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Chapter 3

The Working Experiences of Student Migrants in Australia and New Zealand

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Indicative of developments worldwide and consistent with Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) trends (2009), precarious employment has become increasingly commonplace (TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment 2008, Brosnan and Walsh 1998, Nossar, Johnstone and Quinlan 2003, Quinlan and Mayhew 2001). Migrant workers are over-represented in such employment (see Australian Bureau of Statistics 2010a, 2010b, Statistics New Zealand 2010), and the growing concern surrounding these workers is reflected in the increasing volume of literature on the subject (see Benach and Muntaner 2007, Bohle et al. 2004, Dörre, Kraemer and Speidel 2006, Department of Trade and Industry 2006).

While there is extensive research addressing migrant workers, international students have scarcely made an appearance in labour-studies literature and the student migrant is typically not characterized as emblematic of a vulnerable worker (ILO 2010, Pollert and Charlwood 2009). However, in deregulated labour markets, with jobs characterized by low wages, insecurity and unclear employment relations legislation (Haque 2002, Sargeant 2009, May et al. 2006, Standing 1997), potential for exposure to unsafe and illegal work practices for this group may be multiplied.

This chapter redefines and broadens the definition of *vulnerable worker* to argue that migrant students might rightfully be included in this group because they are frequently compelled to accept extremely poor conditions of employment. Discussion begins with the background of student migration in an Australian and New Zealand context, followed by an examination of the definitional issues inherent in researching vulnerable work. Finally, the initial findings of an exploratory study will be presented, along with discussion of potential implications for the labour market.

Student Migration to Australia and New Zealand

Financial, cultural, and educational exchange in a 'shrinking world' (Infometrics NRB and Skinnerstrategic 2008: 12) has meant nearly three million tertiary students worldwide pursue opportunities in formal education outside their own countries

(Binning 2010). In an era of knowledge as a commodity to be traded (Kritz 2006), export education industries are of paramount importance to Australia and New Zealand, ranking fourth and fifth in exports respectively (Yuile 2010, Stevens 2010). The Institute of International Education's (2008, cited in Austrade 2010) data on international student mobility notes Australia ranks fifth for the number of international students, and is the third most popular English-speaking destination behind the United States (US) and the United Kingdom (UK). In the 2009–2010 year student migrants in Australia numbered 585,000 (or 3.9 per cent of the total labour force). Export education contributes an even greater share of GDP in New Zealand than Australia – 1.13 per cent compared to 1.06 per cent (Crawford 2009), numbering 73,000 or 2.13 per cent of total labour force (Infometrics, NRB and Skinnerstrategic 2008, Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010b, Statistics NZ 2010). In addition to geographic proximity, Australia and New Zealand are widely perceived to be 'safe countries that provide a studios environment' (Mazzoral et al. 2001).

Legislation governing migration and conditions of work for migrant students are similar in Australia and New Zealand, due in part to the Closer Economic Relations (CER) Agreement legislating greater policy alignment between the countries (Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade 1983). Consequently, both countries share similar migrant entry categories: primarily for professional migrants, business entry, educational purposes or seasonal work (see Benson-Rea, Haworth and Rawlinson 1998, Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010b). In both countries student migrants are limited by their visa conditions to working a maximum of 20 hours per week during the academic year. This caveat assumes that students will have alternative means of financial support and that work in the host country will be an additional means of income.

With the internationalization of education (Kritz 2006, Edwards and Edwards 2001), student migration can be considered part of a global movement of people and is often argued to be the precursor of highly skilled migration (Skeldon 1992). Further, educational migration is seen as a legitimate response to skill shortages and an ageing workforce, and offers economic benefits (Bexley et al. 2007, Chen and Madamba 2000, Department of Labour 2006, Glover et al. 2001). The positive impact of work may be experienced in terms of practical experience, socialization, improved language skills and the opportunity for improved 'life chances'. For the host country, migration can address skills shortages, provide financial investment and enhance diversity. However, the relationship between the Australian and New Zealand export education industries is a balancing act between competition and cooperation; where students will often choose between studying in Australia or New Zealand as opposed to Europe or the US. Nevertheless, Australia's economy and labour market are much larger and in 'economic terms it is a more attractive destination for immigrants, legal or illicit' (Talcott 2000: 5).

