

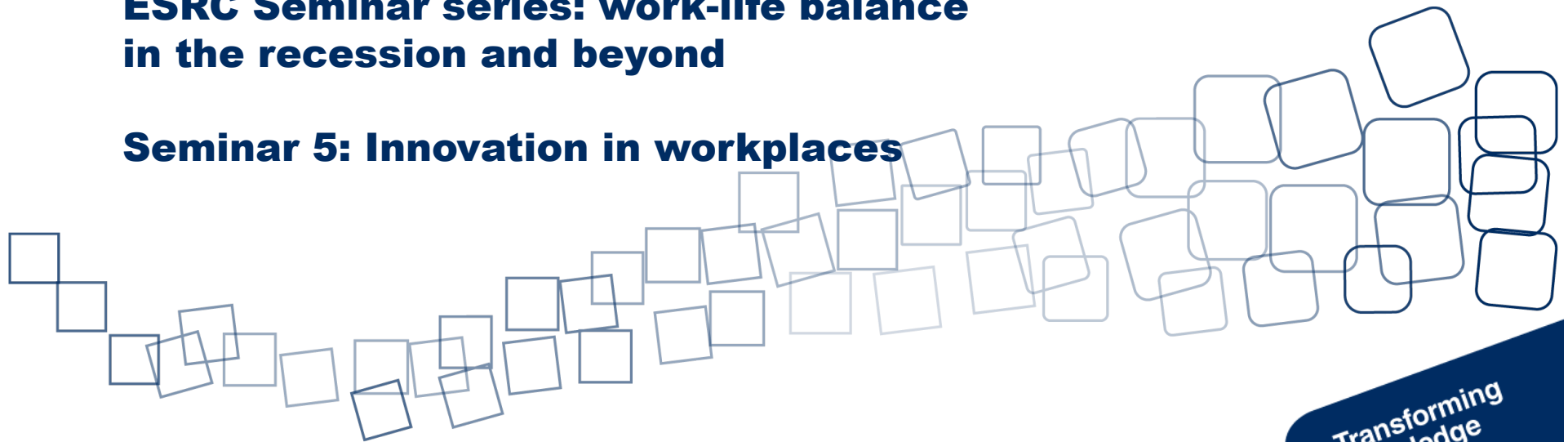
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# **How can managers and professionals work part-time?**

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**ESRC Seminar series: work-life balance  
in the recession and beyond**

**Seminar 5: Innovation in workplaces**



**Transforming  
knowledge  
into action**

# Background - society

- In the UK, 11% of UK managers and 19% of professionals work part-time (Eurostat, 2015)
- In the Netherlands, it's 19% of managers and 47% of professionals (Eurostat, 2015)
- Part-time is encouraged across Europe as a means of participation in workforce for women, older workers, carers, those with health conditions (Eurofound, 2012)

# Background - sector

- Managerial and professional jobs are unsuitable for part-timers because of the 'nature' of the work (Dick, 2009; Campbell & van Wanrooy, 2013)
- Professionalism requires constant availability, and always putting work before non-work (Kuhn, 2006; Seron & Ferris, 1995; Kalleberg & Epstein, 2001; Nentwich & Hoyer, 2012)

# Background - organization

- Organizations want to maximize attraction and retention of talent (Edwards & Robinson, 2004; Tomlinson, 2006) ...
- ...but part-time managers and professionals are perceived as expensive and inconvenient (Dick, 2006, 2009)
- Organizational responses to requests for part-time work (Lee et al., 2000)
  - Accommodation
  - Elaboration
  - Transformation

# Background - individual

- Part-time managers and professionals experience downgrading (Connolly & Gregory, 2008; Lyonette et al., 2010) and career marginalization (Durbin & Tomlinson, 2010) – or work intensification (Kelliher & Anderson, 2009)
- Significant minority of full-time managers and professionals want to work less, but feel they can't (Fagan, 2001). Some leave the workforce when the only other option is full-time (Stone, 2007; Cha, 2010).

# Research question

- How and why does a part-time working arrangement for managers and professionals emerge and develop?

