NOTEWORTHY BOOKS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND LABOR ECONOMICS, 2007*

The Industrial Relations Section is pleased to announce that this year's winners of the Richard A. Lester Award are Greg J. Duncan, Aletha C. Huston, and Thomas S. Weisner for *Higher ground: New Hope for the working poor and their children*.


The contributors to this volume examine the effect of incarceration on the labor market prospects of ex-offenders. The results of their empirical work suggest that the increased use of incarceration for less-educated individuals will lead to a life of "erratic employment and low earnings," and a greater chance of recidivism. The editors summarize the prison experience as "seriously eroding the individual's human and social capital," resulting in: 1) a gap in the person's employment record, 2) the loss of cumulative job skills, 3) cutback on vocational training, 4) the acquisition of survival skills not suited to the workplace, and 5) diseases, at a time (late adolescence to young adulthood) when a person is consolidating skills and social contacts. Early chapters in the book outline current criminal justice and labor market practices and conditions, and the reentry experiences of post-release prisoners. Part II presents studies of employers' reactions to job-seeking ex-convicts. The chapters in Part III use administrative data from California, Florida, Ohio and Washington to measure the outcomes, labor market and otherwise, of released prisoners.


*Higher Ground* reports on New Hope, a three-year demonstration project that was created in Milwaukee, Wisconsin in August, 1994 by social activists and business leaders to provide benefits for unemployed people willing to work full time (30 hrs./week). The project's goal was to address certain barriers to working, not to fix all structural and institutional causes of poverty. New Hope was evaluated by the MDRC (Manpower Demonstration Research Corporation), which monitored the program's implementation and patterns of employment, earnings, and receipt of assistance. Information about official employment and income came from the administrative records of employers' payrolls and state food stamp and cash assistance program records. Applicants were assigned to the

*International Standard Book Numbers (ISBN) are given for each title to facilitate ordering from vendors or other purchasing outlets.*

Education and training in Europe looks at human capital development in relation to the economic problems facing European nations—low economic growth, labor market structure, increased international competition. The book suggests policies to make European educational systems and workplace training more efficient and accessible. The authors indicate that European countries have done a better job providing basic skills in the primary and secondary schools, where government investment is greater, than in post-secondary institutions for professional development. They believe that the policy objective of both promoting economic growth and preventing an increase in wage and income inequality can be accomplished by a greater infusion of private funding, including a moderate rise in university fees. This would improve individuals’ access to financing education and provide well-thought-out incentives to both secondary and post-secondary schools to do well and to students and trainees to follow the “right curriculum.”


Graham Hodges tells the story of New York City “hacks,” from 1907, when the first motorized vehicles came into use, through the beginning of the twenty-first century. Using a broad range of sources including films, plays, fiction, newspaper accounts, and cabdrivers’ memoirs, he paints a picture of fleet drivers and independent cab owners, who were difficult to unionize no matter how hard they struggled to earn a living and who suffered from both a poor public image and low self-esteem. Taxi drivers reflected the shifting demographics and social changes in America as the largely European immigrant-descendant force incorporated increasing numbers of African American drivers after World War II, and more recently immigrants from Russia, Africa and Asia. While various unionization drives were attempted, it was not until 1965 that an International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers local was established, offering beleaguered drivers health benefits and pensions. The appendix of data tables includes time series on the growth of the industry, the cost of medallions, taxi fares, average fleet driver earnings, and the number of licensed drivers.


Duane Leigh and Andrew Gill look at the labor market responsiveness of com-
munity colleges in California—the state that receives the largest number of immigrants and that has America's largest community college system and an enormous state budget. The authors used more than 300,000 observations for first-time freshmen for 1996 (followed over 6 years) from the Chancellor's Office to compare immigrant (Latino and Asian) with the white, native-born population. The authors found that Latino students lagged behind white students and that Asian students were superior to whites on the following measures: 1) transferring to four-year colleges, 2) receiving associates degrees, and 3) total credits earned in community college. By using the same occupational classifications for the skills taught at community colleges and for the employment projections for the local labor market (by county), Leigh and Gill were able to match the skills provided by the colleges with the skills demanded by employers. The authors conclude that it is the kind of training, not the volume of vocational education credits available, that make these programs relevant.