While immigration policies of both countries aim to 'attract and retain international students' (Merwood 2007: 6), the path to permanent residency has become increasingly restricted, where entry categories and requirements are more

limited than previously. Nonetheless, while visa limitations regulate those who work legally, anecdotal and documented evidence from both countries points to illegal work trends, primarily through the violation of hours' restrictions.

The Student Migrant Worker: Definitions and Contradictions

While little is known about the working experiences of student migrant workers, they are nonetheless emblematic of internal and external diaspora of labour and the increased interdependence between countries in terms of the exchange of labour (Cerny, Menz and Soederberg 2005). There is evidence, however, that the fragmentation of employment relationships and the declining rate of trade union membership and collective action has eroded worker protection, particularly for vulnerable workers. Low pay, lack of representation or bargaining power, and precarious working conditions (Funkhouser 2008, Pollert and Charlwood 2009, TUC Commission on Vulnerable Employment 2008) typify the areas of employment where migrant workers are concentrated. Precarious employment is defined by Cranford, Vosko and Zukewich (2003: 3) as 'all forms of employment that involve atypical contracts, limited social benefits and statutory entitlements, job insecurity, low earnings, poor working conditions and high risks of ill health'. Research shows that the employment of migrant labour is widespread in industries where non-standard, precarious employment is the norm (see Dyer, McDowell and Batnitzky 2008, Goldring, Berenstein and Bernhard 2009, OECD 2009). Other causes of vulnerability include an individual's sectoral occupation (such as retail and service), the absence of human resources departments and non-unionism (Department of Trade and Industry 2006: 6). In addition, as student migrants are primarily young they tend to have less power in the employment relationship and are more likely to tolerate flexibility and unpredictability in their working lives (Cellier, Eyrolle and Bertrand 1995, Ehrlich et al. 2004). The International Labour Organisation (ILO) (2009b) estimates the informal sector accounts for the majority of all jobs available to young people, cognisant that wages in the informal sector are lower than the formal economy and protection and benefits are minimal. Hence, for many student migrants, the potential for poor working conditions and/or exploitation is multiplied by the dual factors of migration and youth (Smith and Wilson 2002, Anderson 2008).

While there is an acknowledgement by some of the actual or potential vulnerability of migrant student workers, they may also be seen to experience some relative privilege in terms of education and opportunity. As student migrants have access to not-inconsiderable amounts of investment to fund their studies and lifestyle, questions also arise as to the extent to which their working characteristics are typical of migrants as a whole? While quantitative research suggests generally poor labour market outcomes for migrants (Bauder 2006, Bennett 1993, Garson 1999), little is known about whether student migrants conform to these generalizations, particularly in Australia and New Zealand. Rather, the extant

literature tends to focus on quantifying the proportion of students employed and related financial imperatives (Bexley et al. 2007), and the effect of their employment on academic results and wellbeing (Manthei and Gilmore 2005, Merwood 2007, Riggert et al. 2006, Zimmer-Gembeck and Mortimer 2006).

While there is a general perception that many of the students coming to Australia and New Zealand to study are wealthy, this is often not the case. Some may have their families financially supporting them, but the support may be seen as an investment, to be 'paid back' in the future. Many will be the first in their family to attend a tertiary institution and so may have considerable familial expectations in addition to financial pressures. Butcher and McGrath (2004) state many need to accept low standard accommodation and to work to support themselves, where 'Stories of incredible sacrifice by family to fund a son or (more rarely) a daughter were much more the norm than conspicuous consumption by affluent students' (Rodan 2009: 3). Although financial requirements for student migration are around AUD\$18,000 per year in Australia and NZ\$10,000 per year or NZ\$1,000 for each month of stay in New Zealand, evidence of funds is not regulated, so available data may not accurately represent evidence of actual means of financial support (Australian Government Department of Immigration and Citizenship 2010a, Immigration New Zealand 2010).

