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**Abstract:** In the UK increasing proportions of male and female students in full-time education are working in marginal, flexible, part-time service jobs. This contemporary labour process centres on age being used to control labour, a process that is interwoven with a repertory of other control strategies concerned with minimising costs and maximising flexibility. Contrary to the assertions of some, this labour process is also gendered. Coupled with the fact that such 'stop-gap' jobs do not predict future patterns of labour force involvement, this labour process is unlikely to contribute to a more general erosion of gender segregation in employment. Resistance strategies also take on a variety of forms, with low paid work providing legitimisation for 'leisure' activities and for the advancement of students' own interests.

## **YOUTH, GENDER AND PART-TIME WORK – STUDENTS IN THE LABOUR PROCESS**

Rosemary Lucas

### **Introduction**

Recent studies concerned with the segregation of labour in the labour process have addressed gender but not age segregation (see, for example, Sturdy, Knights and Willmott 1992; Wood 1992; Adkins 1995). Yet teenagers, in particular, are considered to be among some of the most vulnerable and exploited sections of the working class (Gabriel 1988: 167). This paper examines the role of age (Lucas 1995a) with reference to students engaged in service work, particularly in hotel and catering services.

In the context of critical developments in the youth labour market where increasing proportions of male and female students are combining work with study, and against a background of theoretical argument drawn from relevant literature, empirical material is presented about the practices and effects of the age division of labour. While this paper is designed to focus on age, this cannot be done without reference to the sexual division of labour. It is only by considering age and gender together that the significance of student youth part-time labour in the labour process can be most clearly articulated. Within this analysis three important

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themes are identified and addressed: student labour's effect on traditional sex segregation; teenage compared with young adult labour patterns of labour control; and resistance.

### **Age as a Structural Construct**

As Crompton and Sanderson (1990: 7) note, factors other than gender and class relationships may structure the division of labour in any particular society. Age is one example of an individual attribute but the very essence of its individuality is problematic in terms of its validity and use as a structural construct. Indeed the main reason why the concept of age has been largely disregarded in labour market stratification is that the 'ascriptive criteria of race and sex offer the clearest basis for permanent stratification' (Blackburn and Mann 1979: 14). Even so, chronological age is used by the state and other institutions to legitimise the exclusion of certain groups from access to resources and opportunities that may benefit others. An example is unemployment benefit which is denied to people under the age of 18 and over retirement age.

The most visible age stratification occurs at both ends of this axis, theoretically marking out from the labour process those who are deemed to be otherwise occupied, that is the 'young' who are still in full-time education and the 'old' who have retired. Age stratification in this way is in itself conceptually flawed, as well as value laden, because the point at which such lines are drawn cannot be fixed. For example, most young people leave full-time education at a variety of ages between 16 and their early 20s and many older people are retiring in their 50s rather than their 60s (Lucas 1993: 34–35, 1995a: 236–239). Furthermore, it would be misplaced to assume that, even though students and pensioners are deemed not to be 'active labour', they are absent from the labour process. Significant proportions work in flexible employment, and this trend is increasing, particularly among young people in full-time education.

### **The Youth Labour Market and Student Labour**

Most student employment is located in the service sector.<sup>1</sup> Many working students remain invisible because marginal, low paid jobs are not recorded in official statistics such as the New Earnings Survey, but Gabriel (1988: 93–128), Crompton and Sanderson (1990: 140–141) and Reiter (1996) note how the most visible and best documented examples of segmentation by age are found in fast food. 'McDonaldization', (Ritzer 1993), a managerial strategy driven by the rational standardisation of product and service delivery such that labour requirements are deskilled, minimised, cheap and easily replaceable, is the very stuff of labour process theory. Yet this may only represent one extreme of a spectrum of managerial

strategies because there are enormous differences in the extent to which organisations can choose to pursue such an approach.<sup>2</sup> The extent to which work can be deskilled depends on whether service is customised or standardised. Thus, customised service in a luxury hotel may be controlled through responsible autonomy (Wynne 1993) while standardised service in fast food lends itself to direct control (Gabriel 1988). However, employers, in adopting different strategies, are not necessarily obsessed with labour control (Marchington 1992: 150).

