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Improving School-to-Work Transitions

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creating consortia of constituencies—community organizations, labor unions, care service providers, employer associations—to provide on-site child care services. The final chapter proposes economic supports at a grander scale, such as a national policy of paid family leave, subsidization of child care, early childhood and after-school education, minimum wage increases and living wage ordinances, and national health insurance. Drago cites smaller-scale successes along these lines as a cause for optimism, such as California's paid leave policy that replaces half of workers' regular income at an average cost of only \$46 per employee per year. The book concludes with the "Working Family Bill of Rights," a proposed set of specific legal "rights to request" and "rights to refuse" that would help alleviate or reduce the incidence of work-life conflicts.

Some of the tougher questions are left for readers to explore on their own elsewhere, most likely to keep the book manageable. Thus, labor economist readers might be left wondering whether equally shared care time should truly be a goal in itself, from the standpoint of both household productivity and joint utility. Might the current distribution be pareto-optimal? Moreover, must not equally shared care time be accompanied by equally shared authority (for example, two-way "honey-do" lists)? Similarly, on the workplace side, is not flexibility more than just an instrument to reduce the gaps, but also an end in itself? Because there are disparities in access and safe use of flexibility practices, is there thus perhaps also a fourth gap, the shortfall in flexibility? Is there perhaps also an emerging norm of "ideal fatherhood" through which men can derive process benefits and uniquely male identities from performing unpaid work? Finally, are policies of inclusion truly something beyond the "voice" and "employee participation" institutions long examined and promoted in the literature? Obviously, answers to these questions are too much to ask of a handy, 175-page book that aims—with success—at promoting both work-life balance and new ways of thinking about it. As Juliet Schor remarks in the Foreword, Drago indeed has crafted a truly holistic and original analysis.

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Improving School-to-Work Transitions. Edited by David Neumark. New York: Russell Sage

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In their 1992 *Quarterly Journal of Economics* article "Job Mobility and the Careers of Young Men," Robert Topel and Michael Ward documented the staggering degree of employment instability among young men. On average, young men work at nearly seven different jobs in the first ten years of employment. This turbulent introduction to the labor market might provide information to young workers regarding their skills and preferences. Indeed, over time, most men find stable employment, and the frequency of job transitions slows. Some early labor market instability may therefore be necessary for establishing high-quality employment matches. The fitful transition from school to work comes at a significant cost, however. Young workers experience earnings losses from unemployment (or underemployment) along with reduced opportunities to invest in firm-specific human capital. The editor of the volume reviewed here, David Neumark, documented in 2002 that workers who experience early job changes for exogenous reasons receive lower wages in the long run ("Youth Labor Markets in the U.S.: Shopping Around vs. Staying Put," *Review of Economics and Statistics*).

The volume is a collection of eight essays examining programs and institutions designed to facilitate transition to the labor market. While these essays share a common overarching theme, each was clearly written independently and focuses on a distinctly different research question. Furthermore, the focus of the volume is on providing new research insights as opposed to summarizing the existing literature. For this reason, it is poorly suited as a primer for individuals hoping for a systematic overview of the problem of school-to-work transitions and possible solutions. It is, however, likely to be of value to researchers and policy makers already familiar with the literature. Given the structure of the book, I will organize the remainder of my comments around the individual chapters.

The first chapter, by Neumark, briefly introduces the literature documenting the difficulty of school-to-work transitions and outlines the major U.S. policy initiatives that have been undertaken to ease these transitions. Neumark also provides a useful summary of the primary research findings of the remaining essays. The conclusions and policy implications outlined at the end of the chapter are essentially a restatement of the primary research findings with little additional analysis.

The second chapter, written by Deborah Reed, Christopher Jepsen, and Laura E. Hill, examines

how the school-to-work transition varies by race, ethnicity, and immigrant status. The authors document an unsurprising pattern of systematically more difficult school-to-work transitions for black and Hispanic youth than for whites. College attendance differentials tend to be explained by family background characteristics, while differences in post-school employment are not. The authors also find that recent immigrants tend to fare poorly compared to those who have been in the country longer, and particularly compared to the subset of immigrants who grew to adulthood in the United States. Parts of the analysis suffer from the authors' failure to distinguish between low wages and low labor force attachment when describing "successful" school-to-work transitions. I suspect these two contributors to low earnings have different causes and policy implications.

In the third chapter, James R. Stone, III, and Oscar A. Aliaga describe enrollment patterns in career and technical education (CTE) programs. Their analysis demonstrates that self-reported participation rates by students are much lower than participation rates derived from high school transcript analyses. Furthermore, they show that many students participate in activities linked to CTE, such as job shadowing, even if they are not enrolled in formal CTE programs. The authors identify student characteristics that are correlated with participation. In addition to these descriptive statistics, the authors provide a brief literature review and discussion of the recent legislative history of CTE programs. Overall, the chapter provides a useful starting point for researchers interested in the nature of CTE participation.

In the following essay, Neumark and Donna Rothstein study the impact of school-to-work (STW) programs on a variety of subsequent education and employment outcomes. The authors focus on several STW programs implemented at the high school level, including job shadowing and mentoring. This research represents an extension of the same authors' "School-to-Career Programs and Transitions to Employment and Higher Education" (*Economics of Education Review*, 2006), which examined a similar question but focused on the problem of identification. One contribution of the current work is its analysis of how the estimated treatment effects vary based on the predicted probability of college attendance. This predicted probability acts as an index of a student's level of disadvantage. The authors use a cross-sectional OLS regression to identify the treatment effects for students in the top and bottom halves of the index. While readers may be concerned about the challenges to identification, the findings suggest that for some outcomes,

STW programs may have very different effects for high- and low-risk students.

