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Education:

2006-Present Ph.D. Candidate, Economics, Columbia University
2006 M. Phil. Economics, Columbia University
2005 M.A. Economics, Columbia University
2003 B.A. Economics and Statistics, University of Rochester

Honors:

2008 Graduate Student Summer Research Fellowship, GSAS, Columbia University
2007 Graduate Student Summer Research Fellowship, GSAS, Columbia University

Teaching and Research Fields:

Environmental Economics
Health Economics
Labor Economics
Law and Economics

Dissertation:

Title: "Essays on Environmental Regulation, Tort Law, and Public Health"
Sponsor: Professor W. Bentley MacLeod
Expected date of completion: Spring 2010

Job Market Paper: "General Deterrence and the Clean Air Act"

Abstract:

Decisions to comply with laws may be based on beliefs about the expected penalties for noncompliance, and these beliefs may often be formed by observing the legal sanctions imposed on others (Sah, 1991). I test whether this is true for the enforcement of air pollution regulations in the United States by analyzing plant-level data on emissions of toxic air pollutants from several thousand manufacturing plants and data on regulatory actions to enforce the Clean Air Act. Consistent with this theory being true, large legal sanctions imposed on polluting plants by state

governments are associated with reductions in pollution emissions at other plants in the same state. This deterrent response to sanctions of others, known as the general deterrent effect of sanctions, stretches across industrial categories and persists for several years. These results imply that enforcing the Clean Air Act with frequent sanctions that are non-maximal may be efficient (Bebchuk and Kaplow, 1992).

Teaching Experience:

Teaching Assistant:

Fall 2008 and Fall 2006, Principles of Economics, Prof. Brendan O'Flaherty

Summer 2005, International Trade, Dr. Guido Sandleris

Spring 2005 and Fall 2004, Principles of Economics, Prof. Sunil Gulati

Research Experience:

Fall 2009, Spring 2009, Spring 2007, Summer 2006, Spring 2006, Fall 2005:

Research Assistant for Professors Janet Currie and W. Bentley MacLeod, Currie and MacLeod's National Science Foundation Grant SES-0617829

Working Papers

“Accidental Death and the Rule of Joint and Several Liability”, with Janet Currie and W. Bentley MacLeod. NBER Working Paper # 15412, October 2009; under submission.

Abstract:

Reforms to the Joint and Several Liability rule (JSL) are one of the most common tort reforms and have been implemented by most U.S. states. JSL allows plaintiffs to claim full recovery from one of the defendants, even if that defendant is only partially responsible for the tort. We develop a theoretical model that shows that the efficiency of the JSL rule depends critically on both whether the care taken by potential tortfeasors is observed, and on how the actions of the potential tortfeasors interact to cause the harm. We then provide evidence that reforms of the JSL rule have been accompanied by reductions in the accidental death rate in the U.S. This result is consistent with the hypothesis that the reform of JSL causes potential tortfeasors to take more care.

“How do Tort Reforms Affect the Accidental Death Rate? An Empirical Analysis.”

Abstract:

In order to reduce the volume and costs of tort litigation, since the 1970's most U.S. states have enacted tort reforms limiting liability for committing torts. I estimate whether several common types of tort reforms affect the number of non-motor-vehicle accidental bodily injury torts that are committed, by analyzing data on accidental death rates, the presence of tort reforms, and controls from the 50 U.S. states and D.C. from 1981-2004. Reforms to the collateral source rule are associated with more accidental deaths and reforms to the rule of joint and several liability are associated with fewer accidental deaths, but other reforms such as caps on non-economic damages and punitive damages reforms do not have robust associations with accidental deaths. I find that estimates of the effects of tort reforms on accidental deaths in prior research are sensitive

to model specification and the inclusion of overdoses on illegal drugs and abused pharmaceuticals, a leading but non-tortious cause of accidental death, in the dependent variable.

Work in Progress:

“The Effects of Criteria Air Pollutants on Mortality: Evidence from Changes to the National Ambient Air Quality Standards”, joint with Janet Currie.

Abstract:

The National Ambient Air Quality Standards for the criteria air pollutants regulated by the Clean Air Act establish thresholds for ambient concentrations of these pollutants that the air in every county in the United States is not supposed to exceed. Revisions to these thresholds over time have caused reductions in pollution levels in counties whose air quality is worse than the new threshold levels. We identify the contemporaneous effects of the criteria air pollutants on elderly and infant mortality using variation across counties in reductions in pollution levels caused by the revisions to the thresholds.

Personal:

Citizenship: United States of America

References:

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