Furthermore, the labour process does not take place in a vacuum but is subject to the economic, legal, social and political contexts in which organisations operate (Marchington 1992: 150). Age as a means to control labour must be contextualised within the reality that the youth labour market has undergone a fundamental transformation since 1980. This was sparked by a major intervention in youth training in the mid-1980s designed to lower the wage aspirations of young people who were expensive to employ relative to adults and to improve the supply of transferable skills in the labour market (Lee 1992). Relatedly, young workers under the age of 21 were removed from the scope of Wages Councils in 1986, thereby allowing employers to pay young workers wages that were both lower and closer to market clearing levels.

Pay levels of young workers have fallen and the pay-off, according to free market economics and government policy prescription, should have been more jobs. However, in the 1990s the relative positions of 16–24 year olds worsened since the gap between youth unemployment and the overall unemployment rate is now greater than in the mid-1980s (Milne 1996). According to Labour Force Survey data, in 1995 youth unemployment was 15 per cent, 1.79 times the national average. Even more surprising is the fact that youth unemployment increased at a time when the number of young people entering the labour market has fallen.

The fall in labour market entrants is also related to the increased proportion of young people remaining in full-time education. By the mid-1990s, two-thirds of 16 and 17 year olds were remaining in full-time education (Sly 1993, 1994) and participation in full-time higher education had increased from one in five to one in three of the youth population (Thomas 1994). Thus, more highly qualified young people have been entering the labour market at a later point in time. Consequently full-time youth employment has reduced considerably with most new posts being part-time or temporary (Milne 1996). As a result, the numbers of part-time workers in the 16–19 age group now exceed those of full-time workers (Employment Department 1994).

The increased participation of students in part-time and other flexible forms of employment has clearly been driven by government policies aimed at increasing the availability of flexible workers, especially young people (Crompton and Sanderson 1990: 134; Dex and McCulloch 1995:

137). Such labour market developments are not, however, exclusive to Britain. Unskilled service jobs or 'stop-gap jobs' are increasingly important as an entry point to the labour market for young men and women in Canada and the USA, but are not 'permanent sites of life-time employment' (Myles, Picot and Wannell 1993: 180; also Jacobs 1993).<sup>3</sup> Dex and McCulloch suggest that Britain 'may be in the process of moving to the USA model of part-time employment, where the rates of part-time employment are highest amongst the young who are in full-time education' (Dex and McCulloch 1995: 136–137). Hakim has noted that 'the expansion of student jobs clearly contributed to the expansion of marginal jobs in the 1980s and 1990s' (Hakim 1996: 18–19).

The issue of the age division of labour requires further theoretical development. Braverman (1974) paid scant attention to age, and also said little about gender, service work (and the deskilling of service work), notions of skill and flexibility, and workforce resistance, consent and compliance. It is instructive to develop some of these areas more specifically in relation to more recent theoretical concerns, and to work in hotel and catering services, in order to contextualise the survey and case study data.

### **Age, Gender and Flexibility in the Labour Process**

We can posit that capital, in seeking to exert even more control over labour and to maximise its flexibility, is turning to young male and female labour because women's part-time employment in the childbearing age ranges, linked to family formation, appears to have reached a peak (Dex and McCulloch 1995: 107). In hotels and catering 'the highly competitive and changing nature of the industry also often renders it indifferent to the sex of the "disadvantaged labour" upon which it depends' (Crompton and Sanderson 1990: 133) . . . 'it is necessary that labour should be cheap, rather than it should be of one sex or another' (Crompton and Sanderson 1990: 148).

However, we cannot examine students in the labour process in services without reference to the sexual division of labour. This is particularly significant when we observe that young men are seemingly taking 'women's' jobs. The strand of theory that posits that control over women's labour derives from limiting women's access to jobs (Hartmann 1979, 1981; Walby 1986, 1990) appears to be inadequate in these circumstances.

In catering occupations (including chefs, cooks, bar staff, waiters and waitresses) it is well documented that age, gender and occupational segregation are pervasive (Lucas 1995b: 52–55). It is, therefore, of interest to note that Crompton and Sanderson (1990: 157), Dex and McCulloch (1995: 135) and Hakim (1996: 17) suggest that student employment is eroding some of the effects of gender segregation in employment.

