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Bad Jobs in Britain

Nonstandard Employment and Job Quality

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The rapid growth in nonstandard forms of employment toward the end of the 20th century has fuelled claims about the spread of "bad jobs" within Anglo-American capitalism. Research from the United States indicates that such jobs have more bad characteristics than do permanent jobs after controlling for workers' personal characteristics, family status, and occupation. We apply a version of the bad characteristics approach to British data and find that despite some institutional differences with the United States, (notably, in employer welfare provision), the British case also supports the hypothesis that nonstandard employment (part-time, temporary, and fixed term) increases workers' exposure to bad job characteristics.

Keywords: *job quality; nonstandard employment; Britain*

The rapid growth in nonstandard forms of employment during the final decades of the 20th century has generated considerable controversy about the changing nature of work (in general), especially on the subject of job quality. For some commentators, it presents new opportunities for recombining work, leisure, and family in ways that lead to more fulfilling forms of involvement in the public and private spheres (e.g., Handy, 1994). Within Europe, sociologists, such as Beck (1992) in Germany and Gorz (1999) in

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France, claimed that nonstandard jobs represent a new stage in the commodification of labor, a view that is shared by the influential British commentator Hutton (1996). Of these, Beck's (1992) destandardization of labor thesis is probably the most striking for it declared that the traditional division between blue- and white-collar jobs is being replaced by a new one between standardized, full-time employment and a "risk-fraught system of flexible, pluralized, decentralized underemployment" (p. 143). Beck insisted that such forms of work inevitably imply a decline in job quality, because the conditions that trade unions won under the standardized, mass-production factory regime cannot be maintained in a world of individualized, nonstandard arrangements. Similar views can be found across the Atlantic in North America where, Harrison (1997), for instance, described the growth of the contingent workforce as the "dark side" of the new economy in which the "growing heterogeneity in work organization and practices, both among and within particular employers" has led to "declining employment security and more uncertain wage and salary prospects over time" (p. 259).

Whatever the merits of these claims, the spread of nonstandard employment has opened a new phase in an old debate about the nature of work under capitalism. This version of the debate is made more complicated by the tendency among leading European sociologists to rely on theoretical assertion (e.g., Beck, 1992; Gorz, 1999), whereas their North American counterparts favor empirical analysis (e.g., Kalleberg, Reskin & Hudson, 2000; Tilly, 1996). In this article, we propose to open up a transatlantic debate on the quality of nonstandard employment by applying methods developed in the United States to British data. We begin by reviewing the debate about nonstandard employment in Britain before turning to a U.S. approach to the analysis of bad jobs. The subsequent sections outline the research methodology, the findings, and their theoretical significance. We conclude by placing the findings in the context of recent European Union directives that seek to provide part-time and fixed-term workers with the same conditions as those in full-time, permanent employment.

NONSTANDARD EMPLOYMENT AND JOB QUALITY

Until recently, much of the British literature on nonstandard employment tended to assume rather than demonstrate that nonstandard jobs are a substandard form of employment. Admittedly, this assumption emerged from the debate surrounding Atkinson's (1985) controversial model of the *flexible firm*, where both Atkinson and his critics (e.g., Pollert, 1988) accepted that

employers introduced nonstandard employment arrangements as a means of reducing labor costs, notably through reductions in wages, social insurance, fringe benefits, and redundancy payments. Accordingly, Fevre (1991), in a rare early overview of the quality of nonstandard employment, concluded that nonstandard work was *poor work*, a view shared in Beynon's (1997) more recent review of what he termed *hyphenated jobs*. This conception of the nonstandard as substandard is so strong that some studies even used part-time work itself as an indicator of bad employment (e.g., Beechey & Perkins, 1987; Rubery, 1998).

In the context of these unsupported assertions, the work of Gallie, White, Cheng, and Tomlinson (1998), and more recently, the work of Booth, Francesconi, and Frank (2002) represented a significant advance in that they drew on analyses of nationally representative surveys. Gallie and colleagues (1998, pp. 162-165) compared female part-timers with male full-timers and found that they have lower levels of pay, fewer fringe benefits, and are more pessimistic about promotion chances (see also Lissenburgh, 1996). In relation to temporary workers, Booth and colleagues found that temporary workers are less satisfied and receive less pay and training than permanent workers.

Nevertheless, the evidence reported by Gallie and colleagues is limited in that it only compares female part-timers with male full-timers—it does not compare part-time and full-time, permanent arrangements per se. Even though Booth, Francesconi, et al. (2002) represented a refreshing break from the British preoccupation with part-time employment, it only considers a couple of employment conditions. Furthermore, both studies included subjective indicators, such as estimates of the chances of promotion (Gallie et al., 1998) and feelings of job satisfaction (Booth Francesconi, et al., 2002), which might reflect more on the person than the job. So despite recent progress, the analysis of job quality in Britain has yet to include a comprehensive comparison of the employment conditions for part-time and temporary workers with those of their full-time, permanent counterparts.

