good employees (Cooper et al., 2001) and also to appeal to clients. Research undertaken by PricewaterhouseCoopers found that work–life balance, rather than income, was the main factor in choice of employer for

almost half of new graduates worldwide (cited in Edwards and Wajcman, 2005). Taking all of these factors into account, one may assume that the gap between the quality of FT and PT jobs was likely to decrease. Indeed, before the onset of the 2008 recession, evidence suggested that the PT/FT gap was beginning to narrow (Gallie and Zhou, 2011).

Finally, the 2008-9 recession and the economic crisis in Britain makes it essential to return to the fundamental question of the quality of PT jobs. On the one hand, new opportunities for quality PT jobs might have been created. In contrast to previous recessions, many employers were vigorously pursuing strategies to retain staff for as long as possible, in order to best position themselves for an economic up-turn. Introducing more flexible and reduced hours work can help reduce costs while retaining staff. At the same time, employers were seen to be providing greater flexibility for their employees. The economic crisis could therefore act as a facilitator for those employees wishing to reduce their hours or work more flexibly over the longer-term. As a result, the traditional preferences by employers and managers for constantly visible and present workers may be challenged (Lewis and Rappaport, 2009).

On the other hand, while some employers might have been more amenable to increasing PT work for a wider range of employees, labour force statistics suggested a more negative picture of the quality of PT jobs since the 2008-9 recession. While there was a substantial expansion of PT working soon after 2008, and most especially for men (Grimshaw and Rafferty 2013; ONS 2012), this growth in PT working did not spread across all occupations but was more heavily skewed towards lower-level jobs. Furthermore, many of the new part-timers were so-called ‘involuntary’ PT workers who took a PT job because they were unable to find suitable FT work (Bell and Blanchflower 2011, 2013). We are particularly interested in the implications of these labour market changes for the evolution and distribution of the quality of PT jobs in Britain.

In this chapter, we explore the quality of PT jobs in comparison with FT jobs over time in

Britain, drawing and building upon previous work in the area (e.g., Felstead and Gallie 2004; Felstead et al., 2000; Gallie and Zhou, 2011). We also add to the growing body of research into the quality of PT jobs by making comparisons between shorter and longer-hours PT jobs, as described in the next section.

## **6.2. DATA CONSIDERATIONS**

There are numerous ways to differentiate PT from FT workers. For consistency across the ‘Skills and Employment Survey’ (SES) data-sets, our definition of PT work is set at less than 30 hours a week. The quality of PT jobs is known to vary by hours worked (Anxo et al, 2007; Warren and Walters 1998) and accordingly we also disaggregate the PT band into 1-19 and 20-29 weekly hours. In the following sections, we include data over time for female PT and FT workers, as well as some comparative 2006-2012 data for men working PT and FT, in spite of the small numbers of male part-timers overall. Using the new dataset to examine the quality of PT jobs, we are able to examine a broader range of job characteristics than the traditional emphasis on pay differences, while simultaneously disaggregating PT workers into short and longer-hours workers and including data on male part-timers that span the period of the economic crisis.

## **6.3. PART-TIME JOBS IN THE OCCUPATIONAL STRUCTURE**

It has been demonstrated in many previous studies that PT jobs are more readily available in lower-level occupations (e.g., Anxo et al., 2007; Durbin and Tomlinson, 2010; Thornley, 2007; Tomlinson et al., 2009; Warren 2001). As a result, many women - including the highly qualified - crowd into these lower-level jobs, especially during the key child rearing years, and often remain trapped, unable to get back onto the career ladder (e.g., Grant et al., 2005; Connolly and



Gregory, 2008a). However, there has been an increase over time in the number of higher-level PT jobs in Britain (Gallie and Zhou 2011). In 2012, almost a third (31%) of female part-timers in the SES were in higher-level non-manual jobs (Associate Professional/Technical, Managerial, Professional), compared with only 13% in 1986. Nevertheless, there was still a much higher proportion of FT women than PT women in these jobs (55% in 2012, up from 26% in 1986).

