TATIANA MOCANU

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GRADUATE STUDIES

Ph.D. in Economics, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (Expected May 2022)

References:

Professor David Albouy	Professor Dan Bernhardt	Professor Alexander Bartik
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University of Illinois	University of Illinois	University of Illinois
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PREVIOUS STUDIES

M.Sc. in Economics, University of Bonn (Germany), 2015

B.Sc. in Economics and Management, Otto-von-Guericke University Magdeburg (Germany), 2013

RESEARCH AND TEACHING FIELDS

Labor Economics, Public Economics, Urban Economics

TEACHING EXPERIENCE
(*List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent. **Rated as Outstanding. †Not evaluated)

Economics of Taxation (Graduate Level): Fall 2017**, Fall 2018†
(Robert E. Demarest Memorial Teaching Award)

Welfare Economics: Fall 2018†

Intermediate Microeconomics: Fall 2016†, Spring 2017†, Spring 2018*, Fall 2019**—2021**

Macroeconomic Principles: Spring 2019*

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

2018, 2019-2022: University of Illinois, Research Assistant for Professor David Albouy

AWARDS

Morris and Sally Kleiner Labor Economics Prize, Department of Economics, UIUC, 2020

Summer Research Fellowship, Department of Economics, UIUC, 2020

Paul W. Boltz Fellowship, Department of Economics, UIUC, 2019

Robert E. Demarest Memorial Teaching Award, Department of Economics, UIUC, 2018

Graduate Fellowship, Department of Economics, UIUC, 2015-2016

Deutschlandstipendium, Ostdeutscher Sparkassenverband, Germany, 2011-2013

PRESENTATIONS
(†Co-author presented)

2021: AEA ASSA (poster), Association for Education Finance and Policy 46th Annual Meeting, Annual Scientific Conference of Romanian Academic Economists from Abroad (ERMAS)

2020: AEA (poster) and AREUEA ASSA (San Diego), PhD Conference on Real Estate and Housing (OSU, canceled), EALE-SOLE-AASLE World Conference (Berlin), Junior Migration Seminar (CERDI-PSE-LISER-University of Luxembourg- Universidad Carlos III-CEPII-IC Migrations-World Bank)†

2019: 9th European Meeting of the Urban Economics Association (VU Amsterdam), Young Economists Symposium (Columbia University), Urban Economics Association Summer School (attendee) (LSE), Empirics and Methods in Economics Conference (University of Chicago)†

2018: 13th Meeting of the Urban Economics Association (Columbia University)

REFEREEING

Regional Science and Urban Economics, *Journal of Housing Economics*

JOB MARKET PAPER

"Designing Gender Equity: Evidence from Hiring Practices and Committees"

This paper analyzes how different screening practices affect gender equity in hiring. I transform tens of millions of high-dimensional, unstructured records from Brazil's public sector into selection processes with detailed information on candidates, evaluators, screening tools, and scores. Exploiting a federal policy reform that required the use of more impartial hiring practices, I find that increasing screening impartiality improves women's evaluation scores, application rates, and probability of being hired. To better understand which design choices reduce gender disparities, I leverage variation in how different hiring processes complied with greater impartiality. I find that the most effective changes to increase women's hiring odds involve i) adding blind written tests to a hiring process that already uses subjective methods, such as interviews, or ii) converting subjective rounds into only blind written tests. However, when employers remove subjective stages, gender hiring gaps remain unchanged. Finally, more gender-balanced hiring committees induce male evaluators to become more favorable toward female candidates in subjective stages. To interpret these results, I develop a model of hiring in which evaluator bias, tool bias, and screening precision jointly determine relative hiring outcomes by gender. In light of my findings, the model suggests that both evaluator bias and lower screening precision disadvantage female applicants. Screening changes that limit discretion in existing hiring practices or add new impartial screening tools reduce the gender hiring gap, while policies that eliminate subjective screening tools are ineffective because the loss of screening precision outweighs the reduction in evaluator bias.

RESEARCH PAPERS

"The Impact of International Students on Housing Markets" (with Pedro Tremacoldi-Rossi) (Revise and Resubmit, *Canadian Journal of Economics*)

We study the impact of the 2005-2015 international student boom in US universities on local housing markets. By constructing a sample of American college towns characterizing rarely studied local markets in small urban areas, we show that international students exogenously sustained demand for rentals and residential investment, representing countercyclical shocks during the Great Recession. Exploiting the historical distribution of foreign enrollment across college towns and country-of-origin networks, we find that international students increased rents by 1.3% and home prices by 2.5% relative to the housing boom peak, translating into home equity gains of $4,000. An analysis exploiting within-city dynamics reveals that neighborhoods near campus absorbed international inflows by replacing single-family homes with apartment rentals.