THE BAD CHARACTERISTICS APPROACH

Perhaps the most sophisticated study of job quality and nonstandard employment to date is Kalleberg, Reskin, and Hudson's (2000) analysis of "bad jobs in America" (hereafter KRH). They conceptualized *bad jobs* as those with certain *bad characteristics*—namely, low pay without access to health insurance and pension benefits. Using data from the 1995 Current Population Survey, they found that approximately 1 in 7 jobs in the United States is bad on these three dimensions. In an innovative multivariate analysis

that uses a count measure of badness (i.e., number of bad characteristics), they found that nonstandard employment increases workers' exposure to the three negative characteristics net of controls for workers' personal characteristics, family status, occupation, and industry. Separate analyses for men and women also show that nonstandard employment exacerbates sex inequality with women being noticeably more likely to have jobs with bad characteristics.

One of the strengths of this analysis, though it is not one made explicit by KRH, is that they use objective, economic indicators of job quality. Furthermore, this 'bread and butter' conditions of employment approach, which emphasizes the economic returns to work, reflects the common social judgment that bad jobs are low-paid, have few benefits, and lead nowhere (i.e., "dead-end jobs" or "McJobs"; Ritzer, 1998, pp. 59-70). In this regard, one of the limitations of the KRH analysis is that it does not include any measure of promotion opportunities. This is a notable weakness, particularly when dual and segmented labor market theorists (e.g., Doeringer & Piore, 1971; Gordon, Edwards, & Reich, 1982) argued that the existence of job ladders or internal labor markets was one of the defining differences between the primary (*good*) and secondary (*bad*) segments of the labor market. Such jobs offered not only the prospect of promotion, but also the prospect of substantial increases in pay, security, and social status.

Nevertheless, we propose to replicate much of the analysis undertaken by KRH using data from Britain. As replication is frequently a matter of degree than of kind, we would like to make it clear from the outset that this is not a precise or perfect replication, and that the study has merit in its own right. That said, we adopt the core of the KRH analysis in that we use the same hypothesis (that nonstandard employment increases workers' exposure to bad characteristics) and the same bad characteristics approach, with its emphasis on objective economic indicators of job quality. Given our concerns about the limitations of the KRH conception of bad jobs, we include an indicator of promotion ladders to provide a broader conception of a bad jobs, whereas state provision of pensions and health care in Britain mean that we have to use some different, if not unrelated, welfare characteristics. Furthermore, in modeling the data, we adopt a more conservative approach than KRH in that we do not present separate analyses for men and women. Our primary focus is on the relationship between contractual status and job quality. We consider these changes to be important for developing the study of bad jobs, especially on a cross-national basis. If the hypothesis that nonstandard jobs are relatively inferior to standard jobs holds in a different national setting, especially one with different labor market welfare arrange-

ments, then we believe this represents an important extension of the proposition's generalizability.

DEFINING BAD JOBS IN BRITAIN

In an insightful review of the evolution of welfare and labor market institutions in Britain and the United States, Jacoby (2001) argued that in the United States, "a weak state, an individualistic ethos, and social heterogeneity combined to produce a set of institutions that put the weight of risk-sharing on private parties rather than government" (p. 35). Against this background, he described how the country developed a unique form of *welfare capitalism* in which the business corporation rather than the government, or fraternal societies, became the primary source of economic security and the principal means of indemnifying against the risk of ill health or lack of income in old age. In Europe, by contrast, citizens were able to look to the state to provide insurance against risks of this kind, partly because the greater social homogeneity and organization of its working classes led to the creation of welfare states that provided pensions, healthcare, and social security on a universal basis.

The significance of this for our purposes is that Britain has a welfare state. Public health provision is relatively small in the United States when compared to Britain with the result that employees in the United States tend to value jobs that insure them against medical costs and loss of earnings through illness. Britain, by contrast, has a universal system of public health care in the form of the National Health Service, which is funded out of taxation and free at the point-of-use. There is, in addition, private health care and health care insurance that individuals may purchase and some companies may provide to selected employees (mainly those in professional and managerial positions). Nevertheless, the use of the private sector is a minority activity given the adequacy of the national system. Consequently, employer provision of health insurance is less useful in distinguishing bad jobs in the British context but we are, at least, able to ask if the employer provides an income during illness.

Employer pension schemes, by contrast, are more directly comparable between Britain and the United States so we are able to include an equivalent measure. However, it should be noted that in both cases, the British welfare state makes relatively generous provisions when compared to the United States. The state provides for loss of earnings through illness and provides a universal pension on reaching the compulsory retirement age of 65. Consequently, we acknowledge that absence of sick pay and employer based pen-

sions in Britain are not directly equivalent to the absence of health insurance and pensions in the United States, because employees in Britain can always fall back on those provided by the state (even if they are less generous than employer schemes). Nevertheless, the provision of such benefits has become so widespread among British employers that their absence can reasonably be interpreted as evidence of substandard employment conditions (Russell, 1991).

Accordingly, our definition of bad jobs concentrates on the economic nature of the employment relationship, in particular to the level of income from employment, continuity of income while sick or in retirement, and the prospect of increased income through promotion. More specifically, we conceptualize bad jobs as those with (a) low pay, (b) no sick pay, (c) no pension scheme, beyond the basic state scheme; and (d) are not part of a recognized career or promotion ladder.

Despite differences in welfare provision, Britain otherwise represents a particularly appropriate case for testing claims about quality of nonstandard employment in a European context. When compared with its European neighbors, its traditions of economic deregulation and flexible labor markets, which are typical of Anglo-American capitalism generally, have led to Britain being labeled the "America of Europe." With regard to nonstandard employment, this similarity is reflected in three ways. First, Britain is the only major European country to have no regulations preventing or restricting the use of particular kinds of nonstandard contracts (e.g., Spain will not allow temporary workers to be used for permanent jobs). Second, until recently, it was one of the few major European countries without a statutory national minimum wage, which may explain why it has, with the United States (which has a relatively low minimum wage), one of the highest incidences of low pay within the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (Keese, Puymoyen, & Swaim, 1998).

