NOTEWORTHY BOOKS IN INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND LABOR ECONOMICS, 2009*


The authors chose the 1999 entering cohort to follow the college completion rate of a sample student group over six years. They also studied outcomes at twenty-one leading public universities, and at statewide systems in Maryland, North Carolina, Ohio, and Virginia, since public systems are the most frequent point of entry for students of modest means. Among their conclusions: the low overall college completion rate is systematically related to race and ethnicity, gender, and socioeconomic status; large disparities remain in graduation rates between highly selective schools and public universities; high school grades and scores on subject achievement tests, rather than aptitude scores are better predictors of graduation rates; “reliable, simple, and predictable provision of financial aid,” in contrast to the complex packages more commonly available, would advance college completion. (p. 189)


The papers included in this volume analyze changes in poverty and in antipoverty policies in the United States over the past forty years and review the changing role of race and ethnicity in the labor market. Aspects examined include the outdated poverty measure, the increased labor force participation of women, the large number of single mother-headed families, and poverty mobility. Because minorities make up more than half of all poor people, the editors state that “policies addressing racial and ethnic disparities in opportunities and outcomes” are needed in addition to race-neutral antipoverty policies. (p. 7)


The authors bring their experiences as university administrators as well as researchers to this study of non-tenure track (NTT) faculty at elite research institutions. They point out that the common understanding that NTT faculty are hired as a cost-saving measure greatly oversimplifies the issue. The underlying problems Cross and Goldenberg identify are: hiring is done without regard to an overall staffing strategy; the contributions of these faculty members are not evaluated adequately; these teachers are treated simultaneously as second-class citizens and as full voting members of the faculty. The remedies the authors propose include improved management information systems, development of shared governance practices with pivotal roles for faculty, establishing expectations for

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the instructional contributions of senior faculty "stars," giving sustained support to the humanities, arts, and social sciences, areas where the investment returns to education may not be immediate, and judicious use of business models that support the institution's mission.


The papers in this volume, presented originally at an October 2006 conference, describe efforts to improve and increase the pool of future faculty. Among those efforts were the Mellon Foundation's Graduate Education Initiative, which funded initiatives in the social sciences and humanities at the departmental level, the Council of Graduate Schools PhD Completion Project, which supported improvements in science, engineering, and mathematics, the Carnegie Initiative on the Doctorate, which underwrote apprenticeship in pedagogy, and the work of the National Research Council's Committee on Women in Science and Engineering. Other chapters address issues of attracting undergraduates to PhD study, increasing representation of people of color in the PhD pool, increasing the representation of women in academia, and the internationalization of doctoral education. These include the chapter by Maresi Nerad, who used data from three national comprehensive surveys of PhD career paths and educational outcomes to disprove common assumptions about PhD recipients and their employment status, such as the desirability of professorial positions and the constraints in accepting academic job offers, and Linda Abriola and Margery Davies' description of the recruitment and retention policies of Tufts University's School of Engineering, which has a significantly larger percentage of both women students and faculty than the national average.


In addition to facing the overwhelming problems presented by the Great Depression, Frances Perkins, the nation's first female Secretary of Labor, needed to contend with gender discrimination. Superbly qualified for the position through her academic, professional and political training, Perkins became a valued colleague and confidant to President Franklin D. Roosevelt, and engineered the passage of such milestone federal legislation as the Social Security Act and the Fair Labor Standards Act. At the start of her professional life, Perkins followed the path of social work/social reform that was available to upper middle class women during the Progressive era and quickly arrived at the political arena, where she was mentored by Al Smith and Robert Wagner. After becoming acquainted with Roosevelt, who was then New York State Governor, she was appointed by him to serve as Industrial Commissioner. At the national level, her last government appointment on the U.S. Civil Service Commission disappointed Perkins, who had hoped to head the Social Security Administration. In her personal life, marriage brought her the unexpected burdens of a chronically ill, eventually institutionalized husband, and similarly affected daughter, but several close friendships provided Perkins with both financial and emotional support throughout her life.


This book explores the characteristics, impacts, attitudes and responses of the governments, employers and trade unions of seven sending and receiving countries to the cross-border labor mobility in the post-enlargement (post-2004) European Union. The researchers found that between 2003 and 2005 the increase in net migration flows for the EU-15 as a whole was relatively small, 0.2%, with the UK and Ireland as notable exceptions. Evidence from the four receiving countries
in the study indicates that employment opportunities played an important role in driving these flows. The push factors in the sending countries included a dissatisfaction with general social and living standards as well as with working conditions and labor relations. In their new resident countries, the migrants performed routine manual work requiring little training or skills, and were frequently overqualified for this work or were working in a sector different than that for which they were trained. The study found that the inflow of labor did not seriously affect the wages or employment opportunities of domestic workers in receiving countries.


