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Current Position

Assistant Professor of Economics, Claremont Graduate University, 2020-

Education

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

B.A. Economics, Rhodes College, 2015.

Research Fields

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

Research

Publications

Does Race Matter for Police Use of Force? Evidence from 911 Calls (with Mark Hoekstra) *forthcoming American Economic Review*

This paper examines race and police use of force using data on 1.6 million 911 calls in two cities, neither of which allows for discretion in officer dispatch. Results indicate white officers increase force much more than minority officers when dispatched to more minority neighborhoods. Estimates indicate black (Hispanic) civilians are 55 (75) percent more likely to experience any force, and five times as likely to experience a police shooting, compared to if white officers scaled up force similarly to minority officers. Additionally, 14 percent of white officers use excess force in black neighborhoods relative to our statistical benchmark.

Working Papers

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) *R&R JHR*

Risk assessment has been increasingly adopted in an effort to reduce pretrial detention for poor, low-risk defendants. This paper examines the impact of risk assessment using administrative data from a large Texas County. We identify effects using a regression discontinuity that exploits the overnight implementation of a risk assessment policy. Results indicate this led to a 6.5 percent increase in non-financial bond and an 8.5 percent decrease in pretrial detention, though neither effect persisted beyond two months. Additionally, the policy did not increase violent pretrial crime, though there is some suggestive evidence of increases in non-violent pretrial crime.

The Minimum Wage and Search Effort, NBER Working Paper 25216. (with Camilla Adams and Jonathan Meer) *R&R Economic Letters*

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.

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.

Racial Bias by Prosecutors: Evidence from Random Assignment

There is much interest in understanding the extent to which racial bias drives the large racial disparities in criminal justice outcomes. However, little is known about whether prosecutors exhibit racial bias, despite the widespread belief that prosecutors have more power and discretion than any other actor in the justice system. This paper uses data from New York County to test for racial bias in convictions by being the first to exploit the conditionally random assignment of prosecutors to cases. To overcome confounding factors associated with defendant and prosecutor race, I use a difference-in-differences to consider how much more black versus white defendants are convicted by white prosecutors, compared to the same difference for black prosecutors. Results indicate strong evidence of racial bias for property crimes, even after adjusting for multiple comparisons, but not for other crimes. Property crime results show white defendants have similar conviction rates regardless of prosecutor race. However, while prosecutors of both races convict black defendants at higher rates, the difference in conviction rates across white and black defendants is 5 percentage points (8 percent) higher for white prosecutors than black prosecutors. Additional results indicate this effect is driven by differences in dismissals and by defendants with no criminal history.

The Effect of Prosecutor Leniency on Criminal Case Outcomes

Many argue prosecutors wield more discretion and power than any other agent in the criminal justice system. Despite this widespread belief, little work has documented the extent of prosecutorial discretion. Using data that tracks cases from arrest through disposition, this paper exploits the conditionally random assignment of cases to prosecutors. To quantify prosecutor discretion, I use a random effects model to estimate prosecutor-specific measures of leniency. Results show prosecutors are important for case disposition. Replacing a prosecutor with one that is a standard deviation harsher increases the odds of a guilty outcome by 3 percentage points or 5 percent. This magnitude is similar to the average difference in guilty outcomes between black and white defendants, or half the effect of a prior arrest. Additional results indicate prosecutor race and gender are not primary determinants of leniency. However, prosecutors are willing or able to exercise significant discretion for defendants with no prior arrests and less severe crimes.

The Effect of Field Training Officers on Police Use of Force (with Matt Ross and Chandon Adger)

There have been rising concerns about excessive police use of force. In this paper, we consider the link between field training officers and subsequent recruit behavior. To do so, we leverage a unique setting in Dallas, Texas, where recruits are as good as randomly assigned to field training officers and where we have detailed information on calls for service. Results show there are meaningful differences in field training officers' propensity to use force. Further high-force field training officers increase recruits' propensity to use force by 30% in the year after training but do not affect arrests.

Works in Progress

The Impact of Marginal Policing Changes on Neighborhoods with Matt Ross, Steve Mello, and Ben Feingold

Reducing Failure to Appear in Shasta County with Emily Owens

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.)

Grants

Police Training and Use of Force BLAIS Challenge Award 2020 (with David Bjerk and Matt Ross)

Improving Criminal Justice Outcomes for the Extremely Disadvantaged J-PAL State and Local Innovation Initiative, Pilot 2020 (with Emily Owens)

Does More Training Mitigate Disparities in Police Use of Force? Quasi-Experimental Evidence from New Linked Data Russell Sage Foundation Presidential Grant 2020 (with Matt Ross)

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 2018-2020

Texas A&M University, Lechner Scholar 2015-2020

Teaching Experience

Instructor of Record Claremont Graduate University, PhD Labor Supply (Fall 2021)

Instructor of Record Claremont Graduate University, PhD Game Theory (Spring 2021)

Instructor of Record Claremont Graduate University, PhD Economics of Crime (Fall 2020)

Instructor of Record Texas A&M University, Intermediate Microeconomic Theory (Summer 2018)

Teaching Assistant Texas A&M University, Applied Econometrics (Spring 2017, Fall 2017)

Teaching Assistant Texas A&M University, Sports Economics (Fall 2018)

Presentations (including planned)

2021: Johannes Kepler University Linz, Claremont McKenna College, Haverford College, The Economics of Crime and Justice Conference (Chicago/LSE), West Virginia University, All-California Labor Economics Conference, Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management, Southern Economic Association Conference

2020: Notre Dame, University of Alabama Birmingham, Queen's University, Claremont Graduate University, University of Colorado Denver, Quattrone Center (Penn Law), Southern Economic Association Conference

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

Invited Referee: American Economic Review, American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, American Law and Economics Review, Economic Inquiry, Industrial Relations, Journal of Human Resources, Labour Economics, PLOS One, Southern Economic Journal, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Criminology & Public Policy, Journal of Political Economy

Texas A&M Graduate Instruction Committee Representative (2019-2020)