

# Will Labadie

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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, Applied Microeconomics

WORKING  
PAPERS      “Growth-based School Accountability Rules and Grade Retention Practices”, September 2020. **[Job Market Paper]**

*Abstract:* In this paper, I explore the effect of public school accountability rules on school-level grade retention policy. In particular, I study the impact of accountability criteria that are based on year-to-year changes in student test scores. I develop a simple framework to simulate an administrator’s retention strategy decision under a test score level-based accountability system and under a system that evaluates schools based on both levels and changes. The baseline framework predicts that in order to maximize the school-wide average test score, an administrator must retain almost all failing students; to maximize both the school-wide average level and the school-wide average increase in scores, an administrator must promote more aggressively in later grades. Students promoted from the last grade of a school are removed from the pool of test-takers, and the framework consistently predicts low retention in the final grade offered by a school after test score changes are added to the accountability system. 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 30% 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 360,000 fewer retained students each year nationwide, and \$4.2 billion saved in public school expenditures. I further find that administrators do retain significantly fewer students in the last grade offered by their schools. My results suggest that school administrators are willing to use retention as a tool for optimizing their schools’ accountability ratings, and that the components of accountability systems do alter administrator behaviors.

“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.

*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.

RELEVANT  
EXPERIENCE

**Teaching Experience**

- *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)
- *Teaching Assistant*, Intermediate Microeconomics, University of Houston (Fall 2019)
- *Instructor*, Principles of Microeconomics, University of Houston (Fall 2017, Spring 2018)
- *Teaching Assistant*, Principles of Microeconomics, University of Houston (Fall 2015)
- *Teaching Assistant*, International Trade, University of North Texas (Summer 2013, Fall 2013, Spring 2014, Summer 2014)

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, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, Microsoft Office

LANGUAGES

English (Native), Spanish (Basic)

CITIZENSHIP /  
VISA

U.S.A.

REFERENCES

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