When we disaggregate the PT band into shorter and longer hours, the percentage of female part-timers working longer weeks (20-29 hours) increased over time, rising from 40% in 1986 to 52% in 2012 (53% for male part-timers in 2012). The longer hours PT workers were more likely to work in higher-level occupations than other part-timers in each year analysed, suggesting that longer PT hours work represented a middle ground in terms of job quality for women, falling mid-way between FT and short PT jobs. By 2012, over a third (36%) of those women working between 20 and 29 hours per week were in higher level non-manual jobs, compared with a fifth (22%) of shorter hours part-timers (Figure 6.2). Shorter hours female part-timers in 2012 (working 1-19 hours per week) were the women most likely to work at the bottom of the occupational hierarchy in sales work, as operatives and in elementary jobs (48% compared with 24% of those women working 20-29 hours a week). Over half (51%) of male part-timers in 2012 were also concentrated in low-level occupations, a substantial increase after 2006 (39%).

INSERT FIGURE 6.2 AROUND HERE

Over-concentrated in lower level jobs, female part-timers were also the group most likely to be working predominantly with other women. Occupational segregation is commonly described as the concentration of men and women in different kinds of jobs (horizontal segregation)

and/or in different grades or levels (vertical segregation). Research has shown that as more women enter the labour market, they are frequently recruited into jobs defined as ‘female jobs’ (e.g., Gonäs and Karlsson, 2006). As noted earlier, sectors with a high rate of PT employment also tend to be the most feminised and have high proportions of lower-paid jobs (Thornley, 2007). Respondents in the SES survey were asked to consider the ratio of men to women within their workplace doing their type of job. Across all years, female part-timers (short and longer hours part-timers, so we do not disaggregate them here) were the workers most likely to work predominantly with other women (57% in 2012), but the PT/FT gap amongst women had narrowed over time (Figure 6.3).

INSERT FIGURE 6.3 AROUND HERE

To sum up this section: there were some positive developments over time, with more female part-timers working in more senior level positions, although women working longer PT hours were more likely to be working in these higher-level jobs than women with shorter PT hours. A PT/FT gap in occupation level still persisted up to 2012, however: women in lower-level occupations remained far more likely to work PT than other women workers. Not only were almost half of female part-timers working in lower level jobs, the majority were still concentrated in workplaces where their jobs were done mainly by women.

#### **6.4. PART-TIME WAGES**

Reflecting the persistence of differences in the occupational locations of PT compared with FT workers, above, a PT/FT wage gap amongst women also persisted over time, to the detriment of part-timers. Exploring gross hourly wages, in 2012 the raw PT/FT wage gap stood at 17%

(Figure 6.4a), the same level as in 1986. Much of this gap can be explained by women's levels of education: so when, in 2012, education level was entered into a wage regression, working PT or FT was no longer statistically significant. We discuss education more in the next section. Figure 6.4a also shows that the PT/FT wage gap was lowest amongst female graduates (Level 4+ NVQ) and widest for women with NVQ levels 1-3. The post-recessionary expansion in the number of men working PT was associated with a drop in male part-timers' hourly wages, relative to male full-timers. In 2006, the part-timers had held an hourly wage advantage, but by 2012 the PT/FT wage gap amongst men stood at 10%, and remained statistically significant (at 1%) after controlling for level of education held. As with women, the PT/FT wage gap was at its narrowest (6%) amongst male graduates.

The wide PT/FT wage gap amongst women was applicable to women working short and longer PT weeks (hence data not shown), but there was wide wage diversity amongst the part-timers by occupation. We compared women's hourly gross wages using the male FT mean as a benchmark each year. We calculated a wage gap by dividing wage by the male FT mean (for each year), identifying gaps as positive when women's wages were higher than the male mean (Figure 6.4). Women in higher-level non-manual jobs, both PT and FT, fared better per hour than male full-timers. Indeed, female part-timers in these jobs did even better than their full-time counterparts. The most wage-disadvantaged women each year, however, were part-timers in lower level jobs, over half of whom (54%) had a level of education at NVQ 2 or less (GCSE or less).

