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The Relationship Between
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and Work Factors
and Maternal Employment
in Australia

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Peter McDonald**

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LABOUR MARKET AND SOCIAL POLICY - OCCASIONAL PAPERS NO. 62

**THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL, FAMILY, RESOURCE AND WORK FACTORS AND
MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA**

Edith Gray and Peter McDonald

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Summary

The factors associated with mothers' attachment to the labour force are of interest to social researchers and policy makers. Previous research conducted had found that factors such as mother's education, number of children, partner's employment and gender role attitudes were related to employment of mother's. This paper adapts a theoretical model of the effect of family-household and work system factors on job turnover, to examine maternal employment in Australia using nationally representative longitudinal data. It is found that education, financial situation, the number of young children and attitudes are important factors in understanding maternal employment.

Résumé

Les chercheurs sociaux et les décideurs politiques ont étudié les facteurs qui conditionnent les mères de famille sur le marché de l'emploi. Selon les premiers résultats, ces facteurs varient selon l'éducation de la mère, le nombre d'enfants, le travail du conjoint et les comportements sociaux. Ce document adapte un modèle théorique de l'effet famille-ménage et des facteurs de l'emploi sur la rotation de la main d'oeuvre pour examiner l'emploi des mères en Australie en utilisant des données nationales longitudinales représentatives. Il en ressort que l'éducation, la situation financière, le nombre d'enfants et les comportements sociaux sont des facteurs importants s'il on veut comprendre l'emploi maternel.

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THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PERSONAL, FAMILY, RESOURCE AND WORK FACTORS AND MATERNAL EMPLOYMENT IN AUSTRALIA.¹

Introduction

Motherhood substantially reduces women's involvement in the labour force over the lifecycle. Career breaks, reduced working hours, reduced duties, and lower rates of pay, are factors which are experienced by a large proportion of mothers (as compared to men, and to women who do not have children).

It has been suggested that some women are solving the disjunction between work and parenting by 'walking away from parenthood' (Glass & Riley, 1998: 1401). This paper aims to determine what factors—both family-household system and work system factors—are important in allowing women to maintain labour force attachment.

1. Labour force participation of women and men in Australia

For the year ending 30 June 1999, women made up 43 per cent of the labour force (Table 1). In terms of actual labour force participation², the female participation rate in 1999 was 54 per cent, while for men it was 73 per cent. The labour force participation rate for women has been increasing over time, while for men it has been decreasing. In 1990, Young (1990a: 8–9) wrote that female labour force participation has increased steeply since the 2nd World War. This increase continues, increasing 3.5 per cent from 50.4 per cent in 1989 to 53.9 in 1999. In comparison, Ruzicka (1986) found that men's labour force participation has decreased, a trend which has also continued, down from 75.2 per cent in 1989 to 72.8 per cent in 1999.

Table 1. Summary of labour force participation and employment indicators, 1989, 1994 and 1999.

| <i>Indicator</i> | 1989 | 1994 | 1999 |
|----------------------------------------------------|----------|------|------|
| | Per cent | | |
| Females (of total labour force) | 40.8 | 42.3 | 43.3 |
| Male LF participation rate | 75.2 | 73.6 | 72.8 |
| Female LF participation rate | 50.4 | 52.2 | 53.9 |
| Male P-T workers (of all male employed) | 7.2 | 10.4 | 12.5 |
| Female P-T workers (of all female employed) | 38.9 | 42.0 | 43.5 |
| Males casually employed (of all male employed) | 13.1 | 18.1 | 22.0 |
| Females casually employed (of all female employed) | 29.3 | 30.8 | 31.8 |

Source: (ABS, 2000: 108).

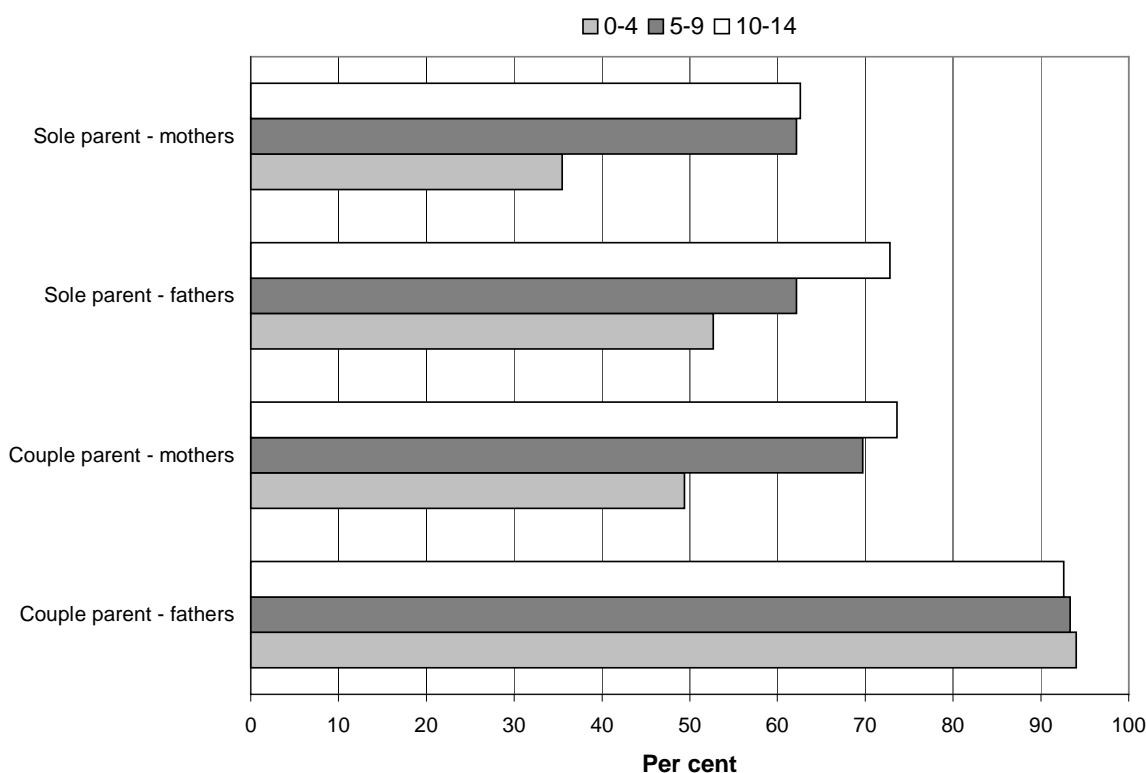
¹. Edith Gray, ACSPRI Centre for Social Research, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University and Peter McDonald, Demography and Sociology Program, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University.

². Labour force participation of those aged 15 and over.

As indicated, there is an increasing trend toward convergence of labour force participation rates. In 1999 women and men's labour force participation rates were closer than at any other time in the 20th Century. Likewise, unmarried and married women's participation rates are similar. The transformation in female labour force participation, driven predominantly by the involvement of married women, saw married women make up 71 per cent of the increase in female labour force participation between 1966 and 1986 (Young 1990b: 9). This is a great change in the characteristics of those involved in the labour force; however, labour market participants have very different employment arrangements which are not necessarily evident from the description of participation rate convergence.

