

Original citation:

Green, Anne E., Atfield, Gaby and Purcell, Kate. (2015) Fuelling displacement and labour market segmentation in low-skilled jobs? Insights from a local study of migrant and student employment. Environment and Planning A.

Permanent WRAP url:

<http://wrap.warwick.ac.uk/74907>

Copyright and reuse:

The Warwick Research Archive Portal (WRAP) makes this work by researchers of the University of Warwick available open access under the following conditions. Copyright © and all moral rights to the version of the paper presented here belong to the individual author(s) and/or other copyright owners. To the extent reasonable and practicable the material made available in WRAP has been checked for eligibility before being made available.

Copies of full items can be used for personal research or study, educational, or not-for-profit purposes without prior permission or charge. Provided that the authors, title and full bibliographic details are credited, a hyperlink and/or URL is given for the original metadata page and the content is not changed in any way.

Publisher's statement:

<http://online.sagepub.com>

A note on versions:

The version presented here may differ from the published version or, version of record, if you wish to cite this item you are advised to consult the publisher's version. Please see the 'permanent WRAP url' above for details on accessing the published version and note that access may require a subscription.

For more information, please contact the WRAP Team at: wrap@warwick.ac.uk

warwick**publications**wrap

highlight your research

<http://go.warwick.ac.uk/lib-publications>

**Fuelling displacement and labour market segmentation in low-skilled jobs? Insights
from a local study of migrant and student employment**

Anne Green

Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, England;

email: Anne.Green@warwick.ac.uk

Gaby Atfield

Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, England;

email: G.J.Atfield@warwick.ac.uk

Kate Purcell

Institute for Employment Research, University of Warwick, Coventry CV4 7AL, England;

email: K.Purcell@warwick.ac.uk

Abstract

Medium-term employment trends highlight increasing labour market disadvantage for people with no/low qualifications. Consequently, established local populations with no/low qualifications have been reported as being hostile to ‘new arrivals’ filling local jobs, on the basis that they are perceived as taking employment opportunities away from them. Drawing on a local study of migrant and student employment on opportunities for people with no/low formal qualifications in the UK city of Coventry, this paper shows how labour market restructuring in the context of neoliberalism has resulted in an increasingly compartmentalised labour market, in which some types of employment have become undesirable and often not feasible for some local workers, but attractive (or at least acceptable) for other groups, including migrant workers and students. The outcome is reduced labour market opportunities for local people with no/low qualifications, because the more flexible migrant workers and students allow employers to restructure their workforces and develop jobs that fit with the ‘frames of reference’ of these groups but match the requirements of some established local people less well.

Keywords: migrants, students, displacement, segmentation, flexibility, local labour market

1. Introduction

The UK labour market has witnessed important changes in recent years. Key medium-term trends include the sectoral shift from manufacturing to services (Wilson et al., 2014) and a polarisation in the occupational structure of employment characterised by growth in relatively low-skilled and highly-skilled jobs in services, alongside a decline in intermediate occupations (Goos and Manning, 2007). Labour market restructuring has resulted in a reduction in full-time permanent manual work (conventionally associated with manufacturing) and an increase in temporary, part-time opportunities (mainly in services). In a context of neoliberalism low-skilled roles are often characterised by flexibility, fragmentation, insecurity and instability (Standing, 2012). In 2008/9 the UK witnessed a deep recession and people with no/low skills, who already suffered the highest rates of worklessness, were particularly vulnerable to job loss (Department for Work and Pensions, 2009), especially in the manufacturing and construction sectors. Hence, the recession served to entrench the ‘break’ from a more secure past in which manual work in manufacturing was perceived as a viable long-term employment option for people with no/low qualifications.

Alongside changes in labour demand, there have been important developments in labour supply. Two such developments are the focus of attention here: first, the medium-term increase in migrant workers to the UK; and secondly, the increase in higher education (HE) students looking for term-time employment.

As regards migrant workers, the emphasis here is on ‘free movers’ from Eastern/Central Europe, whose numbers increased dramatically from 2004 (McCollum et al, 2012). Inflows peaked in 2007/8, coinciding with a buoyant labour market in the UK; thereafter they declined somewhat (Salt, 2011). The arrival of migrant workers constituted a supply-side shock to the labour market. In theory a shock can have both positive and negative economic and labour market impacts, with migrant workers either ‘complementing’

or ‘displacing’ workers from the established local population. There is little evidence for migration having caused significant displacement effects of UK natives from the labour market when the economy is strong, but there is some labour market displacement during recession (Devlin et al, 2014), with UK workers and jobseekers whose employment opportunities may be limited by their relative lack of formal qualifications being the most likely to be vulnerable to negative impacts (Rowthorn, 2014).

Less attention has focused on the national and sub-national labour market impact of students than of migrant workers, albeit an exception is a preliminary analysis by Munro et al, (2009). In the UK there is a tradition for students to move away from the parental home when they enter higher education (HE),ⁱ such that in ‘university cities’ they represent a significant and growing source of labour supply. It is estimated that the student term-time workforce in the UK rose by more than half a million over the first decade of the 21st century, to approximately one million.ⁱⁱ The growth in absolute student numbers, combined with push factors such as shifts in the cost of HE from the state to individual students and an enhanced emphasis on the acquisition of ‘employability’ skills while in HE, have been key drivers in the increased labour supply of HE students.

The labour market impact of both migrant worker and students are of particular interest from a geographical perspective because these groups are spatially concentrated in particular local areas, and so they may have spatially uneven and locally-distinctive impacts. Hence there is value in local analysis.

The focus of this article is on investigating, in the context of broader labour market trends and through the lens of a particular local labour market (Coventry), the impact of migrant workers and HE students seeking term-time employment on labour market opportunities for no/low qualified people amongst the established local population. It addresses the question of whether migrant workers and students, who may be conceptualised

as ‘new arrivals’, are fuelling displacement and labour market segmentation. It does so by exploring the different frames of reference of migrants, students, and local workers and jobseekers with no/low skills and, reciprocally, the way in which these different groups of workers are allocated to particular sectors and occupations via employers’ actions and strategies.

