

Kendall Houghton

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Education

Ph.D. Economics, University of Oregon, 2021 (expected)

M.S. Economics, University of Oregon, 2016

B.A. Economics, Arabic Studies Minor, University of Montana, 2013

International Baccalaureate Diploma, Tualatin High School, 2009

Research Fields

Applied Microeconometrics, Public Policy, Labor Economics, Data Science

Working Papers

“Childcare and the New Part-Time: Gender Gaps in Long-Hour Professions”

This paper examines gender differences in work timing and elasticity using hourly data on worker activity for 40 million tech workers. I find both genders work outside the traditional work week, but men work more than women on nights and weekends – times when formal childcare is relatively scarce. In order to isolate the impact of childcare, I examine how work activity varies in response to unexpected winter weather public school closures. Women respond to these unexpected breaks in childcare by reducing work activity by 34%. Male work activity does not respond to these unexpected breaks. The results provide evidence for the emerging theory that the persistent wage gap between men and women in high-wage professions is a function of a long-hour wage premium and the allocation of within-household childcare to women.

“Fatalities and Government Transfers” with Ben Hansen and Caroline Weber

We estimate the effect of Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefit disbursement on drug-related fatal automobile collisions. Distributing SNAP benefits on days other than the first of the month, adding an additional income shock to the monthly calendar, increases the number of drug-related fatal automobile collisions by 1.21 percent. A one-percentage point increase in the share of SNAP benefits distributed on a day leads to a .2 percent increase in the number of drug-related fatal automobile collisions. Our estimation utilizes a dataset of variation in SNAP distribution dates across states, and switches in distribution date regimes within states over time to identify a causal relationship. We plan to extend our analysis in two ways. (1) Using our current identification strategy, we will estimate the effect of SNAP disbursement on drug-related mortality at large between 1990 and 2017 using National Vital Statistics System data. (2) We will employ an alternate identification strategy, the initial roll-out of SNAP, to verify our results.

“Getting into the Weeds of Tax Invariance” with Ben Hansen, Keaton Miller, and Caroline Weber

This paper provides a general empirical test of tax invariance. It shows that when a 25 percent gross receipts tax was eliminated on processor cannabis firms in Washington state and the retail cannabis excise tax was simultaneously increased from 25 to 37 percent – a move intended to be revenue neutral – tax invariance does

not hold. Instead one-third of the tax is passed along to consumers in the form of higher prices. Processor and retail firms adjust their prices such that retail firms maintain a constant markup. As a result, processor profit on each gram of cannabis sold rises and retail profit on each gram falls. The failure of tax invariance has the potential for wide-ranging implications on how tax systems are designed.

Work in Progress

“Who is Speaking and How Much? Conversation Dynamics by Gender and Race”

Much has been written about the difference in how men and women behave in formal conversation. Recordings of conferences and office meetings show that men speak more than women in conversation, on average. In order to more carefully investigate this phenomenon, I consider how interviewer and interviewee speaking times vary by gender in podcast interviews. I construct a novel dataset of podcast interview recordings using automatic speech recognition programs to quantitatively describe the number of times each person in a conversation speaks and the duration of their speaking. Repeated observations of interviewers on their own podcast and interviewees across multiple podcasts allows for identification of the interaction effects of interviewer and interviewee characteristics, by both race and gender.

“Covid-19 and Worker Productivity” with Ben Hanson, Grant McDermott, and Caroline Weber

We estimate the immediate and longer-term impact of Covid-19 stay-at-home orders on worker productivity. We use a novel dataset of tech worker code activity to proxy for productivity. We identify the impact using two strategies: (1) we compare activity in 2020 to activity on the same day of the year in 2019, (2) we utilize the geographic variation in stay-at-home order timing to compare productivity in areas with stay-at-home orders to those without. We examine the difference in these effects by gender and document the adaption of workers over time.

“Productivity Shocks and Spillovers: The network effects of natural disasters” with Grant McDermott

The network effects of natural disasters are not well understood. Most estimates of the effects of natural disasters assume perfect independence between regions, simply because identifying spatial spillovers and network effects requires detailed (and typically unobservable) data about the structure of those relationships. We shed light on these issues using a novel and precise measurement of productivity from the tech sector: individual contributions to software code on shared projects. These projects are typically supported by a number of (geographically-dispersed) collaborators. We are thus able to track productivity shocks to GitHub users located in regions directly affected by extreme events, as well as any spillover effects on their collaborators in other regions. The richness of the data allows to identify control groups of users who are neither directly affected nor collaborators with affected workers.

