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EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics, University of Texas at Austin, 2022 (Expected)
M.S. in Economics, University of Texas at Austin, 2018
B.S. in Economics and Computer Science, University of Maryland College Park, 2011

REFERENCES

Leigh L. Linden
Department of Economics, University of Texas at Austin
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512-475-8556

Sandra E. Black
Department of Economics, Columbia University
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212-854-3676

Brendan Kline
Department of Economics, University of Texas at Austin
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RESEARCH FIELDS

Economics of Education, Econometrics, Labor Economics, Public Economics

JOB MARKET PAPER

An Exact Hypothesis Test For Clustered Samples

I propose a hypothesis test for clustered samples. I derive my test by inverting the distribution of the test statistic under a standard assumption about the errors. This allows critical values to be selected from a distribution that matches the test statistic itself, which is crucial for a hypothesis test to reject true hypotheses at the correct rate. Largely due to critical value selection, previous tests can over- or under-reject in samples with few clusters, few ever-treated clusters, cluster size outliers, or treatment intensity outliers. I show that my proposed test is an exact test regardless of these features. Using simulations, I also demonstrate where this adjustment is most impactful in achieving exact tests compared to previous hypothesis tests.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

The Impact of Corequisite Math on Community College Student Outcomes: Evidence from Texas (Forthcoming, Education Finance and Policy)
with Lauren Schudde

Developmental education (dev-ed) aims to help students acquire knowledge and skills necessary to succeed in college-level coursework. The traditional prerequisite approach to postsecondary dev-ed—where students take remedial courses that do not count toward a credential—appears to stymie progress toward a degree. At community colleges across the country, most students require remediation in math, creating a barrier to college-level credits under the traditional approach. Corequisite coursework is a structural reform that places students directly into a college-level course in the same term they receive dev-ed support. Using administrative data from Texas community colleges and a regression discontinuity design, we examine whether corequisite math improves student success compared with traditional prerequisite dev-ed. We find that corequisite math quickly improves student completion of math requirements without any obvious drawbacks, but students in corequisite math were not substantially closer to degree completion than their peers in traditional dev-ed after 3 years.

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS (continued)

The Importance of Institutional Data Reporting Quality for Understanding Dev-Ed Math Enrollment and Outcomes (Community College Journal of Research and Practice, 2020)
with Lauren Schudde

Student placement test records, course enrollments, and other student-level data collected by community colleges are vital for evaluating the outcomes of students in developmental education (dev-ed) courses. Researchers and policymakers rely on this information to examine the impact of existing programs and assess ongoing reforms to dev-ed – the accuracy of state administrative data is critical to those tasks. In this study, we examine math placement records in a statewide administrative data set to understand how test records provided by colleges in the state aligned with student course enrollment patterns. We highlight systematic data reporting problems, where many students lacked test scores and test exemption records necessary for policymakers and researchers to determine if they enrolled in the appropriate coursework for their needs. We also found that a non-negligible proportion of students enrolled in dev-ed math – 10% – did not require remediation due to exemption status or passing placement test scores. We conclude with a discussion of the pressing need for accuracy in data reporting, as up-to-date, high-quality student-level data are essential to evaluate ongoing reforms to developmental education.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Patterns, Determinants, and Consequences of Ability Tracking: Evidence From Texas Public Schools
with Sandra E. Black, Julie Cullen, and Kate Antonovics

Schools often track students into classes based on academic ability. Proponents of tracking argue that it is a low-cost tool to improve learning since education is more effective when students are segregated by ability, while opponents argue that tracking exacerbates initial differences in opportunities without strong evidence of efficacy. In fact, very little is known about either the pervasiveness or the determinants of ability tracking in the United States. To fill this gap, we use detailed administrative data from Texas to estimate the extent of ability tracking within schools for grades 4 through 8 for each year from 2011 to 2019. We then explore the nature and evolution of tracking, including how tracking changes in response to educational policies such as school accountability. Finally, we explore how exposure to tracking correlates with student mobility in the achievement distribution.

Disruptive Interactions: Long-run Peer Effects of Disciplinary Schools
with Anjali P. Verma

Evidence suggests that exclusionary discipline -- suspensions and temporary placements at disciplinary alternative schools -- pushes marginal students out of the school system and increases the likelihood of incarceration. This paper examines the impact of disruptive peer effects at disciplinary alternative schools on the future removal, educational attainment, and labor market outcomes of students placed at these schools. To study this, we use the linked administrative records of all high-school students in Texas with a disciplinary placement between 2004 and 2018. Noting that a large number of regular schools feed disruptive students into a single disciplinary alternative school, we exploit the over-time variation in peer composition within a disciplinary school to estimate the causal effects of peers' disruptiveness on students' outcomes. Our results show that having a peer group with higher average disruptiveness at the disciplinary school leads to 1) an increase in students' subsequent disciplinary removals; 2) a decline in their educational attainment (lower high-school graduation, college enrollment and graduation); and 3) a decline in their adult employment and earnings (8% or 1272 USD decline in annual earnings at age 27). These results highlight the need to examine exclusionary discipline policies and adopt approaches that can mitigate the adverse effects of peers at disciplinary schools.

WORK IN PROGRESS (continued)

Exclusionary Discipline: Impact of Student Removal to Disciplinary Alternative Programs in Texas
with Anjali P. Verma

In this paper, we analyze the impact of disciplinary removals of high school students from their regular instructional environments on rates of graduation, drop-out, and other exits. We use the administrative records of all students entering 9th grade in Texas public schools between 1999 and 2014, including their referrals to the Disciplinary Alternative Education Programs (DAEPs) which provided educational programming during periods of disciplinary removal. Noting that physical distance to DAEP campuses is an important determinant of a school's propensity to refer students to DAEPs, we exploit variation in the timing of the entry and exit of local DAEPs across Texas, employing an event-study design to analyze the impact of DAEPs on graduation, drop-out, and other exits. We estimate separately the effect of DAEPs on removed students as well as the indirect effect of attending a high-removal school on students who are not removed.

PRESENTATIONS

Southern Economics Association 2021 (Upcoming)
A Hypothesis Test Robust to Cluster Heterogeneity
Disruptive Interactions: Long-run Peer Effects of Disciplinary Schools (Presented by Coauthor)

Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Seminar Series 2021
Exclusionary Discipline: Impact of Student Removal to Disciplinary Alternative Programs in Texas

TEACHING AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Teaching Assistant, University of Texas at Austin
Empirical Public Economics, Professor David Sibley, 2021
Labor Economics, Professor Gerald Oettinger, 2020-2021
Microeconomic Theory, Professor Gerald Oettinger, 2020
Introduction to Microeconomics, Professor Helen Schneider, 2019
Introduction to Econometrics, Professor Stephen Donald, 2017
Macroeconomic Theory, Professor Felipe Schwartzman, 2017
Introduction to Macroeconomics, Professor Michael Sadler, 2016

Graduate Research Assistant, University of Texas at Austin
Research Assistant to Professor Sandra E. Black, 2018-2021
Research Assistant to Professor Daniel S. Hamermesh, 2018-2019
Research Assistant to Professor Lauren Schudde, 2017-2019

OTHER PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Congressional Budget Office (Washington, DC)
Summer Associate, 2019

Brooke Charter Schools (Boston, MA)
Chief Data Officer, 2015-2016
Data Manager, 2014-2015

The Brattle Group (Cambridge, MA)
Research Analyst, 2012-2014

PROGRAMMING LANGUAGES

Proficient: R, Stata, LaTeX
Familiar: C, Python, Lisp, VBA, HTML, ArcGIS