It is argued that the outcome of allocation processes of workers to jobs is reduced labour market opportunities for local people with no/low qualifications because the availability of more flexible migrant workers and students allows employers to restructure their workforces and develop jobs that fit with the frames of reference of these groups but that do not match the requirements of the established local population with no/low qualifications. The local low-skilled population is being indirectly displaced. The mutually reinforcing interplay of differences in the frames of reference of different labour market groups, and of (mis)matches between these preferences and employers’ recruitment and work organisation practices has led to an increasingly compartmentalised labour market.

The novelty of the article lies in comparing in the same local study a mix of different groups: migrant workers, students and local workers/jobseekers with no/low qualifications. It contributes to the broad sociology of work literature on these groups, and on employers’ attitudes and practices and the way in which job roles are framed in the light of available labour supply. It makes an empirical contribution to understanding labour market dynamics and outcomes by blending qualitative and quantitative evidence through the lens of a local case study.

The remainder of the article is structured as follows. Section 2 presents a selective review of the literature, while section 3 outlines the methods used. Section 4 introduces the local case study area and section 5 summarises key features of the occupational and sectoral profile of migrant and student employment. Local case study results are presented in section

6, focusing first on supply-side preferences and views on the acceptability of different jobs and associated work organisation, secondly on job search methods, thirdly on employers' requirements for flexibility, and fourthly on employers' recruitment channels. Section 7 discusses the impact and implications of empirical findings, with particular reference to displacement and labour market segmentation and compartmentalisation. Section 8 concludes.

2. Literature review

Literature from a range of disciplines and topics is of relevance to this article. The focus in this section is on five key interlinked topics: on the supply-side (1) the concept of frames of reference and (2) job search methods; on the demand-side (3) employers' attitudes and preferences and (4) their recruitment methods, and then on how these processes come together in (5) labour market segmentation.

Frames of reference

The concept of 'frames of reference' has been identified as crucial in understanding how individuals from different groups seek out opportunities and/or respond to those available to them (Piore, 1979; Anderson and Ruhs, 2010). In relation to labour supply characteristics, in practice, this means that motivations to work in particular types of jobs vary: what might be acceptable to some potential workers may not be acceptable to others, and so there may be differentiated pathways in the labour market. The literature suggests that a low paid job, with unsocial hours and uncertainty about whether it will continue beyond the short-term, is likely to be unattractive to jobseekers from the established local population currently in receipt of regular out-of-work benefit payments whose frames of references may be shaped in part by previous experience of the precarity of low-paid work and who seek a stable local job

(Shildrick et al, 2010). But such a job may be acceptable to other groups with very different frames of reference: for instance some migrants from Eastern Europe who may spend short spells working in the UK interspersed with return migration (Trevena et al., 2013) who need to earn money immediately on arrival, and/or migrant workers who regard such a job as a stepping stone to something better. Likewise for some students with a similar short-term perspective, such a job may have advantages over employment that requires different flexibility or longer-term commitment (see Belt and Richardson, 2005). The key point is that frames of reference, which are shaped by experience and by short- and longer-term aspirations, help explain the relative acceptability to different types of jobs.

Job search methods

In terms of job search methods a key change over the last decade or so is the increased use of the internet in job search (Green et al., 2012). However, this has led to more potential methods of job search being available, rather than a replacement of previous methods. Individuals tend to use a variety of methods of job search, albeit there are variations in the mix of methods used by different groups. Individuals in the UK with no/low qualifications are less likely than average to make use of the internet for job search (Green et al., 2012) and are more likely than average to use the public employment service (Jobcentre Plus).

Research on migrants and ethnic labour markets has stressed the importance of social networks in job search (e.g. Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; Bauder, 2006). Another key focus of the literature on job search amongst migrant workers has been on their use of agencies to seek jobs when they first arrive (Nathan, 2008; Stenning and Dawley, 2009; Sporton, 2013) to facilitate speedy job matches. By contrast, methods of job search amongst students remain under-researched.

Employers' attitudes and preferences

Turning from the supply-side to the demand-side of the labour market and specifically employers' attitudes and preferences, research suggests that for less-skilled job roles employers tends to place most emphasis on 'soft skills', prioritising attitude over formal educational qualifications (Hasluck, 2011; Newton et al., 2005). A study drawing on a survey of employers belonging to the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) suggested that the relative weightings given by employers to soft skills vis-à-vis skills certified via formal qualifications were 4:1 (CBI, 2007). In theory, this emphasis should help individuals with no/low qualifications who are over-represented amongst the unemployed to find employment, but there is evidence that some employers are reluctant to recruit the longer-term unemployed, using duration of unemployment as an indicator of lack of motivation/desire to work (Devins and Hogarth, 2005). There is considerable evidence from research involving employers that migrants are perceived to be 'good' workers, whose positive attributes are that they are hard-working, reliable and flexible (see Lloyd et al., 2008; Danson and Gilmore, 2009; MacKenzie and Forde, 2009; Thompson et al., 2013; McCollum and Findlay, 2015). These characteristics are sometimes placed in opposition to those of 'bad' local workers (see Tannock, 2013) in a debate that focuses attention on shortcomings in local labour supply and away from the poor quality of some low-skilled jobs. Scott (2013) suggests that employers' need for 'good' migrant workers is primarily about maximising labour power in poor quality jobs, and about getting the 'right kind of people' in post. Hence, different groups may occupy different positions in a hiring queue. The different attributes employers associate with particular groups of workers stem in part from workers' different frames of reference and consequent willingness to meet employers' terms, while, as highlighted by Anderson and Ruhs (2012) employers' assessment of what they want, or indeed need (in terms of attributes and skills of particular workers), is shaped by what they think they can get.

