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Abstract:

Place and Social Views: Evidence from Volunteer Missionary Service for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints
Tanner Eastmond, University of California San Diego
Michael D Ricks, National Bureau of Economic Research

Wide disparities exist in social views held by Americans, and these views often have real consequences for individual outcomes. An intuitive avenue for understanding how social attitudes form and develop is exploring how the places where people live influence their views. We explore this in the context of volunteer missionaries for the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, who spend 18-24 months immersed in the culture of their (geographically limited) missions. Leveraging the plausible exogeneity of mission assignment to social views, we survey former missionaries to explore both their stated and revealed views. We find that those assigned to more racially diverse areas have more equitable views on race/racism and immigration. We also find that after their volunteer service these individuals live in more diverse areas, are more likely to vote for minority candidates, have more favorable attitudes about education, and are more likely to be registered Democrats. These results are stronger for those with strongly Conservative parents and those who grew up in less diverse areas.

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Abstract:

City Limits: A study of minimum wages using mobile device location data

Hitanshu Pandit is a PhD Candidate at Department of Economics, University of North Carolina, Greensboro. He is interested in applied microeconomics with a primary emphasis on Labor, Urban and Health Economics. In his job market paper he uses mobile device location data to study the relationship between employment and minimum wages across the United States.
Last decade has seen changes in local policy decisions, especially the growing trend in decentralization of wage determination. There is a need for detailed and accurate geographic and time information considering local policy changes aimed at the local areas where boundaries are porous. Using the establishment location and mobile device location data by SafeGraph, this study explores how the labor market responds to local minimum wage ordinances. I use the difference-in-differences approach, to estimate the effect of increase in minimum wages on the variation in duration of visits at a location, which can be used as a proxy to employment hours. I find a decrease in employment hours when there is a proportionate increase in local minimum wage and an increase in distance traveled from home with an increase in minimum wage. The study further demonstrates that the local labor market, especially in the non-tradable sector, is more responsive to the changes in local minimum wage than the state-binded minimum wage changes.

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I'm a PhD candidate in Economics at University of Pittsburgh. My research interests include behavioral economics, experimental economics, gender economics, and labor economics. In my research I seek to understand the role of behavioral biases in determining market outcomes and how efficacy of policies can be dependent on these biases. I am particularly interested in exploring the influence of gender stereotypes on labor market outcomes for women. Much of my work requires the use of lab and online experiments as well as theoretical and empirical tools.

Abstract:

Can Temporary Affirmative Action Improve Representation?

In absence of policy interventions like affirmative action, employers' biased beliefs about underrepresented groups may not correct on their own due to less hiring of and subsequent learning about those who are underrepresented. This paper explores whether temporary affirmative action can improve representation even after the policy is lifted in settings where employers hold biased beliefs about performance. I experimentally elicit employer hiring decisions and beliefs about potential employee performance in two between-subject experimental treatments: a control treatment without affirmative action and a temporary affirmative action treatment. While beliefs and hiring are biased against women in the control condition, I find in the temporary affirmative action treatment that representation improves even after affirmative action is lifted. An initial exposure to women workers improves representation of women after removal of affirmative action policy. This increase is partially and heterogeneously driven by employers' beliefs about performance - where employers who are most likely to discriminate against women show the greatest reduction in gender bias in beliefs which in turn determine the changes in hiring choices in favor of women. The results shed new light on using a temporary affirmative action policy to break a cycle of under-representation by correcting biased beliefs.
Abstract:

Belief Shocks and Labor Market Dynamics

This paper studies the role of beliefs in shaping aggregate labor market dynamics. In a stylized model of the labor market with search frictions, I introduce noisy beliefs about aggregate productivity. Noise shocks to beliefs affects the hiring decision of the firms as well as search intensity of workers which in turn affects bargained wages causing further feedback effect via consumption demand on vacancy creation of firms, thus, ultimately affecting the aggregate labor market dynamics. Using the now cast errors of professional forecasters, I use a sign restricted VAR to identify noise shocks from the fundamental shocks in the data. I find that noise shocks generate stronger and much more persistent responses for labor force participation rate, unemployment rate, outflow from unemployment and job-to-job transition rates. In comparison, the response of these variables to purely fundamental shocks is significantly muted. This opens up a potential channel for beliefs in driving labor market fluctuations.