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Melissa R. Wilson
University of Oregon

Updated: Aug. 26, 2020

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Economics, University of Oregon (expected 2021) M.S.,
Economics, University of Oregon (2018)
B.A., Economics, University of South Florida (2016)

FIELDS

Applied Microeconomics, Labor Economics, Applied Econometrics, Public Policy, Economics of Crime

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2016-present: Graduate Employee, Department of Economics, University of Oregon

WORKING PAPERS

"Racial Disparities in Police Stops: A Regression Discontinuity Approach"

Abstract: This paper analyzes the incidence of racial bias in traffic stops by city police departments in 9 cities across the country. Under the "veil of darkness," police cannot determine the race of a driver prior to pulling them over, based on the hypothesis of Grogger and Ridgeway (2012). Utilizing the Stanford Open Policing data, I employ a regression discontinuity design around the start of daylight savings time in order to make an accurate comparison between daylight and nighttime stops drawn from the same distribution of drivers and correct for estimation bias. I find little evidence of racial disparities in police stops with no significance for black drivers and significance for Hispanic drivers that is not fully robust to functional forms. This indicates that daylight times do not affect proportion of stops of minority drivers and racial disparities are not affected by visible lighting. I posit that this might be due to a flaw in the "veil of darkness" hypothesis, rather than a lack of racial discrimination.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

"Drug Laws, Police Leniency, and Racial Disparities in Arrest Rates"

Abstract: This paper tests if racial disparities in arrests are driven by police bias. I use stop and arrest data with different types and severity of contraband reported to determine if racial discrimination affects police decision-making at lower contraband levels. By showing there is a larger racial disparity in arrest rates at lower contraband levels than at higher levels, I provide evidence as to whether the disparity is driven by officer taste-based discrimination. This motivates policy decisions to decriminalize marijuana and, subsequently, other minor crimes that disproportionately harm minority groups.

FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND GRANTS

Kleinsorge Research Fellowship Award 2020
Graduate Teaching Fellowship 2016-2021
University of South Florida Directors Award 2012-2016
University of South Florida Honors College Award 2012-2016

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Introduction to Microeconomics	Instructor of Record	Spring 2021, Fall 2019, Summer 2019
Introduction to Macroeconomics	Instructor of Record	Winter 2020, Spring 2019, Summer 2018
Introduction to Econometrics I	Discussion Instructor	Winter 2019
Introduction to Econometrics II	Discussion Instructor	Fall 2018
Introduction to Microeconomics	Discussion Instructor	Spring 2018, Spring 2017
Introduction to Macroeconomics	Discussion Instructor	Winter 2018

PRESENTATIONS

Kleinsorge Fellowship Proposal Presentation at University of Oregon 2020
How to Use Wikipediatrend in R at Grant McDermott's Seminar UO 2018

COMPUTER SKILLS

Google Earth Seminar at Oregon State University Spring 2018
Stata, R/RMarkdown, Julia, MATLAB, Latex
Git/Gitbash
Microsoft Office Suite
Stanford Open Policing Project Database
ISR Police Data

DATABASES

Stanford Open Policing Project Database
Chicago ISR Police Data

REFERENCES

Professor Benjamin Hansen
University of Oregon
Department of Economics
bchansen@uoregon.edu

Professor Jonathan Davis
University of Oregon
Department of Economics
Jdavis5@uoregon.edu