

ILE Conference Highlights Graduate Research

Labor and community organizing; the economics of human capital and worker training; labor law and policy; the political economy of labor in Mexico; and race, gender, and sexuality in the workplace were among the topics explored during the ILE's second Graduate Student Research Conference, held at UC Santa Barbara on February 21–22, 2003. Graduate students from throughout the UC system shared their research findings in wide-ranging sessions that addressed labor and employment issues not only in California and the rest of the United States but also in Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

The forty-one conference presentations, organized into thirteen sessions, exemplify the rich body of academic work fostered by the ILE, which funded the students' research projects. "This is the next generation of labor and employment scholars," said ILE Director Ruth Milkman in welcoming the conference participants. "These students are breathing new life into a field that was, until recently, in serious decline. We are proud that the ILE is helping to bring about its



rebirth." Among the many student presenters were John Marshall (Management, UCLA), Miriam Padolsky (Sociology, UCSD), and Jonathan Isler (Sociology, UCD).

Marshall's presentation, "Bargaining Leverage: Unionization, Capital Structure, and the Strategic Use of Debt," offered a revealing analysis of the debt-to-equity ratios of S&P 500 firms from 1998 to 2001. He concluded that unionized firms had significantly more indebtedness than

nonunionized firms did, and he hypothesized that unionized firms were increasing their debt level as a strategy to reduce net income in order to reduce union demands for increased wages.

Padolsky presented a historical perspective on social science and management scholarship regarding the influx of research scientists into industry immediately after World War II. Her paper, "Knowledge Workers in

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Industry: The Rise of a Management Science for the Industrial Research Scientists of the 1950s,” documents the ways in which corporate managers viewed scientists in this formative period and explores the implications of that history for understanding the management of engineers and other highly skilled workers in corporate settings today.

In his paper, “Web Design as a ‘Boundaryless’ Career: An Exploration of Shifting Career Structures in the Information Technology Sector,” Isler questions conventional assumptions about the benefits of “boundaryless” careers—those in which the worker is not dependent on a specific organization for training, professional growth, or financial well-being. Isler’s presentation explored the shifting nature of career structures for high-tech workers and identified areas for policy intervention.

The conference also featured a plenary session on “Labor’s Achievements and Prospects: Perspectives from the Field.” The speakers included Arturo Rodriguez, president of the United Farm Workers of America (UFW), and Quynh Nguyen, organizing director for the Asian Pacific American Labor Alliance. Nelson Lichtenstein, a member of the ILE Advisory Board and professor of history at UC Santa Barbara, welcomed the conference participants to his campus. ILE Director Ruth Milkman and Associate Director Peter Olney also spoke at the plenary.

UFW President Rodriguez outlined the challenges facing his union and the ways in which research on labor and employment issues could help meet them. He pointed to agricultural subsidies, wage levels throughout the



Graduate students at the opening plenary session of the conference



Arturo Rodriguez

state, and the Agricultural Labor Relations Act as subjects that could be fruitfully explored in future research. He also spoke about the union’s recent achievements in the organizing area and the implications of new legislation signed by Governor Gray Davis a few months ago that mandates mediation to facilitate the negotiation of first contracts. A lively discussion of this historic legislation followed.



Quynh Nguyen

two major issues in the Asian Pacific Islander community have been civil rights and immigrant rights,” she said. “The challenge for researchers is to

state, and the Agricultural Labor Relations Act as subjects that could be fruitfully explored in future research. He also

Nguyen focused her remarks on the emerging importance of worker rights to Asian Pacific Islanders.

“Traditionally, the

connect those issues to worker rights.” Nguyen went on to discuss the ways in which research like that being sponsored by the ILE can contribute to advancing the work of immigrant labor and community organizers.

UC faculty members serving as discussants for this year’s conference included Ralph Armbruster-Sandoval (Chicano Studies, UCSB), César Ayala (Sociology, UCLA), Edna Bonacich (Sociology, UCR), David Brody (History, UC Davis), Chris Erickson (Management, UCLA), Paul Frymer (Sociology, UCSD), Ellen Reese (Sociology, UCR), Michael Reich (Economics, UCB), Kim Voss (Sociology, UCB), Margaret Weir (Sociology and Political Science, UCB), Carol Zabin (Center for Labor Research and Education, UCB), and Nick Ziegler (Political Science, UCB).