Although there has been a convergence in labour force participation rates, women who have young children in their household remain the least likely to be involved in the paid labour force. As displayed at Figure 1, those most likely to participate in the labour force are men who are in a couple relationship. Among these men there is little difference in the participation rates by the age of the youngest child—they are all around 93 per cent.

Figure 1. Labour force participation of parents by sex, relationship status and age of youngest child, 1999.



Source: Annex 1 Table A1.

As noted, there are also differing work arrangements of men and women. Of women working in 1999 (Table 1), 44 per cent were employed part-time, while for men this proportion was 13 per cent. Part-time work has increased by about 5 per cent in the last 10 years—an increase that has occurred for

McDonald, in examining the affect of age of youngest child, by single ages, found that age of youngest child was an impact factor in considering the employment of mothers (McDonald, 1999). He found that there was a lower proportion of women with an infant employed as compared to women with a child aged one to two, and a lower proportion employed for women with a child aged one to two compared to women with a child aged three to five (Table 3).

Table 3. Employment of mothers by partner status according to the number and ages of their children.

| Indicator | 1986 | 1991 | 1996 |
|---------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------|------|------|
| | Percentage with mother employed at least one hours per week | | |
| Couple families with one child | | | |
| 0 | 24 | 27 | 28 |
| 1-2 | 42 | 53 | 50 |
| 3-5* | 48 | 55 | 62 |
| Couple families with two children | | | |
| 0 and 1-2 | 14 | 28 | 22 |
| 1 and 3-5* | 23 | 28 | 24 |
| 0 and primary+ | ** | 31 | 27 |
| Both 1-2 or 1-2 and 3-5 | 33 | 41 | 48 |
| 1-2 and primary+ | 38 | 45 | 53 |
| Both 3-5* | 37 | 45 | 45 |
| 3-5* and primary+ | 45 | 53 | 56 |
| Couple families with three children | | | |
| All preschool | 22 | 27 | 26 |
| Two preschool and one primary+ | 27 | 34 | 33 |
| One preschool and two primary+ | 37 | 45 | 49 |
| Couple families with four children | | | |
| At least one preschool child | 29 | 32 | 30 |
| One-parent families with one child | | | |
| 0 | 11 | 15** | 10 |
| 1-2 | 20 | 23 | 30 |
| 3-5* | 33 | 36 | 44 |
| One-parent families with two children | | | |
| Youngest is aged 0** | 4 | 17 | 9 |
| Youngest is aged 1-2 | 14 | 22 | 21 |
| Youngest is aged 3-5* | 28 | 36 | 31 |

Source: (McDonald, 1999)

Notes:

* 3-5 year-olds who are not yet at primary school.

** Denominator is less than 100 mothers.

For women in couple relationships, 28 per cent of those with an infant worked at least one hour. This increased to 50 per cent of women with a youngest child aged 1-2, and 62 per cent with a youngest child aged 3-5. For single women, these proportions are 10, 30 and 44 per cent. While McDonald (1999) finds that age of youngest child has an effect on employment, the number of children does not have as great an effect.

It is evident that in Australia, women remain the primary caregiver to young children. As noted by Glezer and Wolcott (2000:45), 'The age of the youngest child significantly affects mothers' workforce participation rates, but it does not affect men's participation rates. In order to best address this situation, the paper focuses on aspects that encourage the labour force involvement of mothers with young children.

2. An overview of factors supporting women's labour force attachment following birth

2.1. Background factors

Demographers and economists interested in population studies have provided some insight into the relationship between a woman's background and her involvement in work following the birth of a child. These investigations have centred on aspects such as the individual's demographic characteristics, financial characteristics, and gender-role attitudes.

Typically, the demographic characteristics that are included are the woman's age and education (Desai & Waite, 1991; Greenstein, 1986; Leibowitz & Klerman, 1995; Shapiro & Mott, 1979), number of children (Leibowitz & Klerman, 1995; Mott, 1972; Waite, 1980), age of youngest child (Glezer & Wolcott, 2000; McDonald, 1999), marital status (Desai & Waite, 1991; Rosenfeld, 1996), race/ethnicity (Desai & Waite, 1991), and welfare background (Greenwell, et al. 1998). The pattern of these relationships is generally a positive relationship between age and education and women's employment, while larger numbers of children are negatively related to women's employment.

A main line of investigation into women's employment following birth is the role-conflict hypothesis of rewards and costs (both monetary and otherwise) of mother's employment (McLaughlin, 1982). McLaughlin's hypothesis argues that investments such as education, previous labour force experience and economic well-being are related to labour force participation. Others have also found that women whose husbands have high incomes return to the labour force at a slower rate than women whose husbands earn a lower income (Greenstein, 1986). However, women with high-income husbands do not leave the labour force as early as women with low-income husbands (Felmlee, 1984; Greenstein, 1986).

Finally, gender role attitudes have been found to be important in determining women's return to work. Greenstein (1986) found that attitudes to women in the workforce were a greater predictor of women's perinatal labour force participation than other socio-demographic factors. The attitude scale was based on nine questions about women in the labour force, covering economic, social and psychological reasons for work. He concluded that due to the strength of the relationship, other social and psychological factors should be investigated (Greenstein, 1986: 570). Hakim (1991) also argues that gender role attitudes are important in determining women's role identity: women with high work commitment invest in their careers, while women with a homemaker identity view the labour force as secondary to their role as carer and wife.

2.2. Work factors

Glass argues that along with these individual characteristics, workplace experience and conditions are important in determining mothers' labour supply (Glass & Riley, 1998: 1405). There are many possible interactions between work factors and maternal employment, which include aspects of work benefits, but also work constraints.

In Australia, the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business encourages enterprises to provide particular family friendly benefits for parents to combine their work and

family lives. These include the provision of child care centres, family rooms, paid parental leave, flexible time and the availability of part-time work (DEWRSB, 1998). These factors are important in assisting parents to negotiate the work and family lives, but other factors have been found to help women maintain attachment to the labour force.

Workplace experience has been found to be related to mother's return to work. In one study, later withdrawal from employment prior to childbirth is found to decrease the time of women's return to work following childbirth (Waite, et al. 1985). However, workplace experience is not necessarily a good predictor of women's return to employment. McLaughlin (1982) found that women with continuous workforce participation (that is, continuous employment of any type) were not more likely to return to work sooner than women with non-continuous participation.

Other occupational characteristics are hypothesised to be related to maternal employment. Although many have predicted that women in traditionally 'female' occupations would return to work, as the workplace conditions would be conducive to negotiating work and home life, many did not find this held (Desai & Waite, 1991; Glass & Camarigg, 1992). In fact, Glass and Fujimoto (1995) found that workplaces with a high concentration of female employees were not a strong predictor of employer provision of family benefits. Other characteristics such as unionisation, overall firm size and proportion of women in job category are thought to be related to employee retention (Glass & Riley, 1998).

Glass and Riley (1998) note three clusters of family responsive policies. These clusters include both workplace policies which are family friendly, and also ones which do not act as constraints for women with child responsibilities.