# Methods

- Interviews with senior, well-paid professionals and managers, including directors and partners
- Engineering, IT, assurance, tax, HR, legal, marketing and business development
- 39 people; 67 part-time working arrangements
- Four research sites, in two organizations, in UK and Netherlands
- Narrative interviews; focus on the working arrangement

# Model of process of development of PTWA

Evaluation  
of other  
options

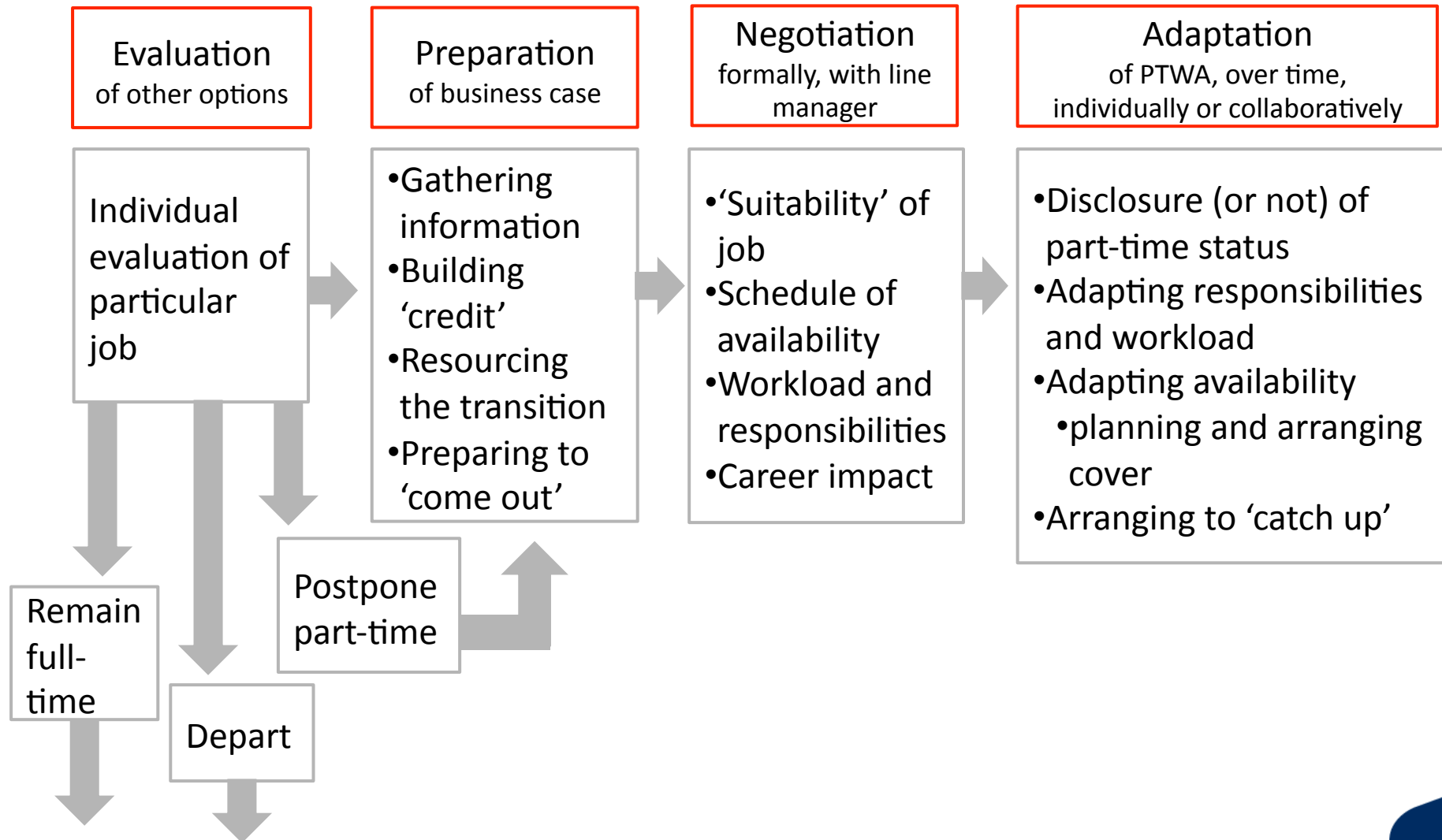
Preparation  
of business case

Negotiation  
formally, with  
line manager

Adaptation  
of PTWA, over time,  
individually or  
collaboratively



# Model of process of development of PTWA



## Adaptation

of PTWA, over time, individually or collaboratively

- Disclosure (or not) of PT status
- Adapting responsibilities and workload
  - Individually, by cutting out networking and development
  - Collaboratively, by delegating, or building team resources over time
- Adapting availability
  - Individually, by improving planning & project management
  - Collaboratively, by improving planning and arranging cover
- Arranging to 'catch up'
  - Individually, by reading emails
  - Collaboratively, with a 'buddy'

# Outcomes at time of interview

- Availability
  - A third had achieved predictable time off with no interruptions
  - A third had only occasional/emergency contact during time off
  - A third still responded to urgent/unpredictable events during time off
- Responsibility
  - 17 had reduced workload – but 10 by restricting type of work
  - 7 team managers retained FTE responsibility, while reducing personal workload
  - 14 retained FTE workload and responsibilities
- Career
  - Plateau until return to FT
  - Expect promotion as part-timer
  - Alternative career ambitions (not climbing corporate hierarchy)
  - In conflict between career and non-work roles

# What drives the process?

- Why do some people fall out of the process?
- Why do some part-timers end up marginalized or downgraded?
- Why do some part-timers end up delivering full-time outputs, or being full-time available, for part-time salary?

# Three dominant discourses of part-time work

- 1. Suitability of work.** Some types of work are unsuitable for part-timers because of the 'nature' of the work:
  - constant availability to unpredictable demands
  - fast responses, which mustn't be delayed by time off
  - information exchange by being present
- 2. Responsibility for making part-time work.** Part-timers make a *lifestyle choice*; they depart from norms of best practice, so they are:
  - personally responsible for consequences of their choice – job redesign without impacting on colleagues or clients