The next ILE Graduate Student Research Conference will be held in February 2004 at the UCLA Conference Center in Lake Arrowhead. ■

How Do Minimum Wage Laws Affect Job Training?



David Fairris

A recently completed ILE-funded study finds that the job training received by low-wage workers is, in general, not affected by the minimum wage level they face. The authors, economists David Fairris (UC Riverside) and Roberto Pedace (University of Redlands), question the widely held assumption that employers are not likely to provide minimum-wage workers on-the-job training, except when the costs of such training are subsidized by subminimum “training wages.”

Human capital theory, which dominates the literature in this area, suggests that employers are likely to offer their employees general training in skills that are transferable to a variety of work settings only if workers’ wages can be significantly reduced during the training period. In this view, minimum wage laws

discourage firms from offering on-the-job training to low-wage employees.

Fairris and Pedace, however, found no significant differences in job training levels between states with high and low minimum wages. High minimum wages reduced neither the average number of hours of training per employee nor the percentage of workers trained.

“There have been two basic problems with previous studies done on this issue,” said Fairris. “They don’t have very good measures of job training, and they rely mainly on data collected from individual workers, which exclude important establishment-level determinants of training such as turnover rates.” Fairris and Pedace based their analysis instead on a unique data set gathered from an employer survey. “Firms are likely to have more precise information on training than workers,” noted Fairris. “By using establishment-level data we have better measures than previous studies, both on the proportion of workers receiving training and on the extent of training provided, and also on

important establishment-level control variables that affect training.”

According to Fairris, previous research has also failed to take account of the wide range of actual employer practices in regard to worker training. The survey data on which this study is based suggest a broader perspective on human resource practices, in which firms are understood to pursue “high-road” or “low-road” approaches. High-road employers offer good wages and benefits, provide training, have career ladders in place, and recognize their employees’ need for a voice in the workplace; low-road employers do none of these things. “From a policy perspective,” Fairris points out, “the question is whether minimum wage laws can act as a spur to low-road firms to rethink their human resource practices.”

The study, “The Impact of Minimum Wages on Job Training,” will be published in the January 2004 issue of the *Southern Economic Journal*. An online version is available at: <http://www.economics.ucr.edu/people/fairris/impact2.pdf>. ■

ILE Postdoctoral Fellows Selected For 2003–04

ILE has selected two new postdoctoral fellows for the 2003–04 academic year. Gina Neff, who is currently completing her Ph.D. in sociology at Columbia University, will be based at UCLA, where she will conduct a research project on young workers in the “new economy.” The UC Berkeley campus will host the second ILE postdoctoral fellow, Isaac Martin, whose research will examine

the relationship of organized labor to tax revolt in the 1970s and 1980s. Martin is currently completing his Ph.D. in sociology at UC Berkeley.

Neff’s project will build on the research she completed for her dissertation, “Organizing Uncertainty in Silicon Alley,” an examination of “entrepreneurial labor” in New York City’s dot.com sector. Neff conducted in-depth interviews with dot.com

employees and research on the industry’s development in New York. She discovered that in exchange for the possibility of career advancement, the employees accepted risks, including those associated with job security, that were once borne by corporations. As an ILE fellow she will look at recent California college graduates in a variety of employment settings, focusing on

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Conference Examines Crisis In Human Services

