10-1-2005

Employment Research, Vol. 12, No. 4, October 2005

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Citation

W.E. Upjohn Institute. 2005. Employment Research 12(4). [https://doi.org/10.17848/1075-8445.12\(4\)](https://doi.org/10.17848/1075-8445.12(4))

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Employment Research

OCTOBER 2005

The Upjohn Institute
Celebrates 60 Years

Mini-Grants

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"Noteworthy Books"

Vol. 12, No. 4

Employment Research is published quarterly by the W.E. Upjohn Institute for Employment Research. Issues appear in January, April, July, and October.

The Institute is a nonprofit research organization devoted to finding and promoting solutions to employment-related problems at the national, state, and local level. The Institute is an activity of the W.E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation, which was established in 1932 to administer a fund set aside by Dr. W.E. Upjohn, founder of the Upjohn Company, to conduct research on the causes and effects of unemployment and seek measures for the alleviation of the hardships suffered by the unemployed.

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The Upjohn Institute Celebrates 60 Years

This year marks the Institute's 60th anniversary. The Institute has pursued its mission of researching and publicizing practical solutions to the hardships of unemployment since 1945. The fact that the Institute can celebrate 60 years of researching employment-related issues and informing policymakers about them underscores the enduring importance of labor market issues on the national and international agenda.

The Institute grew out of one man's concern for the precarious fate of workers in his community. The year was 1932 and the nation was plunged into a deep economic depression. Upwards of 25 percent of the nation's workforce was without jobs, leaving countless families destitute. Dr. W.E. Upjohn, founder and head of the Upjohn Company, employed a good share of the workforce within the Kalamazoo area, and he was concerned about the prospect of laying off his own workers as well as the broader problem of the hardships of the unemployed in the community. At this time in the nation's history, no government-supported safety net for the jobless existed. Social Security had not yet been established, and neither had the unemployment insurance (UI) system.

To address this void, Dr. Upjohn established the W.E. Upjohn Unemployment Trustee Corporation, which, as stated in his will, was "for the purpose of establishing a benevolent and

charitable institution for research into the causes and effects of unemployment and to study and investigate the feasibility and methods of insuring against unemployment and devise ways and means of preventing and alleviating the distress and hardship caused by unemployment."

The trust also provided for experimenting with innovative solutions to employment problems. To address the immediate issue of the joblessness around him, Dr. Upjohn purchased a large tract

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of farmland northeast of Kalamazoo. As a physician who had started his career practicing in rural Michigan, he saw farming as a way of providing the social safety net that could protect workers from the vagaries of an industrial economy. On this piece of land, he envisioned laid-off workers growing enough food for their families and some extra to sell for other essential items.

The farm program did not last long, however. Economic conditions began to improve and, fortunately, the company was not forced to lay off workers. It is reported that a few displaced workers

FAR Photography

The Institute's facilities from 1945 to the present.

from other companies availed themselves of the free land to provide for their families. In 1935, the federal government stepped in with Social Security pensions, the UI system, which provided short-term cash support, and an extensive public works program, which offered work opportunities. The grand experiment of setting aside land outside of America's cities was replaced with other programs. Yet, the concern about unemployment

and its flip side, sustainable full employment, remained a top national priority.

In fulfilling the mission of the trust to research employment issues, the trustees established the Institute in 1945. They consulted with many experts from around the country. The trustees had few models to guide their decision. Some

Dr. Upjohn saw farming as a way of providing the social safety net that could protect workers from the vagaries of an industrial economy.

experts whom the trustees consulted had floated the idea of funding an entity associated with a university or other larger organization. Yet, the trustees were concerned that such affiliations, while offering benefits, could also create distractions for the trust from pursuing its central purpose. They decided that an independent organization was the best way to ensure the pursuit of the trust's unique mission.

