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Education

Ph.D. Economics, Texas A&M University, expected 2020.

B.A. Economics, Rhodes College, 2015.

Research Fields

Applied Microeconomics, Labor Economics, Economics of Crime, and Economics of Discrimination

Research

Working Papers

Racial Bias by Prosecutors: Evidence from Random Assignment (Job Market Paper)

Racial disparities in criminal justice outcomes are well-documented. However, there is little evidence on the extent to which racial bias exhibited by prosecutors is responsible for these disparities. This paper tests for racial bias in convictions by prosecutors. To identify effects, I leverage as-good-as-random variation in prosecutor race using detailed administrative data on the case assignment process and case outcomes in a major US city. I show that the assignment of an opposite-race prosecutor leads to a 5 percentage point (~ 8 percent) increase in the likelihood of conviction for property crimes, and this result is robust to adjusting for multiple comparisons. I find no evidence of effects for other types of crimes. Additional results indicate that racial bias for property crime convictions is driven by fewer dismissals for opposite-race defendants and by defendants with no criminal history.

The Minimum Wage and Search Effort, NBER Working Paper 25216. (with Camilla Adams and Jonathan Meer) *Under Review*

Labor market search-and-matching models posit supply-side responses to minimum wage increases that may lead to improved matches and lessen or even reverse negative employment effects. Yet there is no empirical evidence on this crucial assumption. Using event study analysis of recent minimum wage increases, we find that increases to minimum wage do not increase the likelihood of searching, but do lead to large yet very transitory spikes in search effort by individuals already looking for work. The results are not driven by changes in the composition of searchers.

The Effect of Risk Assessment Scores on Judicial Behavior and Defendant Outcomes, IZA Discussion Paper No. 11948. (first author with George Naufal and Heather Caspers) *Under Review*

High rates of pretrial detention are one of the most pressing concerns in the U.S. criminal justice system. The use of risk assessment scores as a means of decreasing pretrial detention for low-risk, primarily poor defendants is increasing rapidly across the United States. Despite this, there is little evidence on how risk assessment scores alter criminal outcomes. Using administrative data from a large county in Texas, we estimate the effect of a risk assessment score policy on judge bond decisions, defendant pretrial detention, and pretrial crime. We identify short-term effects by exploiting a large, sudden policy change using a regression discontinuity design. This approach effectively compares defendants booked just before and after the policy change. Results show that adopting a risk assessment score leads to increased release on non-financial bond and decreased pretrial detention. These results appear to be driven by poor defendants, do not worsen existing racial disparities, and deteriorate with time. Additionally, we find risk assessment scores did not increase violent pretrial crime, however, there is some suggestive evidence of small increases in non-violent pretrial crime.

Does Race Matter for Police Use of Force? Evidence from 911 Calls (with Mark Hoekstra)

While there is much concern about the role of race in police use of force, identifying causal effects is difficult. This is in part because of selection, and in part because researchers often observe only interactions that end in use of force, necessitating nontrivial benchmarking assumptions. This paper addresses these problems by using data on officers dispatched to over two million 911 calls in two cities, neither of which allows for discretion in the dispatch process. Using a location-by-time fixed effects approach that isolates the random variation in officer race, we show white officers use force 60 percent more on average than black officers, and use gun force twice as often. To examine how civilian race affects use of force, we compare how white officers increase use of force as they are dispatched to more minority neighborhoods, compared to minority officers. Perhaps most strikingly, we show that while white and black officers use gun force at similar rates in white and racially mixed neighborhoods, white officers are five times as likely to use gun force in predominantly black neighborhoods. Similarly, white officers increase use of any force much more than minority officers when dispatched to more minority neighborhoods. Consequently, difference-in-differences estimates from individual officer fixed effect models indicate black (Hispanic) civilians are 30 – 60 (75 – 120) percent more likely to experience any use of force, and five times as likely to experience gun use of force, compared to if white officers scaled up force similarly to minority officers. These findings highlight the importance of race as a determinant of police use of force, including and especially lethal force.

Does Violence on the Job Change Police Behavior?

There are rising concerns about the quality of policing in high-violence urban neighborhoods in the United States. Residents of these areas are concerned that police officers are failing to reduce crime, but also that when police officers do engage, their tactics are too severe. This paper examines whether risks to officer safety drive both phenomena. To do so, I exploit variation in unprovoked ambushes on police within and across beats using administrative 911 call data from a large American city. Results show that ambushes lead to an 8 percent decline in arrests, an effect that persists for at least three years after an ambush. In contrast, I find no effect on police severity, as measured by use of force and civilian complaints. This suggests police officers respond to increased risk by de-policing, rather than using more aggressive tactics.

Works in Progress

The Effect of Early Parole on Employment

The Effects of Prosecutor Quality on Criminal Case Outcomes

Exposure to Racial Diversity and Judge Behavior

Other Publications

Entrepreneurship and Crime: The Case of New Restaurant Location Decisions, 2016, *Journal of Business Venturing Insights* (5) 19-26. (first author with Steven Caudill and Franklin Mixon Jr.)

Honors and Awards

Texas A&M University, S. Charles Maurice Fellowship in Economics, 2019

Texas A&M University, Outstanding Graduate Student Course Instructor, 2018

Texas A&M University, 1st Place 3rd-year Ph.D. Student Presentation

Texas A&M Private Enterprise Research Center, Graduate Student Fellow 2018-present

Texas A&M University, Lechner Scholar 2015-present

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record, Intermediate Microeconomic Theory (Summer 2018)

Teaching Assistant, Applied Econometrics (Spring 2017, Fall 2017)

Teaching Assistant, Sports Economics (Fall 2018)

Presentations (including planned)

2019: Symposium for Agricultural & Applied Economics Research, Society of Labor Economists, Western Economic Association International Conference, Transatlantic Workshop on the Economics of Crime, Southern Economic Association Conference, Conference on Empirical Legal Studies, Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management, The University of Memphis, Rhodes College

2018: Southern Economic Association Conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management

Professional Activities

Referee, Industrial Relations & PLOS ONE

Texas A&M Graduate Instruction Committee Representative

References

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