INSERT FIGURE 6.4 AROUND HERE

## ***6.5. PART-TIME SKILLS AND TRAINING***

Occupations and wages are commonly used to compare the quality of PT and FT jobs. As we have seen above, they usefully demonstrate the persistence of a substantial PT/FT gap in job quality in Britain, but also point to diversity amongst female part-timers that the PT/FT dichotomy disguises. The SES data allow us to explore other indicators of the quality of PT jobs to better consider the evolution and distribution of the quality of PT jobs in Britain over time, moving beyond the traditional focus only on occupation and pay.

Earlier analysis of skill levels using SES data debated whether all groups of workers were benefiting equally from a general up-skilling of jobs (Felstead et al., 2000; Horrell 1994; Gallie et al., 1998). By 1997, whilst women full-timers were found to be converging on men in terms of the qualifications needed to get their jobs, the learning time to carry them out and the training period associated with the work (Felstead et al., 2000: 725), ‘pockets of cumulative disadvantage remain, especially among PT and other ‘non-standard’ workers’. Drawing upon the 2001 survey, Felstead and Gallie (2004) also concluded that PT jobs, on average, still demanded lower qualification levels and shorter amounts of training from workers.

Our results look beyond 2001 and they affirm a general increase over time in the educational levels required for the jobs done by respondents. Moreover, this overall increase persisted beyond the recession and into 2012. The mean score for required educational level for women’s jobs rose from 1.38 in 1986 to 2.36 in 2012 (Table 6.1). A substantial and statistically significant PT/FT gap, however, persisted across all the years. It was still as wide as 22% in 2012, although this was a large drop from the 51% of 1986. Comparing the two groups of part-timers, in each year, longer hours female part-timers reported higher levels of required education than other women working PT (in 2012 the scores were 2.30 and 1.72 respectively, statistically significant at 1%), though still lower than female full-timers. The jobs of male part-timers demanded the lowest educational levels in both 2006 and 2012, and hence the PT/FT gap was larger still amongst men (29% in 2012).

The increase in level of education required for the job portrays a positive picture of the upskilling of work over time, with women faring better than men, and a narrowing of the PT/FT gap amongst women up to 2012. However, SES data, like other sources, also show a general increase in the levels of education held over time. What were the implications of this for whether the education levels that were held by workers matched, exceeded or were less than the qualifications required for the job being done? Here we are drawing upon influential debates over the proportions of female part-timers who are ‘working below potential’. In 1986, around a third of women workers were working below their potential in that they had achieved a higher level of education than was needed for the work that they were currently doing (37% of PT compared with 29% of FT, statistically significant at 1%). This educational mis-match grew after 1992 for women, but fell from 2006. In 2012, still fully 41% of PT (49% for shorter hours part-timers) and a third of female full-timers were under-employed in terms of their levels of education. The mis-match for male part-timers was even higher and rising after the recession so that, in 2012, over half (54%) of men working PT had higher levels of education than their job required. This may support the argument that these men are taking short-term, PT jobs as a stop-gap measure through the worst of the recession and may revert to better FT jobs, once the labour market fully recovers.

INSERT TABLE 6.1 AROUND HERE

We then considered a) how long respondents felt that it had taken them to learn to do their job well, and b) the length of training received for the type of work being carried out. The scores on the learning and training indexes give more support to the overall picture of general improvements over time, persistent statistically significant PT/FT gaps, longer hours PT jobs

as a middle ground between FT and shorter PT jobs, and high levels of disadvantage for the small group of men working PT. The PT/FT gap for learning times amongst women narrowed over time, but the gap for training, though narrowing until 2006, had widened a little by 2012. Unlike the case with level of education, there is also some evidence here to suggest a drop in job quality after the recession: between 2006 and 2012 almost all groups of workers saw falls in the time taken to learn to do the job well and the length of the training needed for their job.

