

2011 Western Economic Association 86th Annual Conference
CSWEP session summary
June 29-July 3, 2011
San Diego Marriott Hotel and Marina

Session Title: Striking a Balance: Getting Tenure and Having a Life

Chair: Jennifer Imazeki, San Diego State University

Panelists:

Kelly Bedard, University of California, Santa Barbara

Jennifer Imazeki, San Diego State University

Fernando Antonio Lozano, Pomona College

Valerie Ramey, University of California, San Diego

In this roundtable, the panelists gave advice to junior faculty about how to succeed both professionally and personally. After each panelist related some of their own experiences on the tenure-track at a variety of institutions, the session turned to an open Q&A with much frank discussion between the panelists and session participants.

Session Title: Education

Chair: Cory Koedel, University of Missouri, Columbia

Paper: Celeste Carruthers (University of Tennessee) and Marianne H. Wanamaker (University of Tennessee) presented *Closing the Gap? The Effect of Private Philanthropy on the Provision of African-American Schooling in the U.S. South*

Private individuals and philanthropies have frequently sought to address inequalities in the provision of education through grants and other monetary means. The public goods provision literature indicates that such private giving may serve to crowd out public expenditures on education, thereby reducing the potential impact of these gifts on their intended beneficiaries. Little empirical evidence exists to support or refute this claim. We match data on the Rosenwald Schools Program, an early 20th century initiative that constructed over 5,000 schools for Southern U.S. African-Americans using private funds, to newly assembled data on local school districts to measure the amount of crowd-out and diversion of these funds. We find that Rosenwald contributions resulted in short-lived gains in spending on black schools, in-kind crowd out of black teachers, and diversion or matching that benefitted white schools. Crowd out and diversion were more pronounced in areas where blacks were more disenfranchised. The program appears to have had no lasting impact on relative resources in black and white Southern schools.

Paper: Rachana Bhatt (Georgia State University) presented *Timing is Everything: The Impact of School Lunch Length on Children's Health*

The large number of overweight children in the U.S. has led school administrators and policy makers to examine how aspects of the school environment affect children's health. Advocates for

school nutrition reform have suggested that among other things, it is important for children to have an adequate amount of time to eat. This paper examines whether the length of time children are given to eat lunch in school has an impact on their Body Mass Index. The results indicate that longer lunches lead to healthier weight outcomes for children.

Paper: Cory Koedel (University of Missouri), Jason Grissom (Vanderbilt University), Shawn Ni (University of Missouri), and Michael Podgursky (University of Missouri) presented *Pension-Induced Rigidities in the Labor Market for School Principals*

Educators in public schools in the United States are typically enrolled in defined-benefit pension plans, which restrict labor flows across pension system borders. Using an 18-year administrative panel data from the entire state of Missouri, we show that these pension plans introduce substantial rigidities into an important segment of the labor market in education – the labor market for school leaders. The rigidities that we identify can lead to the misallocation of labor to school leader positions, resulting in inefficient education production. Recent research shows that students benefit greatly from high-quality school leaders, which makes our findings particularly troubling for districts where the geographic labor market is divided by a pension-system border.

Paper: Paco Martorell (RAND), Damon Clark (University of Florida), and Jonah Rockoff (Columbia Business School) presented *School Principals and School Performance*

We use detailed data from New York City to estimate how the characteristics of school principals relate to school performance, as measured by students' standardized exam scores and other outcomes. We find little evidence of any relationship between school performance and principal education and pre-principal work experience, although we do find some evidence that experience as an assistant principal at the principal's current school is associated with higher performance among inexperienced principals. However, we find a positive relationship between principal experience and school performance, particularly for math test scores and student absences. The experience profile is especially steep over the first few years of principal experience. Finally, we find mixed evidence on the relationship between formal principal training and professional development programs and school performance, with the caveat that the selection and assignment of New York City principals participating in these programs make it hard to isolate their effects. The positive returns to principal experience suggest that policies which cause principals to leave their posts early (e.g., via early retirement or a move into district administration) will be costly, and the tendency for less-advantaged schools to be run by less experienced principals could exacerbate educational inequality.