Recruitment methods

In terms of recruitment methods, just as jobseekers tend to use a variety of employment channels, so employers typically use several recruitment methods. According to the 2014 UK Employers Perspectives Survey 74% of employers used private free recruitment channels (such as word of mouth/personal recommendation, own website, internal notices, etc), 44% used private paid for channels (such as the local press and recruitment agencies) and 38% used public free channels (such as Jobcentre Plus) (Shury et al., 2014). The most frequently used channels were Jobcentre Plus and word of mouth/personal recommendation (used by 32% and 30%, respectively). The next most commonly used channels were employers' own websites and recruitment agencies (used by 21% and 19%, respectively). Some employers routinely refer vacancies for low-skilled roles to Jobcentre Plus, but particularly in a slack labour market, concerns have been expressed that the requirement for out-of-work benefit claimants to apply for a specific number of vacancies per week can result in employers receiving large numbers of applicants (of whom a substantial proportion may be deemed unsuitable [Tunstall et al., 2012]).

Research on migrant and ethnic labour markets has highlighted the importance of use of social networks/referral hiring (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003; Wills et al., 2010). Employers can use existing employees to help identify other 'good workers' as potential employees, and use such social networks as instruments of information and obligation, helping to 'keep workers in line' (Waldinger and Lichter, 2003).

Labour market segmentation

The combination of jobseekers' frames of reference and job search methods, and use of particular recruitment channels and practices by employers in accordance with their

preferences for workers with specific attributes/skills for certain job roles, helps to explain how certain groups of workers become concentrated in particular types of jobs. Drawing on the experience of migrants in the US labour market, Piore (1979) noted how, as new arrivals, they appeared to take a distinct set of jobs that the native labour force refused to accept. Hence, 'migrant jobs' were generally unskilled, low-paid and carried inferior social status, had hard or unpleasant working conditions, and were characterised by considerable insecurity with minimal opportunities for progression. He conceptualised these 'migrant jobs' as lying in the secondary sector of a 'dual labour market', in which better quality jobs in the primary sector were reserved for natives.

However, as noted by Waldinger and Lichter (2003) in a case study of Los Angeles, less-skilled native workers may not have the attributes and skills necessary to facilitate entry to the primary sector, and so are reliant on that segment of the labour market where immigrant densities are highest. Yet their case study found little evidence of competition: African Americans (as a native group characterised by labour market disadvantage) tended not to apply for jobs filled by new immigrants – in part because employers' hiring practices via social networks tended to exclude them while at the same time reducing the number of vacancies on the open labour market.

So, the literature suggests that in a segmented labour market processes of cumulative causation tend to mutually reinforce existing patterns of advantage and disadvantage. Moreover, because some sectors and occupations are more or less suitable for new migrants (e.g. because of a need for a threshold level of language skills), within the secondary segment of the labour market compartmentalisation tends to occur, with distinctive jobs being linked to particular components of labour supply.

3. Methods

The methodology adopted here is that of an exploratory local case study, designed to reveal indicative insights into labour market processes and associated impacts of migrant and student employment in low-skilled jobs on labour market opportunities for no/low qualified people from the local population. It is not designed to be statistically representative, and so quantification of impacts is not possible.

The local case study was informed by secondary analysis of labour market information from a range of administrative and survey sources, including the Labour Force Survey (LFS) (see section 5 for summary results). Data from the LFS was used to investigate the occupational and sectoral concentration of migrant worker and student employment vis-à-vis the aggregate picture, to inform the focus of the local case study.

The results reported in sections 6 and 7 draw on primary research undertaken in the Coventry area (see section 4 for further details) in the West Midlands region of England in late 2010/early 2011. This involved interviews with sixteen employers of varying sizes, drawn from the hotels & restaurants, manufacturing, wholesale and retail sectors, employing students and/or migrant workers in jobs requiring no/low qualifications. Twenty-five employees drawn from the local established population working in low-skilled jobs in these sectors and jobseekers with no/low qualifications from the local established population who were actively seeking low-skilled employment were interviewed also. The jobseeker interviews were undertaken at local community centres where jobclubs were held. Three focus groups, comprising nineteen participants in total, were undertaken with students aged 19-22 years (from the two universities in the city) in term-time employment and two focus groups, comprising thirteen participants, of migrant workers (from Eastern Europe who had arrived in the UK since 2004) working in low-skilled employment in the case study sectors were also undertaken. The migrant focus groups were held at a migrant resource centre and were conducted in English and Polish.

4. The Coventry local study area

With a population of 317 thousand in 2011, the city of Coventry is located in central England. Coventry's experience of economic change means it may be considered an archetype of neoliberal restructuring of the labour market. Together with its attractiveness to migrant workers and the relatively large share of students amongst its population this makes it an apposite choice for a local study.

Coventry has a strong engineering and manufacturing base, traditionally associated with relatively well paid jobs in motor vehicle manufacture. From the 1980s onwards significant restructuring of the local economy occurred and many large employers closed (Mackie, 2008). In the decade prior to the 2008/9 recession there was strong growth in services, transport and logistics, and construction. Its occupational profile is skewed towards low-skilled occupations to a greater extent than nationally. Like the rest of the West Midlands region, Coventry was harder hit than the national average by recession: at nearly 10% in 2010, Coventry's unemployment was higher than the Great Britain average (less than 8%).

Coventry and the wider sub-region saw substantial inflows of migrant workers from Eastern/Central Europe from 2004, although, as nationally, the numbers of new arrivals declined with the recession. According to administrative data on National Insurance numbers (NINOs) allocated to overseas nationals (one of the most comprehensive proxies of new migrant workers to the UK) at the 2007 peak 53% of nearly 7,000 NINOs in Coventry were issued to nationals from EU Accession countries in Eastern/Central Europe, the majority being from Poland. The stock of migrants is higher: according to the 2011 Census 12% of residents were not born in the UK and had arrived in the previous decade.