The papers contributed to this volume focus on three areas pertaining to public employee pensions. First, in the section on financial aspects of public employee pensions, the authors examine accounting methods (actuarial or market-based) and the possibility of changing the rules that govern them, whether actuarial projections are tied to economic realities and market conditions, the traditional defined benefit (DC) plans, pension funding volatility, the relative costs of hiring public versus private sector employees, and administrative costs of public sector plans. The chapters in the second section review reforms in Japan, Canada, and Germany, as well as the United States. The last section deals with political economy and how public pension assets are perceived and managed.


The authors of this volume conducted an independent study of the partnership, begun in 1995, between Kaiser Permanente (KP), the country’s leading not-for-profit HMO, and the labor unions that represent its 90,000 employees. While this development is described as both advancing health care delivery, in spite of some bureaucratic aspects, and providing new models for labor-management negotiations, the authors are quick to point out that it is not a perfect solution. The California Nurses Association, for example, is highly critical of the partnership and has refused to join it. Nonetheless, the partnership has persisted, weathering even the break-up of the AFL-CIO in 2005, which left KP unions on both sides of the split. Among the partnership accomplishments are the peaceful settlement of the labor-management struggles of the 1990s, the successful negotiation of three national bargaining contracts, and survival of a stressful CEO transition. The authors conclude “that where the partnership was active, it had significant effects on reducing costs, improving workers’ views of their jobs and of Kaiser as a place to get health care, and ... improving clinical performance.” (p. 226)


Labor market outcomes in the cities that exist across the Mexico—United States border from each other are markedly different. On the American side, there are lower earnings and higher unemployment rates compared to the rest of the United States, while workers in the Mexican “twin” cities live at a higher socio-economic level than other Mexicans, though lower than people across the border. Contributors to this volume address border labor market issues related to migration, trade, gender, education, earnings, and employment, such as the low educational attainment and per-capita income of the young, rapidly growing border population, the evolution of the maquiladoras, the determinants of wages among Mexican immigrant women on the U.S. side of the border, and the net effect of Mexican migration on the public economy of the U.S. border states.

The aim of this volume is to extend conventional economic analysis by developing a system of “National Time Accounting (NTA)” to measure and compare how people spend their time, evaluating the full array of human emotional experiences. The editor and his collaborators collected time-diary information with the added emotional component. Critics of this method, including George Loewenstein, say that the NTA cannot account for moments in life which do not contribute to the national income nor can it capture one’s overall satisfaction or dissatisfaction with one’s life as a whole. In Chapter 3, David Cutler adds that the NTA is not successful as a measurement, because “existential happiness is not just about material goods consumption.” (p.108) He adds that some activities which are not measurable in themselves lead to a benefit. To William Nordhaus’ argument that subjective experience cannot be compared from person to person, Alan Krueger responds that it is “more a philosophical than an empirical argument.” (p. 5) Blanchflower points out that the NTA is better than more conventional data on life satisfaction at understanding differences between groups, though it is more costly and difficult to collect.


The authors studied gender inequality in the labor market in the United States and several European nations, using four economic measures (paid work, hours worked, occupational gender segregation, and gender inequality in wages) and examining how these vary for men and women with different educational attainment and in relation to the number and ages of their children. Pettit and Hook tie these economic measures to national notions of gender and family obligations, with particular attention to the wide variation in legislation mandating job-protected parenting-related leaves and other conditions in different countries. For gender differences in employment and wages, they conclude that “inequality is institutionalized through households and within markets.” (p. 65) They also found that having children does not necessarily have a negative impact on women’s occupational choices. Though women have made economic gains relative to men over the past thirty years, disparity in wages “is connected to inequalities in the domestic obligations associated with child rearing,” (p. 144) with some evidence that highly skilled women are opting out of child-rearing, either “through forgoing child-bearing altogether or by having other people care for their children.” (p. 177)


The goal of this volume is to provide an understanding of intermediaries and the role they play in labor markets. The papers, which were originally prepared for a conference held in May 2007 before the downturn in the economy, analyze online job search engines, criminal record providers, public employment offices, state regulatory agencies, labor unions, centralized job matching markets, and temporary help agencies. In Chapter 11, “Temporary Help Agencies and the Advancement Prospects of Low Earners,” Fredrik Andersson, Harry J. Holzer, and Julia Lane describe their use of new Census Bureau longitudinal data from five states on workers covered by unemployment insurance and their employers to estimate the effects of temporary employment on the earnings of persistently low earners over a six-year period. The results of their study showed that the employees’ earnings increased if they found steady work with another employer. Because finding higher paying employment is often difficult for this type of worker, temporary employment agencies can help them overcome such problems as employer discrimination, the job seeker’s limited information, transportation, and geographic mismatch.