Finally, Britain has experienced rapid growth in various forms of nonstandard employment over the past 20 years. The proportion of all employees working part-time (i.e., less than 30 hours per week) rose from 21% in 1981 to 26.5% in 2000, whereas the proportion of temporary jobs increased from 4% in 1981 to 8% in 2000. Self-employment rose from 7% of the labor force in 1980 to 11.6% in 2000.¹ Compared to its European neighbors, Britain has among the highest proportions in part-time employment (Blossfeld & Hakim, 1997), whereas the proportion in temporary employment is relatively low despite not having any legal restrictions against such contracts (Booth, Dolado, & Frank, 2002). Perhaps the most revealing change has been increased female participation in the labor force (from 42% in 1980 to 47.3% in 2000), particularly when this expansion has been almost entirely in part-time

work (81.6% of part-timers are women). However, it should also be noted that the proportion of men employed part-time has increased from 2.3% in 1973 to 8.4% in 2000.

DATA AND METHODS

WORKING IN BRITAIN 2000: A NATIONAL SURVEY

The data presented in this analysis are drawn from a nationally representative survey of the employed and self-employed in Britain. The survey, *Working in Britain 2000*, contains 2,132 employees with a response rate of 64.6%. Those interviewed were aged between 20 and 60 and did at least 1 paid hour of work per week. The primary sampling units are postcode sectors, stratified by population density and proportion of the population in Socioeconomic Groups (SEG) 1 and 2. The postal addresses and respondents were selected randomly. We weighted the data to make it more representative using population estimates from the national Labour Force Survey of 2000. The weighting variables were gender, age, SEG, and part-time or full-time employment status. The interviews, which were conducted on a face-to-face basis, lasted for over an hour and included a short self-completion questionnaire in addition to the main schedule. Finally, it should be emphasized that the survey fieldwork began before the New Labour government implemented a European Union directive (July 2000) that sought to provide part-time and fixed-term workers with the same terms and conditions as full-time employees. We shall discuss the significance of this development in the final part of the article.

As indicated earlier, some scholars view part-time employment itself as an indicator of low quality employment. By contrast, we would argue that the question of whether nonstandard arrangements are substandard is an empirical issue and not one that can be resolved on axiomatic grounds alone. Our survey allows us to examine three types of nonstandard employment: part-time, temporary, and fixed term. In doing so, we are defining nonstandard as that which is either not permanent or not full-time, with standard employment being that which is both permanent and full-time. Consequently, it includes permanent and temporary part-time employees; those on full-time and part-time fixed term contracts, and full-time temporaries.

It should be noted here that this contrasts with the definition of *nonstandard employment* taken by KRH (2000) in three respects. First, their definition of *nonstandard employment* includes anything "other than standard, full-time jobs, including part-time employment in an otherwise standard working arrangement" (p. 258). This is somewhat surprising because it

means that they are eliminating a major form of part-time employment from their analysis on the basis of definitional fiat rather than empirical evidence. In this regard, it is important to stress that even the recent British literature contains no arguments for distinguishing between part-time jobs in otherwise standard arrangements and part-time jobs that are not. Second, unlike the Current Population Survey used by KRH, *Working in Britain 2000* does not contain enough respondents to make similar distinctions between the different kinds of temporary and fixed term contracts (e.g., temporary, temporary-help agency employment, employment with contract companies, etc.). In our survey, the fixed term category is the largest group among all those who describe themselves as temporary employees and contain enough cases to be included as a separate category. Consequently, our temporary group includes all other forms of temporary employment including those without an explicit termination date, (as opposed to fixed-term employees) temporary-help agency staff, and so on. Finally, we have not included the self-employed in our analysis, because the *Working in Britain 2000* survey had a separate and shorter set of questions for the self-employed. Items on membership of pension and sick pay schemes were not included, because these would inevitably have to be private (even individual) schemes and therefore would not be directly comparable to those that standard employees might obtain through their employers. Furthermore, the self-employed are generally unlikely to belong to formal job ladders because they are, for the most part, either likely to be the head of a small business or to work on their own. Consequently, our analysis is more restricted, though arguably more robust in conceptual terms in that we only make comparisons between standard and nonstandard employees.

METHODS

Defining low pay is inevitably an arbitrary exercise, as there is no consensus on what constitutes the appropriate benchmark. Nevertheless, economists tend to estimate low pay by using a measure derived from the distributions of earnings, such as half or two-thirds of the median. Accordingly, our estimate is based on half of the median for full-time men, which corresponded with the Britain's Low Pay Unit's recommended rate for the minimum wage in 2000 (£5.11 per hour; see Appendix).²

A bivariate analysis of the relationship between pairs of these indicators suggests that those who have one bad characteristic are likely to be exposed to another. For instance, 60.0% of those with low pay do not have an occupational pension scheme and 67.2% of those with no pension are not covered by

sick pay arrangements, whereas 65.3% of those without sick pay are in a job that does not have a recognized promotion ladder. This tendency is supported by the pairwise correlations, which indicates that all four dimensions are associated and in the expected direction. The strength of these associations is moderate but comparable to those reported by KRH (2000) for bad jobs and Hunter (2000) for good jobs. The strongest association that is between occupational pension and sick pay approaches .50, whereas those between low pay and sick pay and between low pay and occupational pensions are weaker ($r = -.34$ for pensions and $r = -.21$ for sick pay).³ In sum, these data provide some evidence for the presumption that these four items can be used as a single index of bad jobs. Moreover, the conventional assumption that bad jobs are a combination of low pay, few benefits, and no career prospects, would appear to have some statistical merit.