  - choosing not to get promoted
- 3. Categorizing part-timers.** Part-timers as a different 'type of person': less committed, worthy, ambitious, professional, reliable

# Dominant and minority discourses

## Suitability of work

**DOMINANT:**  
'Nature' of work prevents part-time

**MINORITY:**  
Jobs can be constructed differently

## Responsibility for making part-time work

**DOMINANT:**  
Individual – who has made lifestyle choice

**MINORITY:**  
Organization – part-time as a resourcing contract

## Categorizing part-timers

**DOMINANT:**  
Stigmatized 'others'

**MINORITY:**  
Included as the 'new normal'

# Jobs can be constructed differently

Distinguishes between the nature of the **work** and the construction of managers' and professionals' **jobs**

- **Work** may be fast, unpredictable and interdependent, but...
- ...**Jobs** can be designed to be **scalable** without negative organizational consequences. Different working practices are needed:
  1. Maximizing predictability, with good planning and project management across the team
  2. Maximizing substitutability within the team, with cover and emergency-access protocols
  3. Improving information transfer, so everyone can keep up to date after time off

# Jobs can be constructed differently

- Designing working practices for predictability
  - ‘Part-time’s a learning for the whole team because we’ve tended to work almost as a fire drill: you have this thing that comes in, you deal with it, you work until it’s done and then you move on to the next one and even if you’re working full-time that’s a really tiring way to work. It’s not that efficient, and we learnt that we could push back and we could strategize. So I think it was quite empowering for the whole team.’ Elinor, Finance manager, InfoCo UK



# Jobs can be constructed differently

- Designing working practices for substitutability
  - ‘I always involve a colleague, and so if I am not available, the colleague can join the client meeting. So I really want the whole practice here to be a continuous practice between different people, because the clients need to be served, so that’s the ultimate.’ Trudy, Senior manager, PSF Netherlands

# Jobs can be constructed differently

- Designing better information management practices
  - ‘The day you’re not there, there will be calls and meetings, where things are discussed that require, if you want to stay up to date, a good knowledge management structure. We don’t have that. You have to find another way, to find one of your colleagues or a co-worker, or a buddy, but that’s all on your own initiative. So people make it work by themselves.’ Jeroen, Operations manager, InfoCo Netherlands

