Samuel Norris

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Employment

Assistant Professor, Harris School of Public Policy, University of Chicago, 2018-

Education

Ph.D., Economics, Northwestern University, 2018 (anticipated)
    Committee: Jon Guryan (co-chair), Seema Jayachandran (co-chair), Lori Beaman, Matt Notowidigdo
M.A., Economics, University of Toronto, 2012
B.A., Economics, Simon Fraser University, 2011

Fellowships & Awards

Susan Bies Prize for best third-year paper in economic policy, Northwestern University, Fall 2016
Price Theory Scholar, University of Chicago, Fall 2016
NIJ Graduate Research Fellowship ($32,000), 2016
NSF Law & Social Sciences Dissertation Improvement Grant ($19,000), 2016
Doctoral Fellowship, Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada, 2013-2017
International Growth Center Grant, with Lucie Gadenne and Monica Singhal, 2014

Invited Presentations & Conferences

2018-2019: Urban Economics Association, Southern Economics Association, Ohio State University
2017-2018: Empirics and Methods (Chicago), London School of Economics, Northwestern Law, Simon Fraser University, University of Pennsylvania, NBER Summer Institute
2016-2017: H2D2 Research Day
2015-2016: EconCon 2016, University of Chicago Micro Lunch
2014-2015: University of Chicago Micro Lunch; 5th Lindau Nobel Laureate Meeting
2013-2014: Canadian Economics Association Annual Conference

Refereeing

AEJ: Applied, AEJ: Economic Policy, AER: Insights, Journal of Political Economy, ReStat

Working papers

The Intergenerational and Sibling Effects of Incarceration: Evidence from Ohio (with Matthew Pecenco and Jeffrey Weaver) [PDF]

The United States incarcerates over 2 million people annually, but an even larger number of individuals are affected by the criminal justice system as family members of the incarcerated. In this paper, we provide the first quasi-experimental estimates of the effects of incarceration on prisoners' children and siblings in the United States. We leverage the random assignment of cases to judges in Ohio as a source of exogenous variation in incarceration, and use linked administrative data to measure outcomes for family members. In contrast to most existing work, we find that incarceration reduces criminal involvement among the children and siblings of prisoners. Parental incarceration decreases the likelihood of juvenile incarceration by 2.3 percentage points (45 percent) and adult incarceration by 2.6 percentage points (29 percent), with similar estimates for the effect of sibling incarceration. The reductions are concentrated among children from poorer neighborhoods and those who experience maternal rather than paternal incarceration. At the same time, parental incarceration increases rates of teen parenthood and reduces high school graduation rates. We show that these effects are most consistent with exposure to incarceration having a specific deterrent effect on child criminal activity, although the stresses associated with parental incarceration simultaneously harm children in other domains.

Judicial Errors: Evidence from Refugee Appeals [PDF]

Judges with the same conviction rate might choose to convict different defendants, which has important implications for the fairness and efficiency of the justice system. I show how this notion of inconsistency can be nonparametrically bounded using information from other court decisions on the same cases. I implement the procedure for a Canadian refugee appeal court, and bound disagreement for the average pair of similarly-severe judges at 10% of all cases, higher than the amount of disagreement coming from cross-judge variation in leniency and large relative to the overall approval rate of only 14%. Under slightly stronger assumptions I build a structural model to study the judge and institutional characteristics associated with inconsistency. The structural estimates of consistency are highly correlated with lawyers' surveyed opinions on judge consistency. Judges are more consistent when workloads are low and become much more consistent as they gain experience, with the largest gains coming in the first year. Across judges, consistency is higher for judges appointed after a 1988 reform designed to reduce politically-motivated appointments.

