The Industrial Relations Section is pleased to announce that this year’s winner of the Richard A. Lester Award is Stephen A. Wandner for *Solving the reemployment puzzle: From research to policy.*


Using the experiences of thirty-three women in Milwaukee and Racine, Wisconsin, the authors describe the impact of welfare reform on the working poor. The authors used a work history approach in their study, asking their subjects about jobs held, work or home crises that required them to seek out welfare assistance and programs, and how welfare affected their work lives. Their informants represent the growing, low-wage service sector segment. They are women who provide the primary economic support for their families and who deal with what the authors describe as “the dilemmas that our current labor markets and social policy regimes have created for struggling families.” (p. xii)


The eastern expansion of the European Union in 2004 and 2007 caused concern about the impact of migration to the western states of a sizeable population bloc with lower incomes, from countries undergoing a transformation to a market-based economy and free society. Preliminary findings of the IZA Migration Program Area research are that in general migrant workers have not crowded out local citizens from the labor market, lowered their wages, nor monopolized welfare support. The skilled labor these workers provided has contributed to the economic development of the host countries. Source countries benefitted from workers’ remittances and frequently from their new skills.


Frazier examines recent changes in the Chinese government’s most expensive function, old-age pensions which have risen at a rate of over 15 per cent per year. These funds, now controlled by local cities and counties, which took them over from state-owned enterprises, have become the channel for corrupt gain. Pension reforms have not helped low-income populations or regions as the government claims. Frazier states that “the Chinese case sheds light on the constraints and possibilities for welfare policies in large economies with high levels of inequality.” (p. 176) He points out that it is very difficult politically to reduce these benefits once they are established, planting the seed for an even larger financial commitment for the government in the future.

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

Getman uses the history of the Hotel Employees & Restaurant Employees International Union (HERE) to illustrate current successes and failures of organized labor. He calls for reform of labor law, which he believes gives advantage to employers. More effective, he feels, would be reinforcing the unions’ right to strike and eliminating permanent replacement of striking workers. Getman criticizes the structure and leadership of the current labor movement, chastising union leaders for their reluctance to risk “imaginative job actions” (p. xii) and to accept “responsibility for their organizing and bargaining failures.” (p. 5)


The author analyzes in detail six well-known proposals to reform social security using DEMSIN, Demographic and Economic Microsimulation. This independent, private sector initiative takes into account the interactions between demographic and economic variables, particularly in projecting labor earnings. His results, based on the method’s baseline assumptions, intimate that the program’s financial condition is significantly worse than official projections.


The authors use *Health and Retirement Study* (HRS) data to explore pensions of the retirement age population of the United States (1992-2006) and relate it to other retirement wealth. They focus on plan type, values, participation, and eligibility ages for various benefits. Comparisons among different cohorts highlight the shift to defined contribution from defined benefit plans and changing sources of retirement income. Plan descriptions allowed researchers to determine how well employees understand their pensions. Results of their study indicate that participation in pensions is more extensive than commonly believed, that women’s pensions are rapidly improving, and that the reduction in total wealth from the 2008-2009 stock market decline is relatively small for the current retirement age population.


The authors analyze data from the *Women’s Employment Study* (WES), “a survey of 753 low-income single mothers in Michigan who were interviewed five times between 1997 and 2003.” (p. 22) Their findings suggest that welfare reform has created risks for child development. The authors demonstrate that the type of work a mother did, the number of hours she worked, and the flexibility of her job made a critical difference. They recommend the implementation of policies that stabilize unpredictable work schedules, strengthen job retention, and improve advancement to higher-skill work and ultimately better earnings for working mothers.


This companion volume to the author’s 2008 *Managing the human factor* (ILR Press ISBN 978-0-8014-4227-8) contains cases studies that enhance his earlier history of personnel management from the mid-1870s to the early 1930s. From his sources, including confidential reports of the Industrial Relations Counselors, Inc. and its predecessor, the industrial relations staff of the law firm Curtis, Fosdick, and Belknap, he compiled reports on the personnel policies and practices of individual firms. Kaufman is the first researcher to be given access to the IRC reports and has done a valuable service in conveying their contents through his analytical and historical understanding of industrial relations issues.