During its early years, the Institute focused on local employment issues. Its first program centered on a plan for a closely coordinated, comprehensive

community manpower service system. It included vocational guidance, testing, counseling, training, placement, and job analysis. Central to this program was a strong research function, dedicated to understanding the local labor market and to evaluating the effectiveness of various programs. The Institute also solicited input from local business leaders on their employment needs. In retrospect, one can see that these elements were precursors to the system that is governing the federal and state workforce development programs today—locally administered reemployment and training services guided by input from the local business community.

As the federal government continued to assume an increasing role in addressing workforce issues, the Institute also expanded its scope to include national issues of job separation, unemployment and income maintenance, hiring practices throughout the business cycle, the job-seeking of youth, and UI program design. The Institute sought to provide insight into the issues confronting policymakers and to better understand the policies devised to address these issues. For instance, the Institute commissioned the first comprehensive description and analysis of the UI system, which became the "bible" of academics, policymakers, and practitioners for several decades. The Institute established a Washington, D.C., office so it could be a major participant in designing and evaluating federal programs and in informing lawmakers. Later, as these government programs were scaled back and responsibilities for workforce programs were increasingly devolved to state and local governments, the Institute consolidated its activities in Kalamazoo.

Today, the Upjohn Institute numbers nearly 60 employees divided between two divisions. The research division, with nine Ph.D. economists and a strong support staff, continues the mission of conducting research on practical solutions to employment-related problems. It also publishes books on these topics and gives out grants to researchers around the world. As a modern-day equivalent of the "farm" experiment, the Institute, through its Employment Management Services

Dr. W.E. Upjohn.

Division, also administers the federal and state employment job training and welfare-to-work programs for the local area. These programs provide job training and job search assistance to thousands of local residents annually.

The marriage of research and operations provides a unique opportunity for the Institute to pursue innovative projects. During the past decade, the Institute has partnered with federal, state, and local agencies to use research findings and techniques to develop systems and management tools that help to improve the delivery of employment services, which in turn enhance the employment and earnings outcomes of workers. These initiatives include a system of management tools that uses statistical analysis of administrative data

Our perspective on employment issues has always included the well-being of the individual and the local community, both of which were the focus of Dr. Upjohn's compassion and concern.

and wage records to provide customized information to job seekers and frontline staff in one-stop career centers; a performance adjustment model for states and local workforce development areas that accounts for factors outside the local administrators' control so that they can focus on what matters for improving the delivery of services; a pilot program that uses a statistical model to target resources to welfare-to-work participants; plus many others.

The Institute has also recently unveiled a "model program" for the delivery of workforce development services that its Employment and Management Services Division is implementing with the active participation of local employers and social service agencies. Besides being the model program for delivering services, the Employment and Management Services Division is also one of three pilot sites in the state for a new prisoner reentry program.

Groundbreaking ceremony at 300 S. Westnedge in June of 1964.

The Institute continues to strive to better understand the effectiveness of workforce programs through rigorous evaluation at all levels. Members of the staff have engaged in evaluations of the national UI system, state workforce programs, and local initiatives. The Institute's research agenda also includes studies on the effect of education and job training on employment outcomes, efforts to expand our understanding of local labor market and employer workforce needs, and assessments of the administration of workers' compensation programs. Staff members have devoted considerable attention to the disadvantaged. Major projects include exploring the importance of creating additional jobs for low-wage workers and the long-run effectiveness of using alternative job search arrangements, such as temporary help agencies, in securing and retaining employment and in career advancement. Our staff also pioneered research into the measures employers can take to reduce accidents and workers' compensation claims.

The Institute has expanded its scope to include international issues, recognizing the global nature of the economy and the

lessons that can be shared across different institutions and cultures. Projects include examining job reallocations in transitioning eastern European countries, explaining the factors behind entrepreneurship and new firm startups, and developing and evaluating active labor market programs in these countries. In pursuing these issues, the Institute has worked closely with organizations

Undoubtedly, the issues that the Institute has addressed during its first 60 years will continue to dominate local, national, and international agendas.

such as the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), the World Bank, the International Labor Organization, and the European Union.

