

BENJAMIN D. PYLE



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ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

Boston University School of Law

Boston, MA

Associate Professor of Law

July 2023 — Current

- Subjects Taught: Criminal Law; Employment Law
 - Center for Innovation in Social Science Faculty Fellow
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EDUCATION

University of Michigan

J.D., Magna Cum Laude

August 2018 – May 2021

Journal: Articles Editor for Michigan Journal of Law Reform

Clinic: Workers' Rights/Unemployment Insurance Clinic (2 years)

Awards: Order of the Coif; Book Award for Legal Ethics

University of Chicago's Donald M. Ephraim Paper Prize in Law and Economics

Ph.D. in Economics

August 2016 – 2023

Master's of Arts in Economics

January 2018

Fields Completed: Labor, Public Finance

Awards: 2016 - 2017 William Haber Graduate Fellow; 2023 John E. Parker Memorial Prize
in Labor Economics and Human Resources

Claremont McKenna College

B.A. Philosophy, Politics, and Economics; Mathematics, Magna Cum Laude

May 2013

Awards: Edward J. Sexton PPE Fellow, Robert Day Scholar,
Dean's List, National Merit Scholar, Rotary Scholarship

PUBLISHED WORK

Articles & Comments

- [*Invited Response: Knowledge Generation and Uncertainty in an Unpredictable Social World*](#), 103 B. U. L. REV. 2049 (2023).
- [*Understanding Violent Crime Recidivism*](#), 95 NOTRE DAME L. REV. 1643 (2020). (with J.J. Prescott & Sonja Starr)
- [*Identifying the Impact of Labor Market Opportunities on Criminal Behavior*](#), 59 INT'L REV. L. & ECON. 65 (2019). (with J.J. Prescott)

Reports

- [*Second Chances Part I - Federal Employment for Workers with Past Arrests or Convictions \(EEOC Federal Sector Report 2023\)*](#) (with Romella El Kharzazi and EEOC staff)

Economic Letters

- Benjamin Pyle & John C. Williams, *Data Dependence Awakens*, FRBSF ECON. LETTER 2016-12 (2016).
 - Mary C. Daly, Bart Hobijn, & Benjamin Pyle, *What's Up with Wage Growth?*, FRBSF ECON. LETTER 2016-07 (2016).
 - Glenn D. Rudebusch, Daniel J. Wilson, & Benjamin Pyle, *Residual Seasonality and Monetary Policy*, FRBSF ECON. LETTER 2015-27 (2015).
 - Mary C. Daly, Fernanda Nechio, & Benjamin Pyle, *Finding Normal: Natural Rates and Policy Prescriptions*, FRBSF ECON. LETTER 2015-22 (2015).
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WORKING PAPERS

- **Negligent Hiring: Recidivism and Employment with a Criminal Record**

This paper uses theoretical and empirical methods to understand the most common reason employers report reluctance to hire workers with a criminal record: legal liability generated by the tort of negligent hiring. While the purpose of the tort is ostensibly to protect and make whole those harmed when an employee misbehaves in a foreseeable manner, I find that, in practice, the tort generates additional criminal behavior and worsens employment outcomes. I first provide a survey of the current doctrine across the states and trace the origins of the tort through the common law. Using a difference-in-differences strategy, I show that adoption of negligent hiring increased the number of property criminal offenses (7%). Next, I examine state legislation clarifying the negligent hiring standard and reducing the likelihood that an employer will be found liable. I use survey and administrative data from over a dozen states to document that the states that reformed their negligent hiring law increased employment for people with criminal records by 2-5 p.p. (5-9%) and lowered reincarceration for a new criminal offense by 2 p.p. (10%) relative to people in non-reforming states. The Census Bureau's Disclosure Review Board and Disclosure Avoidance Officers have reviewed this information product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and have approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied to this release. This research was performed at a Federal Statistical Research Data Center under FSRDC Project Number 2295. (CBDRB-FY22-P2295-R9926 and CBDRB-FY23-P2295-R10669).