As well as being two of the city's largest employers, Coventry and Warwick

universities between them have an undergraduate student enrolment of around 40,000 in 2009/10 (with additional numbers of postgraduate students). According to statistics on students in cities compiled by Munro et al. (2009), Coventry was ranked fifth on the share of students in the total population in 2001 and on the share of students as a percentage of all in employment in 2005-7. The two universities in Coventry have contrasting locations and student populations. Historically Coventry University has had a strong locally-focused vocational mandate, while the University of Warwick is one of the UK's leading research-led universities. Coventry University is situated in the city centre, while the University of Warwick has a campus location on the city's south-western outskirts.

5. The occupational and sectoral profile of migrant and student employment

Key features of similarities and contrasts in the profile of employment for migrants and students are discernible from analyses of pooled LFS data for 2004-2010. Around two-thirds of migrant workers from the EU accession countries in Eastern/Central Europe who arrived in the UK from 2004 onwards were employed in elementary occupations or were working as process, plant and machine operatives. Over three-quarters of students working term-timeⁱⁱⁱ were working in sales and customer service occupations and elementary occupations. Hence both of these groups were concentrated in low-skilled occupations (irrespective of the qualifications they held).

Sectorally, over 70% of students employed in low-skilled occupations were in two sectors: retail and hotels & restaurants. The largest concentrations of migrant workers from Eastern/Central Europe employed in low-skilled occupations were in the manufacturing sector (a sector from which students were virtually absent). The hotels & restaurants and the wholesale distribution sector had the next largest concentrations of migrant workers in low-skilled occupations.

The uneven occupational and sectoral distribution of employment of migrant workers, students and the low-skilled established population are central to discussions of displacement and labour market segmentation. As outlined in section 2, they can be understood with reference to the different characteristics and job search methods of groups of (potential) workers on the supply-side, and employers' recruitment practices and preferences for different groups of workers on the demand-side.

The analyses of LFS data summarised above, coupled with work history accounts from interviewees in the Coventry local study (drawn on in section 6), suggest that the local established population with no/low qualifications may face competition with migrant workers from Eastern/Central Europe for jobs in manufacturing and in operative roles in distribution and warehousing; with students for jobs in retail; and with both migrant workers and students for jobs in hotels & restaurants. Sections 6 and 7 discuss whether these different groups are in fact competing for the same jobs.

6. Local case study results

Supply-side preferences and views on job and work organisation acceptability

It would be expected that the frames of reference of migrant workers, students and the local population with no/low qualifications shapes their preferences for, and acceptability of, different types of jobs. This sub-section compares and contrasts different groups' views relating to volume and timing of hours worked, permanent vis-à-vis temporary work and geographical location of work. The main dimensions of difference and similarity of these features of jobs are summarised in Table 1.

In terms of volume of hours per week, there was a preference for conventional full-time permanent employment amongst interviewees from the local established population and migrant workers, but despite this preference migrant workers interviewed displayed a greater

willingness to take temporary and atypical employment (including at short notice). By contrast students displayed a willingness and preference for working on a part-time basis.

For jobseekers with no/low qualifications from the established local population the preference for full-time permanent employment stemmed from a desire for reasonable certainty beyond the short-term that they would earn a greater amount from employment than they would receive on out-of-work benefits. Typically, jobseekers wished to avoid taking temporary employment because of logistical difficulties of making frequent horizontal moves between low-skilled jobs and the disruption incurred in ‘cycling’ between employment and unemployment - partly because of concerns about the processes of reapplying for benefits and the associated potential for disruption in income entailed:

When you sign on it takes the dole people three weeks to sort out your dole. If an agency rang me up and said we've got three days a week work for you, that's no good, because I've got to pay my rent, my council tax, my basic bills, and if I signed off the dole to take those three days a week work, and I've got to work a week in hand, it would take the dole three weeks to sort out my claim. (Jobseeker)

Several interviewees expressed a desire for stability to help plan for the future:

What I need is a permanent full-time job. I don't want to be pottering around with jobs when I'm 50. My kids are getting older – and I want to provide for them so that they can go to College. (Jobseeker)

While the low-skilled employees interviewed from the established local population generally displayed similar preferences for permanent full-time employment, they differed from jobseekers in their willingness to consider part-time and temporary employment, often at wage levels at or close to the National Minimum Wage, as a possible step (which may or may not be realised) towards permanent full-time employment.

Migrant workers interviewed demonstrated greater flexibility not only in the type of employment they would take but in the locations where they would consider working and were willing to both travel further for work and to relocate. Given their need to fit employment around their studies students displayed a preference for part-time and temporary employment in the immediate vicinity (often within the confines of the University itself), so as to enable them to minimise time spent in moving between study and employment. Similarly the low-skilled local population (both employees and jobseekers) expressed a strong preference for local jobs.

The all-round flexibility displayed by migrant workers generally stemmed from their need to ensure an ongoing income from employment to sustain themselves in the UK as well as the aspiration expressed by some of the migrant interviewees that their employment in the UK should generate savings in the short-term to be used to improve their living standards when they returned to their country of origin. Consequently, they would contemplate undertaking a wide range of jobs, often below their qualification levels, in order to achieve this. In the case of the student interviewees, their preference for part-time, temporary work, often at anti-social hours, largely reflects their need to fit employment around their studies, as well as the time-limited duration of these studies.

These frames of reference that shape what types of work are preferable and acceptable to the different groups are crucial in understanding the (mis)match with available employment opportunities.

Job search methods

Similarities and contrasts were evident in the ways in which the different groups sought employment. The jobseekers with no/low qualifications from the established local population emerged as the most distinctive in terms of job search methods used, with a foremost reliance

on Jobcentre Plus; (this is indicative of the use of formal, mediated methods of job search). They made less use of social networks than other groups of interviewees. This reflects the fact that some jobseekers with no/low qualifications had either weak social networks per se, or that the social networks they had were not useful for job search. Low-skilled employees from the established local population had made some use of Jobcentre Plus services, although they indicated that using social networks or making direct applications to employers were more likely to yield employment.

