

Viewing Submission

Title:

Nonprofit and Public Employment Amidst Ongoing Economic Scarcity and Political Pressures for Efficiency

Description:

The U.S. economic downturn and “jobless recovery” have energized continued effort by scholars, lawmakers and policy advocates to understand better the respective capacities of the for-profit and not-for-profit sectors for offering high quality jobs and prospects for sustained labor force attachment. This panel examines the roles of the nonprofit and public sectors, in comparison to the for-profit sector, as sources of employment and the nature of contemporary public and nonprofit jobs. Investigating themes of growth of opportunity, resource scarcity and uncertainty, and employee vulnerability, the four papers contextualize nonprofit and public jobs within the current trend of privatization of public services, debates over both the commitment and compensation of public workers and public sector unionism, and the continued economic downturn that have resulted in decreasing jobs within some nonprofit sub-fields and decreasing working conditions across the nonprofit, public as well as for-profit sectors. The papers combine a broad “establishing” view of some of the characteristics of employment in the nonprofit and public sectors, respectively (papers 1 and 2), with an examination of the access of disadvantaged workers to employment opportunities within each sector (paper 3) and through cross-sectoral collaboration (paper 4). Paper 1 assesses the dominance of the nonprofit sector as a source of significant employment opportunity, particularly within the subfields of social assistance, education, and health care, even as privatization favoring for-profit firms poses competitive challenges. Turning to employment within the public sector, paper 2 investigates the individual and organizational level correlates of stressful child welfare work conditions, finding that organizational policies and practices related to job rewards, decisionmaking, and work-life support are substantially predictive. The third paper considers the access that the nonprofit and public sectors provide workers lacking a college degree to high quality jobs, conceptualized as those providing fringe benefits, full-time hours and scheduling flexibility; the authors find that lower-educated nonprofit and public employees receive benefits and scheduling flexibility to a significantly greater extent than their peers in for-profits. The final paper reports results of an innovative nonprofit workforce development initiative for cost-effectively linking disadvantaged workers to high-quality employment opportunities within the for-profit sector. In total, the panel contributes to academic policy research by adding to knowledge of the scope, nature, and impacts of employment within the public and nonprofit sectors. With respect to policy practice, the papers’ identification of structural aspects of nonprofit and public employment that may limit or facilitate work outcomes, and presentation of cross-sectoral strategies for linking workers to quality jobs, offer potential levers for enhancing employment opportunity.

Policy Area:

Public & Non-Profit Management

Previous Primary Policy Area:

CrossCutting

Secondary Policy Area:

Employment & Training

Cross-cutting Theme:

Informing Strategies For Managing Budget Cuts

Second, although overall nonprofit employment grew faster than overall business employment during the 2000-2010 decade, in several key fields that traditionally have been dominated by nonprofits, for-profit employment growth significantly outpaced nonprofit employment growth. Several factors are likely behind this trend including the for-profit sector's ability to access capital more easily than the nonprofit sector and the preferences for for-profit providers on the part of some state and local governments, which have increasingly been outsourcing traditional government functions to private entities, particularly in the area of social assistance.

The findings have several implications for public policy research and practice. First, they demonstrate the job creation potential of the nonprofit sector, especially during recessions, and therefore highlight the need to keep this sector's potentials in view as efforts to boost job growth are developed. Among other things, these findings demonstrate why job promotion efforts that operate exclusively through the income tax mechanism are insufficient because they discriminate against this set of job-creators for which income tax incentives have little effect. Beyond this, these findings suggest the need to address the unequal playing field on which nonprofits are forced to compete against a growing number of for-profit providers. The paper concludes with a discussion of these implications and questions about the future of the nonprofit sector as a job generator in light of current realities.

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Start Time:

10:35 AM

Public Employment Stress: Worker and Organizational Factors and Strategies for Change In Child Welfare

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Abstract Text:

The public sector plays a key role in the delivery of human services. For example, public child welfare organizations provide the majority of in-and-out-of home services to families and children across the country. These are challenging jobs and workers are at high risk for prolonged stress. Further, changing demographics (i.e., generational, more dual-earner and single-parents) among employees bring increasing diversity, work-life concerns, and stress into the workplace. From an organizational perspective, stress is associated with job dissatisfaction, lack of commitment, impaired effectiveness, and turnover affecting an organization's capacity to provide quality services (Hopkins, et al., 2007; Mackay, et al., 2004). Thus, more supportive and responsive cultures to ameliorate the damaging effects of stress are necessary. Yet, it is unclear the degree to which organizations have control over the reduction of stress. This paper reports on a mixed-method study that includes a multi-level analysis of workers in a statewide public child welfare system to determine the relationship between worker stress and organizational, individual and job factors within agencies and across 24 county agencies. It sought to answer: 1) Is child welfare worker stress related to workers' perception of organizational factors

persons of color, and parents (Blank, 1985; Dolcos & Daley, 2009; Gonyea, 1999; Saltzstein, Ting & Saltzstein, 2001; Schmitt, 2010). In this paper, we consider whether the public and nonprofit sectors constitute a similarly promising source of high quality employment for another set of comparatively vulnerable workers, those without a college degree, at a time when the compensation of jobs frequently occupied by workers with lower educational attainment are worsening (Autor, 2011; Holzer & LaLonde, 2000; Kalleberg, 2009). Further, many workers advance out of low-wage jobs – and acquire advanced education – only with difficulty, often finding themselves stuck in low-wage “careers” (Andersson, Holzer & Lane, 2003; Boushey, 2005; Holzer, 2008). The success of American welfare policy, said to be rooted in employment that “lead(s) to a living wage and economic self-sufficiency,” thus arguably rests on the quality of jobs that can be attained by lower-educated workers (Johnson & Corcoran, 2003, 615).

We utilize nationally representative data on American workers collected by the 2008 National Study of the Changing Workforce to examine lower-educated individuals’ access to quality jobs conceptualized along three dimensions: providing a bundle of three core fringe benefits (family health insurance, a retirement plan, and paid vacation); full-time hours; and scheduling flexibility within the context of full-time hours. The results of descriptive and logistic regression analyses suggest that lower-educated employees in the public and nonprofit sectors have unique access to high quality employment opportunity relative to their counterparts in for-profit firms, consistent with the reputation of public and nonprofit jobs for providing opportunity to other marginalized groups of workers. More novel perhaps is the significant and positive effect found for lower-educated public (and nonprofit) employees’ access to schedule flexibility, an aspect of job quality for which the public sector is not particularly well known; and lower-educated nonprofit (as well as public) workers’ access to fringe benefits, a reward with which nonprofit agencies are less commonly associated. Our results additionally reveal that access to full-time hours is related to personal attributes – with males and those with more work experience more likely to be full-time – and not sector of employment.

The findings have several implications for public policy research and practice. To the extent that lower-educated individuals can more readily access high quality jobs in the public and nonprofit sectors, policy initiatives to promote work may be best targeted there. Yet this strategy is challenged by two continuing trends affecting the status of public and to some extent nonprofit sector employment: the expanding privatization of public services and debate about the taxpayer burden entailed by public employee compensation and unionism (Bernhardt & Dresser, 2002; Capulong, 2005-6; Edwards, 2010; Keefe, 2011; Lewin, et al, 2011; Schmitt, 2010). The paper concludes with a discussion of the findings, and future policy directions, in the context of these political and organizational realities.

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Start Time:

11:15 AM

Linking Disadvantaged Workers to Employment: An Sroi Case Study of a Nonprofit Labor Market Intermediary

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