Higher female participation is a characteristic of teenage student part-time employment (Sly 1993, 1994; Micklewright Rajah and Smith 1994; Dex and McCulloch 1995). While this is consistent with women being disproportionately located in flexible jobs (Dex and McCulloch 1995, vii), it is also surprising for two main reasons. First, female teenage students are unlikely to differ fundamentally from their male counterparts in terms of domestic or child caring responsibilities. Second, this difference occurs between two tranches of a segment of the labour force that is ostensibly more advantaged and equal that at any other time during the course of working life. If flexible youth employment is not gendered, then why do more women students work than men, why are they clustered in different occupational groups and why do women earn less than men? Such observations seem more readily to fit a second strand of theory proposed by Adkins (1995: 147), who argues that labour markets are gendered (by patriarchal social relations) before occupations are differentiated and, therefore, the difference between men and women in the labour market arises because women have to fulfil the conditions of being sexualised workers (production practices are gendered) (see also, Urry 1990).

A further critical theme relating to control in the labour process in hotels and catering concerns the notions of flexibility and skill. Here it is most useful to work from Atkinson's (1984) model of the flexible firm conceptualised in terms of functional flexibility (core), numerical flexibility (periphery), pay flexibility and distancing, although his notion of core and periphery has been widely challenged by others including Guerrier and Lockwood (1989a, 1989b), Lockwood and Guerrier (1989) and Pollert (1991). Operating in highly volatile and unpredictable product market conditions, many hotel and catering organisations employ above average rates of numerically flexible workers who are more core than peripheral to business needs (Guerrier and Lockwood 1989b).

For Pollert, flexibility is simply a continuation of labour market segregation by gender, race and age and of a wide repertoire of managerial strategies including lowering labour costs and rationalisation. Effort can be intensified through numerical flexibility, which is the core of many hotel and catering businesses' labour processes. If you cannot deskill, why not increase control through the increased use of numerical flexibility (part-time, casual, zero hours contracts) and pay flexibility (individual contract making, tips to subsidise wages) by employing groups such as students?

The flexible service jobs that students undertake are, in the main, classified as unskilled. However, it is now well documented that tacit skills (skills developed within the domestic or private sphere which are undervalued as far as paid work is concerned) are associated with much service work (for example, Crompton and Sanderson 1990: 132). The undervaluing of tacit skills and the difficulties of quantifying and making explicit

the skills necessary to deal with customers, to give satisfaction and deal with awkward ones, may explain why many customer service jobs are classified as unskilled, that is below craft/semi-skilled level (Hotel and Catering Training Company 1994: 78). A further definitional difficulty lies in the nature of hotel and catering work. ‘“Non-standard” employment relationships, together with the intimate and/or personal nature of much of the work, means that the hotel and catering industry is rich in examples of the kinds of ambiguities and problems relating to the definitions of occupation . . . as neither employment practices nor employment statuses are particularly stable’ (Crompton and Sanderson, 1990: 133). The nature of such work presents boundary problems which may make flexible working easier to impose.

### **Resistance, Legitimation and Consent**

Finally, we need to address the issue of workforce resistance and legitimation and consent generated by workers’ acquiescence in the labour process. Trade unions are not a significant force in hotels and catering because aggregate density is a mere 3 per cent (Lucas 1995b: 99). Therefore, we have to consider whether informal work groups or individual workers sustain practices to create relief and space from the tedium of work and find ways to absorb hostility and diffuse conflict. Here it is most useful to follow Marchington’s (1992) typology, developed in relation to how service workers use their tacit skills (technical and attitudinal) to ‘get by’, ‘get back’ and ‘get on’.

### **Methodology**

The main data reported here, which form part of a four year project funded by the Manchester Metropolitan University (MMU), were gathered in a structured questionnaire survey (Spring Term 1995) of full-time undergraduate students in five (of seven) faculties of the MMU. This university offers one of the widest choices of students by type of course and subject area. The sampling frame was designed to target similar numbers of male and female full-time students in their first year, final year and another year (normally their second although this was variable according to course type and length) across a variety of vocational and non-vocational courses. The courses surveyed were first degrees in chemistry, combined studies, electrical engineering, history, hotel and catering management, illustration, law, psychology and social science. Of 1,145 students surveyed, 345 students were currently working during the university term and 800 students were not working.

The questionnaire, piloted earlier and subsequently modified, was issued, completed and collected at the end of class contact time by one of

the researchers, or by a member of teaching staff, a method successfully employed in an earlier, formative study (Lucas and Bailey 1993). This method elicits a high quantitative response, as the only non-respondents are the minority of students who are absent. Gabriel (1988: 14) has noted how 'younger respondents were much more likely to answer in concise, unqualified and unambiguous ways' and so we can feel confident about the quality of the responses, both in the survey and in the case study interviews.