- **Estimating the Impact of the Age of Criminal Majority: Decomposing Multiple Treatments in a Regression Discontinuity Framework** (with Michael Mueller-Smith and Caroline Walker)

This paper studies the impact of adult prosecution on recidivism and employment trajectories for first-time felony youth criminal defendants. We use extensive linked Criminal Justice Administrative Record System (CJARS) and socio-economic data from Wayne County, Michigan (Detroit). Using the discrete age of majority rule, and a regression discontinuity design, we find that adult prosecution reduces future criminal charges over 5 years by 0.48 felony cases (↓ 20%) while also worsening labor market outcomes: .76 fewer employers (↓ 19%) and \$613 less earnings (↓ 21%) per year. We develop a novel econometric framework that combines standard regression discontinuity methods with predictive machine learning models to identify mechanism-specific treatment effects that underpin the overall impact of adult prosecution. We leverage these estimates to consider four policy counterfactuals: (1) raising the age of majority, (2) increasing adult dismissals to match the juvenile disposition rates, (3) eliminating adult incarceration, and (4) expanding juvenile record sealing opportunities to those prosecuted in the adult system. All four scenarios generate positive returns for government budgets. After accounting for increases in recidivism generated by many of these policies and the corresponding victim costs borne by society, we find positive social returns for expanding the reach of juvenile record sealing and increasingly dismissing marginal adult charges, while raising the age of majority breaks even. Eliminating prison for first time adult felony defendants increases net social costs. Any opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not reflect the views of the U.S. Census Bureau. The U.S. Census Bureau reviewed this data product for unauthorized disclosure of confidential information and approved the disclosure avoidance practices applied to this release (Approval number: #CBDRB-FY22-291).

- [Who Benefits from Corporate Tax Cuts? Evidence from Banks and Credit Unions around the TCJA.](#) (with Edward Fox)

The TCJA of 2017 made large changes to the taxation of corporate and pass-through businesses in the U.S. Understanding the effects of these changes is complicated by the difficulty of finding control firms whose taxation was not altered by the Act. We study the effect of the TCJA on small and medium size banks using credit unions—which compete with these banks for deposits and in making loans—as a novel control group. Credit unions were not taxed both before and after the Act. Using a difference-in-difference framework, we find that an important fraction of the incidence of the tax cut goes to depositors. We find little evidence that employees or borrowers from banks receive a share of the tax cut in the form of higher wages or lower interest rates on loans or that banks increase their investment in fixed assets as a result of the Act.

- [Agency Incentives and Disparate Revenue Collection: Evidence from Chicago Parking Tickets](#) (with Elizabeth Luh and James Reeves)

We examine enforcement patterns in administering parking tickets for failure to purchase vehicle registration, colloquially known as the sticker fine, across ticketing agencies in Chicago. Leveraging a sharp 2012 sticker fine increase in an event-study framework, we find that Chicago police increased their enforcement of sticker non-compliance across Black relative to non-Black neighborhoods, but find no disparate response in the ticketing behavior of other parking enforcement agents. This significant disparity in ticketing by police officers is not driven by changes in compliance or differences in neighborhood characteristics, but rather differential enforcement. We present suggestive evidence of differences in officer incentives and marginal parking enforcement costs as key mechanisms. An officer-specific decomposition provides evidence that disparate enforcement is not concentrated among a small handful of officers, but is instead a broader departmental phenomenon. We link this disparate enforcement to a widening of the financial instability gap across neighborhoods, including increased rates of ticket non-payment and bankruptcy filings.

- [Measuring Lawyer Mental Illness: Evidence from Two National Surveys](#) (with Clifford Rosky) [manuscript available upon request]

We analyze the National Survey on Drug Use and Health (NSDUH) to assess the relative rates of mental illness for lawyers. First, we find that lawyers experience moderate or severe psychological distress at significantly higher rates than the other educational groups, including the general public. In addition, lawyers experience serious psychological distress significantly more often than people with a BA, people with a graduate degree, and doctors. As previous studies have documented, the legal profession has a serious problem with alcohol. 9.3% of lawyers experience alcohol abuse and dependence. This rate is 55% higher than the rate among the general public, more than double the rate among doctors (4.1%), and significantly higher than the rate among all other groups. When we break down our findings by age and gender, we see distinct patterns in the distribution of mental illness. Female lawyers are more likely to experience moderate or severe psychological distress than male lawyers. Similarly, younger lawyers (between the ages of 26 and 34) are more likely to experience moderate or severe psychological distress than older lawyers (over age 50). The same gender and age patterns hold true for serious psychological distress.