Students reported making direct applications to employers, reliance on social networks (often of fellow students) and some use of (sometimes student-specific) agencies to access jobs. They tended to view social networks as most beneficial – in terms of both finding out about what a particular job involved and its suitability to their circumstances, and in securing interviews:

You need to know someone who works there already and who can go and ask for you. Giving a CV in is less good, and your CV might never be seen by the manager, but if someone who works there mentions directly that you are looking for a job, you will probably get an interview. (University student)

Migrant workers routinely mentioned friends and family as a useful way to find out about employment opportunities. Like students and some of the low-skilled employees, they also cited having approached employers directly for work.

The migrant workers interviewed mentioned agencies as a job search method more frequently than interviewees from the other group, suggesting that this was a key method of job search for them. This reflects their need to find employment quickly on moving to the UK, especially before social networks became more established as a source of information on vacancies and on inside intelligence on what working in a particular job for a specific employer was like; as one migrant worker explained:

I came to the UK on a Sunday and had a job on Monday morning by going to an agency. (Migrant worker)

The fact that much of the work provided by agencies is temporary makes seeking work through agencies an attractive option for students; indeed, many made use of university-based agency services geared mainly or entirely towards student employment. Interviewees (both jobseekers and employees with no/low qualifications) from the local established population tended to be reluctant to use agencies because the temporary work that they could supply was often regarded as exploitative and hindered their attempts to make longer-term plans.

There was general agreement amongst all groups interviewed that increased use of the internet for job search and use of internet-based recruitment by employers meant that jobs were, in the words of one jobseeker interviewed, “*snapped up*” quickly. Amongst those interviewed, the jobseekers with no/low qualifications and were more likely than other groups to mention not having access to the internet or lacking confidence in using it, whereas students and migrant workers tended to be much more confident in this respect.

Variations in the mix of job search methods used by the different groups relate partly to differential access to, and confidence in, using them, and perceptions of differential success associated with them. However, frames of reference and the association of different kinds of jobs with particular job search methods, also play a key role. On the basis of this indicative evidence, supply-side preferences and differences in job search behaviour would appear to be explanatory factors in the uneven distribution of the groups considered here by job type, occupation and sector.

Employers’ requirements for flexibility

In general, employers interviewed (especially in the retail and hotels & restaurants sectors) had work organisation models that operated with a requirement for numerical flexibility to

match the cyclical, fluctuating and sometimes unpredictable demand for their services. Such numerical flexibility could be achieved through use of temporary staff, often alongside working time flexibility amongst other employees. Consequently employers sought workers who could offer such flexibility (as highlighted in section 2).

Flexibility was a key attribute employers associated with both migrants and students. Corroborating findings from the literature, including about attributes associated with a 'good worker', employers interviewed noted that migrant workers were willing to work extra hours and to change their working hours at short notice, willing to do jobs that other people were not willing to do, and had access to good support networks, which enabled them to work at short notice. As one employer noted:

If you're saying "who are your most flexible, reliable staff?" a lot of the people we have employed who are migrants would appear at the top of that list. For the most part they are tremendously hard working. ... What we might lose is that flexibility [if we could not employ migrants], that when things go wrong, "yes, we'll stay behind and give you a hand because we actually want to earn that extra money" and it's not quite the same with a lot of our English guys. (Employer)

Hence migrants provided numerical flexibility through being willing to take temporary employment, to take on extra hours at short notice.

The low-skilled jobs that employers were recruiting workers to fill often did not require (m)any formal qualifications or training and few skills gaps were identified by employers interviewed in relation to low-skilled work. Hence functional flexibility (i.e. an ability and willingness to perform more than one role, as required) could be helpful. As well as meeting requirements for numerical and working time flexibility,^{iv} several of the employers interviewed noted that students were often a particularly useful labour supply

source for providing functional flexibility, because of their ability adapt to new roles quickly – as illustrated by the following quote:

We would suffer in the quality of the staff [if we could not employ students].

We would probably get people in to do the job, but they wouldn't have the same level of intelligence, probably not the same speed of picking up ideas.

(Employer)

Hence, both migrant workers and students were prized by employers for providing the flexibility they desired.

Employers' recruitment channels

In general employers interviewed often used a mix of formal and informal recruitment channels for low-skilled positions, but suggested that there had been a decline in the use of the formal recruitment methods favoured by jobseekers with no/low qualifications from the established local population and an increase in the use of informal recruitment through placing adverts in windows/on notice boards and word-of-mouth recruitment through existing employees' and their friends and families. Such recruitment methods tend to favour new recruits with similar characteristics to current workers, and so reinforce existing patterns of segmentation and compartmentalisation. Recruitment through Jobcentre Plus was regarded by employers as bureaucratic and time-consuming, and the standard of applicants was often poor:

We just have a frame in the doorway, and we find that we have more than enough applications just from that. ... We used to use [the Jobcentre] several years ago when the job market wasn't so depressed – in addition to advertising at the doorway. However, now, if we used Jobcentre Plus, we would get a lot of applications from people who have been long term

unemployed. There is a better quality of applicants' response from advertising just inside the door of the shop. (Employer)

This quote also illustrates an important volume issue: in the context of recession, employers found that they simply had no need to turn to Jobcentre Plus for recruitment because they could source more than enough suitable applicants in other ways. Employers often thought that word-of-mouth recruitment through existing employees resulted in a high calibre of applicants and employees who were likely to stay in post and work hard so as not to let down the individual who had recommended them (in accordance with recruitment as a social process as set out in section 2). As an employer explained:

[One of our staff], his next door neighbour is Polish and he was looking for a job. So he recommended [the employer] and he put his application in for us here. And he's been excellent and his brother then started and his brother-in-law then started. (Employer)

Some migrant workers and students recognised that employers acted in this way, as illustrated by the assertion:

If you are a good employee, they will take people you recommend (Student)

and referred their friends accordingly. So, through their own actions, they helped to replicate existing labour market patterns of segmentation and compartmentalisation.

