Penalized or Protected? Gender and the Consequences of Nonstandard and Mismatched Employment Histories

Millions of workers are employed in positions that deviate from the full-time, standard employment relationship or work in jobs that are mismatched with their skills, education, or experience. Yet, little is known about how employers evaluate workers who have experienced these employment arrangements, limiting our knowledge about how part-time work, temporary agency employment, and skills underutilization affect workers’ labor market opportunities. Drawing on original field and survey experiment data, I examine three questions: (1) What are the consequences of having a nonstandard or mismatched employment history for workers’ labor market opportunities? (2) Are the effects of nonstandard or mismatched employment histories different for men and women? and (3) What are the mechanisms linking nonstandard or mismatched employment histories to labor market outcomes? The field experiment shows that skills underutilization is as scarring for workers as a year of unemployment, but that there are limited penalties for workers with histories of temporary agency employment. Additionally, although men are penalized for part-time employment histories, women face no penalty for part-time work. The survey experiment reveals that employers’ perceptions of workers’ competence and commitment mediate these effects. These findings shed light on the consequences of changing employment relations for the distribution of labor market opportunities in the new economy.

Reference Information

Author:
David S. Pedulla

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