## **6.6. PART-TIME WORK INTENSITY AND DISCRETION**

Not only have we been able to examine skills and training as key indicators of job quality, the SES data-sets also allow us to analyse differences between PT and FT workers in the levels of work intensity and discretion.

Many working PT find that they have too much to do in a short space of time, especially those in more senior-level occupations, where PT workers already tend to work longer hours than those in lower-level PT occupations (e.g., Smithson et al., 2004). Evidence after the recession of 2008 showed that many companies cut their workforces and that the number of employees working PT hours grew, raising concerns that the same amount of work was being done with reduced staffing and hence work intensity was increasing. Studies using this data series have shown how ‘hard work’ grew after 2006, following a decade when there had been little change (Felstead et al. 2013a; Gallie 2005; Green 2006). How did part-timers compare with full-timers?

We report on an overall measure of work intensity: whether respondents strongly agreed that their jobs required them to work ‘very hard’ (Figure 6.5). Across all years, female full-timers stood out amongst the workers, female and male, followed by women working longer PT hours, further supporting our argument that the latter group occupy a middle ground in job quality amongst women workers. There was also a creep upwards over time in hard working for most

groups (Figure 6.5a). Within the work-time groups, it was largely those with the highest levels of education who were most likely to be working very hard, but female full-timers still retained the lead within each educational grouping. In 2012, fully 61% of female graduates working FT (NVQ Level 4+) reported working very hard (compared with 46% of equally qualified male full-timers. Figure 6.5b). In spite of the better quality of female FT than PT jobs in terms of skills and training, and learning required for the job, FT women seem to pay for this advantage by having to work harder than women working PT, or than men working either FT or PT.

INSERT FIGURE 6.5 AROUND HERE

Level of work intensity links us to long-standing questions around workers' discretion over what they do in the workplace. There is a well-known variation in workers' self-control of their own work. Certain jobs remain very 'Taylorist', in which various aspects of work, including how hard workers work, are rigidly controlled and monitored closely (whether by employers, managers, customers or machines). Far more autonomy is commonly available at higher levels of the occupational hierarchy (Edwards 1979). The PT/FT split has been firmly implicated here (Fagan 2001).

We report mean scores on an overall task discretion index that amalgamates workers' discretion in four areas: how hard they work, what tasks they do, how they do those tasks and the quality standards to which they work (Table 6.2). The index ranges from 0 to 3, with three the highest level of discretion. The discretion levels reported by women working PT were lower than for full-timers (and statistically significant) up until 2006, after which the PT/FT gap virtually disappeared. Longer hours PT women again occupied a middle ground, but the difference between the PT groups was neither large nor statistically significant.

Women workers, in PT and FT jobs, saw their overall discretion fall in the 1990s, but discretion levels rose again in the following decade, including after the recession. Discretion levels rose for male part-timers too, but those reported by male full-timers fell just a little from 2006 to 2012, thus narrowing the male PT/FT gap (it was no longer statistically significant by 2012). The groups of male full-timers who saw the largest of these drops in discretion levels were in Administrative and Secretarial jobs (only 5% of male full-timers were in this occupational category in 2012), and Operatives (11%).

INSERT TABLE 6.2 AROUND HERE

In spite of the many positive changes in the quality of work over time, there was a reversal, or at best a stalling, in terms of task discretion in the 1990s. By 2012, however, there were signs of improvement, particularly for women and part-timers.

## **6.7. SUBJECTIVE EVALUATIONS**

This chapter has focused on objective measures of job quality, reflecting Green's (2006) emphasis on the importance of the features of a job when measuring its quality. We end, however, by examining subjective measures: orientations to work and job satisfaction. These have been core topics in research into women's working lives and in particular into the heavy concentration of women with caring responsibilities working in PT jobs in Britain.