Throughout its 60 years, the Institute has benefited from a unique perspective on employment issues. As an organization, we have grown up with the nation's attempts to address the consequences and hardships of unemployment, dating from the

establishment of the public employment service in 1933 and the passage of the Social Security Act and the creation of the UI system in 1935, to the Workforce Investment Act, which was enacted in 1998 and currently governs our nation's workforce development programs. All of these programs began after the trusteeship was established and have matured during the years when the Institute was engaged in research on these issues.

Throughout this evolution of programs, we have seen a need to be the unbiased evaluator of the issues before us, to help determine what works and doesn't work in meeting these social needs. We pride ourselves on offering that service and on providing accessible information to all those who are concerned with and engaged in these issues—academics, policymakers, and practitioners—as evidenced in part by the more than 200 books we have published.

At the same time, our perspective on employment issues has always included the well-being of the individual and the local community, both of which were the focus of Dr. Upjohn's compassion and concern. We began with a local focus, and that focus continues to drive the research and other activities of the Institute. Undoubtedly, the issues that the Institute has addressed during its first 60 years will continue to dominate local, national, and international agendas. While specific issues move up and down the priority list as political agendas change, the Institute will maintain a store of knowledge to help inform the policy discussion, regardless of the topic. We will continue to pursue our mission of providing rigorous research on these matters, and to be a resource and catalyst for devising innovative ways to improve the circumstances of those lacking employment opportunities and experiencing the hardships of unemployment.

2005 Dissertation Award Results

FIRST PRIZE

Dr. Chris Riddell

University of Toronto

Three Essays on Labour Policy

Legislation is typically passed to accomplish some goal that benefits the majority of society. Sometimes, however, public policies lead to unanticipated and undesirable outcomes. This dissertation examines the side-effects of three very different and very important labour laws in Canada.

The first chapter examines the impact of union recognition laws and the role of management opposition using data on private sector certifications from British Columbia between 1978 and 1998. Overall, the results indicate that virtually the entire 19-percentage-point decline in success rates that occurred during the 1984–1992 election regime can be attributed to the union recognition procedure alone. Moreover, management opposition to unions was about twice as effective in the voting system.

The second chapter examines the impact of the availability of welfare checks on drug consumption and health outcomes using hospital records on injection users from a major hospital in Vancouver. The results indicate that drug users are much more likely to leave the hospital against medical advice—thereby interrupting their treatment—on check day.

The final chapter utilizes a natural experiment to evaluate the long-run impact of unemployment insurance in New Brunswick. Using the five decennial censuses over the period 1940–1991, the paper exploits the comparison over time between New Brunswick and Maine to estimate the long-term effects of UI program parameters on labor market outcomes. The results indicate that New Brunswick's shift to a more generous UI system in 1955, and particularly in 1972, significantly increased the frequency of part-year work, especially among women.

HONORABLE MENTION

Dr. Joel Elvery

University of Maryland

The Impact of Enterprise Zones on Resident Employment: An Evaluation of the Enterprise Zone Programs of California and Florida

This dissertation estimates the impact of two geographically targeted economic development programs on the employment of people living in the targeted area. This question is difficult to address for a number of reasons. Unlike in most program evaluation problems, the process that determines the outcome of interest (resident employment) happens at a lower level of aggregation than the process that determines selection for treatment. Therefore, standard program evaluation techniques have to be modified to address this issue. The enterprise zone programs of California and Florida were designated at a very detailed level of geography, making it hard to measure the location and characteristics of the zones.

A methodology is developed to address the unusual selection process of these programs. The first step is to create a neighborhood-level measure of the component of residents' employment probabilities explained by the neighborhood that is conditional on characteristics of area residents. The next step is to estimate the effect of enterprise zones on resident employment by comparing the conditional employment probabilities of neighborhoods containing enterprise zones with those of comparable areas.

