Joel F.S. McMurry

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Education

University of Wisconsin-Madison, Ph.D. Economics	In Progress
University of Wisconsin-Madison, M.S. Economics	2016
University of Chicago, A.B. Philosophy, Economics	2011

Current and Previous Positions

University of Wisconsin-Madison Department of Economics

Research Assistant for Naoki Aizawa	2018 - Present
Research Assistant, Center for Research on the Wisconsin Economy	2017 - 2018

Analysis Group Inc.

Senior Analyst (Chicago, IL)	2011 - 2013

Research Fields

Labor economics, public economics, applied microeconomics

Working Papers

Skills, Savings, and the Family

Extended Family and the Production of Child Skills

Family Resources, Risk-Taking, and the Fuller View of the Portfolio (with Annika Bacher & Eirik Brandsås)

Making Summer Matter: The Impact of Youth Employment on Academic Performance (with Amy Ellen Schwartz, Jacob Leos-Urbel & Matthew Wiswall), revision requested, *Quantitative Economics*

This paper examines New York City's Summer Youth Employment Program (SYEP). SYEP provides jobs to youth ages 14-24, and due to high demand for summer jobs, allocates slots through a random lottery system. We match student-level data from the SYEP program with educational records from the NYC Department of Education and use the random lottery to estimate the effects of SYEP participation on a number of academic outcomes, including test taking and performance. We find that SYEP participation has positive impacts on student academic outcomes, and these effects are particularly large for students who participate in SYEP multiple times.

Human Capital and College Prospects

This paper studies how parental investment in the human capital of children responds to changes in the college environment the child will face in late adolescence. I develop and estimate a dynamic model of parental savings and investment in which parents make a trade-off between saving in financial assets or the human capital of their child. Parents care about their asset position at the end of the finite decision problem as well as the quality of college their child enjoys. College quality is produced by combining tuition dollars, a choice made by the parent, and the human capital of the child in the terminal period. These inputs are complementary, so policies that increase tuition spending on the child will increase the return to investing in one's child during childhood. I simulate three counterfactual education policies: an unconditional transfer, a conditional tuition grant, and a policy that approximates free public university. I find that such policies increase human capital investment the most in children from poor families, but the magnitudes of the increases are modest.

Intrafamily Insurance, Portfolio Choice, and Intergenerational Wealth Inequality (with Eirik Brandsås)

We consider how intra-family insurance affects household portfolio choices and savings decisions. Empirically, we find that stock market participation and the fraction of assets invested in stocks are increasing in measures of family member human capital. Taking this as suggestive evidence that intra-family insurance reduces risk aversion, we study a model of consumption, savings, and portfolio choice with two-sided altruism and no commitment in which parents and children can insure each other. In the model, agents with family members of lower human capital optimally choose to hold lower portfolio weights, reducing the average rate of return obtained. Families with lower human capital thus not only have lower labor income, but also lower rates of return, potentially propagating both the level and persistence in wealth inequality.

Capital and Productivity in US States (with Noah Williams)

We study United States economic growth at the state level over the period from 1970-2015. Our main contribution is the construction of new data series on capital at the state and industry level, using data on the aggregate capital stock and payments to capital at the state and industry level. We use published data and neoclassical theory to construct this data, as there are no official data on investment or capital at the state level. We use this data to study capital accumulation and convergence across states, as well as levels and trends in factor shares across states, regions, and industries. We show that the decline in labor's share of income was strongest in states where it was initially the highest, and while labor's share fell in manufacturing it increased in services. Thus even as manufacturing shrank and services grew as a share of total output, labor's share declined overall. We then adopt a standard growth accounting framework to investigate whether state growth during this period was due to capital accumulation, a growing workforce, or total factor productivity growth. We find substantial heterogeneity in the growth experiences of states. States with higher average output growth also had higher average productivity growth, but a larger fraction of their growth was driven by factor accumulation. In addition, we decompose state TFP growth into a component that captures growth within industries and one that characterizes productivity growth due to factor reallocation towards more productive industries. We find that for most states, growth is due to within-industry productivity growth as opposed to reallocation across industries, and in fact reallocation effects generally slowed growth.

The Production of Child Health (with Naoki Aizawa & Matthew Wiswall)

Childcare Quantity and Quality (with Sarah Flood, Aaron Sojourner & Matthew Wiswall)

Teaching

University of Wisconsin-Madison

Teaching Assistant, Analytical Public Finance	Fall 2016
Teaching Assistant, Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory	Spring 2016
Principles of Macroeconomics	Fall 2015

Honors and Awards

Juli Plant Grainger Institute Summer Fellowship (UW-Madison Dept of Economics)	2018, 2019
"Distinguished Teaching Assistant" (Highest Category)	Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Fall 2016

Conference Presentations

2018: Midwest Macro (UW-Madison)

Computer Skills

R, Julia, Stata, Matlab, SAS, LaTeX