Some of the employers interviewed also pointed to an increase in the numbers of direct applications in the context of recession. They tended to associate direct applications made in person positively, as showing initiative and the attributes of commitment and work ethic that characterise 'good workers'. It was clear that some employees with no/low qualifications from the local population, migrants and students recognised this, and as outlined in the sub-section on job search methods, made direct applications accordingly.

Use of agencies, particularly to recruit temporary workers, also emerged as an

important recruitment method in the context of recession. As has been highlighted in other studies (for example, Peck and Theodore [1998]; Forde and MacKenzie [2010]), private agencies have been adept in adapting their strategies to the local context and to take account of the supply of migrant workers, and recruitment through agencies in Coventry provided the kind of numerical flexibility some employers sought (as explained above, since use of agency labour permitted employers to vary the number of workers they engaged on a daily basis).

In summary, on the basis of indicative evidence from the Coventry local case study, it appears that the job search methods used by migrant workers and students matched more closely the changing recruitment methods used by employers than those methods favoured by the jobseekers from the established local population with no/low qualifications.

7. Impact and implications

As outlined in section 1, the volume and spatial concentration of migrant workers and students in particular local labour markets serves to heighten concerns about their wider labour market effects, particularly in a politically charged context of economic crisis. The most obvious negative effect of migrants and students entering the labour market would be direct substitution or displacement, where their entry reduces opportunities for the local population with no/low qualifications through taking positions that local people would otherwise have filled, but negative effects may be indirect too.

Displacement

At face value, the empirical findings from the local case study suggest that there is potential for local people with no/low qualifications to be displaced, whether directly or indirectly, by migrant workers and students. This displacement can be direct: i.e. a student or migrant is in direct competition with a local jobseeker for employment and the employer chooses to

employ the student or migrant because they more closely meet the requirements of the employer. Alternatively it can be indirect: i.e. local people with low or no qualifications are displaced from the labour market because the presence of students and/or migrants allows the employer to create jobs that are suitable for or tolerated by these groups but are not suitable for the local jobs seekers, so leaving fewer available job opportunities for the latter.

There is greater potential for displacement of people from the established local population with no/low qualifications at times of economic crisis than in more buoyant labour market conditions. First, in difficult economic circumstances there is an increased onus on employers to seek ways of coping with fluctuations in demand, and workers who are willing to change the number of hours they work, or who are working in temporary employment, allow employers to call on labour only when needed, so providing the employer with numerical flexibility. Secondly, job losses amongst local employees, combined with migrant and student incomers to a local labour market, increase the pool of potential workers from which employers can choose when recruiting. In the Coventry local study migrant workers and students appeared to be better positioned to find low-skilled employment because their preferences often fit more closely with the types of employment and contractual arrangements on offer in the local area and/or they have adapted to employers' changing recruitment practices and contractual arrangements on offer in the local area.

However, the Coventry local study did not uncover evidence of direct displacement of local people with low or no qualifications. Instead, the negative displacement effects were indirect, occurring as a result of employers creating or modifying jobs in a way that meant that jobseekers with no/low qualifications from the established local population were unwilling or unable to apply for them (as in the case of African Americans in Waldinger and Lichter's [2003] study of the Los Angeles labour market) and take them. Employers were able to do this because of the existence of pools of migrant worker and student labour willing

and able to take these jobs. In this respect the ‘needs’ of jobseekers with no/low qualifications from the established local population – in terms of hours of work, pay levels vis-à-vis benefits, and a series of external constraints - become self-limiting. This situation was reinforced by the recruitment methods used by employers, particularly their promotion of the social process of ‘family and friends’ recruitment, which gave them easy access to networks of students and/or migrants who would be suitable employees and who would be willing to take the work on offer.

Labour market segmentation and compartmentalisation

There is indicative evidence from the Coventry local study that the ready availability of migrant workers and students willing to take low-skilled work has fuelled certain developments in the labour market that have resulted in particular jobs being constructed in ways that made them less appealing/appropriate for people with no/low qualifications from the established local population. This suggests that in the so-called secondary labour market horizontal compartmentalisation might occur between those jobs that are mainly or only suitable for, and mainly or only done by, students and/or migrant workers, and those which are suitable for, and mainly done by, the established local population, with limited crossover between labour supply groups/jobs.

A certain amount of segmentation is inevitable in the labour market as different jobs require different skills, characteristics and aptitudes. However, evidence from the Coventry case study suggests that compartmentalisation also occurred based primarily on the capacity and willingness of these groups to offer flexibility over the times that they work and the number of hours that they work, rather than being sector-specific. As in the case of indirect displacement of local people with low or now qualifications, this type of labour market restructuring witnessed in Coventry appeared to be both self-reinforcing and self-replicating.

Both migrant workers and students tended to be clustered in jobs with people who were like themselves to a greater extent than would be expected if they were randomly distributed through the labour market. It was not simply the case that some jobs were more suitable for students and/or migrants, but also that certain forms of employment becoming associated with these groups - 'migrant jobs' or 'student jobs' - and the recruitment methods used by employers further served to increase such clustering, so that existing patterns of compartmentalisation and segmentation were reinforced.

In theory, this type of labour market compartmentalisation is not a scenario that inevitably disadvantages members of the established local population with no/low qualifications. It is possible to envisage a situation where there is complementarity between the different groups and compartmentalisation in the labour market occurs that is not to the detriment of any particular group. Instead there could be work suiting the 'needs' of each group, and these different patterns of working would mesh together so that employers' requirements were catered for, as noted by the employer below:

Generally, if you are looking at people in their thirties up, they are looking for more day-time work, whereas students are quite prepared to work evenings, the unsocial shifts. Migrants seem to want to work anything, just to get a job. They will work wherever. We struggle to get more of our evening team people from our original base, which is just general English working class people.

(Employer)

In the context of neoliberal labour market restructuring in Coventry, the number and kinds of flexible jobs in the secondary labour market done by migrant workers and students appear to have been increasing, while the proportion of low-skilled jobs offering stable sustainable employment appears to have decreased.