# Organizational responsibility for making part-time work

- Part-time as an organizational resourcing issue, not a personal lifestyle issue or perk...
- ...Therefore organizational responsibility to be **working-hours-neutral** across all HR strategies and practices
  - Culture & behaviours
  - Working practices & job designs
  - Recruitment, performance and promotion practices

# Organizational responsibility for making part-time work

- Part-time as a resourcing issue, not a personal lifestyle issue
  - ‘I mean in the end I do a value exchange with InfoCo. They give me money and I work, and we agreed on the hours that we work .’ Tjarko, Internal consultant, InfoCo Netherlands

# Organizational responsibility for making part-time work

- It's an organizational responsibility to ensure a 'working-hours-neutral' culture
  - 'PSF have been really quite pioneering. I really do think the culture they are striving for has led to working flexibly and working part-time being a lot more acceptable.' Naomi, Senior manager, PSF UK

# Organizational responsibility for making part-time work

- Organizational investment in future talent: ‘fixed-volume’ activities
  - ‘It’s very important to make many billing hours. On the other hand you also have to be part of all kind of meetings; and to keep up with everything you have to read a lot. So you end up, of course, spending relatively more time on these kind of things, but [managers] also saw it as an investment because, of course, you had to keep up your knowledge and they knew that takes time.’ Simone, Senior manager, PSF Netherlands

# Organizational responsibility for making part-time work

- Promotion based on skills and potential, not volume of extra-role activities
  - ‘InfoCo measure [performance] more by output, and that limits you sometimes a bit. In an ideal world, I think you should mix both outputs and what knowledge and skillset are required.’ Jeroen, Operations manager, InfoCo Netherlands

# Inclusive discourses of being part-time

- Part-time is the 'new normal'
- We're all part-timers in a 24/7 environment
- We're all enriched by our non-work lives – and part-timers may bring particular authenticity, perspective, judgement?



# Inclusive discourses of being part-time

- Part-time as the ‘new normal’
  - ‘Four days is actually, it’s a bit like five days, isn’t it? It doesn’t feel like, Oh, I’m a part-timer. It feels like I’m here to do my job and I do it and that’s accepted and that’s fine. It’s not really a thing, I suppose, it’s just that I don’t work Mondays; in my head it’s not really a thing that I work part time.’ Adele, Marketing manager, PSF UK

# Inclusive discourses of being part-time

- We're all part-timers
  - 'I find part-time a very unhelpful term, actually, because I don't know anyone who doesn't work part-time. I mean to say, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, 365 days a year. So we all work part-time, it's a convenience term that relates to a norm.' Keith, Internal consultant, InfoCo UK