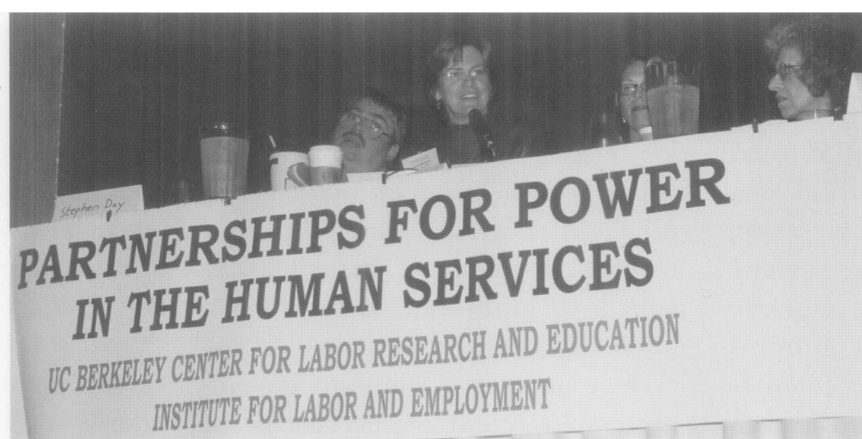
California's community-based care system for people with mental and physical disabilities is facing unprecedented challenges. Human service workers remain among the lowest paid employees in the state, which leads to chronic staffing shortages, inadequate training, and high turnover. Provider

agencies often lack the funding to raise wages and to cover the costs of increased benefits. The quality of care has suffered as a result.

To examine these problems and explore possible solutions, the UC Berkeley Center for Labor Research and Education (CLRE) organized an ILE-funded conference titled "Partnerships for Power in the Human Services: Collaboration between Community Agencies, Unions, Consumers, and Advocates." Held on February 21, 2003, the event attracted over 200 participants, including nonprofit service providers, union members and staff, consumers of mental health and disability services, advocates, and academics.

Dion Aroner, the CLRE's legislator-in-residence, opened the conference with a call to "move forward together in order to improve the quality of care for consumers." Elizabeth Hill, California State budget analyst, was the keynote speaker. She stressed the need to find creative ways to access greater funding for human services, pointing to several areas in which California is not receiving its full share of funds from the federal government.

The conference also showcased



Pictured left to right: consumer advocate Steven Day; Josie Mooney, SEIU Local 790; Patricia Kemerling, ARC San Francisco; and Sally Zinman, California Network of Mental Health Clients

research linking the wages of direct care workers and the quality of care. Laura Reif of UC San Francisco presented the results of her ILE-funded study on the impact of increased wages for home care workers in San Francisco. "What happens when home care workers are paid a living wage?" Reif asked. "Turnover falls by 30 percent!" She added that consumers in San Francisco reported fewer problems finding qualified home care workers after pay increases were instated.

The conference brought together nonprofit service providers, union staffers and members, consumers, and advocates—groups that have had limited experience working together. Throughout the day presenters shared examples of successful stakeholder partnerships from around the country. A partnership between unions and consumers was at the core of obtaining greater state and federal funds for home care services in California. In Connecticut, a similar partnership won increased funding for mental health services.

These relationships are not always easy. Patricia Kemerling, executive director of ARC San Francisco,

explained that although management had "felt betrayed" when workers first unionized, this attitude changed. "Over time I came to believe the union is a good thing," she said. "People are treated equitably, and we have fewer complaints." She talked about how management and the union now work together to

improve the industry, and she noted that ARC has more political power since they began working with the union.

Josie Mooney, from the Service Employees International Union (SEIU) Local 790, spoke about labor-management cooperation. In the past, she recalled, "workers called us to complain about low wages and insufficient training. They blamed their bosses, and we did too." Her perspective has changed, however. "Today, the problem is not individual bosses, but a system in peril."

Sally Zinman, of the California Network of Mental Health Clients, reported on a pathbreaking partnership between workers and clients in which SEIU mental health care workers met with clients to discuss the issue of seclusion and restraints. The two groups developed a joint proposal for presentation to the state assembly.

The conference closed with a proposal to establish workshops for providers and unions that could lead to a better understanding of the culture, history, and interests of both groups. Participants also planned to follow up with a working group to develop a research agenda to further explore labor market issues in the human services. ■

UCLA Downtown Labor Center Reaches Out

Since its opening last fall, the UCLA Downtown Labor Center has developed a wide assortment of innovative programs for members of local unions and community organizations. "The center is rapidly becoming recognized as a hub for exciting new types of training and research," said Labor Center Director Kent Wong. "It is providing a variety of educational opportunities, particularly for workers who cannot fit traveling to the UCLA campus into their schedules." Recent and upcoming programs include training in computer literacy, organizing skills, and strategic planning.