Murray challenges the view of Progressive reformers that the private workers' sickness funds that existed from the late nineteenth to the mid-twentieth century were inadequate and mismanaged and therefore justified the need for government health insurance. Because of the rapid passage of workers' compensation legislation from 1911 to 1920, the reformers thought compulsory health insurance laws would pass easily, but voters and state legislatures turned the bills down. The quantitative evidence Murray presents reveals that thirty percent of the American industrial labor force was covered by industrial sickness funds rather than the Progressive estimate of only five per cent. Murray also says that the funds were stable, competently managed, and adequately fulfilled their limited mission, which was to keep workers and their families from becoming destitute. Murray argues that by the mid-twentieth century the technological advances in actuarial science made commercial insurance a better value, which contributed to the industrial fund's decline. Several tables of regressions calculated by the author can be found in the text and appendix of the volume. Appendix A also contains annotated descriptions of the data collected for the study.


The eleven essays in this volume provide empirical evidence about how the change in economic factors, specifically wage rates, job opportunities, access to health insurance, housing costs, and debt, contributes to the varied and lengthening transition to adulthood. The first five chapters address achieving stable employment and completing schooling. The chapters in Part II examine trends in marriage and living arrangements, analyzing employment and wage outcomes, housing costs, and debt as explanations of declining marriage and childbearing and increased rates of living with parents. The editors point out the importance of non-economic factors, "social norms" such as increasing occupational opportunities for women and the decreasing stigma of single parenthood, that are difficult to quantify. Part III focuses on the effects of differences in family background and increased incarceration rates on achieving independence.

Using data from the Health and Retirement Study (HRS) survey of 22,000 individuals, the contributors to this volume assess the financial and health prospects in retirement of Americans born between 1946 and 1966. Chapters in Part I discuss such issues as the Boomers' expectations that they will be working longer than previous generations. Though retiree wealth for the early Boomers is projected to rise, longer life expectancy indicates that the increase will not be sufficient to generate greater annual income than that received by older cohorts. Part II includes findings about health and health insurance. Though Baby Boomers smoke less, they are more obese according to David Weir (Chapter 5) with a concomitant rise in rate of diabetes (39%), a slight increase in hypertension and stroke, and a 32% increase in “self-reported pain.” The authors in Part III review retirement assets. For example, Annamaria Lusardi and Jason Beach (Chapter 13) found that close to one third of the Boomer respondents “gave no thought to retirement,” even with the event within sight. They recommend, therefore, that savings stimulation policies should be directed to groups least likely to plan.


In 2002, Jacob Mincer became the first recipient of the IZA’s Institute for the Study of Labor prize for lifetime achievement in labor economics. The current volume attempts a comprehensive analysis of Mincer’s work and his contribution to shaping modern labor economics, both in terms of his own research and the students and colleagues he drew to the study of human capital. Mincer is regarded as a founder of human capital research, and indeed modern labor economics as a whole. Teixeira places Mincer’s work in historical context, describing the evolving notions of human capital from the late-eighteenth century on, the development of a research program centered on the economic value of education in the mid-twentieth century, and the criticism of human capital analysis in the 1970s.


To ascertain the views of workers in the United States, Canada, Great Britain, Ireland, Australia and New Zealand, the authors of What workers say used the responses from a linked set of surveys based on the 1994-95 Worker Representation and Participation Survey in the United States and the 2001 British Worker Representation and Participation Study. The book's initial chapters present the results for each of the six countries. The next chapters discuss the implications of the survey responses for unions, employers and governments. In Chapter 7, David Peetz and Ann Frost write that union members reported satisfaction with unions and that many nonmembers, including one third of workers in nonunionized workplaces, said they would join if given the opportunity. Peetz and Frost assert that unions need to develop new models of organizing to reach out to younger employees, new workplaces and segments of the workforce that have been overlooked. The editors contend that the United States labor regulation model fares badly when compared to those of other Anglo-American countries in giving employees voice, which have “allowed workers to choose unions more freely and firms to develop nonunion voice practices more freely alongside union ones” (p. 218).