The first cluster is related to reducing working hours, that is, the ability to work part-time or to avoid unfriendly family practices such as working overtime, or very long hours. The second cluster allows flexible working hours, and flexibility in the location of work (e.g. teleworking), and the ability to control unsuitable working hours such as shift work. The final cluster is the availability of workplace social support from managers and co-workers, but also in the form of sick leave, family leave, or the availability of child care assistance (Glass & Riley, 1998).

These background and work factors give sufficient scope to analyse women's employment status following birth. The following section discusses the data source and theoretical model used to investigate the impact of these aspects of the resource portfolio and family system.

3. Information sources

This paper examines the influence of the resource portfolio and family system on mothers' involvement in the labour force following childbirth. In order to assess what aspects of the resource portfolio and family system are important, this paper utilises a longitudinal survey titled 'Negotiating the Lifecourse' (NLC). This survey is administered through the ACSPRI Centre for Social Research, Research School of Social Sciences, Australian National University and is currently the only longitudinal survey being conducted in Australia that is concerned with family lifecourse issues.

The first round of the study was conducted in October–November 1996 and February–April 1997, and the second wave was carried out in April–July 2000. At wave 1 a total of 2,231 respondents were interviewed, 1,247 of whom were women and 984 of whom were men. At the second wave 1,786 of these respondents were followed up. A comparison of all respondents and non-respondents of the second wave is available at Table 4. The data analysed in this paper is a subset of mothers.

Table 4. Summary statistics at time of Wave 1 NLC—comparison of all NLC respondents and non-respondents of Wave 2 NLC 2000.

| <i>Summary measure</i> | Not interviewed | Interviewed No. (%) | Total |
|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------|------------------------|--------------------|
| Sex | | | |
| Male | 213 (47.9) | 771 (43.2) | 984 (44.1) |
| Female | 232 (52.1) | 1014 (56.8) | 1246 (55.9) |
| Partnered status** | | | |
| Not in a relationship | 137 (30.8) | 385 (21.6) | 522 (23.4) |
| In relationship – not living together Living together, but not legally married | 38 (8.5) | 137 (7.7) | 175 (7.8) |
| Married and living with spouse | 45 (10.1) | 144 (8.1) | 189 (8.5) |
| | 225 (50.6) | 1119 (62.7) | 1344 (60.3) |
| Highest level of education | | | |
| Bachelor degree or higher | 77 (17.3) | 351 (19.7) | 428 (19.2) |
| Undergrad Associate Diploma | 39 (8.8) | 199 (11.1) | 238 (10.7) |
| Vocational qualification | 102 (23.0) | 380 (21.3) | 482 (21.6) |
| Completed secondary school | 113 (25.5) | 365 (20.4) | 478 (21.4) |
| Incomplete secondary school | 113 (25.5) | 491 (27.5) | 604 (27.1) |
| Employment last week* | | | |
| Yes, worked for payment or profit | 308 (69.2) | 1372 (76.8) | 1680 (75.3) |
| Yes, but on maternity/parental leave | 3 (0.7) | 14 (0.8) | 17 (0.8) |
| Yes, but on other leave | 11 (2.5) | 36 (2.0) | 47 (2.1) |
| No, did not have a paid job | 123 (27.6) | 364 (20.4) | 487 (21.8) |
| Born in Australia? ** | | | |
| Yes | 315 (70.8) | 1460 (81.7) | 1775 (79.6) |
| No | 130 (29.2) | 326 (18.3) | 456 (20.4) |
| | <i>Mean</i> | | |
| Age** | 33.32 | 36.56 | 35.91 |
| Age of spouse** | 37.40 | 39.68 | 39.29 |
| Net yearly salary | 17075.10 | 19405.82 | 18948.64 |

Total N

Source: NLC data 1997.

Notes:

** Significant at the P<0.0005 level.

* Significant at the P<0.01 level.

Weighted by a household weight to adjust sampling method.

4. Analysis of data

This paper adapts the theoretical framework developed by Glass and Riley (1998), and incorporates factors discussed in Section 2, to interrogate the relationship between the resource portfolio and family situation on the main caregiver's employment status (see Figure 2). This framework is used as the basis of analysis, and has been adapted to suit the available data.

Although Glass and Riley's model is designed to investigate job turnover (i.e. exiting the labour force or changing job following pregnancy), the framework includes many of the factors outlined in

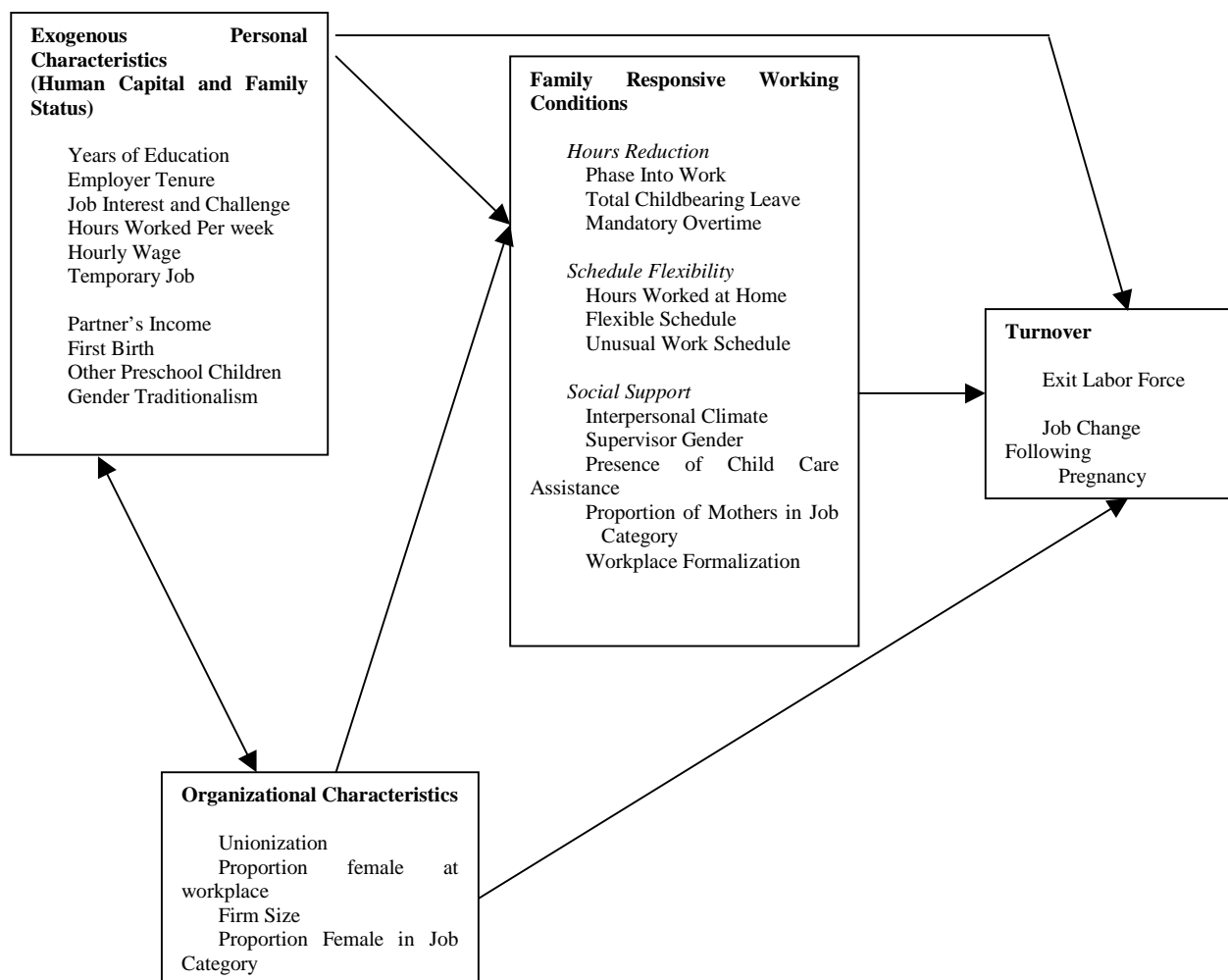
Section 2 that were found to be related to maternal employment. In this investigation using NLC data, the measure of job turnover is whether or not the mother was employed. Hence, the dependent variable is whether the respondent (mother) was employed in the previous week or not.