One recent offering was a class in computer basics for Spanish-speaking union leaders and organizers, cosponsored by the Global Information Internship Program at UC Santa Cruz. Twenty-six participants were trained in word processing, database management, internet use, and desktop publishing. The class sessions were conducted in Spanish and were designed for students with no previous technical training. "I used to be scared of using computers," said Dolores Sanchez, a member of the Justice for Janitors Union. "Now I will be a better communicator, both at work and in my personal life." Instructor Scott Goodell reported that the program was a big success: "Many of the students told me they planned on purchasing their own home computers and that they wanted access to the internet."

In partnership with the Los Angeles Trade Tech Labor Studies Program, the Downtown Labor Center is planning a program in April on "Strategic Planning in Unions." This training will include a series of four sessions designed to promote long-term

planning as a key skill for union leaders. Participants, who will receive credit toward an associate degree in labor studies, will learn to develop strategic plans for their organizations in such key areas as health benefits and California's state budget, as well as on issues specific to their own locals. June McMahon, a project director at the UCLA Labor

Center, notes that this program builds on the achievements of last year's union leadership schools. "It will serve as a way for them to renew and build communications networks with leaders from other unions," she said.

Another program now in the planning stages for the Downtown Labor Center is an organizing school, designed to develop leadership skills among rank-and-file labor and community activists. "While this region has a tremendous pool of experienced organizers and grassroots leaders, Los Angeles really has no place where new leaders can be



Dolores Sanchez gets a helping hand from Maricela Salinas, a fellow SEIU Local 1877 member, at the DLC's computer literacy class

nourished and trained," said Wong. The pilot phase of this effort, to be launched in conjunction with the Community Scholars Program of the Department of Urban Planning at the UCLA School of Public Policy and Social Research, involves three workshops to be held in the spring of 2003. These sessions will focus on the lessons of recent organizing successes in Los Angeles. Trainers will be drawn from the local area. On the basis of an evaluation of these pilot workshops, Labor Center staff will assess the feasibility of developing a more comprehensive organizing school. ■



Graduates from last year's African American Union Leadership School

UC Campuses Launch Labor Studies Initiatives

As a multicampus research program, ILE supports the development of labor studies curricula throughout the UC system. "Today's undergraduates are more interested in labor and employment than has been the case for many years," said ILE Director Ruth Milkman. "Part of our mission is to foster the development of labor studies courses that provide students with the opportunity to engage with these issues." New initiatives to develop labor studies at UC Irvine, UC Davis, and UC Riverside have been launched with funding from the ILE's Collaboration and Dissemination Grants Program.

A \$14,000 ILE grant made in 2001–02, supplemented by an additional grant for 2002–03, has helped to support the development of a labor studies program at UC Irvine. The funding has allowed the UCI labor studies group to continue its highly successful conferences, seminars, and symposia. "The monies that were made available to us by the campus were very limited," said Professor Gilbert Gonzalez (School of Social Sciences, UCI). "The funding from the ILE has allowed us to take the program to another level."

Another campus where plans for a labor studies curriculum are underway is UC Davis. An introductory course that would be the foundation of such a curriculum is now in the planning stages, supported by a \$25,000 ILE grant for the 2002–03 academic year. The course will have both a historical and a comparative dimension, providing students with a broad multidisciplinary introduction to labor in the United States and other parts of the world. "The funding has helped us overcome the budgetary constraints

usually associated with the development of new curriculum," said Professor Fred Block (Sociology, UCD). "We're hopeful that we can now create a focal point for labor studies that currently does not exist on this campus."

UC Riverside is home to the most recent of these initiatives. The ILE has awarded \$27,000 in funding for 2003–04 to develop an interdisciplinary labor studies program on the campus. The goal is to increase the number and frequency of labor studies courses and to organize a minor in labor studies. The initiative will also seek to provide service learning opportunities for students in the labor and employment field. "This is a very exciting opportunity," said Professor Ellen Reese (Sociology, UCR). "I think it will help to increase the interaction among faculty interested in labor issues and help to improve the academic opportunities we provide to the students."

