

SUNGOH KWON

CONTACT INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

Ph.D. in Economics, **University of Connecticut**, Expected May 2018

- Dissertation Title: “*Three Essays on Socioeconomic Inequality*”
- References: Nishith Prakash (Primary Advisor), S Anukriti, Eric Brunner, Gautam Rao, Stephen Ross

Visiting Scholar, **Harvard University**, 2016

- Academic Host: Gautam Rao

M.P.P. in Economic Development, **KDI School of Public Policy and Management**, 2012

B.S. in Economics, **Yonsei University**, 2011

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Fields: Labor Economics, Development Economics

Topics: Intergenerational Mobility, Economics of Education, Public Policy, Gender Inequality, Behavioral Economics, Field Experiments

TEACHING INTERESTS

Labor Economics, Development Economics, Economics of Education, Gender Inequality, Applied Econometrics, Program Evaluation, Behavioral Economics

JOB MARKET PAPER

“The Effects of Affirmative Action Bans on Low-Income College Access and Upward Mobility”

Abstract: In recent years, many states in the U.S. have banned race-based affirmative action in college admissions. Public universities in these states have put more weight on socioeconomic factors such as family income to ensure diverse student body without the explicit consideration of race. This paper investigates whether statewide affirmative action bans improve college access for low-income students and subsequently help them climb the economic ladder. Using institution-level data, I find that affirmative action bans increase the enrollment share of low-income and first-generation students at selective public universities. The positive impact on college access is driven by low-income Asian students. Banning the use of race in admissions also raises the upward mobility rate, which measures the extent to which an institution contributes to intergenerational income mobility.

WORKING PAPERS

“Does Public School Spending Raise Intergenerational Mobility? Evidence from the U.S. School Finance Reforms”

Abstract: This study examines whether investment in public schools can enhance equality of opportunity as measured by intergenerational income mobility (IGM). To estimate the causal effect of public school spending, I exploit the plausibly exogenous variation in school spending induced by the U.S. court-mandated school finance reforms. I use county-level college attendance rate and IGM constructed based on administrative tax records. Students are more likely to attend college

due to additional resources in public schools. An increase in school spending raises IGM of children from high-income families. However, public school spending has little impact on IGM of low-income children. The school spending effects are concentrated among low-poverty counties. In particular, I find a significant increase in IGM of low-income children in low-poverty counties, which implies that the positive effect of school spending might be mitigated by negative environments in high poverty areas.

“Goal Setting and Student Effort: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Zanzibar”, with Asadul Islam (Monash University), Eema Masood (World Bank), Nishith Prakash (University of Connecticut), and Shwetlena Sabarwal (World Bank)

Abstract: Non-binding self-set goals are widely used in daily life as instruments for motivation and self-control. We estimate the impact of this cost-effective commitment device in a developing country, Tanzania. In collaboration with the World Bank and Ministry of Education and Vocational Training, we conducted a randomized field experiment in 187 secondary schools in Zanzibar. Schools were randomly placed into either goal-setting group wherein each Grade 7 student set a specific competitively self-referenced target for an upcoming achievement test or into the control group. We find that the goal setting intervention significantly increases student efforts as measured by study time. However, we do not find a significant impact on student test scores. This is not entirely surprising as a majority of nonfinancial interventions in the literature have found limited to no impact on student test scores.

“Dowry: Household Responses to Expected Marriage Payments”, with S Anukriti (Boston College) and Nishith Prakash (University of Connecticut)

Abstract: Dowry is a ubiquitous feature of South Asian marriage markets. However, empirical research on dowry has been limited by the lack of data. We utilize retrospective information on gifts exchanged at the time of marriage for 39,544 marriages during 1960-2008 (a) to describe dowry trends and (b) to examine the impact of dowry expectations on households’ financial and childbearing decisions in contemporary rural India. Average real net dowry has been remarkably stable over time; although there is considerable heterogeneity across castes, religions, and states. We find that, relative to parents of firstborn-boys, parents of firstborn-girls increase per capita household saving and fathers work more after the child’s birth if expected future dowry payment is higher. However, dowry has no impact on fertility and sex-selection. Lastly, the effects on expenditure on children’s education are inconclusive.