Questions, largely fixed response and some open ended, covered areas that included:

- ★ how students obtained work;
- ★ the substantive details of the employment contract (jobs done, place of work, remuneration, daily and weekly hours, breaks and other conditions of employment);
- ★ aspects of gender in employment;
- ★ experiential/attitudinal issues of students in work and not in work (satisfactions/dissatisfactions; benefits and drawbacks of work/not working);
- ★ why students work (or do not work).

Clearly research data that is gathered primarily by a survey such as this cannot address the intricacies of the construction of skill and gender in the labour process, but it has yielded highly informative data on students working in the youth labour market. It is also important to note that the findings relate to a specific labour market (large urban conurbation) and may not be wholly representative of student employment in a more rural environment or a smaller town. However, many of the survey findings are consistent with more broadly observed general trends identified by other (Sly 1993, 1994) and, more recently, by others including Dex and McCulloch (1995). More importantly, the survey has yielded data which are either missing from, or are more detailed than, data contained in national statistical sources.

More qualitative data have come from the case studies based on the questionnaire data and follow-up in-depth interviews with hotel and catering management undergraduates, hence the use of this industry as the main exemplar of service work. Some reference is also made to the pilot study of 41 undergraduates and 67 sixth formers (the 1994 survey), although this has been discussed at length elsewhere (Lucas and Ralston 1995a, 1996b, 1995c, 1996, 1997; Lucas 1997).

### **The Practices and Effects of Age Segmentation**

The following discussion concentrates on selected preliminary findings of the 1995 survey of 345 working full-time undergraduates, supported by the case study material, and relates to the students' first named job.



Although the division of labour by age and gender underpins the discussion throughout, the findings are also centred on the three broad themes identified at the outset: whether student labour breaks down traditional sex segregation; teenage versus young adult patterns of labour control and resistance strategies.

### *Sample Characteristics*

Thirty per cent of full-time undergraduates were working during the university term;<sup>4</sup> females (35 per cent) were somewhat more likely to work than males (25 per cent). The vast majority (92 per cent) of these students had also worked during vacations in the previous 12 months. Around 90 per cent of this group intended to work during the next vacation and during the following university term. Working throughout the year was a major fact of life for these students.<sup>5</sup>

A significant minority of students were doing two jobs at the same time during the term. Such multiple employment was more likely to be found among teenagers (27 per cent) than young adults (16 per cent) and among females (20 per cent) than males (15 per cent). There was some evidence of employment stability among young adults with 35 per cent having between 1 and 2 years' service and 29 per cent having more than 2 years' service. Unsurprisingly, 72 per cent of teenagers had less than 12 months' service, because they would not have had the time to accrue longer service.

Employment status was not strongly linked to age group or gender with around 70 per cent of students working part-time and 20 per cent working as casuals. While a number of students enjoyed the theoretical freedom of choosing when to work or not to work, casual employment was used in practice to control labour. Students felt pressured not to refuse any offer of work as refusal was perceived to damage the frequency and quality of future work offers.

Overall, the vast majority of jobs (90 per cent) were located in the hotel, catering and leisure and retailing sectors. Teenagers were more likely to work in retailing, while equal proportions of males and females (57 per cent) worked in hotel, catering and leisure jobs. These patterns explain the differences in the jobs that students held, shown in Table 1.

Relatively well-educated young people are working in flexible, unskilled jobs for which, by implication, they are overqualified (the same also holds true for many older women and men in the flexible labour force). Students represent one group of more educated workers who are doing menial jobs. This may explain why waiting staff and bar staff are occupational groups which have a higher proportion of GCSE qualifications than hotel managers, restaurant managers and publicans (Hotel and Catering Training Company 1994: 74).