We follow KRH (2000) in using a summative measure of badness, the number of bad job characteristics, as the dependent variable for the multivariate analysis. The advantage of such a measure is that it enables us to examine the determinants of (bad) job quality generally as well as those for individual dimensions. It should be noted that this conception of bad jobs implies that the characteristics are objective, manifest, and of equal importance: The presence or absence of any of the characteristics has the same implications as that of any other in the set. Under this concept, it is appropriate that each characteristic should be given the same weight. This leads to the choice of a simple summative scale taking values 0-4. The non-negative integer values of the dependent variable, which range from 0 to 4, indicate a count data model. We use an estimator whereby the Poisson distribution provides the probability of the number of bad job characteristics. Estimation is undertaken by maximum likelihood. The probability of a given number of incidences (Y) is given by:

$$f(Y) = e^{-\lambda} \lambda^Y / Y!$$

where

$$\lambda = e(x\beta + \epsilon)$$

KRH rejected the Poisson distribution due to overdispersion (i.e., extra-Poisson variation) and used the negative binomial instead. However, our data conforms to a Poisson distribution, confirmed by goodness-of-fit statistics. Even so, we also ran ordinary least squares and ordered probit models, and we found that they produced broadly similar results.

NONSTANDARD EFFECTS

In testing the hypothesis that nonstandard jobs increase employees' chances of having bad characteristics, KRH (2000) controlled for the possibility that such differences are likely to occur in part because nonstandard jobs are less secure, less likely to be unionized, and involve less complex work than their standard counterparts. Despite differences in our data, we have also sought to control for similar nonstandard effects, but only in the case of unionization and complex work.

Insecurity has not been included, because it is, by definition, a feature of temporary and fixed-term employment so it makes little sense to compare the security of those jobs with permanent jobs. In addition, insecurity is inevitably a subjective measure and as a result may be shaped as much by the anxiety levels of individuals as by their knowledge of their employers' fortunes and likely staffing practices.

UNIONIZATION

One of the defining characteristics of trade unions is that they seek to improve wages and conditions for their members through collective bargaining with employers. Accordingly, employers will find it easier to contain or even reduce labor costs in which workers are not represented by trade unions. As union membership is workplace or employer based, membership rates tend to be noticeably lower among temporary and fixed-term workers because unions find it more difficult to recruit workers who move between enterprises (Heery, Conley, Delbridge, & Stewart, 2000). According to our survey, approximately 1 in 3 of those in standard full-time, permanent jobs are union members compared to only 1 in 5 of those in nonstandard arrangements (either part-time or temporary, including fixed term; see also Gallie et al., 1998). In sum, it seems reasonable to infer that employees in nonstandard jobs are more likely to have inferior employment conditions because they lack union representation.⁴

AUTONOMY

Employers, according to KRH, try to retain skilled workers by offering relatively higher wages and better fringe benefits. As nonstandard workers are generally less skilled, they are less likely to have such conditions.

Because we do not have information on skill levels, we use task discretion for the same purpose.⁵ Employees in high discretion roles tend to have better pay and fringe benefits than those in low discretion roles (Fox, 1974; Goldthorpe, 1982). Furthermore, routinized forms of work that require lim-

ited training and have low levels of interdependence between workers are more amenable to nonstandard forms of employment (Gallie & White, 1994; Pearce, 1993; Tilly, 1996). There is also evidence to indicate that discretion is considerably lower among part-time and temporary workers than full-time workers after controlling for the possibility that they might be in more low-skilled jobs (Gallie et al., 1998). However, fixed term or contract workers, especially male contract workers, tend to have similar levels of discretion as full-time workers (Gallie et al., 1998). Accordingly, we would expect that nonstandard employees with the possible exception of contract workers are more likely to have poorer employment conditions because their jobs require less discretionary effort.⁶

THE DISTRIBUTION OF BAD CHARACTERISTICS

Between one quarter and half of the working population in Britain are in jobs that have at least one bad characteristic. Approximately one quarter of all employees (28.9%) are low paid, just over one third have no pension (36.7%), a similar proportion have no sick pay (36.1%), and half are in jobs that do not have a recognized promotion ladder (51.1%; Table 1). When these individual characteristics are added together to form an overall measure of badness, less than 1 in 10 (9.4%) are in positions that are bad on all four dimensions but only 1 in 4 (27.9%) of the British labor force are in jobs that are not bad in any respect! Comparing men and women, we find that women, on average, tend to have more bad characteristics than men, and that this difference is statistically significant (1.71 to 1.26, $t = 7.594$, $df = 1705$, $p < .001$).