"Beyond Tuition: College Cost Accuracy and Student Outcomes"

This paper goes beyond the focus of the college affordability debate on tuition and studies how living expenses affect the human capital accumulation of US college students. Cost of living (COL) allowances reported by colleges are a substantial part of cost of attendance, which limits federal loan and grant amounts. Without regulation or oversight, self-reported college COL estimates considerably differ from local cost benchmarks, with under-reporting particularly pervasive in for-profits. Exploiting within-university variation in levels of reported living costs, I show that under-reporting in for-profits lowers student aid received by students, increases dropout rates, and incentivizes excessive enrollment of low-income individuals. By having all universities follow standardized COL estimates and making the average under-estimating for-profit university perfectly accurate, dropout rates would decrease by 15%.

"Explaining Racial Disparities During a Pandemic" (with Pedro Tremacoldi-Rossi)

Using individual-level administrative records from Brazil, we study the role of healthcare provision, pre-existing medical conditions, occupation, and income in determining salient racial gaps in COVID-19 deaths, infections, and testing. We show that a 7% racial death gap conditional on individual risk factors, demographics, healthcare seeking behavior, and severity of initial symptoms, disappears once comparing patients hospitalized in the same facility. At least 70% of the gap in deaths is explained by minority patients being disproportionately hospitalized in facilities in lower socio-economic areas and through universal healthcare instead of private insurance. We also find evidence of systematic testing gaps across occupations, where less white, lower income jobs experience testing gaps as large as 40 percentage points relative to frontline healthcare workers, an often-tested group of workers. These occupation-specific testing disparities result in measures of occupational hazards based on confirmed cases that are almost uncorrelated with symptom incidence, which more precisely tracks the observed distribution of deaths across occupations.

Selected Research Papers in Progress

"Learning Interruption and Student Achievement: Evidence from Faculty Strikes in Brazilian Universities" (with Oto Montagner and Pedro Tremacoldi-Rossi)

Exploiting the common occurrence of union-led faculty strikes in Brazilian universities, during which teaching activities are completely suspended because of collective bargaining, we study the effects of learning interruption in student achievement. Comparing exit and entry exam scores of students from the same major and college exposed to different degrees of learning interruption, we find that each additional strike month lowers 7 positions in the learning rank and increases both dropout rates and time to graduation. Linking exam scores to longitudinal student microdata reveals that these effects concentrate on students of lower income, more likely to work, and who studied in lower-quality high schools. Leveraging post-exit exam surveys, we find that a large part of the observed decrease in performance is attributed by students to lower levels of major satisfaction and perception of value-added, as well as commitment of faculty with teaching, effort, and tutoring. Strikes of other professional groups such as non-instructional staff or of short duration have no effects on any student outcomes, ruling out alternative channels explaining our results. We estimate that strikes in public universities, where education is offered tuition-free, have an annual tax-equivalent cost due to longer time to degree of over $300 million, amounting to almost a third of the total funding to public colleges.

"Discretionary Screening and Employee Performance"

How to select the best employees is a central question to every firm and organization. Identifying which productivity signals correlate with future performance is empirically challenging because employers must optimize the value of evaluator's private information with bias enabled by discretion. I develop a query-based text analysis approach to extract and parse on-the-job information available from official records. I couple these employee productivity measures with detailed information on screening methods used for each hiring process and exploit a natural experiment that changed hiring practices used by employers in Brazil's public sector. I investigate how performance pay, career progression, promotion, and wages of employees hired through job processes with different degrees of discretion behave over time. Because most public sector services are not priced by markets, I connect worker productivity outcomes to measures of public sector service quality by employer level, establishing the social return of better hiring practices.

"Measuring Labor Supply and Demand Responses to Affirmative Action: Evidence from Racial Quotas"

Affirmative action policies are commonly criticized for lowering the quality of hired candidates. However, if selection of workers absent of policy is suboptimal because of discrimination or low minority application rates, these interventions can improve efficiency. This paper studies the effect of racial quotas on three margins difficult to observe and measure: employer response to the quota implementation, quality of hired candidates under the new regime, and whether more minority candidates apply to jobs. Using variation from the introduction of a racial quota policy in Brazil, the paper leverages demographic information and performance in each hiring process stage of all applicants – both subject to the quota and non-minority candidates – as well as evaluation methods, job offers, and career progression. I study how employers subject to the policy changed selection behavior, including screening methods and job postings. By exploiting a discontinuity in treatment generated by the reform design, which enforced the quota only in job processes offering at least 3 openings in the federal government, I test whether employers responded strategically to the quota by spreading job vacancies into multiple job processes below the compliance threshold. Finally, I investigate how the policy affected the selection of minority candidates, especially in occupations with historically low employee diversity.

"When Inventors Become Bureaucrats: Talent Allocation Between Private and Public Sectors"
(with Pedro Tremacoldi-Rossi)

LANGUAGES & SKILLS

English (fluent), Romanian (native), Russian (fluent), German (intermediate)
R, Stata, Python, LaTeX