The findings reveal that a substantial portion of the variation across neighborhoods in employment rates can be explained by controlling for the attributes of residents. This indicates that it is important to control for resident characteristics when making cross-neighborhood comparisons. Even though the focus is on two very targeted and generous enterprise zone programs, there is no evidence that the programs impacted the employment of zone residents.

Mini-Grant-Funded Research

The Upjohn Institute provides small levels of funding, called mini-grants, intended to facilitate the research and publications of nontenured faculty. We will occasionally use Employment Research to feature work that has been partially supported by an Upjohn Institute mini-grant.

Industry Growth and Decline and Changes in the Gender and Education Wage Gaps During the 1980s

Paul J. Devereux
University of California, Los Angeles

Using panel data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics that cover a long period of time, this study finds that industry growth and decline had a large effect on wages during the 1976–2001 period. Over 10-year periods, workers who were initially in industries that subsequently declined have slower wage growth than other workers. Furthermore, workers who were predicted, based on their education, sex, and industry affiliation at the beginning of the decade, to be likely to move to industries that subsequently declined have much slower wage growth than other workers. This suggests that some skills are neither industry-specific nor purely general in nature. The effects of industry-demand changes on wages are larger for younger workers but similar for men and women.

These estimates are used to predict how the relative wages of different education, sex, and race groups were affected by changes in industry composition during the decade of the 1980s. A simple accounting scheme using regression estimates suggests that changes in industrial composition can account for most of the within-cohort increase in the wages of women relative to men and 30–50 percent of the increase in the relative wage of more education groups within cohorts. These effects are larger than those typically reported in studies that use repeated cross sections to study changes in relative wages across cohorts. The smaller increase in the

wages of whites relative to nonwhites cannot be explained by changes in industry demand.

The results have some interesting interpretations: they suggest that it is overly restrictive to describe skills as being either completely general or specific to one industry. Individuals can be seen as having a portfolio of skills that have different values in different industries. Shifts in labor demand across industries lead to changes in the value of the portfolio of skills. Other research shows how the male–female wage gap closed during the 1980s despite the fact that women had fewer general skills (in terms of education and experience) and the return on general skill increased. The results suggest that although women had fewer general skills, their portfolios for industry-specific skills increased in value over the decade relative to those of men. This was an important factor in the reduction of the male–female wage gap over this period.

Using Cluster Analysis in Program Evaluation

Laura R. Peck
Arizona State University

The conventional way to measure program impacts is to compute the average treatment effect; that is, the difference between a treatment group that was subject to some program and a control group that was denied the opportunity. Recently, scholars have recognized that looking only at the average treatment effect may obscure interesting and policy-relevant impacts that accrue to subgroups. As part of the effort to inform subgroup analysis research, this paper explains how treatment group heterogeneity challenges program evaluators. It then proposes using cluster analysis to identify otherwise difficult-to-identify subgroups within evaluation data. The approach maintains the integrity of the experimental evaluation design, thereby producing unbiased estimates of program impacts by subgroup.

This method is applied to data from the evaluation of New York

State's Child Assistance Program (CAP), a reform program that intends to increase work effort and earnings among welfare recipients. The paper interprets the substantive findings of the subgroup analysis applied to CAP and then addresses the advantages and disadvantages of using the proposed method.

Does Multiskilling Matter? Evidence from Displaced Workers

Peter Kuhn
University of California, Santa Barbara

Arthur Sweetman
Queen's University

Using displaced worker surveys merged with occupational information on multiskilling from other sources, this study examines the relationship between multiskilling, earnings, and displacement-induced earnings losses. Overall, the findings suggest that workers in multiskilled jobs earn more, both in the multiskilled jobs and in the jobs they locate after displacement. Since the latter differential outweighs the former by a small but statistically significant amount, multiskilling mitigates displacement-induced earnings losses. Controlling for the total training time required for the job, however, multiskilling is associated with lower earnings in both the pre- and postdisplacement jobs. Since the latter effect is smaller than the former, a small prophylactic effect against displacement-induced wage losses exists in this sense as well.