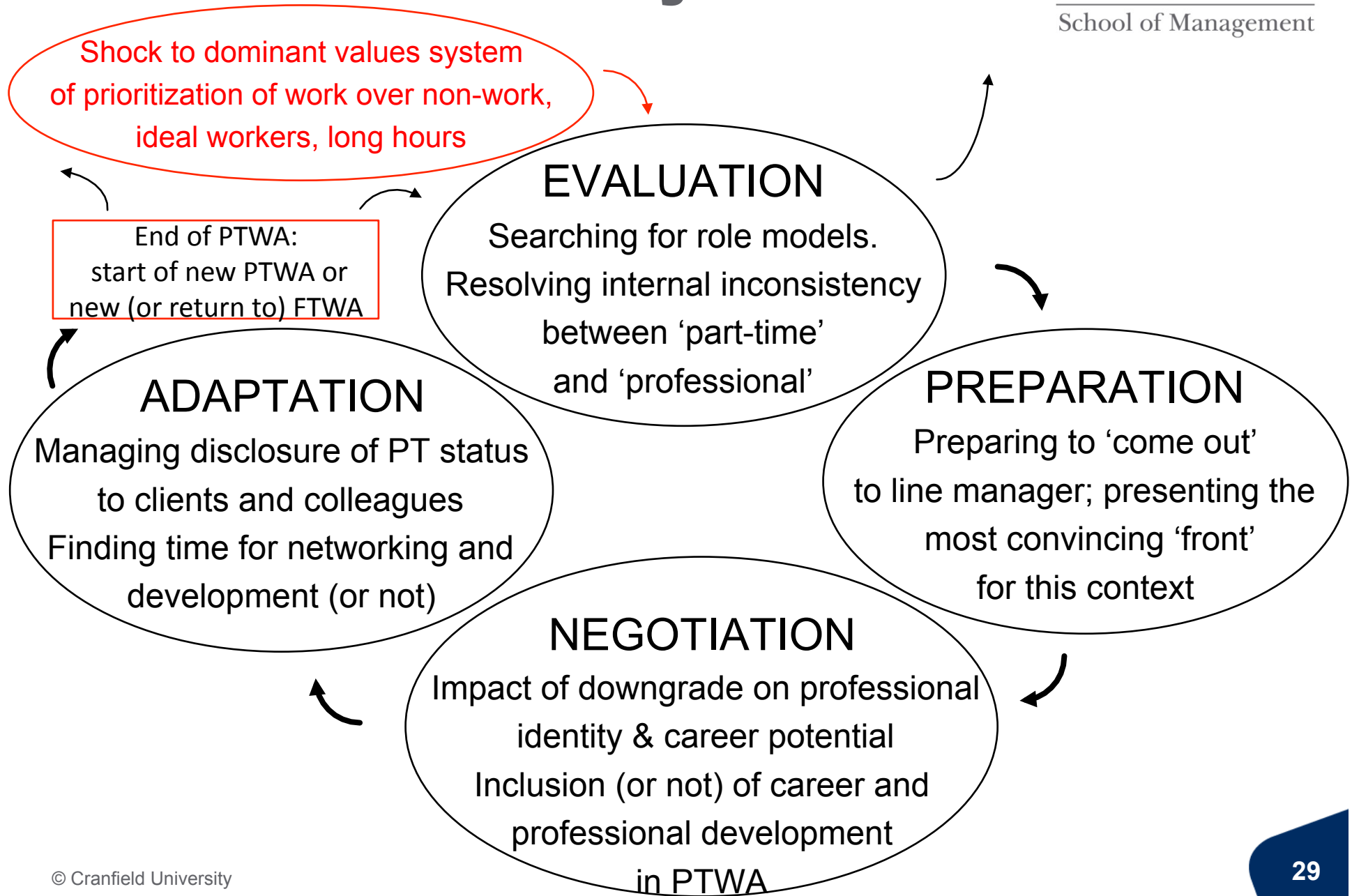
# Inclusive discourses of being part-time

- Life enriches work
  - ‘I felt that having worked part-time and having had the children had kind of given me a maturity and a perspective that some people that had not had to consider conflicting priorities and so on didn’t have.’ Veronica, Senior manager, PSF UK

# Conclusion: part-time and identity work

- Part-time as a work role transition (Nicholson, 1984) requiring identity work:
  - work/non-work (e.g. Blair-Loy, 2003; Dick, 2010)
  - professional/part-time
- Experimenting with provisional selves (Ibarra, 1999) throughout the process of developing PTWA:
  - observing role models (including negative ones; Durbin & Tomlinson, 2014)
  - experimenting with new behaviours or ‘provisional selves’
  - evaluating how those behaviours are perceived (by self and others)