**Table 1** Student Jobs\*\* (by per cent of jobs in each age or gender group)

	Age			Gender	
	16-19 %	20-24 %	25+ %	Male %	Female %
Bar	22	24	17	25	22
Dining room	19	19	4	11	20
Shop/sales assistant	28	12	13	11	18
General assistant	12	13	6	17	8
Cashier/checkout	10	6	—	2	8
Manager/assistant manager	1	3	7	2	4
Chef	—	2	4	5	*

  

	Hotel, Catering & Leisure		Retail	
	Male %	Female %	Male %	Female %
Bar	42	38	—	—
Dining room	19	35	—	—
Shop/sales assistant	—	*	33	59
General assistant	11	8	29	10
Cashier/checkout	—	—	7	28
Manager/assistant manager	4	7	—	—
Chef	8	*	—	—

\*Less than 1%. \*\*Table does not include all jobs.

Source: Undergraduate survey (1995).

Thompson (1983: 86) has suggested that the credentials used for recruitment on the labour market, namely, qualifications, are unrelated to the diminishing skill requirements in the labour process and that higher qualifications are used as a screening device for likely ability to be motivated, responsible and reliable. Alternatively, the recruitment of over-qualified people may be a device to maximise control through responsible autonomy (Friedman 1977). Students comprise a tranche of more educated and privileged labour whose unemployment rate is lower than that of their compatriots who are not in full-time education (Central Statistical Office 1995). Student labour may well be displacing other young people regarded as 'appropriately qualified and skilled', such as youth trainees, from the service labour market.

*Gendered Production practices*

Table 1 provides evidence of men's and women's jobs and the gender differentiation becomes even more clearly identifiable when data on job, sector and gender are crosstabulated. Females were more likely to be employed in front-line service work, which is consistent with the observations of Urry (1990) and Adkins (1995) that production practices are gendered.

A significant minority of students reported gender segregation in the workplace as a whole and more particularly in departments, and how gender differentiation was an everyday part of management practice. There were many examples of men and women working in the same area, ostensibly in the same jobs, being asked to do different tasks. One example was males being assigned to the more physical, but not necessarily onerous, tasks such as moving furniture.

The most frequently mentioned examples of gendered work practices were women waiting and men working in the kitchen. Even where these jobs were theoretically available to both sexes, in practice they remained segmented. For example, one restaurant manager's personal preference was to be served in a restaurant by males but he employed women because he believed they worked harder and were more conscientious. In another instance, waiting jobs were gendered because only females could dress as cheerleaders. In another example of gendered production processes, promotion was more likely to affect males (19 per cent) than females (13 per cent), with accelerated promotion reported for less qualified and experienced males in a female dominated housekeeping department. Even female labour was divided, by personal attributes. One 'less attractive' applicant size 16 had to work in the kitchen because all waitress uniforms were size 10 and 12.

This evidence seems to be at odds with the assertions of greater gender equality, noted above, and the observation that 'there was considerably more equality between women and men who were both employed and full-time students, since virtually all were in similar flexible jobs' (Dex and McCulloch 1995: 135). This cannot be concluded with any degree of certainty. For instance, Hakim's 'broad brush' conclusion that the concentration of student jobs in the same three occupational groups for both men and women constitutes 'no significant sex differences in the levels and patterns of student employment' (Hakim 1996: 17) is too woolly, because we know that catering occupations are gendered. Furthermore, young people who work part-time in conjunction with their studies are likely to go on to other types of work where gender segregation manifests itself differently. In other words, such 'stop-gap jobs' (Jacobs 1993; Myles, Picot and Wannell 1993), even though broadly equivalent proportions of women and men do them, are unreliable predictors of the state of gendered employment at a future and more general level.

*Control Strategies: Pay and Hours of Work*

'It is . . . the case that women are being increasingly forced into competition with other disadvantaged groups in their traditional (i.e. low paid) employment areas, particularly from young people . . . Thus women could lose their dubious advantage of being the most important source of disadvantaged labour supply' (Rubery and Tarling 1988: 126), a point further reinforced by Crompton and Sanderson (1990: 157) and the National Union of Students (1996) who note the increased pressures on students to take up part-time work.

Here, we have strong evidence to support these claims and show how maximising labour control through low cost and high flexibility strategies using student labour is effected. A critical substantive issue where age and gender segregation is most clearly marked relates to pay, shown in Table 2. Age segregation of pay is unequivocal and reaffirms the relative level of exploitation of teenagers noted elsewhere (Gabriel 1988; Crompton and Sanderson 1990). In spite of pay deregulation, a significant element of capital seemingly remains entrenched in practices that allocate reward on a wage-for-age basis. One-third of all students had pay regulated on such a system but this was more likely to terminate at a younger age for males (18) than for females (21).<sup>6</sup> In theory such systems were designed to reflect the relative lack of training, skills and experience of young people compared to adults, but may be no more than a guise to cheapen young labour, particularly female labour.