For the purpose of this investigation, the selection of a subset of mother's from the NLC dataset was required. Mothers were selected on the following basis:

- a) In NLC Wave 1 they are women who have at least one child aged under one year of age (mother of infant child);
- b) and women who have at least one child aged under five years of age (mother of pre-school child).

Due to sample size, multivariate models on Wave 1 data are only provided for women who have a pre-school aged child. Similarly, NLC Wave 2 analyses only use women who have a pre-school child, due to sample size. Further, for Wave 1 data, an analysis of the number of hours worked (if the mother was working) has been conducted to examine the relationship between the theorised factors and the number of hours worked.

Figure 2. Conceptual Model of the Job Turnover Process following childbirth (Glass & Riley, 1998)



The first box in the Glass and Riley framework outlines exogenous personal characteristics that include human capital and family status. In Section 5 some of these characteristics are examined, together with other factors which have been found to be related to maternal employment. These characteristics are divided into three groups for analysis. The factors included that approximate Glass and Riley's characteristics are: partner's income, other pre-school aged children (number of children in the household), gender traditionalism (attitudes), and a measure of education.

However, as found in Section 2, there are other factors which are related to maternal employment, and these have been incorporated into the following three groups. Group one includes variables that are family and personal status variables, group two includes variables that are financial/resource factors, and the third represents gender traditionalism using two attitude scales.

The following background factors are used to investigate maternal employment:

Family and personal status

1. Age
2. Age of youngest child
3. Number of children in household
4. Partner status
5. Country of birth

Financial/resource factors

6. Education
7. Income (partner's)
8. Home ownership⁴

Attitudes

9. Attitude scale 'Social equity' (see Annex 2)
10. Attitude scale 'Homemaker identity' (see Annex 2)

The attitude scales measure conceptually different components. The first attitude scale, entitled 'social equity' scale, measures mother's attitudes to women's place in society and equitable access to social provisions by gender. It measures attitudes to women's involvement in the public sphere. The types of questions that make up this scale are 'There should be satisfactory childcare facilities so that women can take jobs outside the home' and 'Both the husband and wife should contribute to the household income'. A high score on this scale suggests that the respondent believes that women in their society should be involved in, and have access to, public life.

⁴. In the NLC survey, the question on home ownership refers to whether the respondent and/or their partner owns, is purchasing, or renting the dwelling that they are living in.

The second attitude scale, entitled the 'homemaker identity' scale, is a measure of mother's belief in the importance of women providing a homemaker role. Respondents who score highly on this scale believe it is important for women to be involved in, and responsive to their family. The types of questions that make up this scale are 'A wife should give up her job when it is inconvenient to her husband and children', and 'It is better for the family if the husband is the principal breadwinner and the wife has primary responsibility for the home and the children'. It is not statistically correlated to the social equity scale, which supports the use of both scales, in that the scales are conceptually and statistically independent. This means that respondents may hold the attitude that it is important for women and men to have equity in a society, but also believe that it is important for a woman to stay at home and look after the children.

Section 5, using Wave 1 data, analyses these background factors with current employment status to determine which of the indicators are related to women's work status. Further multivariate analysis of Wave 1 data examines the relationship between the explanatory factors and the number of hours women work (if they worked in the previous week). The dependent variable for that investigation is the number of hours the respondent usually works.

The factors that have been theorised as related to women's employment, and analysed in Section 5 using Wave 1 data, are then modelled with Wave 2 data in Section 6.

Section 6 also investigates how workplace factors at Wave 1 may impact on the work status of the mothers of pre-school aged children at Wave 2. The work factors are again adapted from Glass and Riley's framework. They outline two types of work factors, one covering organisational characteristics, and the second being family responsive working conditions.

The following workplace factors are used to investigate maternal employment:

Organizational characteristics

1. Size of workplace
2. Type of employer
3. Gender of people doing the same job
4. Education needed to do the job

Family responsive working conditions

5. Number of workplace benefits (see Annex 3)
6. Number of workplace constraints (see Annex 3)
7. Ability to have flexible working hours
8. Gender of supervisor
9. Relationship with co-workers

Note that one limitation of this investigation is that women may not be in the same job at Wave 1 as at Wave 2, so this should be treated as an exploratory investigation.

5. Analysis of NLC data (Wave 1 data)

As described using ABS data, women with young children are less likely to be involved in the paid labour force than other women, and than men. NLC data (Table 5) show that around 80 per cent of women who do not have children were employed in the week prior to interview. This compares to about 38

per cent of women who have an infant. As age of youngest child in the household increases, so too does women's employment. This section of the paper examines the factors that are related to women's employment when young children are present in the household.

Table 5. Women's employment status by age of youngest child.

| <i>Employment in previous week</i> | Age of youngest child in the household | | | | | | Total |
|------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|-------------|
| | No children | 0 | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | |
| | Number (Per cent) | | | | | | |
| Not employed | 92 (19.4) | 25 (62.5) | 33 (50.8) | 32 (42.1) | 26 (53.1) | 20 (45.4) | 228 (30.4) |
| Employed | 383 (80.6) | 15 (37.5) | 32 (49.2) | 44 (57.9) | 23 (46.9) | 24 (54.6) | 521 (69.6) |
| Total | 475 (100.0) | 40 (100.0) | 65 (100.0) | 76 (100.0) | 49 (100.0) | 44 (100.0) | 749 (100.0) |

Source: NLC data 1997.

Notes: Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the $P < 0.0001$ level.

5.1. Looking at cross-sectional relationships between background factors and mother's employment (analysis of Wave 1 NLC data)

Bivariate Analysis

The background factors examined cover three main areas. These are loosely clustered into groups of demographic factors, financial/resource factors, and gender attitudes. Age, number of children, the cohabitation of their partner, and whether they were born in Australia cover the demographic background. The financial/resource factors considered are education level, home ownership and income of partner, and gender role attitudes include two scales.

Table 6 looks at the relationship between these explanatory factors and the employment status of mothers with an infant child (that is, a child aged less than 1 year). Results of partner status, country of birth and partner's income are not presented due to small cell sizes. That is, results are based on small numbers (N=40), and there is not enough variability in these categories to obtain reliable results.

