

# **‘WORKING TO LIVE’: LOW-PAID MULTIPLE EMPLOYMENT AND WORK-LIFE ARTICULATION**

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**Dr Andrew Smith**

*Bradford University School of Management*

**Dr Jo McBride**

*Newcastle University Business School*

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# Introduction

- There is growing academic and policy interest in issues of low-pay, precarious work and in-work poverty
- Almost 6 million workers in the UK are currently paid below the foundation living wage (KPMG, 2015)
- Successive governments have viewed employment as the best route out of poverty/low-pay
- Previous studies have referred to low-paid workers having more than one job in order to make ends meet (Abrams, 2002; Toynebee, 2003; Grimshaw et al., 2008)
- Our research explicitly focuses on low-paid workers in multiple employment
- This paper critically examines the complexities and challenges of work-life articulation for low-paid workers with more than one job

# Work-life articulation, low-pay and working time - I

- There is a plethora of academic research into work-life 'balance' (WLB), but this has always been an issue for individuals and families, and is typically gendered
- More functionalist accounts assert work-life 'balance', 'integration' (Torrington et al., 2011) and even 'enrichment' (Greenhaus and Powell, 2006)
- The reality is often more complex and contested
- We draw on the concept of work-life articulation (WLA) (Crompton, 2006; Lyonette et al., 2011)
- Focuses on the practicalities and lived experiences of WLA, household and employment strategies as individuals and families navigate these complex issues
- Hochschild (1997) – growth of dual earners, families can be cash rich but time poor, but what about the low-paid?
- Scherer and Steiber (2007) – most work-life conflict for women in higher level occupations, but what about multiple employment?

# Work-life articulation, low-pay and working time - II

- Interlinked issues of WLA, pay and working time
- Mountney and Reid (2012) families struggle with time and income pressures, especially when low-paid
- Fagan et al. (2012) diversification of working time arrangements from the standard working week
- Extended opening and operating times results in changes to the length, pattern and variation of working time
- Presser and Ward (2011) – growth of non-standard working hours, with less quality family time
- Craig and Powell (2012) – additional pressure to juggle competing demands, as workers have little ‘choice’ of hours
- Warren (2015) – impact of the crisis and austerity, creates underemployment and insecurity, which is classed
- Research questions - how work and life are articulated and experienced? Impact of organisational policies and practices? Practicalities of working in multiple jobs?

# The Study

- On-going qualitative research into low-paid multiple employment in the regions of Yorkshire and the North-East of England
- Since June 2015 we have conducted over 40 interviews with low-paid workers with more than one job, along with 7 trade union representatives and 1 foodbank organiser
- ‘Hard to reach group’ as we are focusing on specific workers and no one has conducted this research in the UK before
- Access via the TUC, trade unions, community groups, poverty organisations and foodbanks, with snowball sampling techniques
- Detailed interviews focusing on the experience of work, issues around low-pay/poverty and work-life ‘balance’
- Thematic analysis and key issues of working time complexities, access to work-life balance policies and practices, and work-life challenges

# The Forgotten Workers

- Typical jobs – cleaning, catering, care sector, security, social services, education, retail and self-employment
- Sectors – private, public and third, but many jobs have been recently outsourced to private sector contractors
- Employment contracts – combination of full-time, part-time, term-time only, temporary, seasonal, casual and zero hours
- Heavily gendered towards women, but with a range of ages from late-teens to 60s; in some cases both partners are in low-paid multiple employment
- Education – NVQs, degrees and masters degrees
- Workers with 2, 3, 4, 5, 6 or even 7 different jobs, and all are struggling to make ends meet – some use food banks
- All have a very strong work ethic (see Shildrick et al., 2010)
- *'I do these 4 jobs and work hard to provide for my kids'* (interviewee quote)