In the fifth chapter, David Stern, Christopher Wu, Charles Dayton, and Andrew Maul examine the impact of career academies on student achievement. Four characteristics define a career academy: a school-within-a-school organization in which students at the same grade level take a set of classes together and remain together for at least two years; a curriculum that includes both college preparatory courses and technical classes; and partnerships with employers that provide internships and other employment experiences. While the authors acknowledge the existence of some prior literature on the impact of career academies on student outcomes, they note that little is known regarding the mechanisms through which the effects operate. They attempt to address this limitation in the literature by estimating high school-specific effects of career academy enrollment on GPA, attendance, credits, and suspensions. They also examine which program characteristics predict positive student outcomes. Despite the challenges of reliably measuring program implementation, participation, and education outcomes, the authors effectively argue that program effectiveness likely varies with the quality of implementation.

The next chapter, by Margaret Terry Orr, Thomas Bailey, Katherine L. Hughes, Gregory S. Kienzl, and Melinda Mechur Karp, also examines the role of career academies on student outcomes. The authors identify ten career academy sites with emphases in either finance or travel and tourism. At each site, the researchers obtained a sample of career academy students and a comparison sample of similar non-academy students enrolled in the same high school. Students who attended the career academy reported being more engaged in the academic process than did the comparison students. Those attending an academy of finance were also more likely to plan on attending college, though this was not true of students in travel and tourism academies. While the findings are suggestive that career academies can increase student interest in education, it is difficult to know if the results are causal and if they carry through to subsequent education and labor market outcomes.

The seventh chapter, by Ann E. Person and James E. Rosenbaum, is a qualitative and quantitative investigation of the links between faculty at two-year colleges and employers. The analysis includes a small sample of both public and private for-profit institutions. The authors document that some faculty and administrators exerted great effort to develop relationships with potential employers to ensure the labor-market relevance

of their instruction and create job placement opportunities for their students. This appears to have been more common at private for-profit occupational colleges than at public institutions. Other faculty members viewed such activities as outside the scope of their responsibilities. Within their sample, students reported higher effort and attachment at institutions with strong links to the labor market. The topics discussed in this chapter will be familiar to many academic readers who at times face pressure to establish the labor market relevance of their instruction.

In the final chapter, Nan L. Maxwell examines the set of skills demanded by employers in low-skill entry-level positions and supplied by low-skilled individuals. The author uses survey data with information on a wide set of skills such as basic reading and writing, simple math, the use of office equipment, and the ability to cooperate with others. She computes the fraction of firms demanding and fraction of individuals supplying each particular skill. Skill demand varies in a predictable fashion across industries. Older and younger workers supply somewhat different skill sets, though older workers report having higher levels of skill in the areas most in demand—perhaps because such skills are taught on the job. Not surprisingly, unemployed workers report systematically lower skill levels than do the employed. Employment and compensation do not appear systematically related to possessing skills that are in high demand relative to supply. This may be because possession of particular skills could reflect general human capital. Some skills may also be relatively easy to acquire on the job. While many readers will find the general question and the descriptive statistics quite interesting, data limitations make it difficult for the author to convincingly test economic models.

In summary, this volume is likely to be of interest to researchers and policy-makers already familiar with the literature on school-to-work transitions. While the volume lacks a unified structure, the individual essays provide valuable background information and statistical analyses on specific questions. Readers will want to flip through the chapters, focusing on those topics most relevant for their own research.

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of Cornell University Press), 2008. 248 pp. ISBN 978-0-8014-4580-4, \$29.95 (cloth).

At less than 5% of the total work force in the United States—2.3% employed by temporary help services (THS) agencies and 2.2% direct hires—temporary workers would seem to represent a relatively marginal phenomenon. But the establishment of temporary work as an acceptable form of employment has changed labor market norms and the strategic options of employers in far-reaching ways. As Vicki Smith and Esther B. Neuwirth skillfully demonstrate in their book, temporary help services (THS) agencies played a central role in the normative construction of a new model of flexible staffing.

Smith and Neuwirth's main argument is that the THS industry constructed temporary labor as a product—the good temp—to be sold to employers by convincing them that temporaries could be good workers and temporary employment a feasible, profitable alternative to permanent employment. In order to do this, the THS industry had to market itself both to client firms and to potential temp workers. In the process of socially constructing the good temp as a product, the THS industry helped institutionalize the temporary labor market.

For decades after World War II, temporary employment was indeed a marginal employment practice. Temps were a truly stop-gap solution for employers, simply filling in for permanent workers during vacation or illness. Employers generally assumed that temps would not be committed, high-quality workers. Through a content analysis of nearly 300 personnel and THS industry magazines published between 1960 and 1990, Smith and Neuwirth convincingly show how the industry disseminated new views about temporary and permanent employment to persuade employers to use temps in more planned and systematic ways—transforming jobs into permanently temporary positions in order to scale back the permanent work force—and ultimately succeeded in institutionalizing such use as the normative practice. Industry rhetoric sought to highlight the “true” costs of permanent employment; provided templates for how to use temps efficiently; and identified new occupations, industries, and tasks that could be “temped out.” The institutionalization of the temporary labor market, they suggest, played a crucial role in weakening norms of stable, permanent employment.

Smith and Neuwirth next turn to a contemporary analysis of the work THS agencies do to construct the good temp, based on extensive ethnographic analysis of an agency in Silicon

The Good Temp. By Vicki Smith and Esther B. Neuwirth. Ithaca, N.Y.: ILR Press (an imprint