- [A Second Look at Ban-the-Box: Evidence From Many States' Administrative Data](#) [Work in progress]
- [Occupational Licensing and Migration: Evidence from Lawyer Reciprocity Agreements and Lawyer Mobility](#) (with Thomas Helgerman) [Work in progress]
- [Entrepreneurship and Criminal Record Salience](#) (with Emmanuel Yimfor and J.J. Prescott) [Work in progress]

AWARDS, GRANTS, AND PROFESSIONAL ENGAGEMENT

- Vital Projects at Proteus (\$20,000) (2019) (“Understanding Recidivism Rates for Homicide Offenders”) (Co-PI: J.J. Prescott)
 - Conferences & Presentations: Western Economic Association International Conference* (scheduled 2024); Virtual Crime Economics (ViCE) Seminar* (scheduled 2024); Texas Economics of Crime Workshop (TxECW)* (scheduled 2024); Harvard Law, Economics, & Organization Seminar* (2024); NBER’s Crime Spring Meeting* (2024); Association of American Law Schools Annual Meeting, Empirical Legal Studies* (2024); Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management* (2023) University of Texas at Austin Law and Economics Workshop* (2023); NBER Summer Institute, Crime Session (2023); American Law and Economics Annual Conference* (2023), Midwest Economics Association* (2023); NBER’s Program for Children Meeting (2023); Conference on Empirical Legal Studies* (UVA, 2022); 2022 Interactions: Bringing Together Econometrics and Applied Microeconomics (University of Wisconsin Madison, 2022); Program on Empirical Legal Studies* (Claremont McKenna College, 2018) (Star indicates presenter)
 - Referee: Journal of Public Economics; American Law and Economics Review; International Review of Law and Economics; Review of Law and Economics
 - Bar membership: California
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PREVIOUS TEACHING EXPERIENCE

University of Michigan

Graduate Student Instructor

Ann Arbor, MI

August 2017 — May 2021

- Crime & Public Policy (Upper Level Writing Course); Fall & Winter 2018, Fall 2019, Winter 2021
- Ethics & Economics (Upper Level Writing Course); Fall 2020
- Principles of Economics II; Winter 2019
- Economics of Education (Upper Level Writing Course); Fall 2017, Summer 2018

Claremont McKenna College

Teaching Assistant

Claremont, CA

September 2012 — December 2012

- Introduction to Economics with Eric Helland
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RESEARCH AND LEGAL EXPERIENCE

Washtenaw Prosecutor’s Office and ACLU Michigan

Special Assistant to the Prosecutor

Ann Arbor, MI

March 2022 — June 2023

- Assist with writing *amici curiae* and background legal research.
- Coordinate with various office departments to improve data gathering techniques.
- Conduct independent research to provide policy-relevant information on the impact of various potential reforms.
- Analyze data generated within the prosecutor’s office to evaluate the impact of previous and ongoing policy changes to most effectively use resources informed by recent social science literature.

University of Michigan*Graduate Research Assistant*Ann Arbor, MI
May 2019 — July 2023

- Researcher at the Criminal Justice Administrative Records System for Michael Mueller-Smith.
- Harmonize court records to link data between state criminal justice administrative agencies and Census data.
- Developed code and statistical methodology for research on the interaction between labor markets and the criminal justice system (both theoretical and empirical work).
- Summarized and synthesized criminal justice research.

Freelance*Litigation Consultant*Ann Arbor, MI
2017 — 2023

- Provide analysis and consulting for employment law cases to support expert witness (joint with J.J. Prescott).

Equal Employment Opportunity Commission*Graduate Research Fellowship*Ann Arbor, MI
June 2021 — December 2021

- Provided legal and economic analysis on federal sector employment, criminal records, and credit histories.

National Employment Law Project*Researcher*Ann Arbor, MI
June 2021 — August 2021

- Provided analysis of unemployment insurance programs and laws for litigation and advocacy.

Older employment

pre-2017

- Research Associate at the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco (2013-2016); Research Assistant at the Claremont McKenna's Financial Economics Institute (2011-13); Summer Analyst at Deutsche Bank (2012); Research Assistant at the White House Council of Economic Advisers (2011); Research Assistant at RAND Corporation Institute for Civil Justice (2010-2011)

TECHNICAL SKILLS

- Skilled in Microsoft Office Suite, VBA, STATA, Matlab, CUDA (GPU parallel computing), Eviews, Gauss, Bloomberg, Lexis, Westlaw, Haver, and LaTeX.
- Some experience in Java, Python, and Mathematica.