In relation to our central hypothesis, there are also substantial differences between standard and nonstandard contracts. Nonstandard employment arrangements, whether part-time, temporary, or fixed term, generally have higher proportions on low pay without access to pensions, sick pay, or promotion. Taking sick pay as an example, over half of those in various forms of part-time employment (permanent, 50.3%; fixed term, 57.0%; temporary 53.7%) do not have sick pay compared to under one third (29.2%) of those in permanent, full-time employment. Similarly, 1 in 2 (52.7%) of those in permanent, part-time positions are on low pay compared with 1 in 5 (21.4%) of those in standard jobs.⁷

Turning to the mean number of bad characteristics, we find that all of the nonstandard categories have, on average, more bad characteristics than the standard category (Table 1). For instance, those in full-time permanent employment have the least (1.21), and those in part-time permanent have the

TABLE 1: Percentage Distribution of Bad Job Characteristics and Mean Number of Bad Characteristics by Employment Status

	Percentage of All Employees (n)	Percentage With Low Wages		Percentage With No Sick Pay		Percentage With No Pension		Percentage With No Career Ladder		Mean Number of Bad Characteristics
		Percentage With Low Wages	Percentage With No Sick Pay	Percentage With No Pension	Percentage With No Career Ladder					
Full-time	77.2 (1,640)	22.3	31.1	31.1	46.3	1.27				
Permanent	71.2 (1,519)	21.4	29.2	29.0	44.9	1.21				
Temporary	6.0 (121)	32.0	53.7	57.4	64.4	2.07				
Fixed term ^a	2.6 (56)	13.7	47.6	43.0	58.4	1.72				
Part-time	22.8 (484)	52.4	53.1	55.8	67.1	2.21				
Permanent	20.1 (429)	52.7	50.3	54.3	68.2	2.18				
Temporary	2.7 (55)	32.0	53.7	57.4	64.4	2.07				
Fixed term ^a	1.0 (21)	29.7	57.0	51.1	46.2	1.87				
All	100.0 (2,124)	28.9	36.1	36.7	51.1	1.48				

a. Fixed term is the largest group within the temporary category. Others include seasonal work, agency temping, and casual work.

most (2.18). Although there are some differences within nonstandard employment, these are not as large or as consistent as those between standard and nonstandard forms of employment.

Though the main focus of this article is on differences between those in permanent, full-time work and those in atypical arrangements, it is worth emphasizing the point that the latter do not have a monopoly on bad employment conditions. Almost one in three of those in permanent full-time positions do not enjoy work-based sick pay (29.2%) and pension arrangements (29.0%), whereas just under half (44.9%) do not have access to formal career ladders.

DO NONSTANDARD JOBS OFFER SUBSTANDARD CONDITIONS?

In testing our hypotheses about different types of employment contracts and job quality, we also need to consider other factors that may increase employees' exposure to bad characteristics (KRH, 2000). Assuming that workers wish to obtain employment that has the best possible set of employment conditions, we might expect them to use their market capacity, that is "all forms of relevant attributes which individuals may bring to the bargaining encounter" (Giddens, 1973, p. 103), to obtain the best position available. Accordingly, such resources may be used to procure economic returns in addition to income such as "security of employment, prospects of career advancement, and a range of 'fringe benefits', such as pension rights, etc." (Giddens, 1973, p. 103).

To capture this notion of market capacity, we include personal characteristics such as level of education, family status, age, social class, as well as ability to exercise discretion and unionization. In addition, employer characteristics (e.g., sector and size of workplace) are included because these are all associated with differences in job quality, especially pay (Dickens & Machin, 1998; KRH, 2000).⁸ Before discussing these, however, we need to consider the potential influence of gender.

To put it briefly, gender is an attribute that enhances the labor market capacity of men but undermines that of women. Within Britain, feminist scholars argue that the overwhelmingly female nature of the part-time workforce means that the effects of gender and contractual status either cannot be disentangled (Rubery, 1998) or else part-time work has poorer conditions because employers are able to exploit patriarchal attitudes toward women (Beechey & Perkins, 1987). In the latter case, feminists argue that part-time work is subject to processes of gender typing whereby women's work tends

to have lower pay, narrower job content, and fewer opportunities for promotion than men's work (Martin & Roberts, 1984; Reskin, 1993; Walby, 1986). We propose to disentangle the effects of gender and nonstandard work by controlling for *gender*. Though much of the literature on gender typing relates to occupations rather than employment contracts (i.e., full-time or part-time), we also include a measure for *workplace segregation* because it seems reasonable to assume that a similar composition effect might be present. In doing so, we expect female-dominated workplaces to carry a greater risk of bad conditions.

In relation to *education*, we expect those with relatively low levels of attainment to be less attractive to employers than those with a record of educational achievement. Their labor market choices will, as a consequence, be restricted to jobs that will have relatively poorer employment conditions. *Family status* is likely to be associated in that women are more likely to be in part-time work because they tend to take on a disproportionate share of childcare and housework. Therefore, we examine the difference between women with and without children, those who are married or unmarried, and those whose husbands are unemployed or at work. *Age* is likely to be associated in a curvilinear fashion. Younger employees with limited labor market experience are more likely to be at risk, as are older workers who lack employment alternatives.

We use *social class*, as conceptualized by Erickson and Goldthorpe (1993), to control for the possibility that those in white-collar positions may be less likely to be exposed to bad characteristics than those in waged-labor or blue-collar occupations.

