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ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. Candidate in Economics, University of California, San Diego, expected completion June 2021
Committee: Gordon Dahl (Co-Chair), Itzik Fadlon (Co-Chair), Julie Cullen, Alex Gelber, Gaurav Khanna, Krislert Samphantharak
B.A., Economics, Indiana University, Bloomington, high distinction, 2015
B.S., Mathematics, Indiana University, Bloomington, high distinction, 2015

REFERENCES

Gordon Dahl, University of California, San Diego, gdahl@ucsd.edu, (858) 822-0644
Itzik Fadlon, University of California, San Diego, fadlon@ucsd.edu
Julie Cullen, University of California, San Diego, jbcullen@ucsd.edu, (858) 822-2056
Alex Gelber, University of California, San Diego, angelber@ucsd.edu

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Public Finance, Labor Economics, Health Economics

RELEVANT POSITIONS HELD

Research Assistant, Itzik Fadlon, 2017–2019

FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

NBER Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Retirement and Disability Policy Research, 2020–2021
RAND Summer Institute Scholarship, 2020
Clive Granger Research Fellowship, UCSD Economics Department, 2019
Graduate Summer Research Fellowship, UCSD Economics Department, 2017, 2016
Regents Fellowship, UCSD Economics Department, 2015
Carroll L. Christenson Prize, IU Economics Department, 2015
Carrington Scholarship, IU Economics Department, 2014
Phi Beta Kappa, Gamma of Indiana Chapter, 2014
IU Excellence Scholarship, Indiana University, 2011–2015

JOB MARKET PAPER

“Public Pensions and Private Savings” with Esteban García-Miralles

How does the provision of public pension benefits impact private savings? We answer this question in the context of a reform in Denmark that altered old-age benefit payouts through a discontinuous increase in pension eligibility ages contingent on birthdate. Using detailed administrative data and a regression discontinuity design, we identify the causal effects of the policy, leveraging our setting to study essentially the entire financial portfolio. We document responses over two distinct time horizons. First, we show a lack of responses after the reform was announced but before it was implemented, inconsistent with the notion that future differences in pension eligibility impact savings. Second, we show large savings responses after implementation, when delayed benefit eligibility induces individuals to extend employment. Specifically, we find increased contributions to both employer-sponsored and personal retirement accounts, whereas we find no evidence of adjustments to other savings vehicles, such as bank or stock market accounts. Additional analyses point to inertia as a leading explanatory channel. The increased savings in personal retirement plans is entirely driven by those who made consistent contributions in the past. Moreover, the increased savings in employer-sponsored plans is largely explained by continuing to contribute at employer default rates, highlighting a role for firm policies in mediating responses to social security reform.

WORKING PAPERS

“Joint Retirement of Couples: Evidence from Discontinuities in Denmark” with Esteban García-Miralles

We study how social security influences joint retirement of couples. We exploit three decades of administrative data from Denmark to explore joint retirement in two complementary settings. In the first setting, we exploit the discontinuous increase in retirement observed when individuals become eligible for public pension benefits to identify the causal effects on their spouses. We find that spouses are more likely to retire right when their partners reach pension eligibility age, with a spillover effect across spouses of 7.5%. We further unpack this result by studying additional margins of adjustment such as benefit claiming and earnings, and by documenting meaningful response heterogeneity. We find age differences within couples to be a crucial determinant of joint retirement, which is primarily driven by older spouses who continue to work until their younger partners reach pension eligibility. Controlling for these age differences uncovers a gender gap where female spouses are more likely to adjust their behavior to retire jointly, and this gap remains after controlling for earnings shares within couples. In the second setting, we study to what extent couples adapt their behavior to retire jointly after a reform increases pension eligibility ages. We find spillover effects across spouses comparable to those from the first setting, in which eligibility ages were stable and known by couples well in advance. This suggests that spouses do not face adjustment costs limiting their capacity to retire together after the reform.

“Health Professional Shortage Areas and Physician Location Decisions” with Stephanie Khoury and Alex Masucci

In order to address geographic disparities in healthcare provision, the U.S. government designates primary care Health Professional Shortage Areas (HPSAs), and the Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services (CMS) provide ten percent bonus payments for Medicare services billed by physicians in these areas. We link together several sources of administrative data from CMS covering the near-universe of Medicare-billing physicians and employ a matched difference-in-differences design to identify the causal effects of shortage area designations on physician location decisions. We find evidence that counties designated as HPSAs experience a 23% increase in the number of early-career primary care physicians, many of whom are likely making initial location decisions for their practices. The increase is driven entirely by physicians who attended ranked medical schools, perhaps reflecting the ability of the program to attract high-quality physicians just completing residency. However, we find no evidence that HPSA designation induces physicians in later career stages to relocate to shortage areas. Overall, our findings suggest that targeting financial incentives to locate in shortage areas towards newer physicians may improve the effectiveness and cost-efficiency of policies aimed at addressing physician shortages.

“Family Health Shocks and Charitable Giving”

This paper analyzes the effect of family health shocks on charitable giving behavior in the context of cancer diagnoses, using data from the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and an event study framework. Cancer diagnoses generate plausibly-exogenous variation in personal connections to charities in the health sector, but they also may strain budget sets through impacts on employment or health expenditures. Results show that cancer increases the annual likelihood that married couples donate to health charities by 22.5%. The increase persists for several years and overcomes the negative economic effects of cancer. An intergenerational analysis reveals notably similar effects on health donations of adult children whose parents are diagnosed with cancer; moreover, parent diagnoses lead to large and immediate increases in donations to religious purposes that grow over time.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

“The Effect of Required Minimum Distributions on Intergenerational Transfers”

“Tax Code Spillovers: Evidence from Retirement Savings Decisions in Denmark” with Esteban García-Miralles

“Plugging Gaps in Payments Systems: Evidence from the Take-Up of New Primary Care Billing Codes” with Jeffrey Clemens and Alex Masucci

TEACHING

Teaching Assistant, Master’s courses, UCSD School of Global Policy & Strategy:

Market Failures and Policy Interventions, Prof. Julie Cullen, Winter 2020

Market Failures and Policy Interventions, Prof. Itzik Fadlon, Winter 2019, Winter 2018

Policy Analysis and Decision Theory, Prof. Kate Ricke, Spring 2020, Spring 2019, Spring 2017

Teaching Assistant, Undergraduate courses, UCSD Economics:

Introduction to Microeconomics, Prof. Steve Levkoff, Fall 2019

Introduction to Microeconomics, Prof. Augusto Nieto Barthaburu, Fall 2018

Introduction to Microeconomics, Prof. Kate Antonovics, Fall 2017

Public Economics: Government Expenditures, Prof. Julie Cullen, Winter 2017

Econometrics B, Prof. Carroll Foster, Fall 2016

Additional Positions, UCSD Economics:

Assistant for Electronic Video Handbook: Econometrics Instruction, Prof. Joel Watson, Summer 2017

Previous Teaching Assistant Positions, Indiana University

Principles of Microeconomics, 5 semesters, Spring 2013–Spring 2015

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Referee Service

Journal of Public Economics

OTHER INFORMATION

Citizenship: U.S.A.

Date of birth: May 7, 1993