Methods

During earlier research (Anderson 2010b, Naidu 2011), while not explicitly seeking to focus on student migrant workers, concerning issues regarding this group were identified. There are inherent difficulties associated with researching migrant labour, such as problems locating research participants who are willing to be forthcoming about their experiences for fear of illegal work being revealed and language or cultural differences which affect comprehension. Further, definitional inconsistencies are inherent in attempting to gather data of this kind (Marginson et al. 2005, Boocock et al. 2010, Benach and Muntaner 2007).

During the exploratory research, 74 surveys were collected, followed by ten semi-structured interviews which explored the survey themes in greater detail. Survey questions were designed to explore typical working experiences, focusing on types of work, wages, hours worked, working conditions, health and safety and union membership. The interviews reflected multiple 'realities', while acknowledging differences between individuals (Patton 2002). Transcripts and notes were then analysed for common themes relating to international students' working experiences (Miles and Huberman 2003). The small sample size is not intended to be generalizable, although patterns were found that were consistent with other research findings (Sargeant and Tucker 2009, Neill et al. 2004, McLaren et al. 2004). While the research presented in this chapter presents exploratory New Zealand findings, they are compared to existing Australian research by Nyland and

colleagues (2008) who conducted interviews with 200 higher education students across nine Australian universities.

Survey respondents were all university students, while interviewees were derived from students attending universities and private training institutes. The gender breakdown was 43.2 per cent female and 58.6 per cent male. Ethnicity was varied, with Asians reflecting the majority of the sample (85.1 per cent). Of that group, 27 identified as Chinese, 37 as Indian, and the remainder as Malaysian, Japanese and Vietnamese. Eleven of the participants were European, including Russian (4), German (2) and French (2). Africans numbered three. All were aged between 18 and 25 years, consistent with our definition of 'youth' and the dominant age group for migration for tertiary education (Kritz 2006, International Labour Office 2009).

Research Findings and Discussion

Survey findings indicate workers on overseas student visas provide a supplementary source of labour. That is not to say all student migrants are inherently vulnerable, rather that the characteristics of the work they engage in may make them so. Indicators of vulnerability were identified, namely working hours in excess of visa conditions, rates of pay below legal minima, and insecurity of work, either through a lack of protection or the type of work performed.

Types of Work

While the work engaged in was varied, over half the workers (42 or 56.8 per cent) were concentrated in the hospitality and service sectors, while a small but significant number were employed in the agriculture sector (12 or 16.2 per cent). Typical of vulnerable workers, they were engaged in peripheral positions within the agriculture, construction and service sectors (see Table 3.1). Such work has been found to be associated with poor and/or illegal working conditions (Shelley 2007, Pai 2008, Minto 2009). Interviews indicated many new student migrants quickly obtain jobs through 'word of mouth' within their ethnic communities, assuming positions in low-skilled manual labour. Often positions are organized through networks soon after arrival and migrant students are commonly pressured to take jobs not wanted by local workers. This reflects the 'redistribution' of work in local economies due to the willingness of migrant workers to work in substandard conditions and for lower wages.

Table 3.1 Types of work

Job category	Types of work
Manual labour	labourer, tiling, maintenance for a hire firm, light labouring, bulldozer operator, house painter
Agriculture/ horticulture	tomato packing, hothouse work, agricultural production, stable hand, milking cows, strawberry picking, fruit picking
Administration	receptionist, office administration, data entry
Retail	gift shop, clothing, checkout operator, fast food, cashier
Hospitality	bar waitress, bartender, pub work, translator, receptionist, delivery driver, dishwasher, waiting tables
Other	cleaning, paper round, factory work, housecleaning, computer repairs, car groomer, busboy, shelf stacker

Wages

Survey respondents were asked how much they were paid, and 28 out of 74 (37.8 per cent) respondents had been paid below the statutory minima in New Zealand (at the time, NZ\$12.50 per hour). This is a sizeable proportion, meaning almost four in ten workers were being paid illegally and many were also paid 'cash in the hand'. An example was a Chinese female student, 18 years of age who was enrolled at university and working at a discount store: 'I couldn't find anything. I know the (minimum) wage is more than \$10 [\$12.50] but [I] am lucky to work. Most of my friends can't find anything – so \$7.00 is ok'.

