

WEI-LIN CHEN
ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

University of California - San Diego
National Taiwan University
University of California - Berkeley
National Taiwan University

PhD Candidate in Economics, 2023 (expected)
M.A. Economics, 2017
Visiting Student, 2017
B.A. Economics, 2013

REFERENCES

Julie Berry Cullen	UC San Diego	jbcullen@ucsd.edu
Paul Niehaus	UC San Diego	pniehaus@ucsd.edu
Samuel Bazzi	UC San Diego	sbazzi@ucsd.edu

FIELDS OF INTERESTS

Development Economics, Public Economics, Political Economy

HONORS AND AWARDS

TA Excellence Award. 2019, 2021. University of California - San Diego.
Government Scholarship to Study Abroad. 2021. The Ministry of Education, Taiwan

JOB MARKET PAPER

Informal Taxation and Patronage Politics: Evidence from Electoral Cycles in Indonesian Villages

Abstract: Informal taxation provides bottom-up hence more accountable funding for constrained local governments in many parts of the developing world. The lack of formality of its structure, however, makes it susceptible to local political pressure. This paper examines electoral cycles of a series of public finance instruments to which local politicians have different degrees of discretion in rural Indonesian villages: from property tax collection, rice subsidy provision, to informal tax collection. We find, in an election year, increased informal labor tax burden for funding for maintenance as opposed to construction of public goods, implying that village heads prefer to providing public goods with broader and more immediate benefits when close to elections. We find no changes in property tax payments and rice subsidy provision, suggesting formality of the instruments constrain politicians' patronage behaviors. Overall, the results highlight a potential trade-off in designing public finance instruments between formality and accountability.

WORKING PAPERS

Curriculum and National Identity: Evidence from the 1997 Curriculum Reform in Taiwan

Joint with Ming-Jen Lin and Tzu-Ting Yang — *Revise and Resubmit at Journal of Development Economics*

Abstract: This paper examines the causal effects of textbook content on individuals' national identity, by exploiting a curriculum reform that introduced a new perspective on Taiwan's history for students entering junior high school after September 1997. Using a repeated nationally representative survey and a regression discontinuity design, we show that students exposed to the new textbooks were more likely to hold exclusive Taiwanese identity rather than dual identity (i.e. Taiwanese and Chinese). The effect was greater for academic track students and those living in neighborhoods where fewer people identify as Taiwanese. In addition, our results suggest that the new curriculum had little impact on people's political preferences related to Taiwan independence. Finally, we find that the probability of reporting as Taiwanese among old textbook readers converges with that of people reading new textbooks in the long run since the perspectives of old textbooks are in conflict with the recent social trends.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Political Alignment in Public Sector: Evidence from Law-Enforcement Agencies in North Carolina

Joint with Samuel Krumholz

Abstract: Politician turnovers are associated with task reassignment and personnel turnover often on account of patronage practices. We propose another channel in this paper: policy preference alignment between politicians and civil servants. We examine the empirical relevance of policy preference alignment in the context of sheriffs' offices in North Carolina. We measure policy preference of sheriffs and officers in two ways: traffic stop and search behaviors toward different racial groups and party affiliation. We find that offices under republican sheriffs are associated with higher likelihood of stopping and searching black drivers, but we do not find strong evidence that sheriffs achieve this by reassigning officers out of the traffic stop tasks whose prior traffic stops and searches not aligned with this pattern. On personnel turnover, we find convincing evidence that policy preference nonalignment leads to higher (61% increase) likelihood of officers' leaving offices, especially officers who are eligible for pension benefits, suggesting a trade-off between policy preferences and monetary return.

Disparate Impact of Social Safety Net Inclusion on Internal Migrants in Indonesia

Abstract: Discussion of targeting the poor mostly focuses on the performance of specific methods on the *general* population, while the performance *across groups* are rarely examined. This project examines the performance of the proxy-means-testing (PMT) algorithms across internal migrants and locals in Indonesia. Using the same household expenditure sample and household characteristic variables, I reproduce the PMT algorithm adopted by Indonesian central government. I find that conditional on the same true household expenditure level, the PMT algorithm over-predicts internal migrants expenditure comparing to locals. Zooming in to the poor households the central government aims to target, whose expenditure lies in the bottom 25% of the population, the PMT algorithm's over-prediction results in an 8 percentage points increase of exclusion error for migrants than locals. Preliminary analysis indicates that among the PMT variables, household head education and occupation, and residential neighborhood characteristics contribute the most to the over-prediction bias. Future work will explore whether local labor and residential markets function differently for locals and migrants and how these differences contribute to the PMT algorithm biases.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

As teacher assistant at UC San Diego

Middle East Economics	Spring 2019; Winter, Spring, Fall 2020; Winter 2022 (Prof. James E. Rauch)
Economics of Education	Fall 2018 (Prof. Julien Robert Betts)
Principles of Macroeconomics	Winter 2019 (Prof. Valerie A. Ramey)
Public Economics:ExpenditureII	Winter 2021 (Prof. Itzik Fadlon)
Cities, Inequality, Innovation	Spring 2021 (Prof. Fabian Eckert)
Economics of the Environment	Fall 2021 (Prof. Mark R. Jacobsen)
Long Run Macroeconomics	Spring 2022 (Prof. Giacomo Rondina)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Presentations

2021 Economics Graduate Student Conference (EGSC), Washington University in St. Louis

Referee Service

Economic Journal, Economic Inquiry, Pacific Economic Review, Economic Modelling

OTHER INFORMATION

Citizenship: Taiwan

Languages: Mandarin (Native), Taiwanese Hokkien (Native), English (Proficient)

Technical Skills: Stata, Python (basic), Matlab (basic), \LaTeX