Education is the only factor that is statistically significant at the bivariate level. Mothers with secondary or lower education are less likely to be in employment when their child is an infant than mothers with higher education (21% v 56%).

Results are not presented where cell sizes are too small. The results show that employment status for mothers with an infant are not statistically different by age, number of children in the household, home ownership and attitude to social equity. There is an indication that age is related to employment, with mothers aged 30 and over, appearing to be more likely to be employed than mothers aged less than 30 (50% v 27%), and mothers with a great number of children are less likely to be employed. Mothers who are buying their home also show signs of having higher levels of employment. However, none of these are statistically significant and should be treated with caution.

Table 6. Descriptive statistics. Employment status of mothers with an infant child (aged less than 1 year) by explanatory variables.

| <i>Explanatory variable</i> | Employment status | | Total |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Not employed | Employed | |
| | Per cent | | |
| Age of woman | | | |
| Less than 30 | 72.7 | 27.3 | 100.0 |
| 30+ | 50.0 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| Number of children in the household | | | |
| One | 52.9 | 47.1 | 100.0 |
| Two | 64.3 | 35.7 | 100.0 |
| Three+ | 75.0 | 25.0 | 100.0 |
| Education* | | | |
| Secondary or lower | 78.9 | 21.1 | 100.0 |
| Higher than secondary | 47.6 | 52.4 | 100.0 |
| Home ownership | | | |
| Renting by me &/or partner | 84.6 | 15.4 | 100.0 |
| Buying | 44.4 | 55.6 | 100.0 |
| Own | 57.1 | 42.9 | 100.0 |
| | Mean (standard deviation) | | |
| Attitudes: Social equity | 6.6 (1.8) | 6.6 (1.9) | 6.6 (1.8) |
| Attitudes: Homemaker identity | 4.6 (2.1) | 4.6 (2.3) | 4.6 (2.2) |

Source: NLC data 1997.

Notes:

* Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the $P < 0.05$ level.

Total N=40, cells may not total 40 due to missing data.

When all mothers with a pre-school aged child are examined (Table 7), the results are more conclusive, as it is based on a larger sample size. Age, cohabitation of partner, country of birth and partner's income are not statistically related to maternal employment.

The factors that are related to maternal employment status are the number of children present in the household, the woman's education, home ownership and the scores on the attitude scales. The more children that are present in the household, the less likely a mother will be employed, the higher a woman's education, the more likely they will be employed, and if they are paying off a home they are more likely to be working than if they are renting or have purchased their home. It is evident that the number of pre-school aged children present in the household is related to this group of mothers when it was not related to mothers of infant children. The explanation is that for mothers who have children aged between 0 and 4, the number of children that they have in total affects whether they are working or not. For mothers of infant children this is not a factor as the reason that they are not employed is because of the infant, not the number of children per se. Finally, mothers who score higher on the homemaker identity scale are more likely to be not employed, while mothers who score higher on the social equity scale are more likely to be employed.

Table 7. Descriptive statistics. Employment status of mothers with a pre-school aged child (0–4) by explanatory variables.

| <i>Explanatory variable</i> | Employment status | | Total |
|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Not employed | Employed | |
| | Per cent | | |
| Age of woman | | | |
| Less than 30 | 53.6 | 46.4 | 100.0 |
| 30+ | 47.9 | 52.1 | 100.0 |
| Age of youngest child | | | |
| Zero | 62.5 | 37.5 | 100.0 |
| One | 50.8 | 49.2 | 100.0 |
| Two | 42.1 | 57.9 | 100.0 |
| Three | 53.1 | 46.9 | 100.0 |
| Four | 45.5 | 54.5 | 100.0 |
| Number of children in the household** | | | |
| One | 35.7 | 64.3 | 100.0 |
| Two | 53.4 | 46.6 | 100.0 |
| Three+ | 58.9 | 41.1 | 100.0 |
| Does partner cohabit? | | | |
| No, do not live with partner | 52.4 | 47.6 | 100.0 |
| Yes, live with partner | 49.2 | 50.8 | 100.0 |
| Born in Australia? | | | |
| No | 43.9 | 56.1 | 100.0 |
| Yes | 50.6 | 49.4 | 100.0 |
| Education* | | | |
| Secondary or lower | 61.9 | 38.1 | 100.0 |
| Higher than secondary | 38.3 | 61.7 | 100.0 |
| Home ownership*** | | | |
| Renting by me &/or partner | 61.8 | 38.2 | 100.0 |
| Buying | 42.1 | 57.9 | 100.0 |
| Own | 51.0 | 49.0 | 100.0 |
| Partner's income | | | |
| No info | 57.7 | 42.3 | 100.0 |
| Nil or neg to \$25,999 | 58.2 | 41.8 | 100.0 |
| \$26,000 to \$51,999 | 44.8 | 55.2 | 100.0 |
| \$52,000+ | 45.0 | 55.0 | 100.0 |
| | Mean (standard deviation) | | |
| Attitudes: Social equity** | 6.2 (1.6) | 6.8 (1.5) | 6.5 (1.6) |
| Attitudes: Homemaker identity** | 4.9 (2.1) | 4.2 (2.2) | 4.5 (2.2) |

Source: NLC data 1997.

Notes:

* Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.0001 level.

** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.01 level.

*** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.05 level.

Total N=276, cells may not total 276 due to missing data.

It should be noted that education, which may be considered to be associated with attitude scores, does not show a significant relationship to either of the attitude scales. We can assume then that the use of measures of attitudes is not just a proxy of education.

Multivariate analysis: Logistic Regression (whether mother is employed or not)

These factors have been modelled using logistic regression (Table 8). Model 1 analyses the impact of demographic characteristics on maternal employment. Model 2 adds financial/resource factors, and Model 3 adds the attitude scales.

The results show that three factors remain statistically significant while controlling for other factors. The number of children in the household, woman's education and social equity attitudes are related to maternal employment. The odds of women working reduce as number of children increase. Those mothers who have higher scores on the social equity scale are more likely to be employed, and mothers who have higher education have odds 2.12 times higher than mothers who have secondary or lower education.

These results highlight similar findings to other research with regard to the impact of background factors. A mother's education level is important in determining her employment status, a finding which has been shown by many other authors. Number of children is also a large consideration for many mothers who are juggling the costs of raising children and providing childcare with the gains attained from working.

The social equity scale significantly added to the model explaining mother's employment. This finding is similar to previous research (Greenstein, 1986) which used a similar social role attitude scale and found it to be an important predictor of maternal employment. The homemaker identity scale which was significant at the bivariate level was not significant in the final model.

Multivariate analysis: Linear Regression (number of hours worked)

Many mothers who have young children do not work full-time hours. The explanatory variables used in the previous logistic regression analysis were also used in a model to determine whether these factors impact on the number of hours worked by mothers.

The dependent variable is the square root⁵ of the number of hours worked by mothers who worked at least one hour in the previous week (N=116). Interval or dichotomous variables have been used as dependent variables, and categorical variables have been converted to the equivalent number of dummy variables. The model takes the form:

⁵. The original dependent variable was transformed into the square root of the number of hours worked due to the distribution of the residuals in the model.