# The extensification of work and fragmented time schedules - I

- Complex and fragmented working time schedules that permeate non-standard hours: early mornings, evenings/nights and weekends
- Challenges of variable, changeable, irregular and unpredictable working time arrangements, especially with zero hour contracts (range from 0 to 60 hours/week)
- Underemployment – ‘scramble’ to make up sufficient hours to survive and make ends meet
- Irregular hours that can change at very short-notice (McGinnity and Russell, 2013)
- Combination of ‘mini jobs’ - under 16 hours/week (Grimshaw and Rubery, 2010)
- *‘I work 4.5 hours/week with a half hour drive there and back. I’m doing all that travelling for working very few hours and getting very little pay.’ (Interviewee quote)*

# The extensification of work and fragmented time schedules - II

- Complex 'juggling act' of low-paid multiple employment
- *'I could get more work, but there's only so many balls you can juggle.'* (Interviewee quote)
- Frantic and frenetic daily routines of dashing from job to job, and trying to cover domestic and care responsibilities
- *'The frustrating thing is the kids have picked up on the fact that I go back out to work again'* (Interviewee quote)
- Physically and mentally demanding with long working days – some with 4.30-5am starts and 11pm finishes
- *'I would say my typical working hours are like 6:00 till 9:00 on a morning and then 7:00 till 11:00 every evening, five days a week. But then by the time I get home it's 11:45 and it takes you an hour to unwind. And then I get back up for 04:30. So sometimes its just three and a half hours sleep.'* (interviewee quote)

# Work-life balance policies and practices

- Organisational inequalities as formal WLB policies and practices are typically available for 'core' staff only
- Yet those who are full-time use 'flexibility' to do their second, third or even fourth job
- Managers typically view WLB as the individual responsibility of staff
- *'It's your responsibility, it's not our problem. You took on the job knowing the hours.'* (Interviewee quote)
- But hours are mandated by the employer
- Some limited informal flexibility, but issues of management discretion, fairness and transparency
- Major issues with zero hours, flexible working and pay -
- *'They do say, are there any hours you can't do? So I'll tell them, but that just means I'm limiting what they can offer me. They've got a pool of other people, so they're not doing it for my benefit.'* (Interviewee quote)

# Work-life challenges and complexities - I

- ‘Vicious cycle’ of multiple employment and childcare/eldercare duties
- *‘Sometimes I get to put the kids to bed’ (Interviewee quote)*
- Struggles to fit work around domestic responsibilities, with patchwork care arrangements of family and friends (Warren et al., 2009)
- Many are struggling to make ends meet
- *Some months you are on the bones of your arse’ (interviewee quote)*
- Some are ‘working to live’ and experiencing in-work poverty, have to borrow money from family and friends, make use of foodbanks

# Work-life challenges and complexities - II

- Despite all of these challenges workers did their very best for their families
- *‘Everything I earn goes on my family. I take my son to his football training, his rugby training. I take my daughter to dancing, I want to be there for them.’ (Interviewee quote)*
- *‘Most of my leisure is being a taxi woman for my children to go and do sports. I take them to museums and make it a family day.’ (Interviewee quote)*
- Some are also involved in further and higher education, in order to pave the way to better employment
- But constrained social lives due to lack of income and working unsociable hours
- All want extra income – *‘that would be heaven’* – and more sociable working hours and job security (especially with zero hours contracts)
- Challenges of low-pay and the impact on family life –
- *‘I just want to earn a decent salary – not to be a millionaire – to be comfortable and not have to scrimp and save at the supermarket’.* (interviewee quote)

# Conclusions

- Critically examines the WLA (Crompton, 2006; Lyonette, 2011) complexities for those in low-paid multiple employment
- Key debates around low-pay, JAMs (just about managing) and WLB
- Hochschild (1997) cash rich/ time poor, but these workers are cash poor and time poor
- Scherer and Steiber (2007) – most work-life conflict for women in higher level occupations, but real issues of low-pay, multiple employment and time pressures in lower-level jobs
- Consequences of a deregulated and ‘flexible’ labour market
- Multiple low-paid insecure and precarious work, and underemployed
- Non-standard, variable and changeable working time arrangements
- Social exclusion of ‘peripheral’ workers from organisational work-life balance policies and practices
- Challenges of juggling low pay, insufficient hours and family duties
- Additional work-life challenges and dilemmas, with patchwork and informal care arrangements (Warren et al., 2009)