Estimating the Probability of Leaving Unemployment Using Repeated Cross Sections with an Application: Temporary Contracts and Unemployment Duration Distribution

Luoja Hu
Northwestern University

Since the mid-1970s, European labor markets have suffered from high unemployment rates as well as a high

fraction of long-term unemployed. These markets have also been characterized by a wide use of permanent contracts with high regulated firing costs. In 1984, Spain, which was plagued by the highest unemployment rate and the highest rates of long-term unemployment among all the OECD countries, introduced fixed-term contracts with negligible firing costs as a measure to increase flexibility of the labor market. Since then, while the unemployment rate remained very much unchanged, the share of long-term unemployed has decreased between the mid-1980s and early 1990s. However, this fact does not reveal how the increased employment chances were distributed among the unemployed workers, because when outflow rates increase at any duration of unemployment, the incidence of long-term unemployment tends to decrease.

In this project (joint with Maia Guell of Universitat Pompeu Fabra), the probability of leaving unemployment by duration is estimated and the relative exit probability between the short-term unemployed and long-term unemployed is analyzed in order to fully understand the changes in the duration distribution of unemployment. We first solved a technical difficulty encountered in the empirical analysis. Panel data from the Spanish Labor Force Survey are not available before 1987. To analyze the changes in the probability of leaving unemployment before and after the introduction of fixed-term contracts, we use the cross-section data drawn from the same survey, which is available since 1976. We develop a new method-of-moments based estimation method that uses repeated cross-section data on unemployed individuals. The most important features of the method are 1) it estimates the exit probability at the individual level and thus avoids the small cell problem encountered in previous studies, and 2) it relaxes any stationarity assumption on the composition of inflows into unemployment. We find that the unemployed pool becomes more segmented in the 1990s. Specifically, the relative probability of leaving unemployment of the short-term unemployed compared to the long-term

unemployed becomes significantly higher in 1990s. In this sense, our results would suggest that more targeted policies toward the long-term unemployed can be beneficial in reducing unemployment.

Why Have Aggregate Skilled Hours Become So Cyclical Since the Mid-1980s?

Rui Castro
University of Montreal

Daniele Coen-Pirani
Carnegie-Mellon University

Skilled labor has been traditionally thought of as being relatively insulated from business cycle fluctuations, with most variations in aggregate hours of work being accounted for by changes in unskilled employment. This paper documents and then tries to formally explain a dramatic increase in the cyclicity of skilled labor starting from the mid-1980s.

The paper uses the Current Population Survey's Merged Outgoing Rotation Groups to construct quarterly measures of the quantity and price of hours worked by college educated ("skilled") and non-college educated ("unskilled") workers for the sample period 1979:1–2003:4. In the 1979:1–1983:4 subperiod, which includes the 1981–1982 recession, detrended aggregate hours worked by skilled individuals are not very cyclical. For each percentage point by which GDP is below trend, skilled hours are about one-third of a percentage point below trend. In the 1984:1–2003:4 subperiod, instead, the relative volatility of skilled hours increases dramatically. For each percentage point by which GDP is below trend, skilled hours are a little over one percentage point below trend. This figure slightly exceeds the corresponding one for unskilled hours. This pattern is dominated by an increase in the relative volatility of skilled employment rather than average hours per employed worker. In both subperiods, instead, unskilled hours are as volatile as GDP. Remarkably, while the data suggest that wage inequality between skilled and unskilled workers has been increasing over the last

25 years, inequality among these two groups, as measured by the sensitivity of their employment status to business cycles, is instead lower now than it was 20 years ago.