“The #MeToo Movement and Worker Dynamics” with Ayushi Narayan

We evaluate how team dynamics in work environments responded to the #MeToo movement. Using a dataset of tech worker activity, which includes relational data describing the connections of users through shared projects, we evaluate if interactions between men and women were strengthened or weakened in response to the movement. We observe comments included in project code, the frequency of work on projects, comments on others’ work, the addition of new users to established projects, and the creation of new shared projects. Identifying variation comes from changes over time, such as before and after the broad #MeToo movement inception, and before and after tech-specific incidents. We are able to compare across companies and consider the extent to which a company was specifically involved in a #MeToo incident and how this affects their outcomes.

Publications from Pre-PhD Research

“Public Opinion about Management Strategies for a Low-Profile Species across Multiple Jurisdictions: Whitebark pine in the Northern Rockies” *People and Nature*, 2020 (with Eric D. Raile, Helen T. Naughton, Lena Wooldridge, Courtney Kellogg, Michael P. Wallner, and Elizabeth A. Shanahan)

This study explores drivers of attitudes toward different management strategies (i.e., no management, protection, and restoration) for a low-profile but keystone tree species, the whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis*), in the Greater Yellowstone Ecosystem. Since the whitebark pine species has a range that traverses different federal land designations, we examine whether attitudes toward management strategies differ by jurisdiction (i.e., wilderness or federal lands more generally). We conducted a web and mail survey of residents from Montana, Idaho, and Wyoming. We find that active management strategies have substantially higher levels of support than does no management, with relatively little differentiation across protection and restoration activities or across different land designations. We also find that values (political ideology) do not influence support for management strategies, but beliefs (about material vs. post-material environmental orientation, global climate change, and federal spending for public lands) and some measures of experience (e.g., knowledge of threats) do influence support for management activities.

“How much are US households prepared to pay to manage and protect whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis* Engelm.)?” *Forestry: An International Journal of Forest Research*. 2018 (with Eric D. Raile, Elizabeth A. Shanahan, Helen T. Naughton, and Michael P. Wallner)

The whitebark pine (*Pinus albicaulis* Engelm.) tree species faces precipitously declining populations in many locations. It is a keystone species found primarily in high-elevation forests across the Western US. The species is an early responder to climate change and qualifies for endangered species protection. We use contingent valuation to estimate the public’s willingness to pay for management of the whitebark pine species. In contrast, previous work centres on valuing broader aspects of forest ecosystems or threats to multiple tree species. While only approximately half of the survey respondents have seen whitebark pine, the mean willingness to pay for whitebark pine management is \$135 per household. When aggregated across all households from the three sampled states, willingness to pay totals \$163 million. This information is valuable to forest managers who must make difficult decisions in times of resource constraints and climate change.

“Trade and Sustainability: The Impact of the International Tropical Timber Agreements on Exports,” *International Environmental Agreements: Politics, Law and Economics*. 2017 (with Helen T. Naughton)

Environmental sustainability standards are often portrayed as a hindrance to trade and growth. A set of novel international environmental agreements (IEAs), the International Tropical Timber Agreements (ITTAs), seeks to promote both. The ITTAs encourage international trade for member nations while requiring sustainable timber practices. This paper uses the ITTAs as a case study to examine whether IEAs can lead to environmental cooperation at the same time as increasing trade. Membership in both the 1983 and 1994 ITTAs is examined for an effect on timber exports. The analysis is conducted using panel data for 165 countries between 1970 and 2011 while controlling for year fixed effects, country fixed effects and country-specific trend terms. Estimated ITTA effects vary by ITTA year, timber category and country type. Logs exports fell for both tropical and non-tropical country members, but these decreases were offset by increases in other timber category exports. Tropical country members increased plywood exports, while non-tropical country ITTA members increased exports of sawn wood and veneer sheets. Total exports of targeted timber were unaffected in non-tropical member countries, while the 1983 ITTA increased total exports for tropical countries. These results together suggest that the sustainability clauses entailed in ITTAs have not decreased total timber exports from member countries, but have shifted exports across timber categories.