Implications for the established local population with no/low qualifications

The implications for local residents with no/low qualifications of the patterns and processes of labour market restructuring uncovered in the Coventry local study are potentially far reaching. Particularly in fragile economic circumstances, it seems that relatively few openings are for stable, permanent positions of the type sought by the established local population with no/low qualifications. Indeed, case study evidence suggests that such people often found themselves competing for a seemingly declining number of suitable jobs as employers sought to maintain a flexible workforce who could be called upon and discarded as required. The local pool of migrant workers and students willing to fill temporary roles, often with relatively low pay and unsociable hours, meant that employers had little incentive to make them more amenable to the established local population with no/low qualifications. So while migrant workers and students had not necessarily directly displaced workers from the established local population in low-skilled roles in head-to-head competition at the selection stage, their presence and willingness to fill work in particular ways influenced the kinds of workers employers' demanded, the types of jobs they sought to fill, and their ability to fulfil their requirements. It appears that the dynamic relationship between supply and demand has shifted in the employers' favour in such economic circumstances.

The outcome of this is that some people from the established local population with no/low qualifications have found themselves effectively 'locked out' of some of the available work opportunities. To be competitive in the new flexible labour market, such individuals find themselves having to try to adapt their frames of reference to accommodate employment conditions that have hitherto been regarded as undesirable, or else find themselves residualised - left behind by a labour market that no longer accommodates them.

8. Conclusion

This article has contributed to conceptual and empirical understanding of the impact and implications for local people with low/no qualifications of migrant and student workers as ‘incomers’ to a local labour market. It has done so through the lens of a local study of Coventry: a city that has witnessed an archetypal shift from secure full-time employment in large manufacturing plants to more unstable employment in services. The low-skilled population in the city were particularly adversely impacted in the 2008/9 recession.

Despite local conditions seemingly conducive to displacement of low-skilled local workers by ‘new arrivals’, little evidence of direct displacement was forthcoming. Rather, ongoing labour market restructuring appeared to have resulted in indirect displacement and an increasingly compartmentalised labour market, in which a growing proportion of jobs have characteristics that make them undesirable or unfeasible for workers and jobseekers with no/low qualifications from the established local population, but acceptable (or attractive), for circulating migrant workers and students who come and go.

Likewise central to understanding processes of segmentation and compartmentalisation are the reciprocally reinforcing interplay of differences in the frames of reference and job search behaviour of the different groups, and of (mis)matches between these preferences and employers’ recruitment and work organisation practices. While there were some key differences in the frames of reference and employment profiles of migrant workers and students (leading to compartmentalisation in the secondary labour market), both groups offered employers greater numerical and functional flexibility than the established local population. This allowed employers to restructure employment accordingly to take advantage of such flexibility and the positive attributes of such ‘good workers’. While there are pools of workers ready and willing to work in this way, employers do not need to consider alternative work organisation patterns and practices; the crucial point here is that there is a dynamic relationship between supply and demand.

The narrow outcome of these processes is that in some compartments of the secondary labour market there appears to be, in practice, little direct competition for jobs between students/migrants and the local established population with no/low qualifications because the different groups are not applying for the same jobs (as highlighted by Waldinger and Lichter [2003] in Los Angeles). However, taking a broader and longer-term perspective, competition for jobs remains because the local established population may want the jobs being done by students and/or migrants under different conditions (e.g. scheduled hours, permanent contracts, higher pay, etc.,).

The findings from the local case study of Coventry suggest that the aggregate outcome of allocation of workers to jobs, in a context of ongoing labour market restructuring and depressed economic conditions, with migrant workers and students providing alternative sources of supply allowing employers to restructure their workforces and develop jobs that fit with the frames of reference of these groups, appears to be reduced employment opportunities matching the requirements of the established local population with no/low qualifications.

References

- Anderson B, Ruhs M, 2010, "Migrant workers: who needs them? A framework for the analysis of staff shortages, immigration and public policy", in *Who Needs Migrant Workers?: Labour Shortages, Immigration and Public Policy* Eds M Ruhs, B Anderson B (Oxford University Press, Oxford) pp 15-52
- Anderson B, Ruhs M, 2012, "Reliance on migrant labour: inevitability of policy choice?" *Journal of Poverty and Social Justice* **20**, 23-30
- Bauder H, 2006, *Labor Movement: How migration regulates labor markets* (Oxford University Press, Oxford)
- Belt V, Richardson R, 2005, "Social labour, employability and social exclusion: pre-employment training for call centre work" *Urban Studies* **42** 257-270
- CBI, 2007, *Shaping up for the future - The business vision for education and skills* (CBI, London)
- Danson M, Gilmore K, 2009, "Evidence on employer attitudes and EQUAL opportunities for the disadvantaged in a flexible and open economy" *Environment and Planning C* **27** 991-1007
- Department for Work and Pensions, 2009, *Building Britain's Recovery: Achieving Full Employment*. Cm **7751** (TSO, London)
- Devins D, Hogarth T, 2005, "Employing the unemployed: some case study evidence on the role and practice of employers" *Urban Studies* **42**, 245-256
- Devlin C, Bolt O, Patel D, Harding D and Hussein I, 2014, "Impacts of migration on UK native employment: an analytical review of the evidence", Occasional Paper 109, Home Office/BIS, London
- Forde C, MacKenzie R, 2010, "The ethical agendas of employment agencies towards migrant workers in the UK: deciphering the codes" *Journal of Business Ethics* **97**, 31-41