Particularly low pay rates were widespread in agriculture and horticulture, where almost all workers (21 out of 23 or 91.3 per cent) were paid illegally (75 per cent of all workers reported illegal pay rates). This finding is consistent with Ross and Rasmussen's (2009: 96) contention that 'migrant workers are found working in horticulture "under the table" for as little as \$6 an hour (less than half the statutory wage)'. The finding is also consistent with Nyland et al.'s (2008) Australian research, which reported low and illegal pay rates. In this study, 58.1 per cent of students surveyed were paid below AUD\$15 an hour, with 33.9 per cent receiving less than AUD\$10 an hour, and where the federal rate was AUD\$13.74 (The Australian Fair Pay Commission 2008: 21).

This undercutting of statutory minima is particularly concerning in the current recessionary climate although it is obvious that Australian and New Zealand labour markets rely on migrants: both the legal and illegal variety (see Bauder 2006, Department of Labour 2009). As well as illegal pay rates, there are implications for tax revenue and national medical insurance schemes: Medicare in Australia and Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC) in New Zealand. Of note is that in both studies more than a third of respondents had been paid less than the minimum wage, suggesting that this practice is widespread rather than an isolated incident for student migrant workers.

Hours of Work

While the majority of respondents worked between 15–20 hours per week (42 or 56.8 per cent), the second largest proportion indicated that they worked over 20 hours (28 or 37.8 per cent). Of that group, eight admitted to working full-time (40 hours or more), in clear violation of visa conditions. Of particular concern were those who were 'on call' and working on a casual basis, leading to precarious conditions and reduced protection in the labour market (28 or 37.8 per cent). Such conditions are not illegal, but in the current economic climate, with a lack of jobs *in general*, the employment environment for migrant workers appears to have worsened (Wu, Sheehan and Guo 2010, ILO 2010). Often migrants work longer and more unsociable hours than many non-migrant, full-time workers in standard employment (Loh and Richardson 2004, Quinlan and Mayhew 2001). Students may also work in excess of their visa conditions due to financial imperatives such as repayment of educational loans, as well as finding the cost of living in the host country higher than anticipated, compelling them to take jobs 'off the books' with no employment relations protection. Examples of these responses were the following:

It's expensive to live ... more than they said. So sometimes I miss class, for extra money. I don't like it [the job], but I need to work. (Chinese male training institute student, 22 years, liquor store manager without a manager's license)

It's [the job] not so bad. Too much travel -- but they pay for that. Sometimes it is hard to fit in study, but I need a job. They want me more hours [than I am allowed]. And they are not nice to me. Boring? Yes, but I have a job. (Korean male university student, 24 years, horticultural worker)

Good to earn some money, but late nights, long hours. It is hard to get home [at that time]. And I can't get time off when I need, only when he wants. There is no minimum working hours -- makes it difficult when there is no work. (Malaysian female student, 20 years, waitress)

These findings are consistent with previous research suggesting many migrants work far in excess of stipulated hours (for example, Boocock et al. 2010, Chen and Madamba 2000, Green et al. 2007). Results should however be framed within McInnis and Hartley's (2002) research indicating international students are often unwilling to admit to working more than 20 hours per week because in Australia and New Zealand, this can lead to the mandatory withdrawal of visas. Hence, speculatively, these findings about excess working hours and substandard working conditions are likely to be conservatively reported.

Indications are that long hours compromise the student's attendance and performance at their tertiary institution. The adverse effects of working while studying were highlighted by McDonald et al. (2007) in Australia, while research

by Neill et al. (2004: 136) identifies 15 hours of work as a point beyond which 'there may be a detrimental effect on academic performance'. Furthermore, health and safety implications of this work are signposted as being poor. This theme is discussed in the following section.