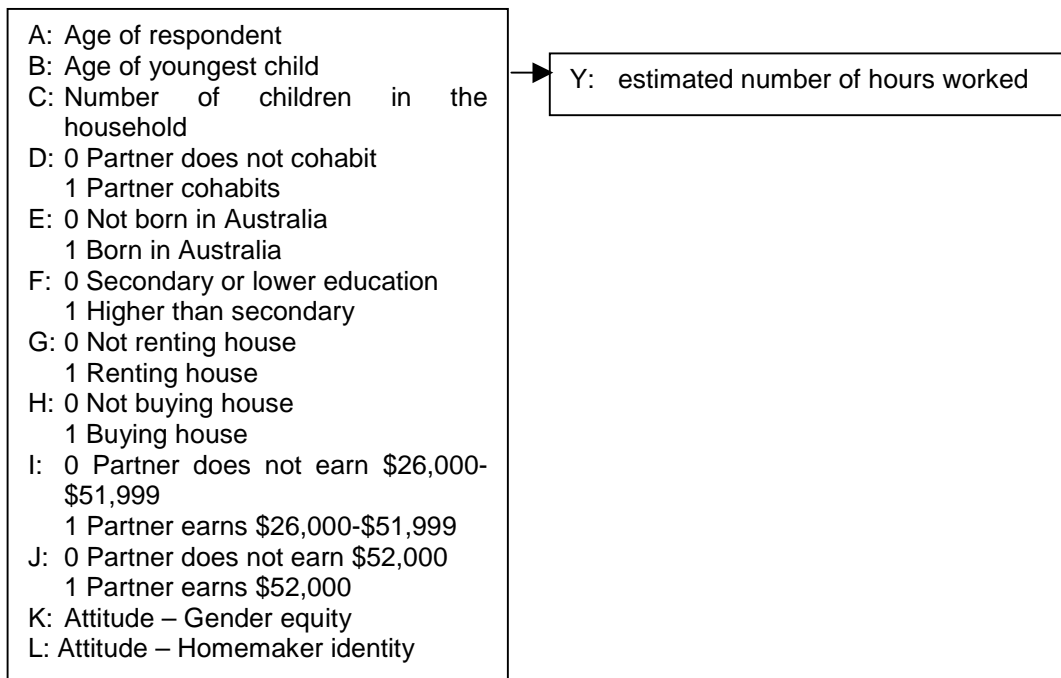
Table 8. Coefficients, Odds ratios, and standard errors from logistic regression analysis of mother's employment when there is a preschooler present, by resource and family system characteristics.

| <i>Characteristics</i> | Model 1 | | | Model 2 | | | Model 3 | | |
|---------------------------------|----------------|-------|--------|----------------|-------|---------|----------------|-------|----------------|
| | B | S.E. | Exp(B) | B | S.E. | Exp(B) | B | S.E. | Exp(B) |
| Age (years) | 0.027 | 0.026 | 1.028 | -0.007 | 0.030 | 0.993 | -0.007 | 0.031 | 0.993 |
| Age of youngest child | 0.153 | 0.103 | 1.165 | 0.187 | 0.110 | 1.206 | 0.189 | 0.114 | 1.208 |
| Number of children | -0.560 | 0.144 | 0.571* | -0.489 | 0.155 | 0.613** | -0.435 | 0.161 | 0.647** |
| Does partner cohabit? | | | | | | | | | |
| No (ref) | 0.000 | | 1.000 | 0.000 | | 1.000 | 0.000 | | 1.000 |
| Yes | 0.354 | 0.411 | 1.424 | -1.620 | 1.321 | 0.198 | -1.025 | 1.422 | 0.359 |
| Born in Australia | | | | | | | | | |
| No (ref) | 0.000 | | 1.000 | 0.000 | | 1.000 | 0.000 | | 1.000 |
| Yes | -0.288 | 0.364 | 0.749 | -0.574 | 0.397 | 0.563 | -0.607 | 0.412 | 0.545 |
| Education | | | | | | | | | |
| Secondary or lower (ref) | | | | 0.000 | | 1.000 | 0.000 | | 1.000 |
| Higher than secondary | | | | 0.766 | 0.268 | 2.151** | 0.750 | 0.277 | 2.117** |
| Home ownership | | | | | | | | | |
| Renting (ref) | | | | 0.000 | | 1.000 | 0.000 | | 1.000 |
| Buying | | | | 0.612 | 0.367 | 1.844 | 0.486 | 0.378 | 1.626 |
| Own | | | | 0.270 | 0.459 | 1.310 | 0.143 | 0.472 | 1.153 |
| Partner's income | | | | | | | | | |
| No info | | | | -1.464 | 1.254 | 0.231 | -1.157 | 1.367 | 0.314 |
| Nil or neg to \$25,999 (ref) | | | | 0.000 | | 1.000 | 0.000 | | 1.000 |
| \$26,000 to \$51,999 | | | | 0.420 | 0.327 | 1.522 | 0.454 | 0.337 | 1.575 |
| \$52,000+ | | | | 0.178 | 0.441 | 1.195 | 0.203 | 0.451 | 1.225 |
| Attitudes: Social equity | | | | | | | 0.251 | 0.094 | 1.285** |
| Attitudes: Homemaker identity | | | | | | | -0.122 | 0.065 | 0.885 |
| Constant | -0.132 | 0.869 | 0.876 | 1.994 | 1.623 | 7.343 | 0.538 | 1.954 | 1.713 |
| <i>-2 log likelihood</i> | 368.755 | | | 329.876 | | | 315.29 | | |
| <i>df</i> | 5 | | | 11 | | | 13 | | |

Source: NLC data 1997.

Notes: * Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.0001 level. ** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.01 level. *** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.05 level.

Figure 3. Regression model estimating number of hours worked.



It is found that similar factors are associated with the number of hours worked by mothers (Table 9) that were associated with maternal employment. The factors associated with whether a mother worked or not were the number of pre-school aged children in the household, her education level and her attitude to social equity. In the model explaining the number of hours worked, the number of children in the household, partner’s income and homemaker identity are all linked to the number of hours worked by mothers with a child under school age.

These findings are different from those found for maternal employment, in that score on the social equity scale and education level were related to maternal employment, but are not related to the number of hours worked. Further, partner’s income level and homemaker identity were not related to maternal employment, but are associated with the number of hours worked. For those mothers who are working, it is found that as the partner’s income increases, the number of hours worked decreases. Similarly, as the number of children in the household increases, the number of hours worked decreases.

The findings also suggest that one set of attitudes affects maternal employment, while the other affects the number of hours worked. Although attitudes to social equity were related to maternal employment, they were not associated with the number of hours that mothers work. Instead, an affiliation with the homemaker identity is more important in understanding the number of hours worked. That is, a mother who believes it is important to provide a homemaker role works fewer hours than a mother who does not score highly on that attitude scale.