Koller explores the ongoing success of the Lincoln Electric Company, which was able to maintain its admired management practices and profitability even during the Great Depression and Great Recession. From early in the 20th century, open communication between managers and workers, a piece rate pay system, and an annual merit-based bonus system were major components of the company’s management system. Its signal achievement was the promise of guaranteed employment as long as workers met certain productivity and performance standards. James Lincoln, general manager and brother of the company founder, was a critic of both government intervention in the workplace and the failure of business executives to understand what motivated their employees. He was also an opponent of unions and none of the few attempts at organizing Lincoln workers succeeded.


Four popular explanations for the decline in wages, union strength, and employment and job tenure at the end of the 20th century (technology, globalization, growing inequality between skilled and unskilled workers, and the immigration of unskilled workers) are discussed. The impact of these trends and the response of their economies differed in the United States, Europe, and Japan, depending on the relative strength of trade unions, the structure of financial markets, training and education policies, and wage and income inequality.


At the conference “Labor in the New Economy,” held November, 2007, academic and government economists examined the condition of workers, the changing demographics of the labor force, flexible and alternative employment arrangements, declining job security, and increased wage inequality. Contributors compared employer-reported to household-reported data and studied how changing labor force demographics affect the measurement of labor force activity. For example, in “Job Loss and the Decline in Job Security in the United States,” Henry Farber finds evidence in recent Current Population Survey data that average job tenure in the private sector has declined sharply for older men (50+), but not for women.


This volume focuses on policy reforms that contributed to Sweden’s recovery from its early 1990s economic crisis. The economy’s recovery was stronger and faster than had been expected with a more even income distribution. While Sweden’s underlying welfare state arrangements have largely continued, government expenditures were reduced and the economy became more competitive. Some of the policy changes that were put into effect include setting the expenditure ceiling for the central government for three years at a time, broadening the tax base and reducing the top marginal rates, changing the pension system to a quasi-funded, more actuarial system, increasing earned income tax credits, abolishing the gift and inheritance tax, deregulating network industries and other monopolies, and creating a primary and secondary school voucher system.


Schmidt explains how rulings in state appellate court cases about industrial accidents,
led to a new understanding of childhood itself. While Progressive Age reformers fought for protective legislation against child labor, families in the 19th century expected their children to earn a livelihood and develop their skills in a safe workplace. When incidents of children’s death and injury occurred, their families went to court to seek redress from employers. The opinions of judges hearing these cases gradually established law regarding youth workers that was separate from that covering adult workers and that included new definitions of childhood as a period when children’s activities should be restricted to school and play.


The National Bureau for Economic Research conference papers included in this volume discuss shared modes of compensation such as employee ownership, profit sharing, and stock options. The authors analyzed data from a survey of approximately 40,000 employees in fourteen companies as well as responses to compensation sharing arrangements questions that were added to the 2002 and 2006 General Social Survey. Their results indicate that shared capitalism is likely to raise profitability and productivity and is linked to benefits such as better pay and job security.


In this study of the public workforce development system in the United States, the authors see a need for investment in a broader spectrum of skills development. They criticize both the “college for all” assumption and the global hegemony of the United States. In chapter 3, Lynn and Salzman recommend that firms organize their science and technology work across national boundaries in a global commons. Scurman and Soares (chapter 6) address the changed skills set required in the workplace and propose integrating liberal arts and vocational/professional curricula at the post-secondary level, connecting job training programs to degree paths, connecting various types of postsecondary education providers, and creating state-based assessment centers.


Wandner reviews research on the reemployment services created to help workers who suffer permanent job loss, and describes how the government accepted or ignored the results of that research in establishing policy. The author was involved in unemployment insurance (UI) experiments from the first proposals in 1985, through the design, operation and evaluation (1985-1996), to 1993 legislation and the programs it created. These services included comprehensive job search help, reemployment bonuses, training and training vouchers, and self-employment assistance. He concludes with recommendations for improving programs by providing proper implementation, sufficient funding, better participation incentives, and finding more effective and efficient designs.


Researchers examined how employers have responded in both their business aims and in the structure of their workplaces to the change from the two-parent-one-bread-winner model to more diverse working families. They conclude that flexibility is required in the time and/or place in which work occurs to address a growing societal need. Support is also needed for career exit, maintenance and reentry.