# Conclusion: identity work



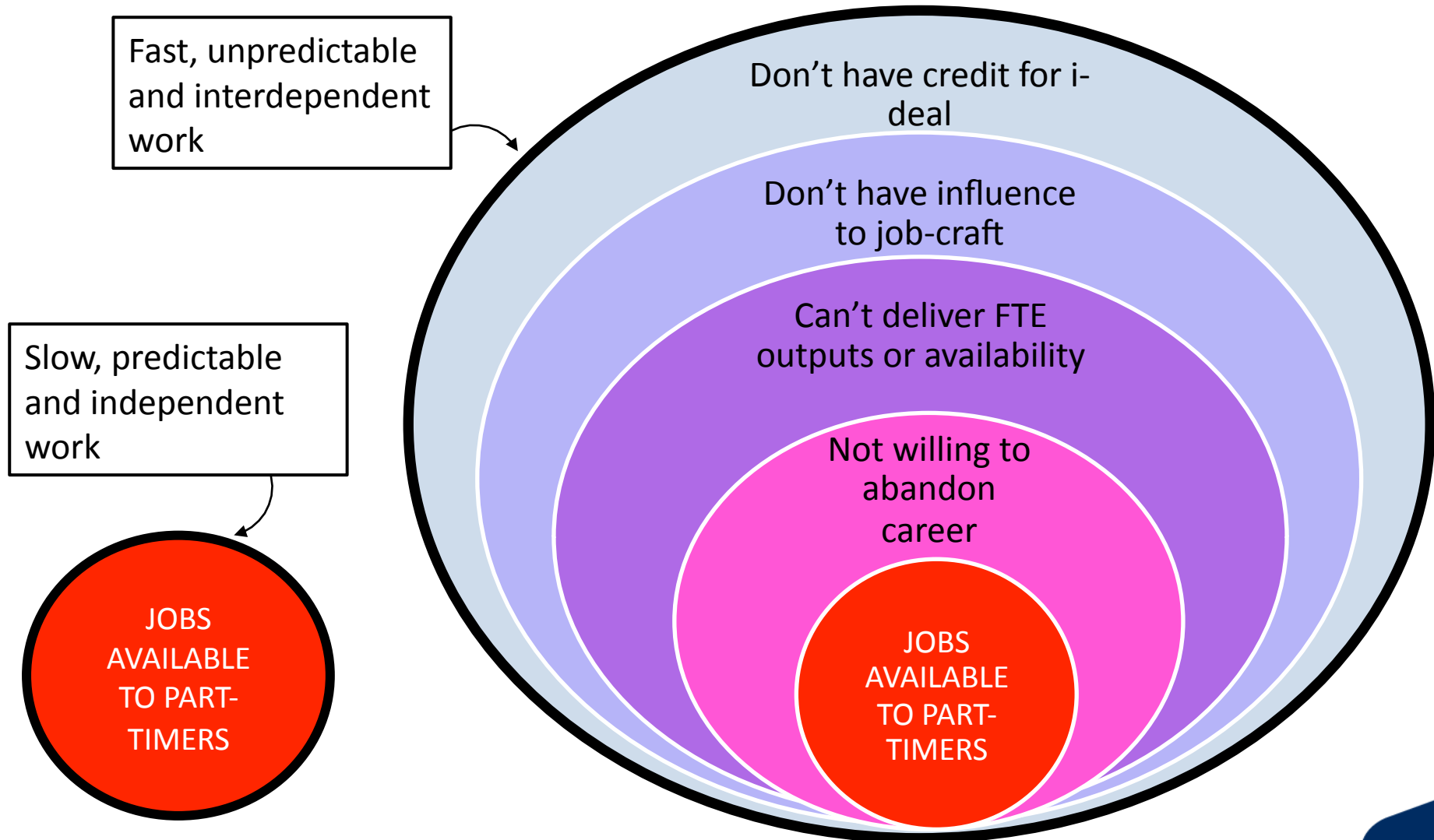
# Conclusion: opportunities for part-timers

Current working practices only allow part-time for managers and professionals who:

- Are doing slow, predictable and independent work
- Are doing fast, unpredictable and interdependent work but:
  - Have ‘credit’ to negotiate an ‘i-deal’ with managers (Rousseau, 2005)...
  - ...or have sufficient influence and supporting resources in the team to collaboratively craft a workable PT job (Wrzesniewski & Dutton, 2001; Leana et al., 2009)
  - ...or have the skills / experience to deliver FTE outputs and be available during their time off (Kelliher & Anderson, 2009)
  - ...and are prepared to abandon promotion



# Conclusion: opportunities for part-timers



# The work design challenge for organizations

- ‘Working-hours-neutral’ policies and practices
  - Across the organization
  - Equally suitable for part-timers, full-timers and ‘extreme’ job-holders
- Working-hours-neutral working practices build in:
  - Predictability (Perlow, 2012)
  - Substitutability (Briscoe, 2007; Tomlinson, 2006)
  - Information transfer protocols (Lawrence & Corwin, 2003; Briscoe, 2007)