Will Labadie

Department of Economics
University of Houston
248 McElhinney Hall
Houston, TX 77204-5019

E-mail: wclabadie@uh.edu
Web: https://www.wclabadie.com
LinkedIn: https://www.linkedin.com/in/wclabadie/

Mobile: (214) 232-9111

EDUCATION

University of Houston, Ph.D., Economics, 2021 (expected)
University of Houston, M.A., Economics, 2017
University of North Texas, B.S., Economics, 2015

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Public Economics, Economics of Education, Applied Microeconomics

WORKING PAPERS

"Growth-based School Accountability and Grade Retention Practices", January 2021. **[Job Market Paper]**

Abstract: Do accountability rules affect public school retention practices? Using a simple model of grade retention, I show that an administrator will retain students differently depending on the accountability ratings criteria he seeks to maximize. I show that an administrator whose school is rated based on student standardized exam passing rates has a strategic incentive to retain borderline students, while an administrator whose school is rated based on year-to-year growth in student standardized exam scores has incentive to retain only the lowest-scoring students. I further show that this effect is most pronounced in the final grade offered by a given school, when promotion of a student ensures her removal from the school's pool of test-takers . I test the predictions of my framework using a novel dataset of school-grade level retention rates for 7 states in the U.S. and an event study design. I find that about 18% fewer students are retained on average each year when a state adds student growth to the accountability criteria by which schools are evaluated. This number roughly corresponds to around 100,497 fewer retained students each year nationwide, and $1.4 billion saved in public school expenditures. I further find that administrators do retain significantly fewer students in the last grade offered by their schools, implying that administrators use retention strategically. This paper is the first to show evidence that school administrators are willing to use retention as a tool for optimizing their schools' accountability ratings, and demonstrates that the individual components of accountability systems alter administrator behaviors.

"Research brief: How did STAAR change retention practices in Texas?", November 2020.

> *Abstract:* The switch from TAKS to STAAR changed the way in which Texas schools are evaluated by the Texas Education Agency (TEA), and in so doing, changed the objectives of school administrators in the state. This study explores the way that the change to administrator objectives affected retention practices in Texas public schools, and whether there were any long-term effects to studentsâĂŹ future exam scores.

"Distributive Politics and the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit", November 2018.

> *Abstract:* In this paper, I explore the possibility and extent of partisan targeting in the administration of the Low-Income Housing Tax Credit (LIHTC) program. State agencies have discretion over the distribution of LIHTC's, and state governors have varying degrees of influence over the allocating agencies. If agencies are partisan or deferent to the governor, LIHTC's may be allocated to match the governor's political interests if the credits are politically salient. I assemble a county-year panel dataset from HUD's LIHTC database, Census demographic data, and CQ election returns data and test the extent to which LIHTC's are allocated to counties based on local partisanship and state governing party using difference-in-differences and regression discontinuity designs. I find that governors of both major parties do not allocate significantly more or less LIHTC's or LIHTC funds to counties that vote with their party relative to those that don't, and I find no significant evidence of differential allocation to "swingier" counties.

"The Impact of the Affordable Care Act Dependent Coverage Mandate on Maternal Labor Outcomes" (with Elizabeth Luh), May 2017.

> *Abstract:* The Affordable Care Act's dependent coverage mandate increased the maximum age of health insurance dependency from 18 to 27. Previous research has found that the mandate caused young people to reduce their labor supply, increase consumption of health care goods, and increase investment in their own human capital. Our paper explores whether or not the cost burden of these activities caused a change in parents' labor decisions. In particular, we use NLSY79 data and a difference-in-differences strategy to compare the mothers of young people affected by the increased maximum age of dependency to mothers of young people not affected by the increase before and after the implementation of the mandate, treating the mandate as a shock to the cost of investing in one's child. We find no significant labor response to the dependent coverage mandate among affected mothers, suggesting that the increased costs incurred by young people as a result of the mandate are either borne by the young people themselves, or absorbed by parents' savings, and that the investment opportunity is not salient enough to mothers to cause a labor response.

Works in Progress

"The Effect of Treatment on the Untreated: Free Primary Education in Kenya".

Abstract: In this paper, I investigate the effects of expanding access to education on students that would have been students in the absence of expansion to access. Any policy that expands access to education and causes children previously unable or unwilling to attend school to attend will change the composition of the average classroom, and will change school staffing decisions. Previous research has established that the composition of a student's peers has significant effects on his performance, that the size and composition of a classroom has significant effects on teaching strategies, and of course that teacher quality significantly affects student performance. To explore this question, I analyze the implementation of a free primary education program in Kenya using data from the Demographic and Health Surveys. As a first pass, I compare the outcomes of students of ethnicities that were highly likely to be students prior to the implementation of the policy to those of ethnicities that were unlikely to be students prior to the implementation of the policy. Using a regression kink design, I find that the literacy rate of likely affected students exposed to the policy significantly increase due to the policy, and that the literacy rate of likely unaffected students exposed to the policy is not significantly affected by the policy. However, using a difference-in-differences method, I find that younger cohorts of unaffected students are increasingly negatively affected by exposure to the policy. I am currently implementing a sibling analysis, using students whose siblings attended school prior to the policy implementation as an additional measure of likelihood of being affected by the policy.

Grant Proposals

"Which Students are Held Back When School Accountability Rules Change?".

Abstract: In this project, I propose to investigate the effects of growth-based accountability rules on student retention practices further. My prior work establishes that a change to growth-based accountability rules causes a reduction in retention rates, particularly in the last grade offered by a school. However, which students are differentially promoted remains unknown. I propose to use restricted-access student-level data provided by the Texas Education Agency through the University of Houston's Education Research Center to examine which students are most affected by the policy change. This research would provide a better understanding of the unintended consequences of the policy change, and would contribute to the literature exploring the interaction between school accountability rules, teacher and administrator incentives, and student experiences.

Relevant Experience

Teaching Experience

- *Teaching Assistant*, Public Finance, University of Houston (Spring 2021)
- *Teaching Assistant*, Intermediate Microeconomics, University of Houston (Spring 2021, Fall 2020, Fall 2019)
- *Teaching Assistant*, Microeconomic Analysis, University of Houston (Fall 2019, Fall 2020)
- *Instructor*, Intermediate Microeconomics, University of Houston (Spring 2019, Summer 2019, Spring 2020)
- *Teaching Assistant*, Introduction to Econometrics, University of Houston (Fall 2018, Summer 2020)
- *Instructor*, Principles of Microeconomics, University of Houston (Fall 2017, Spring 2018)
- *Teaching Assistant*, Principles of Microeconomics, University of Houston (Fall 2015)

Fellowships and Awards

Graduate Tuition Fellowship, University of Houston, 2017-present
Graduate student teaching award, University of Houston Department of Economics, 2019
Achievement Recognition Grant, University of North Texas, 2011-2015
Friends of the Economics Department Grant, University of North Texas, 2014
NTDC Internship Cooperative, University of North Texas, 2014

Computer Skills

Stata, Matlab, R, ArcGIS, LaTeX, Microsoft Office

Languages

English (Native), Spanish (Basic)

Citizenship / Visa

U.S.A.

References

Prof. Vikram Maheshri
Department of Economics
University of Houston
Phone: (713) 743-3833
E-mail: vmaheshri@uh.edu

Prof. Ruxandra Prodan Boul (Teaching)
Department of Economics
University of Houston
Phone: (713) 743-3836
E-mail: rprodan@uh.edu

Prof. Steven Craig
Department of Economics
University of Houston
Phone: (713) 743-3812
E-mail: scraig@uh.edu