- Goos M, Manning A, 2007, “Lousy and lovely jobs: the rising polarization of work in Britain” *Review of Economics and Statistics* **89**, 118-133
- Green AE, Li Y, Owen D, de Hoyos M, 2012, “Inequalities in use of the Internet for job search: similarities and contrasts by economic status in Great Britain” *Environment and Planning A* **44** 2344-2358
- Hasluck C, 2011, “Employers and the recruitment of unemployed people: An evidence review” *UKCES Briefing Paper*, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearne
- Holdsworth C, 2009, “‘Going away to uni’: mobility, modernity, and independence of English higher education students” *Environment and Planning* **41** 1849-1864
- Lloyd C, Mason G, Mayhew K. 2008 *Low Wage Work in the UK* (Russell Sage, New York)
- Mackenzie R, Forde C, 2009, “The rhetoric of the ‘good worker’ versus realities of employers’ use and the experiences of migrant workers” *Work, Employment and Society* **23** 142-159
- Mackie M, 2008, *Coventry’s Economy 1976 to 2026* (Coventry City Council, Coventry)
- McCollum D, Cook L, Chiroro C, Platts A, MacLeod F and Findlay A, 2012, “Spatial, sectoral and temporal trends in A8 migration to the UK 2004-2011 Evidence from the Worker Registration Scheme”, Centre for Population Change Working Paper 18, ESRC
- McCollum D, Findlay AM, 2015, “‘Flexible’ workers for ‘flexible’ jobs? The labour market function of A8 migrant labour in the UK” *Work, Employment and Society* **29** 427-443
- Munro M, Turok I, Livingston M, 2009, “Students in cities: a preliminary analysis of their patterns and effects” *Environment and Planning* **41** 1805-1825
- Nathan M, 2008, Migration and employment agencies: thinkpiece, paper produced for Department for Communities and Local Government, London
- Newton B, Hurstfield J, Miller L, Page R, Akroyd K, 2005 “What employers look for when recruiting the unemployed and inactive: skills, characteristics and qualifications”

- Department for Work and Pensions Research Report 295*, Corporate Document Services, Leeds
- Peck J, Theodore N, 1998, “The business of contingent work: growth and restructuring in Chicago’s temporary employment industry” *Work, Employment and Society* **12** 655-674
- Piore M, 1979, *Birds of passage: migrant labour and industrial societies* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge)
- Rowthorn R, 2014, *Large-scale immigration: Its economic and demographic consequences for the UK* (Civitas, London)
- Salt J, 2011, “Migration to and from the UK”, in *Global Migration, Ethnicity and Britishness* Eds T Modood, J Salt (Palgrave, Basingstoke) pp 14-39
- Scott S, 2013, “Labour, Migration and the Spatial Fix: Evidence from the UK Food Industry”, *Antipode* **45** 1090-1109
- Shildrick T, MacDonald R, Webster C, Garthwaite K, 2010 *The low-pay, no-pay cycle: understanding recurrent poverty* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York)
- Shury J, Vivian D, Spreadbury K, Skone James A, Tweddle M, 2014, “Employer Perspectives Survey 2014: UK Results”, Evidence Report 88, UKCES, Wath-upon-Deerne
- Sporton D, 2013 “‘They control my life’: the role of local recruitment agencies in East European migration to the UK” *Population, Space and Place* **19** 443-458
- Standing G, 2012 *The precariat* (Bloomsbury, London)
- Stenning A, Dawley S, 2009, “Poles to Newcastle: grounding new migrant flows in peripheral regions” *European Urban and Regional Studies* **16** 273-294
- Tannock S, 2013, “Bad attitude? Migrant workers, meat processing work and the local unemployed in a peripheral region of the UK” *European Urban and Regional Studies*
DOI: 10.1177/0969776413481986

- Thompson P, Newsome K, Commander J, 2013, "Good when they want to be: migrant workers in the supermarket supply chain" *Human Resource Management Journal* **23** 129-143
- Trevena P, McGhee D, Heath S, 2013, "Location, location? A critical examination of patterns and determinants of internal mobility among post-accession Polish migrants in the UK" *Population, Space and Place* **19**, 671-687
- Tunstall R, Lupton R, Green A, Watmough S, Bates K, 2012, *Disadvantaged Young People Looking for Work: A Job in Itself?* (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, York)
- Waldinger R, Lichter MI, 2003 *How the other half works: Immigration and the Social Organization of Labor* (University of California Press, London)
- Wills J, Datta K, Evans Y, Herbert J, May J, McIlwaine C, 2010, *Global Cities at Work* (Pluto, London)
- Wilson R, Beaven R, May-Gillings M, Hay G, Stevens J, 2014, "Working Futures 2012-2022", Evidence Report 83, UKCES, Wath-upon-Dearne

Table 1. Preferences for and acceptability of different working arrangements and work locations by different groups

| | Low- skilled jobseekers* | Low- skilled employees | Migrant workers | Students |
|---|--------------------------------|------------------------------|--------------------|----------|
| Volume of hours per week | | | | |
| - full-time preferred | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| - part-time acceptable | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| - part-time preferred | | ✓** | | ✓ |
| Timing of hours worked | | | | |
| - scheduled conventional day-time working preferred | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| - scheduled shift working acceptable | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| - scheduled night working acceptable | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| - atypical hours acceptable – including at short notice | | | ✓ | ✓ |
| - atypical hours preferred – weekends and evenings | | | | ✓ |
| Type of work | | | | |
| - permanent preferred | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | |
| - temporary acceptable | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| - temporary preferred | | | | ✓ |
| Work location | | | | |
| - immediate vicinity preferred | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| - within easy access by public transport acceptable | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| - willing to be geographically mobile | | | ✓ | |

* not currently in employment ** in some cases

Source: interviews and focus groups with workers and job seekers in Coventry

ⁱ Albeit there is evidence that with increased diversity of HE students more are choosing not to move away (Holdsworth, 2009).

ⁱⁱ Estimate based on Class of 99 data and recent analysis of Futuretrack wave 3.1 data combined with HESA student population statistics.

ⁱⁱⁱ In order to most closely proxy university students working in term time, for analytical purposes ‘students’ were defined as full-time students aged 19-24 years working as part-time employees.

^{iv} Characterised by a willingness to work atypical hours (particularly at short notice), and availability at peak periods (such as weekends, when other staff were not available), and a preparedness to do temporary work.