Age segregation of overtime pay was also significant, with teenagers most likely to receive basic pay and least likely to receive a premium rate. Similarly there was also marked gender segregation, with females more likely than men to get normal basic pay and less likely to be paid at a premium rate.

Hours of work are also differentiated by age and gender (Table 2). Work hours for a majority of students (55 per cent) varied from week to week, inbuilding a further dimension of flexibility into already flexible jobs. Men's hours were more likely to include time for rest breaks. Women were less likely to get a break and there was a tendency for women to work until later at night. These factors coupled with the shorter hours worked by females may indicate that female labour is used more intensively in shorter spells.

Females also earn less than males although the picture is not absolutely clear cut because females whose hours do not vary out-earn their male peers, although overall there are actually fewer students in the fixed hours category. However, females are more heavily reliant than males on tips to supplement basic hourly pay, a point related to the fact that females are more likely to be in front-line service work in hotels and catering. Control of female labour is exerted by 'remote control' by forcing females to be more reliant on customers for remuneration than males. In one extreme

**Table 2** Pay and Hours of Work

	Age			Gender	
	16-19 £	20-24 £	25+ £	Male £	Female £
<b>Basic Hourly Pay</b>					
All Cases					
Median	3.08	3.30	3.58	3.49	3.25
Mean	3.27	3.44	4.43	3.63	3.49
Hours Vary					
Median	3.05	3.28	4.00	3.50	3.10
Mean	3.21	3.43	4.22	3.79	3.34
Hours Do Not Vary					
Median	3.15	3.34	3.50	3.25	3.37
Mean	3.33	3.44	4.69	3.41	3.67
Pay Satisfactory	68%	67%	60%	67%	65%
<b>Weekly Hours</b>					
Hours vary					
Median	12.00	12.00	12.75	12.00	12.00
Mean	12.82	13.32	13.08	15.73	13.25
Hours Do Not Vary					
Median	11.00	11.00	14.50	12.00	10.50
Mean	10.85	12.51	14.54	13.11	12.07
<b>Tips</b>					
Daily					
Median	3.00	3.00	5.00	2.25	4.00
Mean	3.79	5.76	6.88	3.02	6.64
Weekly					
Median	6.00	7.00	10.58	7.00	7.50
Mean	13.28	12.04	14.27	9.89	13.91
<b>Weekly Pay Including Tips</b>					
Hours Vary					
Median	40.75	46.72	24.00	48.36	44.88
Mean	49.42	53.57	79.99	63.12	49.37
Hours Do Not Vary					
Median	40.00	38.60	52.56	42.96	40.00
Mean	37.07	45.70	64.31	43.71	47.71

Source: Undergraduate Survey (1995).

Notes: Gross hourly earnings of part-time manual females (all industries and services) taken from New Earnings Survey Part F, (1995) are £3.68 (median) and £4.05 (mean). By age: 18-20 £3.25 (median) and £3.71 (mean) with mean weekly hours 16.6; 21-24 £3.35 (median) and £3.72 (mean) with mean weekly hours 18; 25-29 £3.71 (median) and £4.11 (mean) with mean weekly hours 18.5. Data relating to part-time males are not included.

case female waitresses were paid £1.20 an hour for an 8 hour shift, having to make pay 'good' with tips worth £20–25 a day. Managerial control through pay flexibility also occurs where organisations operate on a ratio of labour costs to sales. In one pizza restaurant, where the target figure of 15 per cent had been exceeded, one student reported that staff were sent home during a shift and that the remaining staff were left working under increased pressure to ensure that the manager 'balanced the books'.

Finally, the majority of students, with the exception of those aged 25 and above, were used flexibly by being frequently or sometimes asked to do other jobs, although this was least likely to be asked of females (53 per cent) and most likely to be asked of males (67 per cent) and teenagers (65 per cent). This seems to suggest a measure of functional flexibility within a numerically flexible labour form (a point also observed in the pilot study) particularly for the 20 per cent for whom it was a frequent occurrence.

