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Placement Chairs

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Research Interests

Labor Economics, Public Economics, Economics of Education, Law and Economics

References

Professor W. Bentley Macleod
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Professor Suresh Naidu
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Professor and Chair Miguel Urquiola
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Education

2015-PRES. **Columbia University**

Doctor of Philosophy in Economics, Expected: May 2022
Dissertation Title: What Makes a Good Job? Essays in Labor Economics
Masters of Philosophy, 2018
Masters of Arts, 2017

2010-2014 **Washington University in St. Louis**

Bachelor's of Arts: Summa Cum Laude, 2014

Job Market Paper

The Effect of Outsourcing on Remaining Workers, Rent Distribution, and Inequality

Firms can decide whether to produce some goods and services in-house or purchase them from the market. Increasingly, they are purchasing from the market—using subcontractors, temp agencies, and other outsourced labor. Low-wage workers' wages decline when they are outsourced, but little is known about how outsourcing affects remaining workers. If firms are rent sharing, outsourcing might increase remaining workers' earnings because there are more rents or fewer workers to share them with. This paper measures the impact of occupational layoff (OL) outsourcing, where firms outsource some occupations, on the earnings and separations of workers who remain employed by those firms. Using employer-employee data based on German social security records in a dynamic difference-in-differences design, outsourcing increases remaining workers' long-run earnings by 6% in a sample of 260 OL outsourcing events. Remainders are also more likely to stay at the outsourcing firm—outsourcing decreases the probability of remainders switching firms by 7.5 percentage points. Higher earnings and fewer separations are consistent with remainders receiving additional rents. Earnings gains are larger for workers in the bottom-half of the within-firm earnings distribution. Outsourcing only increases remainders' earnings in firms with collective bargaining agreements (CBAs). In firms with CBAs, outsourcing increases remainders' long-term earnings by 6%. In firms without CBAs, outsourcing lowers short-term earnings by 3%. The results are consistent with a model of wage setting where outsourcing firms with CBAs need to compensate remainders. When there is no CBA, firms do not compensate remainders and can lower their wages.

Analyzing the impact of outsourcing on within-firm and overall wage inequality, a typical outsourcing event in the sample lowers the within-firm Gini index by 5% as low-wage workers leave the firm and low-wage remainers are compensated. Using Recentered Influence Functions, increasing the share of workers part of an outsourcing event by 1 percentage point (from a baseline of 11.7%) increases earnings at the top of the distribution by approximately 10-15%, and the overall Gini index by 10%. Remainders are relatively high-wage, and outsourcing increases their earnings. By not accounting for this effect, prior studies likely underestimate the total impact of outsourcing on earnings inequality in Germany.

Working Papers

“What’s in a Name? How Definitions of “Employee” Shape Worker-Firm Relationships” [joint with Elliott Ash. Supported by NSF Award Number 1949415]

This paper provides causal evidence on how changing the legal boundaries of employment—whether a worker is defined as a firm’s “employee” versus an outside contractor—affects labor market outcomes. We introduce a dataset of all U.S. Circuit Court cases making substantive employment determinations for the years 1990-2018 and link them to state- and occupation-level data on employment and earnings. Our difference-in-differences analysis reveals how employee definitions impact firm structure: when courts give workers additional legal rights by declaring them “employees”, low-wage workers are more likely to be outsourced. For occupations where effort is more easily monitored (e.g. janitors, guards), “is-employee” determinations increase outsourcing and reduce earnings. For occupations where effort cannot be monitored easily (e.g. doctors, scientists, engineers), employment declines and workers are more likely to be independent contractors.

“Why Choose Alternative Work Arrangements? The Effect of Labor Demand Shocks on AWAs in the U.S. Labor Market” [supported by the DOL Scholars Program]

Alternative work arrangements (AWAs) are employment contracts where workers have fewer legal protections relative to traditional employment. I analyze the effect of economic downturns on AWA prevalence using two negative labor demand shocks. In a framework with uncertainty and fixed labor costs, I find that negative labor demand shocks reduce the probability that workers are in AWAs. The largest declines in AWAs occur in industries most affected by the shocks. This result suggests that AWAs are more marginal employment contracts, and are mostly let go during downturns.

“Keep Going to School: The Effect of Social Promotion on Wage Response to Childhood Labor”

Research has shown that when wages increase, families are less likely to send their children to school. I explore whether the uncertainty about children’s success in school can explain part of this behavior. India’s “No Detention Policy”, enacted in 2010, required Social Promotion – automatic promotion regardless of test results – up to grade 8. I exploit pre-2010 variation in states with Social Promotion, and random wage shocks, to explore whether families are less likely to respond to wage shocks after Social Promotion is implemented. I find that without Social Promotion, higher wages increased dropout probability by 5%. With Social Promotion, higher wages decreased dropout probability by 1.1%, a sign switch and 80% decline in absolute effect. I find no effect on attendance, suggesting no intensive-margin response. These results illustrate that responses to wage shocks can depend on existing education policy, and that families internalize the likelihood of schooling success.

Grants and Awards

2020	National Science Foundation Dissertation Improvement Grant
2019	Wueller Pre-Dissertation Award, Columbia University
2018	Runner up – Columbia University Vickrey Award for Best 3rd Year Paper
2017	Department of Labor Scholars Program Grant
2015	Columbia University Graduate Fellowship
2015	Columbia University Graduate Summer Fellowship
2014	Adam Smith Prize for Excellence in Economics, Washington University

Presentations (including upcoming)

2021	Columbia University Applied Micro Workshop
2021	Society of Labor Economics (SOLE)
2020	ETH Zurich
	Columbia University Applied Micro Workshop
	Society of Institutional and Organizational Economics
2019	Columbia University Applied Micro Colloquium
	W.E. Upjohn Institute Visiting Presentation
	3rd IZA Conference on Contract Work
	Columbia University Applied Micro Colloquium
2018	Midwestern Economics Association
	Columbia University Applied Micro Colloquium
	Briq Workshop on Firms, Jobs, and Inequality
	Columbia University Applied Micro Colloquium
2017	Columbia University Applied Micro Colloquium
	Columbia University Applied Micro Colloquium
2016	Columbia University Applied Micro Colloquium

Research and Professional Experience

2019	W.E. Upjohn Institute, Visiting Researcher
2018-2019	Columbia University, Research Assistant for Professor Francois Gerard
2016-2019	Columbia University, Research Assistant for Professor W. Bentley MacLeod
2014-2015	NERA Economic Consulting, Research Associate

Teaching Experience

Fall 2021	Intermediate Microeconomics Professor: Prajit Dutta Position: Teaching Assistant
Fall 2020	Introduction to Microeconomics Professor: Prajit Dutta Position: Teaching Assistant
Spring 2019	Seminar in Political Economy Professor: W. Bentley MacLeod Position: Teaching Assistant
Spring 2017	Intermediate Microeconomics Professor: Jonathan Vogel Position: Teaching Assistant
Fall 2016	Intermediate Microeconomics Professor: Pietro Ortoleva Position: Teaching Assistant

Other Skills

Skills: STATA, R, MATLAB