

RESEARCH STATEMENT

I am an applied labor economist studying racial and gender inequality. My overarching research goal is to understand how laws and incentives can be structured to reduce disparities. My current projects explore this question in the context of policing.

Reducing Disparities through Policies and Incentives

My paper, “The Effect of Title IX on Gender Disparity in Graduate Education”, evaluates the effectiveness of legislation in reducing gender disparities in education. I find that Title IX, which banned sex discrimination in graduate school admissions, was effective in increasing female representation in traditionally-male dominated fields, which were also the most lucrative.

Although some laws, like Title IX, were effective, others may have unintended consequences. My coauthored paper, “The Disparate Impact of Up-or-Out Promotion Policy on Fertility Timing”, finds that the gender-neutral up-or-out policy at law firms has a disparate impact on female lawyers relative to male lawyers and their decision on when to start a family. Specifically, the adverse effect of children on career advancement disproportionately falls on women, thereby incentivizing them to delay their family-formation until after the partnership decision.

Together, these papers suggest that institutions need to think carefully when structuring policies aimed at reducing inequality. This has been the focus of my other work in this area:

In “Disparities in Police Award Nominations: Evidence from Chicago”, my coauthors and I document a racial and gender gap in award nominations in the Chicago Police Department (CPD). We explore this further in “The Black-White Recognition Gap in Award Nominations”, which uses data from the CPD and leverages institutional features to find that white supervisors do not advocate for their white and Black supervisees equally. This appears to be driven by supervisor bias in advocacy decisions rather than statistical discrimination. Given the reliance on subjective evaluations for promotions in many organizations, our findings have important implications for the Black-white promotion gap and the lack of diversity in upper-management positions.

Another policy I have studied is the assignment mechanism police departments use to assign officers to neighborhoods. In “Police Officer Assignment and Neighborhood Crime”, my coauthors and I document that the current assignment mechanism in the Chicago Police Department, which is based on seniority, leads to more experienced officers being assigned to less violent and high-income neighborhoods. If the assignment mechanism were instead to equalize officer seniority across districts, we

find that violent crime would be reduced by 4.6 percent. This change would improve both equity (in regards to crime rates) and efficiency (as this policy would be revenue-neutral).

Another project, “Who Benefits from Bail Reform? Evidence from Chicago”, evaluates the impact of pretrial detention on defendant outcomes. Using the marginal treatment effect (MTE) framework, my coauthors and I document which defendants benefit from pretrial release. While the economics literature on bail reform commonly employs the local average treatment effect (LATE) interpretation, we show that the MTE framework provides a more complete picture of the impact of pretrial detention. Specifically, we find that the LATE interpretation masks heterogeneity in the likelihood of being found “Not Guilty”. This project has a completed working paper that is not yet public.

Reducing Equities in Policing

My current slate of projects uses detailed policing data from Chicago to better understand the motivations underlying officer behavior. This is an important dimension to understand when structuring laws and incentives to reduce discrimination.

For example, a robust literature documents racial disparities in policing, suggesting that frictions arising from racial differences may affect officer-civilian interactions. In one work-in-progress, my coauthors and I examine the extent to which sociological segregation, or the lack of exposure to other racial groups, in an officer’s residential neighborhood may influence an officer’s behavior in his assigned patrol neighborhood.

Another project examines the role that officers play as gatekeepers to the criminal justice system; after all, entry into the justice system begins with an arrest. Preliminary results find that officers with higher misconduct, as measured by the number of complaints made against the officer, make more arrests for non-index (less serious) crimes as opposed to arrests for violent or property crimes. Further, conditional on making it to court, these arrests are more likely to receive a “Not Guilty” outcome. These results suggest that police misconduct may have important implications for the types of crimes that are targeted by law enforcement and the fairness of the criminal justice system.