The theoretical part of the paper adopts a simple relative demand/supply framework. The central feature of the model is an aggregate production function characterized by capital-skill complementarity. The latter implies that aggregate skilled hours are cyclically less volatile than aggregate unskilled hours. In a recession, for example, since the stock of capital equipment changes slowly at high frequencies, capital-skill complementarity in production leads to an increase in the relative demand for skilled hours. This simple model is used to evaluate quantitatively two potential explanations for the dramatic increase in the relative volatility of skilled hours: 1) The volatilities of GDP and unskilled hours have declined substantially since the mid-1980s. Capital skill complementarity in production predicts that, in such instances, the volatility of skilled hours should increase relative to the volatility of GDP. 2) The skill premium has grown more slowly since the late 1980s, while at the same time investment in equipment has boomed. Jointly taken, these trends point to a structural decrease in the degree of capital-skill complementarity itself. In turn, a lower degree of capital-skill complementarity implies a higher cyclicity of skilled labor. The simple model is calibrated using information on the long-run dynamics of the skill premium and the production inputs. The calibration exercise reveals that the two mechanisms reviewed above jointly account for about 60 percent of the observed increase in the relative volatility of skilled hours. The main effect, from a quantitative point of view, comes from the reduction in the degree of capital-skill complementarity.

"Noteworthy Books" for 2004

The Upjohn Institute is pleased to announce that three of its titles published in 2004 were recently selected as "Noteworthy Books in Industrial Relations and Labor Economics" by Princeton University's Industrial Relations Section. The entire list of the Industrial Relations Section's 2004 picks may be found in its *Selected References*.

International Trade and Labor Markets

Theory, Evidence, and Policy Implications

Carl Davidson and Steven J. Matusz

Davidson and Matusz set out to examine the impact of trade on the poor and unemployed by showing that there is much to be gained by extending the traditional analysis of international trade to allow for labor markets characterized by workers whose labor market experiences are punctuated by spells of involuntary unemployment.

To accomplish this, they develop models to investigate the impact of a variety of policies that are aimed at offsetting some of the costs of worker displacement caused by trade and trade policies. These models allow them to investigate the impact of trade on the poor through both its impact on job opportunities and its impact on the distribution of income when unemployment is present. They are also able to explore how best to compensate those who are harmed by liberalization.

145 pp. \$40 cloth ISBN 0-88099-274-3
\$16 pbk. ISBN 0-88099-273-5. 2004.

Job Training Policy in the United States

Christopher J. O'Leary, Robert A. Straits, and Stephen A. Wandner, eds.

As one federally funded job training program supplanted another, job training evolved from having strong federal control to substantial local authority, from narrowly targeted services to broadly available services, and from proscribed training options to significant customer choices.

This volume provides a broad overview of federally funded job training programs as they exist today. The contributors review what training consists of and how training programs are implemented under the Workforce

Investment Act (WIA). In particular, they examine training service providers and methods of delivering training services, including the use of individual training accounts and eligible training provider lists. Performance management under WIA is examined, as well as the effectiveness of training programs. In addition, public training programs are compared to private training programs offered in other industrialized nations.

359 pp. \$50 cloth ISBN 0-88099-307-3
\$22 pbk. 0-88099-306-5. 2004.

Workplace Justice Without Unions

Hoyt N. Wheeler, Brian S. Klaas, and Douglas M. Mahony

This book provides a thorough analysis of organizational justice systems by exploring nonunion systems of workplace justice and comparing them with the union system, American courts, and systems in 11 other countries.

The authors base their analysis on a combination of literature search and survey questions posed to various decision makers. They examine the overall win/loss rates by employees in termination cases in labor arbitration, employment arbitration, and the federal courts to determine the degree to which

the same result would be reached in the same cases across different processes. These scenarios are posed to labor arbitrators, employment arbitrators, managers,

members of peer review panels, jurors in employment discrimination cases, and labor court judges from other countries. Responses allow comparison of the relative harshness or leniency toward employees for disciplinary offenses, and the criteria used to reach decisions. The result is a body of data and analysis that identify the differences among the systems in both outcome and procedure, and compare them on the basis of their merits.

231 pp. \$40 cloth ISBN 0-88099-313-8
\$18 pbk. ISBN 0-88099-312-X / 2004.

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