Whatever their limitations, nonstandard jobs may serve as an important route into employment for those previously unemployed. As O'Connell and Gash (2003) argued, some of the substandard elements of part-time employment, such as lower wages, may be due to labor market mobility. In particular, a history of unemployment may result in a wage penalty that might explain some of the differences in earnings between part-time and full-time workers. By including *unemployment*, which we define as a period of 6 months or more without work in the previous 5 years, we follow O'Connell and Gash in giving some attention to labor market dynamics in addition to the personal characteristics of workers.

Sector in the sense of public or private sector is included to capture the idea that the market driven private sector may have lower employment standards than the state supported public sector. Finally, *workplace size* is included because employment relations in small firms are frequently informal and lacking in the kinds of fringe benefits associated with large firms (Rainnie, 1989).

NONSTANDARD JOBS AND SUBSTANDARD CONDITIONS

The results of our analysis are consistent with our hypothesis: nonstandard forms of employment are more likely to have bad characteristics than permanent full-time positions after controlling for a range of possible confounding factors. In particular, part-time jobs, whether temporary or permanent, and temporary jobs, whether fixed term or casual or “temp” agency, offer poorer conditions than the permanent full-time standard.⁹ Model 1 presents the results without unionization and autonomy, whereas Model 2 includes both (Table 2). The results are presented as incident rate ratios for ease of interpretation. For instance, what is the relative incidence rate of bad job characteristics for women relative to men, or for full-time employees relative to part-time employees? The incidence rate ratio for a change in x_i is $e^{b_i \Delta x_i}$. For example, referring to Table 2, women have 1.2 times the number of bad job characteristics than do men (or 20% more). Similarly, those in permanent part-time employment are 1.14 (or 14%) more likely to have such adverse conditions.

The relationship between employment conditions and union representation, as well as that with job autonomy, is also as expected. Workers who lack collective representation are almost 50% more likely to have substandard conditions than those who have union representation. Those with low levels of autonomy are also somewhat more inclined to have bad characteristics. But even when these variables are taken into consideration, we still find that all forms of nonstandard employment are significantly associated with bad characteristics (Model 2). Compared to standard, full-time permanent workers, full-time fixed term and temporary workers are exposed to the greatest number of bad job characteristics. Although permanent part-time workers are also more likely to experience poor terms and conditions compared to standard workers, they seem to be the least disadvantaged of the nonstandard categories used in our analysis.

In other words, it is not simply the absence of trade unions or low levels of discretion that are responsible for the association between nonstandard jobs and substandard conditions. The decision to include all forms of part-time, including those “in an otherwise standard arrangement” who are excluded by KRH (2000, p. 258), is supported. The results demonstrate that part-timers are more likely to have bad conditions than their full-time counterparts. In particular, those in part-time and permanent work, who might reasonably be expected to have higher levels of discretion, if not union membership, are associated with bad characteristics in both models.

It could be argued, from a statistical perspective, that these results might be influenced by some of the well-known problems relating to the analysis of pay. In this case, the results may be sensitive to the cut-off point used to

TABLE 2: Factors Relating to Bad Job Characteristics (Poisson Regression)

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
	<i>All</i>	<i>All</i>
Employment contract		
Full-time fixed term	1.60***	1.65***
Full-time temporary	1.72***	1.70***
Part-time permanent	1.17***	1.14*
Part-time fixed term	1.49***	1.56**
Part-time temporary	1.55***	1.48***
Autonomy		
Job autonomy		.95**
Union presence		
[Yes]		
No		1.46***
Gender		
[Man]		
Woman	1.22***	1.20***
Age		
Age	.960***	.97*
(Age) ²	1.00***	1.00*
Education		
[No qualifications]		
CSE, GCSE d-f	.999	.995
O-Level; GCSE a-c	1.00	.998
A-Level, AS-Level	.800**	.858
Degree or equivalent	.775***	.807**
Family status		
[Partner works]		
Partner unemployed	1.16*	1.11*
Single	1.10*	1.11*
Age of youngest child		
[no children]		
1 to 4 years	1.06	1.09
5 to 10 years	1.09	1.08
11+	1.02	1.03
Social class		
[Professional or managerial]		
Routine nonmanual	1.39***	1.34***
Technician or supervisor	1.44***	1.48***
Skilled manual	1.75***	1.67***
Unskilled manual	1.80***	1.73***
Unemployment		
[Not within 5 years]		
Within past 5 years	1.08*	1.06

TABLE 2 (continued)

<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Model 1</i>	<i>Model 2</i>
	<i>All</i>	<i>All</i>
Sector		
[Public]		
Private	1.50***	1.26***
Workplace size		
[500+]		
1 to 24	1.92***	1.63***
25 to 49	1.60***	1.41***
50 to 99	1.46***	1.31**
100 to 499	1.15	1.10
Workplace segregation		
[Men]		
Even mix	.994	.997
Mostly women	1.07	1.10

NOTE: Poisson regression; Model 1: n=1725, Model 2: n= 1725.

* $p < .05$. ** $p < .005$. *** $p < .001$.

dichotomize pay (low pay: yes or no) and by the well-known problem of missing data. To overcome these problems, we ran additional models using a lower level of pay (£4.10, which was closer to the then National Minimum Wage of £3.60) but found that the results were not pay sensitive (not shown). That is, the nonstandard effect still held even with these “really bad” jobs. Similarly, the exclusion of pay from the dependent count variable in other models made no difference.¹⁰ Substantively, it makes little sense to exclude pay from any conception of job quality so we concentrate on reporting those results that include low pay as one of the negative characteristics. In sum, our results lend further support to the argument advanced by KRH that employers use nonstandard jobs, including permanent part-time jobs, as a means of reducing labor costs.