This evidence supports the view that many part-time jobs have highly diffuse specifications and obligations which enable considerable flexibility (Wood 1992: 5–6) and, in part, counters the view that functional flexibility may be less relevant to many hospitality, tourism and leisure firms. Some have argued that the lack of functional flexibility in hotels stems from implementation difficulties and because of the barrier of cultural norms such as departmentalisation (Guerrier and Lockwood 1989a; Riley 1992). Others have suggested that the development of 'quite significant levels of flexibility during the 1960s . . . raises the question of whether or not there is any room left for further functional flexibility on a significant scale' (Bagguley 1990, p. 739) because part-time employment limits the development of wide-ranging skills and experience and the scope for developing functional flexibility. Students, through the way capital exploits their tacit and specific skills, may well be the ultimate example of a numerically functionally flexible form, not conceptualised in Atkinson's model.

### *Resistance Strategies: Opposition, Legitimation and Consent*

Most young people in this study are unlikely to have any long-term orientation to their work since work is primarily for financial need. However, this is not entirely supported in that gaining experience of the work involved was still relatively important. Such experience is more marked than might be expected because of the presence of significant numbers of hotel and catering students (38 per cent of the sample) doing jobs that are less obviously 'stop-gap jobs' because they are in some way related to their intended future career paths.

Table 3 is based on open ended questions about what students enjoy or do not enjoy about work. Students were more likely to express satisfaction

**Table 3** Experiential Issues of Work\*

	Age			Gender	
	16-19	20-24	25+	Male	Female
<b>Positive</b>					
Social (customers/ people)	1	1	1=	1	1
Money	2	2	1=	2	2
Social (staff)	3	3	2	3	3
Experience	4	5	4	6	5
Easy	5	7=	5	5	8
Atmosphere	6	4	3	4	4
Variety	8	7=	6=	9	6
Interesting/challenging/ satisfying	—	6	6=	8	9
Control/independence	7	7=	5	7	7
<b>Negative</b>					
Customers	1	4	5	3	3
Management/staff	2	3	1	4	1
Low pay	3	5	6	5	5
Hours (length)	4	1	2	2	2
Boring	5	7	4	6	6
Work hard	8	6	7	8	7
Affects studies	7	8	5	7	8
Hours (unsocial)	6	2	3	1	4

\*Weighted responses in order of priority. The weighted score is the sum of the first three most important reasons given: 1st=3 points, 2nd=2 points and 3rd=1 point.

Source: Undergraduate survey (1995).

about work than dissatisfaction, although the case studies suggested that such prima facie expressions were underlaid by a complex mix of resistance strategies.

The data in Table 3 do indicate both positive and negative age and gender differences although there was more marked variation in the negative experiential issues of work by age and gender. In particular, negative perceptions of customers suggests that teenagers may have not yet developed or acquired some of the tacit skills of service work. Staff may develop coping mechanisms to 'get by' (Marchington 1992), such as averting eye contact from customers waiting to be served (Wynne 1993). Students gave many examples of awkward customers manifested in 'alienating' gestures and behaviours, including patronising speech and manner, and the clicking of fingers and tapping coins on the bar. They reported how they were left to their own devices to develop the means to

cope with these circumstances, which were often 'undermined' by indifferent, unhelpful, or even hostile management actions and behaviours.

For most, the legitimisation for low paid work came from a fulfilment of social needs with one student describing work as a 'social life in the workplace'. Many students reported a good work atmosphere working with colleagues and customers who were often students. Most students comply with, and adapt to, their low-paid status (see also Table 2), such that work for 'easy money' is not only perceived as a substitute for spending money but is also a way of going out without spending any money.

But some students more consciously deploy strategies of resistance by turning work circumstances to their advantage, such that 'getting by' becomes blurred with 'getting back'. Thus, a student working 36 hours a week (4 shifts) for 'a pittance' of £3.00 an hour managing the leisure centre of a city centre hotel never missed lectures, and used the extensive amount of 'working' time that she spent on her own to complete all her college work. Others read books or collected data for assignments or their dissertation. Yet none claimed they were actually 'skiving'.

Others practised 'getting back' more overtly, both individually and collectively. In one example, because of a change in managers and management style from 'no procedures' to 'enforcing the rules', the staff responded by giving customers free drinks and helping themselves. In circumstances where a pub manager would not trust female staff with keys for the tills, the response was continuous sarcastic genderised banter like 'we're women so we couldn't do that'. Conversely, other workers also 'get back' at students. A student agency worker reported how full-time regulars, paid less than agency staff, used the well known resistance ploy of restricting supplies of cutlery and plates to make life more difficult for agency workers (see Mars and Nicod 1984).