“Helping Settle the Marijuana and Alcohol Debate: Evidence from Scanner Data”, with Michele Baggio (University of Connecticut) and Alberto Chong (Georgia State University), Under Review

Abstract: We use data on purchases of alcoholic beverages in grocery, convenience, drug, or mass distribution stores in counties for 2006-2015 to study the link between marijuana laws and alcohol consumption and focus on settling the debate between the substitutability or complementarity between marijuana and alcohol. To do this we exploit the differences in the timing of the of medical marijuana legalization (MML) among states and find that these two substances are substitutes. Counties located in MML states reduced monthly alcohol sales by 15 percent. Our findings are robust to border counties analysis, a placebo effective dates for MML in the treated states, and falsification tests using sales of pens and pencils.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

“Sex Ratio and Dowry: Evidence from India”, with S Anukriti (Boston College) and Nishith Prakash (University of Connecticut)

Abstract: In the literature, dowry is often considered as a market clearing price. Using retrospective

information on gifts exchanged at the time of marriage for 39,544 marriages during 1960-2008, we examine whether the sex-ratio in the marriage market affects dowry payment. We find that higher male-female sex ratios at birth are correlated with lower dowry payment.

COMPLETED PROJECT IN THE FIELD

“Zanzibar Improving Students Prospects Project (ZISP)”, with *Asadul Islam (Monash University)*, *Eema Masood (World Bank)*, *Nishith Prakash (University of Connecticut)*, and *Shwetlena Sabarwal (World Bank)*

RESEARCH GRANTS RECEIVED

The World Bank, “Zanzibar Improving Students Prospects Project (ZISP)”, (*PI: Shwetlena Sabarwal, The World Bank*), 2015–2017 (\$200,000)

MEDIA APPEARANCES

Medical marijuana took a bite out of alcohol sales. Recreational pot could take an even bigger one, *Washington Post*, December, 2017

New Study Says Marijuana Legalization Reduces Alcohol Use, *Mother Jones*, December, 2017

Achieving Gender Equality In India: What Works, And What Doesn't, *Huffington Post*, November, 2016

Achieving Gender Equality In India: What Works, And What Doesn't, *The Conversation Global*, November, 2016

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

2017: DIAL Development Conference, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

2016: Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

SEMINAR PRESENTATIONS

2017: University Of Connecticut, Department of Economics

2016: University Of Connecticut, Department of Economics

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant of Michele Baggio (University of Connecticut), 2016-2017

Research Assistant of Nishith Prakash (University of Connecticut) and Gautam Rao (Harvard University), 2014

Research Assistant in Impact Evaluation Lab at KDI School of Public Policy and Management, 2011-2012

- Project Title: “Dr. LEE Jong-Wook - Seoul Project and Performance of Students at University of Health Science in Lao PDR”

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor

- Mathematical Economics, University of Connecticut, Spring 2018

Invited Lectures

- Intermediate Macroeconomic Theory, Tao Song, University of Connecticut, Spring 2017
- Economics of Gender and Inequality, Nishith Prakash, University of Connecticut, Fall 2016
- Economic Development, Nishith Prakash, University of Connecticut, Fall 2016

Teaching Assistant

- Contemporary Problems in Economics, Metin Cosgel, University of Connecticut, Fall 2017
- Econometrics (Ph.D.), Jungbin Hwang, University of Connecticut, Spring 2017
- Quantitative Methods for Public Policy (M.A.), Eric Brunner, University of Connecticut, Fall 2016
- Intermediate Microeconomic Theory, Susan Randolph, University of Connecticut, Spring 2016
- Principles of Macroeconomics, Derek Johnson, University of Connecticut, Fall 2015
- Empirical Methods in Economics , Deniz Ozabaci, University of Connecticut, Spring 2015
- Microeconomic Theory (Ph.D.), Talia Bar, University of Connecticut, Fall 2014
- Theory of Labor Markets, Kenneth Couch, University of Connecticut, Spring 2014
- Introduction to Development Policy (M.A.), Hyeok Jeong, KDI School of Public Policy and Management, Spring 2012
- Aid and Development (M.A.), Kye-Woo Lee, KDI School of Public Policy and Management, Fall 2011

AWARDS, FELLOWSHIPS, AND HONORS

Doctoral Dissertation Fellowship, University of Connecticut, 2017
Best 3rd Year Paper Award, University of Connecticut, 2016
Eleanor Bloom Summer Fellowship, University of Connecticut, 2015-2017
Summa Cum Laude, KDI School of Public Policy and Management, 2012
Heung Han Foundation, KDI School of Public Policy and Management, 2012
Oh Ilhong Foundation, Yonsei University, 2010

REFEREEING EXPERIENCE

Economic Inquiry, European Journal of Development Research

REFERENCES

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