While our primary objective has been to test for differences between standard and nonstandard jobs, some of the control variables have interpretative value. Although women are more likely than men to have jobs with bad characteristics, we still find an association with nonstandard forms of employment, including part-time employment, after controlling for gender. However, when we ran separate models for men and women (not shown) we found an interaction effect with part-time men being less prone to bad characteristics than part-time women. This interaction probably reflects differences between employees in that few men, for instance, enter part-time work after becoming parents. Workplace segregation, however, does not appear to sig-

nificantly increase the chances of being in a bad job. Even the results for workplaces that are mostly female fail to reach significance.

In relation to workers' personal characteristics, the results support the argument that those with the least market capacity, and consequently the least bargaining power, are the most likely to have bad jobs. Higher levels of human capital, as well as increasing age, reduce the risk of bad characteristics. University graduates, and indeed, those who complete secondary (high) school (Model 1 only) are unlikely to have jobs that are poorly paid, lack fringe benefits, and are not part of a formal career ladder. In terms of age, we find that as workers get older and acquire more experience their likelihood of being in a bad job declines until they reach their 50s and 60s. Then, as they approach pensionable age (65 in Britain), they increasingly move to nonstandard jobs either involuntarily, having being made redundant and facing limited alternatives, or to achieve greater flexibility during the remainder of working lives (Lissenburgh & Smeaton, 2003).

Unsurprisingly, those in professional and managerial employment are significantly less likely to be exposed to inferior conditions than those in the semi- and unskilled occupational classes or indeed those in routine nonmanual and technical or supervisory positions. However, workers who have been unemployed for 6 months or more in the previous 5 years inevitably have limited bargaining power and this increases the risk of having poor conditions (Model 1), though the effect is not significant once you control for unionization and job autonomy (see also, O'Connell & Gash, 2003). Generally, these results support the popular conception of "McJobs" in that they tend to be held by young people, with few qualifications and possibly a history of unemployment, require little skill, are poorly paid, have few fringe benefits and little prospect of upward mobility.

In terms of employer characteristics, the results are in line with those reported in studies of the low paid. For instance, those in small and medium sized firms and those in the private sector are more likely to have bad jobs. When compared with employees in large organizations (500+), the results on workplace size point to a linear relationship with smaller workplaces being significantly more likely to provide poor conditions. This is consistent with the general depiction of larger workplaces as being able to offer more bureaucratized forms of employment with better pay and fringe benefits (Dickens & Machin, 1998; Rainnie, 1989). It is also worth noting here that the private sector coefficient falls noticeably with the inclusion of the union and job autonomy variables. This is probably because the public sector has a significantly higher level of union membership (Cully, Woodland, O'Reilly, & Dix, 1999) and the sector effect declines once we control for union representation.

Turning to family matters, those whose partners are unemployed (Models 1 and 2) are more likely to have bad conditions. Furthermore, being single, especially if male (not shown), increases the risk of having bad conditions. Again, this is consistent with the evidence on the low paid that finds that single males are more inclined to be among the poorly paid than their married counterparts (Dickens & Machin, 1998; Gosling, Johnson, McCrae, & Paull, 1997).

DISCUSSION

The growth of nonstandard work arrangements has captured the attention of social commentators, sociologists and labor economists in Europe and North America. In this article, we set out to promote a transatlantic dialogue on the study of job quality and nonstandard employment by importing American methods to Britain. We also sought to strengthen the bad characteristics approach developed by KRH by including an additional indicator that captured the presence or, more precisely, the absence of formal job ladders. Despite national differences in labor market welfare arrangements, we found that nonstandard jobs increase workers' exposure to bad characteristics net of controls for personal, occupational and (some) employer characteristics.

How might we explain this result? In terms of labor market theory, it challenges the human capital argument that bad jobs go to those with low education, limited skill or responsibility, and a history of broken labor market commitments. More specifically, we find that after controlling for various indicators of human capital (e.g., education, autonomy or skill) as well as unemployment, nonstandard jobs are still more likely to have bad conditions, which suggests that there are institutional forces at work that are not captured by the human capital perspective. We believe that these result from a structural imbalance in the market capacities of employers and employees and differences in bargaining power account for some of the variations in labor market outcomes. Nonstandard jobs provide employers with an opportunity to cut labor costs to such an extent that we would argue that contractual status represents a form of labor market segmentation. In other words, the market for labor is segmented according to the nature of the employment contract, with a major division being that between standard and nonstandard contracts. That said, we acknowledge the possibility that employers may also use nonstandard, especially fixed-term contracts, to obtain certain kinds of expertise for a short period (e.g., computer programmers) and that such employees may be relatively well paid. Unfortunately, our data does not allow us to test this possibility for reasons we indicated earlier.

Nevertheless, where there are regulations limiting the way employers may use nonstandard contracts then we might expect such employees to have relatively better conditions. This, of course, is an argument for undertaking cross-national research or, at least, national studies with a comparative orientation of the kind undertaken here.