Keeping up with peers in India: A new social interactions model of perceived needs (with Arthur Lewbel, Krishna Pendakur, and Xi Qu) [PDF]

We propose a new nonlinear model of social interactions. The model allows point identification of peer effects as a function of group means, even with group level fixed effects. The model is robust to measurement problems resulting from only observing a small number of members of each group, and therefore can be estimated using standard survey datasets. We apply our method to a national consumer expenditure survey dataset from India. We find that each additional rupee spent by one's peer group increases one's own perceived needs by roughly 0.5 rupees. This implies that if I and my peers each increase spending by 1 rupee, that has the same effect on my utility as if I alone increased spending by only 0.5 rupees. Our estimates have important policy implications, e.g., we show potentially considerable welfare gains from replacing government transfers of private goods with the provision of public goods.

Published papers

Rise and Shine: The Effect of School Start Times on Academic Performance from Childhood through Puberty [PDF] (with Jennifer Heissel, *Journal of Human Resources* 2017)

We analyze the effect of school start time on academic performance. Sleep patterns are determined in part by sunrise times, which vary across time zones. Because school start times do not fully reflect this difference, we instrument for the hours of sunlight before school with the time zone boundary in Florida. We find that moving start times one hour later relative to sunrise increases test scores by 0.08 and 0.06 standard deviations for adolescents in math and reading, respectively. In math, the effect is larger for older children and co-varies with entry into an important pubertal stage. School districts can improve performance while maintaining the current distribution of start times by moving classes earlier for younger children and later for older children.

Media: The Atlantic, Brookings, Chalkbeat, Wisconsin Public Radio

Work in progress

The Intergenerational Effects of Incarceration: Evidence from Early 20th Century Iowa (with Matthew Pecenco)

We provide the first causal estimates of the effect of parental incarceration on long-term child outcomes. Exploiting quasi-random assignment of defendants to judges within judicial districts in 1907-1935 Iowa, we find that each additional year of parental prison sentence decreases child educational achievement and employment levels, but leaves average earnings unchanged. The channels appear to be financial stress and less parental support; longer sentences lead to lower earnings and higher marital dissolution for the incarcerated parent. We also introduce a novel probability-based inference strategy to the economic history literature that can recover consistent estimates in situations with imperfect matching between datasets and allows more observations to be matched. In our sample,

we find that traditional techniques underestimate the true effect by a factor of 2 holding the sample fixed, but increasing the representativeness of the sample reduces estimates by 1/3.

In-Kind Transfers as Insurance (with Lucie Gadenne, Sandip Sukhtankar and Monica Singhal)

In recent years, there has been increasing academic and policy interest in cash as the preferred form of transfer to low income households. However, in-kind transfers remain prevalent throughout the developing world. In this paper we consider one potential advantage of in-kind transfers: the ability to provide insurance against price shocks. Poorly integrated markets in many developing countries mean that poor households face substantial exposure to commodity price risk. We develop a model which shows that in-kind transfers can be welfare improving relative to cash in a world with price risk. In the context of India, we show that price shocks for food commodities are negatively associated with caloric intake and meeting minimal caloric requirements. We then demonstrate that policies that expand the generosity of the Public Distribution System (PDS) - India's in-kind food subsidy program - are associated with increased caloric intake by households as well as reduced sensitivity of calories to local prices, suggesting that the PDS provides insurance against food price risk.

The Effects of School Discipline: Evidence from North Carolina (with Laia Navarro-Sola)

Overly harsh discipline practices (particularly zero- tolerance policies) may harm children by reducing instructional time, inducing dropout, and bringing children into contact with law enforcement. Conversely, non-punished students may benefit from fewer classroom distractions. We study the effect of discipline policies using principal moves between schools as an instrument for school discipline levels. We find that harsher principals reduce test scores for students near the margin of punishment, but have no affect on students unlikely to misbehave.

Pre-PhD research	**Consumption Inequality in Canada, 1997-2009** (with Krishna Pendakur, published *Canadian Journal of Economics*, 2015)
	Imputing Rent in Consumption Measures (with Krishna Pendakur, published *Canadian Journal of Economics,* 2013)
Policy outreach	**Consumption Inequality in Canada, 1997-2009**, chapter in *Income Inequality: The Canadian Story* (with Krishna Pendakur, 2015)