At UCLA the administration approved a new minor in labor and workplace studies in February 2003. The program is designed to prepare students for a wide variety of careers, including labor relations, human resource management, business law, domestic and international government

work, and economic forecasting. The cornerstone of the minor is a year-long course sequence launched in 2002 by a team of UCLA faculty. Titled "Work, Labor, and Social Justice in the U.S.," the sequence is a component of UCLA's interdisciplinary General Education Cluster program. The labor cluster had 120 entering undergraduates enrolled in the 2002–03 academic year, and it is expected to have the same enrollment next year.

The UCLA faculty team for the cluster includes Ruth Milkman (ILE Director and Professor of Sociology), Kent Wong (Labor Center Director), Abel Valenzuela (Professor of Chicano Studies and Urban Planning), and Geraldine Moyle (Lecturer, Writing Programs), assisted by graduate teaching fellows Daisy Rooks (Sociology), Francisco Garcia (Urban Planning), and Kristen Guzman (History). The course includes a film series and a program of guest lecturers from the community. After two quarters of a team-taught lecture-course format, supported by discussion sections, the students divide into groups of twenty for spring quarter seminars. Two of the six seminars are based on service learning, giving students the opportunity to work with unions and community-based organizations in Los Angeles. ■

The State of California Labor 2002

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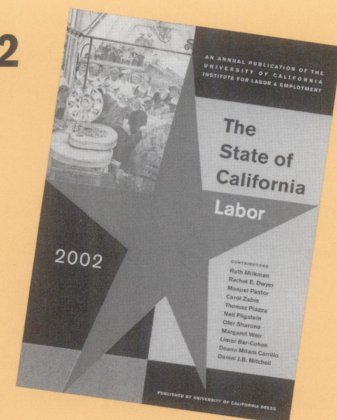
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their orientation toward risk and uncertainty.

In his dissertation Martin compared popular tax revolt in Denmark and the United States in the 1970s. He showed that even though tax revolt in both countries began outside the political establishment, outcomes were defined by political structures: in Denmark a third political party was established; in the United States ballot initiatives provided voters with a tool for resistance at the state level. In his postdoctoral project Martin proposes to examine the politics of tax revolt from a different angle by comparing states within the United States and asking why labor's campaign against tax limits has been so unsuccessful.

Neff and Martin, outstanding young scholars who have already made significant research contributions, were chosen from a pool of highly qualified applicants. Although they were selected because of their academic achievements, both worked in the labor movement before they began their graduate studies. In 1996 Neff was an intern with the AFL-CIO's Organizing Institute, where she worked on organizing campaigns with nursing home workers and meat packers in the southern United States. Martin was a strategic researcher for SEIU Local 250 from 1995 to 1997, and in the summer of 1998 he also conducted research for HERE on the effects of economic development on the hotel industry.

ILE's postdoctoral fellowship program, which is now in its second year, offers recent Ph.D.s an opportunity to pursue independent research. Fellows are free of teaching and administrative duties, and they receive mentoring from ILE-affiliated UC faculty. ■



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California Union Leadership School

Asilomar Conference Center, Pacific Grove, California

September 5-12, 2003

The UC Institute for Labor and Employment is partnering with the California Federation of Labor, AFL-CIO, to offer this inaugural session of the California Union Leadership School. Designed for top elected leaders and staff members, the program will bring together experienced labor practitioners and talented teaching faculty from the University of California. The ILE is accepting enrollments now for this unique educational opportunity.

A Comprehensive Learning Experience

The curriculum includes:

- UC faculty presentations on the economy and politics of the United States and California
- Training in power analysis and organizational mobilization
- Training in financial management and budgeting
- Internal and external communications strategies
- Facing the challenge of organizing on scale
- International responses to globalization
- Organizational management
- Strategic planning
- Meeting the challenge of inclusion

Participants will be challenged to develop a strategic plan that will deal with a real-life problem that their organization is facing.

May 30 is the application deadline. For more information contact Peter Olney at the address below. Include the names and affiliations of proposed participants.

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