Part-timers' levels of satisfaction with their jobs have stimulated one of the most contentious debates in the study of women's working lives in Britain. Over-concentrated in objectively lower quality jobs than full-timers, women working PT have nevertheless expressed satisfaction with many aspects of their jobs. Given the juxtaposition of lower quality jobs and these higher



levels of job satisfaction, in 1991 Hakim infamously asked whether women working PT should accordingly be termed ‘grateful slaves’. Yet other research since then has questioned this idea of a female PT worker whose work orientation is such that she places a low priority on paid work, has chosen to work PT hours in a less demanding job, cares less about the quality of that job and so is more easily job satisfied. Some argue that the greater responsibility placed upon women for caring and domestic tasks limits their choices (e.g. Ginn et al., 1996) and restricts their ‘agency freedom’ as far as their employment decisions are concerned (Lewis and Giullari, 2005). While many women say they like to work PT (Scott and Dex, 2009; Gash et al., 2012) and PT working women have tended to report lower work-life conflict (Crompton and Lyonette, 2007) and higher life satisfaction (Gash et al., 2012) than female full-timers, any such evaluations by women in PT work are likely to be highly influenced by the availability (or lack) of any viable alternatives. In fact, other studies have shown that female PT workers are those most likely to be dissatisfied with their variety of work and their ability to learn new things (European Commission, 1998), and also with terms of pay and job prospects, particularly those women working in lower-skilled PT jobs (Taylor, 2002; Walters 2005).

We considered whether women who worked PT in the SES survey stood out from female full-timers in their work orientations and job satisfaction. Respondents were asked if they would continue to work if they did not need to for financial reasons. There were increases in women’s work commitment over time, for both FT and PT workers. For example, in 1986, 64% of FT and 58% of PT women said they would continue to work. By 2012, the figures had risen to 71% and 69%, respectively. The narrowing of an already small gap in work commitment between female PT and FT workers calls into question the notion of ‘home-centred’ female part-timers and work-committed female full-timers.

INSERT TABLE 6.3 AROUND HERE

What were the patterns of satisfaction amongst PT and FT workers? In the SES, workers were asked about their satisfaction with various aspects of work, including the job itself, the hours, promotion prospects, relationship with their boss, and opportunities to use initiative and pay. Women working PT were not markedly different in the ranking of their assessments from those working FT (Table 6.3). In 2006 and 2012, the friendliness of the people was rated highly by both groups, whilst chances for promotion and fringe benefits scored poorly. In both years, female part-timers were far more satisfied than full-timers with their hours worked and the amount of work, as many other studies have shown, whilst full-timers scored higher than women working PT in using their abilities and prospects for promotion. These relationships were largely stable between 2006 and 2012, though levels of satisfaction on most items had fallen a little. In 2012, the shorter hours PT women workers were more satisfied than women working longer PT with some aspects of their job (including job security, pay, their managers and the friendliness of the people), but they were the least satisfied women when it came to fringe benefits. By 2012, a significant gap in satisfaction with job security had appeared between these two groups of women. By 2012, male part-timers were less likely to be satisfied than male full-timers on every item in the table.

## **6.8 CONCLUSIONS**

In returning to early labour market theory focusing on supply and demand-led explanations of PT employment, and the differentiation between primary and secondary, or core and peripheral labour markets, we nevertheless argue that a more nuanced picture emerges once the category of PT workers is disaggregated by sex and hours worked. In this chapter, we have been able to provide an analysis of trends over time in the quality of PT jobs, up to and including the

recession of 2008/9, while also demonstrating women's continuing dominance of PT work and differences between shorter hours and longer hours PT women workers. We were also able to include data on the small number of PT male workers since the recession. In so doing, a picture emerged of both stability and change over time in the quality of PT jobs.