Table 9. Coefficients, standard errors and R² from regression analysis of score for number of hours worked.

| <i>Explanatory variable</i> | Statistic | | |
|--------------------------------------------|------------------|-------------|-------------|
| | B | SE | Sig. |
| Age | 0.02 | 0.04 | 0.57 |
| Age of youngest child | -0.12 | 0.15 | 0.43 |
| Number of children in household | -0.55 | 0.19 | 0.00 |
| Legal marital status | 0.88 | 0.61 | 0.16 |
| Born in Australia? | -0.17 | 0.39 | 0.66 |
| Education | 0.20 | 0.33 | 0.53 |
| Renting? | -0.52 | 0.57 | 0.36 |
| Buying? | 0.09 | 0.43 | 0.84 |
| Partner's income \$26,000-\$51,999? | -0.94 | 0.38 | 0.01 |
| Partner's income \$52,000? | -1.91 | 0.51 | 0.00 |
| Attitudes: Social equity | 0.17 | 0.10 | 0.10 |
| Attitudes: Homemaker identity | -0.17 | 0.07 | 0.02 |
| Constant | 2.21 | 1.76 | 0.21 |
| Adjusted R ^{2a} | 0.17 | | |

Source: NLC data 1997.

Notes: Bolded cells indicate variables that significantly add to the model.

a) Model significant at the P<0.01 level.

6. Factors associated with maternal employment at Wave 2.

6.1. Looking at longitudinal relationships between background factors (at Wave 1&2) and maternal employment (at Wave 2)

Bivariate Analysis

This descriptive analysis looks at the relationship between Wave 2 personal/family status and financial/resource factors and Wave 1 attitudes, on employment status at Wave 2. The results show that similar background factors (Table 10) are found as in the previous analysis.

Education and attitudes are related to employment status, but so too is cohabitation of partner, a result which was not found in Wave 1 data. It shows that mothers who do not live with a partner are less likely to be involved in work. Further, both scales of attitudes measures at Wave 1 are related to maternal employment at Wave 2. This indicates that attitudes play an important role in the labour force decisions of mothers.

Neither the age of youngest child, nor number of children in the household, are statistically significant.

Table 10. Descriptive statistics. Employment status of mothers with a preschooler by explanatory variables.

| <i>Explanatory variable</i> | Employment status | | Total |
|----------------------------------------|---------------------------|------------------|------------------|
| | Not employed | Employed | |
| | Per cent | | |
| Age of woman | | | |
| Less than 30 | 48.6 | 51.4 | 100.0 |
| 30+ | 46.4 | 53.6 | 100.0 |
| Age of youngest child | | | |
| Zero | 50.0 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| One | 48.9 | 51.1 | 100.0 |
| Two | 52.4 | 47.6 | 100.0 |
| Three | 35.3 | 64.7 | 100.0 |
| Four | 46.9 | 53.1 | 100.0 |
| Number of children in the household | | | |
| One | 38.3 | 61.7 | 100.0 |
| Two | 46.4 | 53.6 | 100.0 |
| Three+ | 55.2 | 44.8 | 100.0 |
| Does partner cohabit?*** | | | |
| No, do not live with partner | 71.4 | 28.6 | 100.0 |
| Yes, live with partner | 44.7 | 55.3 | 100.0 |
| Born in Australia? | | | |
| No | 46.7 | 53.3 | 100.0 |
| Yes | 46.9 | 53.1 | 100.0 |
| Education*** | | | |
| Secondary or lower | 55.0 | 45 | 100.0 |
| Higher than secondary | 40.0 | 60 | 100.0 |
| Home ownership | | | |
| Renting by me &/or partner | 50.0 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| Buying | 47.4 | 52.6 | 100.0 |
| Own | 40.7 | 59.3 | 100.0 |
| Partner's income | | | |
| No info | 62.5 | 37.5 | 100.0 |
| Nil or neg to \$25,999 | 53.1 | 46.9 | 100.0 |
| \$26,000 to \$51,999 | 41.2 | 58.8 | 100.0 |
| \$52,000+ | 42.3 | 57.7 | 100.0 |
| | Mean (standard deviation) | | |
| Attitudes: Gender equity*** | 6.5 (1.6) | 7.1 (1.6) | 6.8 (1.6) |
| Attitudes: Homemaker identity** | 4.7 (2.2) | 3.7 (2.0) | 4.2 (2.1) |

Source: NLC data 1997 and 2000.

Notes:

* Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.0001 level.

** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.01 level.

*** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the P<0.05 level.

Total N=175, cells may not total 175 due to missing data.

6.2. Looking at longitudinal relationships between work factors (at Wave 1) and mother's employment (at Wave 2)

Bivariate Analysis

The workplace factors considered include organisational characteristics and family responsive working conditions (Table 11). In this section, only women who were involved in work in Wave 1 can be analysed. This means that the mothers who are analysed in this section were employed at Wave 1 and had a child aged 0–4 at Wave 2 (note that they may or may not have had a child at Wave 1). This reduces the sample size somewhat, and only descriptive analysis has been conducted.

In this exploratory analysis, the only organisational characteristic that shows a significant relationship with maternal employment is the education needed to do the job. However, it could be argued that this is simply a measure of education, rather than of any organisational characteristic.

Size of workplace, type of employer and gender of people doing the same job are all statistically insignificant. There is an indication that people employed by the government sector are more likely to maintain employment than those employed by the private sector, but this is not statistically proven.

In comparison, family responsive working conditions are found to be related to employment for mothers with pre-school aged children. Those women who had greater access to workplace benefits at Wave 1 (in terms of the number they have), are more likely to be employed at Wave 2 than those who have three or less. The direction of this relationship is as expected.

However, in terms of constraints, the results show that women whose jobs are more demanding, and have greater requirements, are more likely to maintain employment. While these factors (such as working long hours, travelling, etc) are thought to be a barrier to women's employment when there is a child present, it seems that women who have this experience in Wave 1 are more likely to be working in Wave 2. It is suggested that these factors are measuring women's commitment to work, or importance of employment.

The availability of flexible working hours, the gender of the respondent's supervisor, and relationship with coworkers are not significantly related to women's employment at Wave 2.

This exploratory analysis indicates that work factors should be further investigated to determine links to employment. Unfortunately due to the small numbers available for analysis, it is not possible to run a multivariate model.