But students also used their tacit skills to 'get on' and support managerial goals, as well as their own. Some students genuinely enjoyed doing their job effectively in a way that would improve production and service, often in the face of what they perceived as managerial incompetence. In other words, hotel and catering students learnt 'what not to do' from observing managers' actions and behaviours, and relished the opportunity to manage on their own in circumstances of managerial absence.

## Conclusions

The highest rates of part-time employment are now found among teenagers in service work. However, such employment involves youthful 'stop-gap jobs' which do not predicate future patterns of the labour market or labour force involvement.



By employing students, capital can deploy a repertory of control strategies and further maximise its control over labour. Young labour is differentiated and, therefore, divided from other labour in a number of ways. Most particularly it is cheaper and is probably more flexible, with many jobs based on pay flexibility and many numerically flexible jobs incorporating an element of functional flexibility. But young labour itself is not homogeneous. The ways by which it is divided by gender are pervasive – young females are much more likely to work than young males, and they are consistently exploited. What is surprising is that this exploitation occurs at an age when the work circumstances of relatively advantaged young females and males could be expected to be more equal than at any other point in their working lives. Young women, unshackled by the burdens of domestic labour, are still treated unequally in the labour process because of gendered production processes. Optimistic soundings that youth part-time employment may be eroding the effects of gender segregation at a more general level are not echoed by the findings of this research.

Additionally, the research reveals a complex mix of resistance strategies. While unexpectedly high levels of manifestations of workforce consent and cooperation are found, resistance is also manifested in a variety of forms. Students are generally satisfied with their low paid status. On the one hand, there is an element of work being a paid social life; paid work provides a legitimisation for what would otherwise be a leisure activity. On the other hand, the opportunity for some to use work to advance their own interests provides the legitimisation for low-paid work.

The survey and case study data have enabled a more complete profile and account of student labour to be presented, although much theoretical and conceptual development about young labour in the labour process remains to be done. Working students look set to remain a significant part of the youth labour force, given the financial squeeze on funding in education, but it must remain a matter of conjecture whether such early employment experience has any longer term implications for work, society and employment.

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### **Notes**

1. It is not possible to give an accurate picture of the labour market characteristics of students in relation to pay, hours, employment sector, occupation because the main sources including the Labour Force Survey (Courtenay and McAleese

- 1993a, 1993b; Sly 1993, 1994; Dex and McCulloch 1995), Family Expenditure Survey (Micklewright, Rajah and Smith 1994), the British Household Panel Survey (Dex and McCulloch 1995) and the 1991 Population Census (Hakim 1996), do not yield a complete set of consistent data, largely because of their differing methodologies and uses of terminology. However, these sources do tell us that most students work for less than 20 hours a week for relatively poor levels of remuneration (women earn less than men). Employment is located predominantly in distribution and hotels and catering, and the most common occupation is in sales. Additionally, as around one-fifth of part-timers are excluded from the New Earnings Survey because their earnings fall below the income tax threshold (£68.00 a week in 1995), most students are likely to be excluded from the data.
2. Using student and employer data from the pilot study (1994) we have suggested that the use of student labour may well be a combination of strategic choice (to maximise flexibility) and pragmatic response (students actively seek work) – which we have termed ‘pragmatic strategy’ (Lucas and Ralston 1996).
  3. In Germany the opposite is the case, largely because of the institutionalised system of vocational training certification (Blossfeld, Giannelli and Mayer 1993).
  4. This is markedly higher than observed in a 1993 study in four universities where 18 per cent of full-time undergraduates worked during term-time (Ford, Bosworth and Wilson 1995).
  5. Working at some point in time was still an important consideration to the 800 students not actually working at the time of the survey. Of these students, 563 (70 per cent) had worked in some capacity during the previous 12 months. Such work was mainly undertaken in vacations only, although one-third of the students had worked during term-time and vacations. The same number of these students (563) indicated an intention to work during the next vacation, and 131 intended to work during the following term. In other words, working was also important to these students, but there was a tendency for them to work during vacations rather than during the term.
  6. The practice of sex-based differential attainment of adult worker status has a long history. For example, in 19th century textile factories, adult status came at age 21 for males and 18 for females.

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