CONCLUSION

Although our research supports the idea that the growth of nonstandard forms of employment has fuelled the spread of bad jobs on both sides of the Atlantic, regulatory changes initiated by the European Union mean that the debate is entering a new phase. Since we conducted the *Working in Britain* survey in 2000, the New Labour government increased the National Minimum wage from £3.60 per hour to £4.50 in October 2003. It also implemented, after some delay, the European Union's Framework Directive on equality of treatment for part-time and fixed-term workers (but not agency temps) in July 2000. This means that they should have access, among other things to the same sick pay and pensions schemes as full-time workers. These developments, which again reflect transatlantic differences in the relationship between states and markets, suggest that part-time work, in particular, will not continue to be a comparatively inferior form of work. However, we would caution against accepting such a conclusion without further empirical research.

When Britain eventually introduced the EU Framework Directive on Part-time Workers, it framed the legislation in such a way that would benefit only 10% of all part-time workers, according to its own figures (McKay, 2001, p. 295). Much of this was due to the requirement that part-timers must find a full-time comparator within the same workplace. As many part-timers are in workplaces that have a high incidence of part-time employment (Cully et al., 1999, pp. 32-38) standard comparators are often difficult to find. Furthermore, there is evidence to suggest that full-time workers in largely part-time workplaces have had their pay held down, possibly through loss of bargaining power (White & Gallie, 1994). Consequently, it is not at all certain that the link between nonstandard and substandard forms of work will be completely severed.¹¹ Either way, further research will be required to determine the effects of the directives, both on a national basis and cross-nationally where Britain's minimalist interpretation of the measures suggests that it will continue to be the "America of Europe."

APPENDIX

Low pay

Our measure of low pay, which is based on half the median for full-time males, uses information on weekly earnings from the *New Earnings Survey* (2000). The weekly median (£386.6) was divided by 2 (giving £193.3) and then by 37.8, which is the average hours worked by all full-timers, excluding overtime hours. The resulting threshold (£5.11) was used to create a dichotomous variable using information on gross pay for the last pay period and the number of hours during that period from *Working in Britain*. It should be noted that 299 cases (or 14% of the cases) had missing information on pay. This is not unusual in large general surveys that include items on pay. The following items were used to obtain information on fringe benefits and having a job with a career ladder:

Pension and sick pay

"Which of these benefits do you get from your employer or are available to you if you need them?"

"Occupational pension scheme, beyond the basic state scheme."

"Sick pay, beyond the basic government scheme."

Promotion ladder

"Is your present job a step in a recognized career or promotion ladder within your organization?"

The answers were "Yes", "No", "Don't know."

Job autonomy

"Is yours a job which allows you to design and plan important aspects of your own work or is your work largely defined for you?"

"Do you decide the specific tasks that you carry out from day to day or does someone else?"

"Does someone else decide how much work you do or how fast you work during the day?"

"Can you decide on your own to introduce a new task or work assignment that you will do in your job?"

The answer to the third part was either the "respondent does" or "someone else does". Otherwise, the answers were either "yes" or "no".

Union presence

Employees were judged to lack union representation where they answered "no" to the first of these questions, or where they answered "yes" to the first part but "no" to the second part:

"Are there any trade unions or equivalent organizations where you work?"

"Yes", "No".

If "Yes", "Do they represent people doing your kind of work?"

NOTES

1. All figures in this section are from Labour Force Surveys, except where otherwise indicated.
2. Again, this contrasts with the measure used by KRH that is an hourly wage in the bottom quintile of the CPS sample or less than \$6.00 an hour in 1995 (2000, p. 260). However, when we included a lower rate of £4.10 we found that it made no substantive difference to our results.
3. The correlations are confirmed by reliability analysis. When the four items are entered as a standardized scale this produces a Cronbach's alpha of .6094. A three-item version consisting of low pay, pension, and sick pay has a Cronbach's alpha of .6105.
4. Although it is widely recognized that union density is much lower in the United States than in Britain, it is worth noting that both countries have experienced a substantial decline over the past quarter of a century (Western, 1997). Nevertheless, it is possible that the higher levels of unionization in Britain, especially among those in standard jobs, may result in a sharper distinction between standard and nonstandard employment conditions than in the United States.
5. KRH (2000, p. 263) do not have information on skill levels either. They use occupational complexity as a proxy for skill level.
6. We use a 4-item index of job autonomy (see Appendix). This has a reasonable degree of homogeneity with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.66.
7. Our estimate of the proportion that is low paid is quite high compared with other studies (e.g., Gosling et al., 1997). One reason for the difference is that our sample work longer hours on average than those included in the New Earnings Survey.
8. We decided not to include an industry variable as several industries have very few cases. Grouping them would have also meant abandoning a test for the popular distinction between 'good' manufacturing and "bad" service jobs.
9. Although our sample does not include sufficient numbers to analyze variations between different kinds of temporary employment, the evidence on hourly pay suggests that those on fixed-term contracts are paid much more than agency temps and seasonal workers. While this is suggestive, more research is required before the British literature can follow KRH in highlighting differences between different kinds of temporary work.
10. We also ran a series of regressions on each of the four items that make up our index of badness. Again, the results were generally consistent with what we report here.
11. In June 2003, Britain successfully led the challenge against a new European Union directive on extending equal rights to temporary workers, especially office temps (The Financial Times, June 4th).

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