Table 11. Descriptive statistics. Work factors at Wave 1—Impact on employment status of mothers who have a child aged 0–4 at Wave 2.

| <i>Explanatory variable</i> | Employment status | | Total |
|-------------------------------------------|-------------------|-------------|--------------|
| | Not employed | Employed | |
| | Per cent | | |
| Size of workplace | | | |
| Less than 5 | 43.8 | 56.3 | 100.0 |
| 5-24 | 33.3 | 66.7 | 100.0 |
| 25-99 | 61.5 | 38.5 | 100.0 |
| 100+ or Government | 31.9 | 68.1 | 100.0 |
| Type of employer | | | |
| Private | 40.9 | 59.1 | 100.0 |
| Government | 28.1 | 71.9 | 100.0 |
| Gender of people doing same job | | | |
| Mainly men or mixture | 36.4 | 63.6 | 100.0 |
| Mainly women | 40.0 | 60.0 | 100.0 |
| Nobody else does same/self-employed | 36.1 | 63.9 | 100.0 |
| Education needed to do job*** | | | |
| Less than secondary school | 46.4 | 53.6 | 100.0 |
| Secondary school | 54.2 | 45.8 | 100.0 |
| Post-school qualification | 26.0 | 74.0 | 100.0 |
| Number of workplace benefits** | | | |
| Three or less | 54.9 | 45.1 | 100.0 |
| Four+ | 32.3 | 67.7 | 100.0 |
| Number of workplace constraints*** | | | |
| Three or less | 51.1 | 48.9 | 100.0 |
| Four+ | 29.4 | 70.6 | 100.0 |
| Ability to have flexible working hours | | | |
| No | 41.2 | 58.8 | 100.0 |
| Yes | 35.7 | 64.3 | 100.0 |
| Gender of supervisor | | | |
| Man | 23.1 | 76.9 | 100.0 |
| Woman | 50.0 | 50.0 | 100.0 |
| Do not have supervisor/self-employed | 34.5 | 65.5 | 100.0 |
| Relationship with co-workers | | | |
| Mixed feelings/not satisfied | 59.5 | 40.5 | 100.0 |
| Satisfied | 28.6 | 71.4 | 100.0 |
| Very satisfied | 44.1 | 55.9 | 100.0 |

Source: NLC data 1997 and 2000.

Notes:

* Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the $P < 0.0001$ level.

** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the $P < 0.01$ level.

*** Significant difference between those employed and those not employed at the $P < 0.05$ level.

Total N=107, cells may not total 107 due to missing data.

7. Concluding remarks

Glass and Riley (1998) provide a useful framework for the purpose of predicting the effect of personal and work characteristics on maternal employment. This analysis has shown that a set of personal factors are linked to both employment, and to the number of hours worked for women with a preschooler in their household. Work conditions may also be important in modelling maternal employment, but analysis conducted was necessarily bivariate.

The relationship between level of education, number of children in the household, social equity attitudes, and some family responsive working conditions are related to the employment status of women when there is a young child present in the household. Partner's income does not show a statistical association in the multivariate model of maternal employment, but it appears to be associated with the number of hours that mothers work. That is, women whose partner earns a moderate income are more likely to work longer hours than mothers whose partner earns a low or high income.

The number of children in the household is important, even after controlling for age of the youngest child in the multivariate models of employment and number of hours worked. Education is also related to both employment and the number of hours worked if employed, with mothers who have higher levels of education being more likely to work than women who have lower levels of education.

The relationship between attitude scores and employment and number of hours worked is evident. It appears that a respondent's score on the social equity scale is associated with employment, while their score on the homemaker identity scale is associated to the number of hours worked. Mothers who work have higher scores on the social equity scale than women who do not work, and women who work longer hours have lower scores on homemaker identity scale than women who work shorter hours.

Although it might be assumed that there is a strong relationship between education of the respondent and attitude score which should be accounted for, it was found that education was not related to mother's score on either of the attitude scales.

The influence of attitudes on behaviour is important, and is not necessarily influenced by other factors such as education. This investigation shows that attitudes, together with the number of children that women have, their education level, and their financial situation, are all important factors in maternal involvement in the paid labour market. In addressing statements of rejection of motherhood in favour of paid employment, these findings provide important information that may add to the current understanding of women's attachment to the labour force.

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ANNEX 1

Table A1. Labour force participation of parents by age of youngest child and sex, 1999.

| Age of Youngest Child | Couple parent - fathers | | | Couple parent - mothers | | |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|-------------------------|------------------|--------------|
| | <i>In LF</i> | <i>Not in LF</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>In LF</i> | <i>Not in LF</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| | '000 | | | | | |
| 0-4 | 756.9 | 47.9 | 804.8 | 397.5 | 407.3 | 804.8 |
| 5-9 | 467.5 | 33.4 | 500.9 | 349.3 | 151.7 | 501.0 |
| 10-14 | 372.1 | 29.7 | 401.8 | 295.6 | 106.2 | 401.8 |
| | Percent | | | | | |
| 0-4 | 94.0 | 6.0 | 100.0 | 49.4 | 50.6 | 100.0 |
| 5-9 | 93.3 | 6.7 | 100.0 | 69.7 | 30.3 | 100.0 |
| 10-14 | 92.6 | 7.4 | 100.0 | 73.6 | 26.4 | 100.0 |
| | Sole parent - fathers | | | Sole parent - mothers | | |
| | <i>In LF</i> | <i>Not in LF</i> | <i>Total</i> | <i>In LF</i> | <i>Not in LF</i> | <i>Total</i> |
| | '000 | | | | | |
| 0-4 | 4.9 | 4.4 | 9.3 | 57.1 | 103.8 | 160.9 |
| 5-9 | 7.4 | 4.5 | 11.9 | 85.3 | 51.9 | 137.2 |
| 10-14 | 13.9 | 5.2 | 19.1 | 75.0 | 44.8 | 119.8 |
| | Per cent | | | | | |
| 0-4 | 52.7 | 47.3 | 100.0 | 35.5 | 64.5 | 100.0 |
| 5-9 | 62.2 | 37.8 | 100.0 | 62.2 | 37.8 | 100.0 |
| 10-14 | 72.8 | 27.2 | 100.0 | 62.6 | 37.4 | 100.0 |

Source: (ABS, 1999: 20, 24).

ANNEX 2

These are the questions that make up the attitude scales. They are copied directly from the way they were asked in the NLC survey. Responses are: Strongly agree, Agree, Mixed feelings, Disagree, Strongly Disagree.

The 'Social equity' scale

Q234_2 There should be satisfactory childcare facilities so that women can take jobs outside the home;

Q234_4 Ideally, there should be as many women as men in important positions in government and business

Q267_1 Both the husband and wife should contribute to the household income;

Q267_4 Having a job is the best way for a woman to be an independent person;

Q234_1 If both the husband and wife work, they should share equally in the housework and care of the children; and,

Q267_6 Couples should always have activities which are separate from those of their partner.

The 'Homemaker identity' scale

Q267_3 A wife should give up her job whenever it is inconvenient to her husband and children;

Q234_3 It is better for the family if the husband is the principal breadwinner and the wife has primary responsibility for the home and the children; and,

Q267_2 People should consider the needs of their spouse and children as more important than their own.

Table A2. Reliability statistics. Alphas and mean inter-item correlations for attitude factor scales

| <i>Attitude factor scale</i> | Alpha | Mean inter-item r |
|------------------------------|-------|-------------------|
| Social equity | 0.58 | 0.19 |
| Homemaker identity | 0.54 | 0.28 |

Source: NLC data 1997.

ANNEX 3

Items included in workplace benefits (Q117). Do you have any of the following benefits in your job?

1. Paid sick leave;
2. Paid holiday or recreation leave;
3. Long service leave;
4. Paid maternity or parental leave;
5. Unpaid maternity or parental leave;
6. Family or carers leave; and,
7. A company car or vehicle for private use.

Items included in workplace constraints (Q119). Does your job require you to:

1. Work broken shifts or irregular hours;
2. Work overtime or very long hours;
3. Work weekends;
4. Work nights;
5. Take work home; and,
6. Travel away from home overnight.

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