Health and Safety

Growing evidence indicates migrant workers are frequently exposed to hazardous work conditions, and have higher rates of injury and illness compared to non-migrant workers in standard employment (Sergeant and Tucker 2009, McKay et al. 2006). In addition, workers employed in informal work arrangements also have an above-average level of injury and illness, and report higher levels of work-related stress compared with workers employed in more formal working arrangements within the primary labour market (Quinlan and Mayhew 2001, Virtanen et al. 2005). As a result, there is acknowledged difficulty in accurately measuring the wellbeing of all migrant workers as government databases rarely capture the working experiences, occupational injury, fatalities and compensation claims of precariously-employed workers (Boocock et al. 2010).

Student migrants were asked whether they felt safe in their workplaces, and why this was or was not the case. Of the 74 surveys, five chose not to respond, while 46 (62.2 per cent) answered they did feel safe. However, a number answered with qualifiers such as 'But I get left alone at night', 'Drunk men make me feel nervous', or 'I know some of what I do is not my job and I shouldn't [be performing the tasks], but that's ok'. The remainder (23 or 31.1 per cent) answered they felt unsafe in the course of their work and had experienced unsafe work practices:

Often I don't feel safe ... Late nights and by myself. I worry ... hope they [the customers] are not shoplifting. My English is not good to tell them no. (Chinese female training institute student, 19 years, retail worker in a gift shop)

I got the job from a guy I met here, he knew the family. Everyone is Indian, they know we work hard. The job is bad, but I have a loan, and if I stay I need [work] experience'. They [the owners] are not friendly - if you ask for anything they let you go. So I just do my job. (Indian female university student, 19 years, dishwasher at an Indian restaurant)

Language difficulties you know. Sometimes it hard to understand what they [bosses] are saying. Cleaning job is so hard, and it makes a lot of physical problems. (Vietnamese male student, 24 years, cleaner in a hotel)

Around 10 per cent of the sample also mentioned having an accident at work. For example:

I have been injured, mainly cuts and grazes. I did fall badly once but I kept working. [If you are] absent you know, they don't like you, see you are [sic] lazy, maybe not keep you working. (Vietnamese male student, 22 years, manufacturing worker in a factory)

Such workplace disparities have very real implications not only for health and safety, but also wider labour market outcomes, domestically and internationally. Poor working conditions signal an inability of vulnerable workers to enforce contract or statutory rights. The commodification of workers occurs where local workers' wages are cut because migrant workers lack legal work rights and will accept worse conditions.

A Role for Unions?

McDonald et al. (2007) note that student workers are vulnerable to employer exploitation because of their limited work skills, high unemployment and underemployment, and poor knowledge of their rights. At the interviewing stage participants were asked about their knowledge of employment rights and obligations. All ten respondents had limited or incorrect knowledge; while some had been threatened that if they questioned their pay rates and working hours that they would be reported to immigration. No respondents belonged to a union. Grünell and van het Kaar (2003) argue that immigrants are more likely to work in low-skilled jobs in the services sector and in smaller firms in the retail and construction sectors, consequently magnifying the disadvantage associated with low levels of unionization. When work is illegal, it becomes even more difficult for workers to organize for better conditions and for unions there is a conflict in their role. That is, where race is seen as a political issue and a primary union goal is to protect local jobs, often at the expense of migrant workers, this contradiction may mitigate against union involvement in organizing in the secondary labour market, where migrants are known to congregate and poor and dangerous work practices proliferate.

Conclusions

The increasing movement of people for work and educational opportunities to Australia and New Zealand is indicative of global trends. Historically, there has been considerable interest in the poor working conditions experienced by migrant workers, arising against the backdrop of broader debates surrounding precarious work and definitions of worker vulnerability. Nevertheless, little concern has been raised regarding the working lives and experience of *student* migrants. Rather, research to date has primarily concentrated on either the working experiences of migrants or the educational experiences of international students, rather than

examining the working experiences of international students who are an important sector of the migrant workforce.

