Industry Choice and within Industry Earnings Effects

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Date:2022-08-01

Keyword:NA

Url:[click here](https://www.nber.org/papers/w30408)

Attachment:[click here](https://www.nber.org/system/files/working_papers/w30408/w30408.pdf)

From:NEBR-working\_paper

We examine the effect of attending stand-alone technical high schools on the industry of employment and within industry earnings premiums using a regression discontinuity design. We study the universe of students that applied to the Connecticut Technical Education and Career System (CTECS) between 2006 and 2011. CTECS admission shifts male applicants towards higher paying industries that align with CTECS programs of study, but has a much more modest impact on the industry of employment for female applicants. Further, key industry effects observed for females shift these applicants towards lower paying industries. Surprisingly, overall industry earnings premiums and treatment effects of CTECS on earnings premiums are similar for female applicants in traditionally male dominated industries like manufacturing and construction. However, female representation in these industries is too small to contribute substantially to female earnings in aggregate. For male applicants, mechanism analyses show that treatment effects in manufacturing and construction depend in part on work experience while in high school and as a young adult. Alternatively, in professional and office support industries, treatment effects on earnings arise through selection of students with high 8th grade tests scores into these industries because they offer a higher direct return to cognitive skills.