“International Environmental Agreement Effectiveness: A Review of Empirical Studies,” *Research Handbooks in Comparative Law and Economics*, Chapter 18. 2016 (with Helen T. Naughton)

New international environmental agreements are signed and ratified each year. Much effort by policymakers goes into these agreements, yet the literature on their effectiveness is relatively sparse. Further empirical study evaluating environmental agreements is needed to determine their effectiveness. To facilitate future empirical work, a comprehensive search of literature was completed to compile and review existing empirical studies in the field. Many studies rely on simple trend analyses of environmental outcomes, but others use multiple regression analysis to evaluate observed effects of environmental agreements. One important observation from the study is that longer time frame of data facilitates identification of treaty impacts.

Teaching Experience

Instructor, University of Oregon

EC 311, Intermediate Microeconomics, Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Winter 2021

EC 340, Issues in Public Economics, Spring 2019

EC 313, Intermediate Macro, Summer 2017, Spring 2018

Teaching Assistant, University of Oregon

EC 421, Introduction to Econometrics, Winter 2018

EC 320, Introduction to Econometrics, Fall 2017

EC 607, Graduate Core Macroeconomics, Spring 2017

EC 201, Introduction to Microeconomics, Winter 2016

EC 202, Introduction to Macroeconomics, Fall 2015

Employment

Graduate Teaching Fellow

Department of Economics, **University of Oregon**, 2015 - present

Research Assistant

Dr. Caroline Weber, **University of Washington**, 2018 - 2019

Research Associate

Institute on Ecosystems, **Montana State University**, 2014 - 2015

Research Associate

Environmental and Natural Resource Economics Lab, **University of Montana**, 2013 - 2015

Research Assistant

Dr. Helen T. Naughton, **University of Montana**, 2012 - 2013

Research Intern

Institute on Ecosystems, **University of Montana**, 2012 - 2012

Research Intern

Governor Schweitzer's Energy Program, **University of Montana**, 2011 - 2011

Fellowships, Scholarships, and Awards

Outstanding Graduate Teaching, Economics Department, University of Oregon, 2019

General University Scholarship, University of Oregon, 2019
Kleinsorge Summer Research Award, University of Oregon, 2019
Kimble First-Year Teaching Award, University of Oregon, 2018
M. Gregg Smith Fellowship, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Oregon, 2018
Distinctive Scholar Award, Economics Department, University of Oregon, 2015
Kleinsorge Incoming Student Award, Economics Department, University of Oregon, 2015
Graduation with High Honors, University of Montana, 2013
Outstanding Senior in Economics, University of Montana, 2013
Positive Externality in Economics, Economics Department, University of Montana, 2013
Presidential Leadership Scholarship, University of Montana, 2009 - 2013
Western Undergraduate Exchange, University of Montana, 2009 - 2013
Watkins Undergraduate Research Scholarship, University of Montana, 2012
Research Experience for Undergraduates Program, National Science Foundation, 2012
Study Abroad Scholarship, Davidson Honors College, University of Montana, 2011

Professional Activities

Journal Referee

Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Economics of Education Review, Journal of Drug Issues, Forest Policy and Economics, Economics and Human Biology

Presentations

2020: Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management Fall Research Conference, The Workshop in Environmental Economics and Data Science

2018: National Tax Association Annual Conference on Taxation, Western Economics Association International

Other Conference Participation

Google Earth Engine Summit, 2017, *Attendee*

Equity and Inclusion

Understanding Implicit Bias Training, University of Oregon, 2020, *Attendee*

Graduate Student Summit for Diversity in Economics, University of California – Berkeley, 2019, *Workshop Leader*

Women in Economics, University of Oregon, 2017-2018, *President and Co-Founder*

Queer Ally Coalition Training, University of Oregon, 2017, *Attendee*

Service

Remote Sensing for Economists, University of Oregon, 2017, *Workshop Organizer*
Institution Faculty/Staff of the Month, National Residence Hall Honorary, 2019, *Nominee*
Economics Department Graduate Student Guild, University of Oregon, 2017, *President*
Faculty Evaluation Committee, University of Montana Dept. of Economics, 2012, *Member*

Tech

Languages

R, Python, Julia, Matlab, LaTeX, SQL, STATA

Programs

Qualtrics, Tableau

References

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Grant McDermott, Committee Member

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