While these trends may be considered typical of the impact of the increasing migrant workforce (see Dyer, McDowell and Batnitzky 2003, Loh and Richardson 2004, Bennett 1993) they signal a negative impact for the student migrants, where participation in undocumented, precarious work has implications for the worker's ability to remain in the country and pursue career opportunities post-study. Many student migrants undertake courses with the hope of entering gainful employment and/or permanent residency in their host countries (see Anderson and Naidu 2009, Department of Labour 2006, Glover et al. 2001, Nyland et al. 2008). Almost a quarter of international students choose to study in Australia with the aim of becoming permanent residents (Harrison 2010). Indeed, by 2007, two thirds of skilled migrants were former international students rather than offshore recruitments; a 'two-step migration' (Hawthorne 2010). However a 2010 policy change dictates that international students who apply for residency must have gained relevant work experience in Australia (Koleth 2010); the same requirement as for New Zealand (Immigration New Zealand 2010). Further, the Department of Labour's 2008 report indicated that 73 per cent of students surveyed did not transition to work or residence, and most had left New Zealand within five years of getting their first student visas. A counter argument would be that they are able to pursue work opportunities overseas. The longer term gain for many of these migrants, however, is questionable at best.

The apparent lack of interest from policymakers and enforcement agencies in protecting this vulnerable group is often supported by a choice argument: that is, student migrants choose to come here so *their* situation is of *their* own making. Anderson (2008: 2) suggests a dominant paradigm is that of 'good' and 'bad' migrants, dividing these workers into either the hard-working foreigner necessary for the economy, or a thief of jobs and opportunity. Nonetheless, student migrants may be representative of both groups; that is, 'good' in that they bring diversity, potential labour and internal investment, yet 'bad' when 'taking' jobs from residents, while accepting (in some cases, drastically) lower wages and conditions.

In summary, the exploratory research findings revealed here show that international students' working experiences are typical of migrant workers as they are often located in contingent and precarious employment, working long hours in unsafe conditions for low wages. Additionally, student migrants may experience workplace marginalization on multiple levels, where the working conditions they routinely labour under add little to their prospects of securing permanent residency or work relating to their studies. While these working conditions may be illegal, little government impetus for monitoring or enforcement is evident, and to date unions in both countries have not taken a leading role in protecting these workers. While this research has an Australasian focus, these findings have a wide-ranging impact on harnessing the benefits of migration to build high-performance workforces, but also for the student migrant workers whose working lives are dominated by substandard working conditions with little opportunity for progression.

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Chapter 4

Men at Work? Emerging Nuances in Young Masculinities in the United Kingdom's Retail Sector

Steven Roberts

The emergence of the service sector as a key driver of the economy in many industrialized nations and the concomitant collapse of youth labour markets has meant that much youth policy in the last three decades has been aimed at the democratization of the education system. As a result, increasing participation rates of young people remaining in vocational education and an attendant 'massification' of higher education have been primary policy aims internationally (Teichler 1998). This move into post-compulsory education is often supplemented by part-time jobs in retail, bars and restaurants. However, such young people are, more often than not, just 'passing through', on their way to their perceived graduate destinations (Osterman 2001, Huddleston 2011). Yet, a proportion of young people attempt to enter the labour market on a more permanent basis. Increasingly, many of the employment opportunities on offer to such young people are predominantly low-level, often insecure jobs in the service sector that attract low-level salaries.

Internationally, researchers have afforded considerable attention to considering questions mobilizing around young people and service sector employment. They have for example considered, the precariousness of this type of work (for example Inui et al. 2006), the implications of this type of work for moving into adulthood (Arnett 2000), along with the broader social consequences of the increased number of youth employed in service roles (for example MacDonald 2009). There have, however, been two key limitations in the literature. Firstly, non-students have often been overlooked, or had their views compounded with those of students (for example Warhurst and Nickson 2007, Maguire 2010), in spite of what might seem very different motivations for work. Indeed, the group has been recently described as a missing middle of youth research (Roberts 2011a). Secondly, there has been little attention given to the specific experiences of young men in service employment. As Nickson and Korczynski (2009: 298) have argued, while there is research on young men's attitudes to taking up low level service sector employment (for example Furlong and Cartmel 2004, Nixon 2009), there has been little focus on young men's actual experience of this work.

This chapter addresses these gaps in the literature by drawing on qualitative interviews with 24 young men based in the county of Kent, in the South East of