The Part-time Work Directive came into effect in July 2000. This stipulated that PT workers must not be treated less favourably than comparable FT workers; should receive equal hourly rates of pay; should receive equal overtime pay, as well as equal enhanced rates of pay for working outside normal contractual hours; should get equal access to any company pension scheme, training and career development, rights to career breaks, rights to receive enhanced sick, maternity, paternity and adoption leave and pay, parental leave rights and consideration for promotion; and should receive contractual benefits pro-rata. This chapter has traced the quality of PT jobs in Britain both before and up to 12 years after the Directive came into force. It showed that in the dominant depiction of PT work in Britain, part-timers are overly-concentrated in poor quality jobs that demand few skills and low levels of education and training. These jobs, in return, offer workers low wage rates and restricted opportunities for advancement. Women with caring responsibilities have borne the heavy burden of this PT disadvantage in Britain as they account for the vast majority of PT workers. The purpose of the chapter was to interrogate this dominant depiction and explore trends over time in the quality of PT jobs.

The analysis showed stability over time in the overall proportions of working women with PT hours, and the persistence of female-dominated PT working in Britain. A notable change by 2012 was in the proportion of men working PT, reducing women's dominance of PT hours somewhat, although the small numbers of male part-timers in the samples restrict what we can say about the men themselves.

Women's PT jobs were sharply divided according to the hours worked: short PT hours were

associated with lower-level jobs in particular sectors and occupations, whereas longer PT hours tended to be worked more by women in middle or senior roles. There was some evidence of a growing number of female part-timers in higher-level jobs over time, raising hopes that more PT jobs were being opened up in more senior level positions. On the other hand, there is a possibility that the large majority of these jobs were being done by 'high-value' female workers who had previously worked FT in the same position and negotiated reduced hours for a period of time in order to cope with caring responsibilities such as pre-school children (Tilly, 1996).

The chapter has confirmed that PT jobs continued to demand lower levels of skills and training, in comparison with FT. Women in FT jobs appeared to fare better than female part-timers more generally, longer hours part-timers better than shorter, and men working PT did particularly badly. Satisfaction with jobs fell after the recession. Unlike some other aspects of work, there was evidence here of narrowing gaps between the shorter hours and the longer hours part-timers. In some cases such as job security, shorter hours female part-timers overtook those working longer hours in levels of satisfaction, due primarily to a sharp drop in satisfaction for the longer-hours group, rather than a large rise among the shorter hours group.

In conclusion, we saw some evidence of improvement over time in the quality of PT jobs in Britain up until 2012. Amongst female employees, more longer hours' part-timers were working in higher level occupations in 2012, there was a narrowing over time of PT/FT gaps in education and learning times, and there were signs of improvement in levels of discretion for part-timers. A PT disadvantage nevertheless remained, and was most pronounced for those women working shorter PT hours. Male PT workers appeared to be a distinct group and due to small numbers, we are unable to make any longer-term projections about the quality of male PT jobs. The 'hierarchy of job quality' among the various groups under consideration here would place male part-timers at the bottom of all workers, followed by female shorter hours part-timers, longer hours female part-timers, then male full-timers and finally female full-

timers. However, we would argue that, at one extreme, the female full-timers are paying for their quality advantage by working harder and under more pressure, whereas at the other end of the hierarchy, the male part-timers are likely to revert to better FT jobs once the labour market strengthens. What is likely to endure is the well-established poorer quality of shorter hours PT jobs for women.

Why women continue to dominate the short-hours, lower-quality PT job market is in no small part related to a lack of affordable childcare in the UK, which limits many women's opportunities to work longer hours. In addition, women remain normatively associated with domestic work and caring, which serves to perpetuate gender-stereotypical behaviours both within the home and in the labour market. Until men are willing to share more housework and care responsibilities, it seems likely that large numbers of women will continue to work part-time in the UK. At the same time, employers are often unwilling to offer higher-level jobs on a PT basis, so restricting the types of work available with reduced hours. There was some optimism that the recession may serve to challenge this inflexibility (e.g., Lewis and Rappaport, 2009), with employers using flexible working to help with budgetary constraints. There is some evidence of an increase in (longer-hours) PT jobs in senior positions, but only time will tell if this translates into better PT jobs on a wider scale.