

Research Statement

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I am an applied microeconomist and economic historian. My research focuses on key issues in political economy and public economics, often using lessons from the past to address today's challenges. I am particularly interested in understanding the role of institutions, both formal and informal, in shaping economic and political outcomes. A common feature of my work is creating new datasets by digitizing primary sources or through web scraping and text analysis, as well as developing and applying modern econometric techniques. Below, I provide an overview of my three dissertation projects and a brief summary of my other research.

Inclusive Governments and the Integration of Minority Groups

My job market paper, titled “From Alien to Citizen: The Power of Inclusive Propaganda during World War I,” explores how inclusive messages from governments can influence the assimilation of immigrants. This research is particularly relevant given the recent global resurgence of nationalist governments that frequently marginalize immigrants and minorities. During World War I, the U.S. government promoted national unity and the integration of immigrants into the country's shared culture and values to mobilize all available manpower and resources, including its foreign-born population who maintained their distinct cultures and languages. I collect and digitize a novel dataset on this unprecedented wartime propaganda campaign in American history. Leveraging idiosyncratic cancellation in campaign events with a difference-in-differences strategy, I find that immigrants living in cities with greater exposure to inclusive propaganda were more likely to initiate naturalization, marry native-born spouses, and give their children American names. Moreover, these immigrants supported the country even more actively than natives during the war by purchasing more war bonds and saving more food. These findings reveal that inclusive messages from governments have the power to unify their populations.

Media Capture by Governments and Political Outcomes

In ongoing work, titled “Reaping Rewards? Democratic Advertisement Donation and Republican Scandal Coverage”, I am investigating the dynamics of media bias shaped by government advertising during periods of party turnover. I focus on the Democratic presidency's influence during World War I and its subsequent effect on the media coverage of Republican scandals in the 1920s. Using historical newspapers, I collect a novel dataset on the advertisement spaces donated by individuals and businesses, which were subsequently distributed by the Democratic government during the war. Initial analyses using the sample of daily newspapers suggest that newspapers receiving more of these donated spaces were more likely to report Republican scandals, regardless of their own political affiliation. I am actively expanding this dataset to include weekly and biweekly newspapers to study its effect on voting patterns and to examine how the increased revenues from these patriotic donations relate to the previously documented trend of decreasing partisan behavior among newspapers over time.

Using Digitized Newspapers to Address Non-Classical Measurement Errors

In addition to the value of historical newspapers in generating novel datasets, in a paper (forthcoming in the *Journal of Economic History*) joint with Andreas Ferrara and Randall Walsh, we further highlight how

these historical newspapers can also be used as a secondary measure to remove attenuation bias in regression analyses due to measurement error. We provide three methods for using this secondary variable to deal with non-classical measurement error in a binary treatment: set identification, bias reduction via sample restriction, and a parametric bias correction. We demonstrate the usefulness of our methods by replicating four recent papers on important historical events, such as the boll weevil plague, 1918 influenza pandemic, and the adoption of local Prohibition policies in the early twentieth century. Relative to the initial analyses, our results yield markedly larger coefficient estimates.

Non-Dissertation Projects

Another ongoing project, titled “Exposure to Violence and Church Membership: Evidence from the U.S. South”, studies the role of informal institutions in a context where violence was commonly used to suppress economic, social, and political conditions of marginalized groups. During the Jim Crow era in the U.S. South, Black churches were the only institutions controlled by Blacks and served as compensatory devices for the economic and social frustration they faced. Studying racialized violence is empirically challenging. On one hand, data on lynchings might underestimate its extent due to their low frequency. On the other hand, datasets on other forms of violence, such as murders, are not available before the 1930s, especially when categorized by race. To address these challenges, I manually reviewed historical newspapers from *Chronicling America* and constructed a novel dataset on murders committed by race between 1889 and 1916. I find that Black church membership increased at a rate corresponding to increases in Black-involved murders. The effect of violence was more pronounced when considering only murders with Black victims. These preliminary findings suggest that Southern Blacks might have relied on Black churches as a psychological buffer to their fear and stress as well as a form of social insurance. To enhance this project, I have expanded the dataset using *Newspapers.com*, which is more extensive than *Chronicling America*, and have completed data collection on murders by race, manually inspected by research assistants.

While much of my work draws on important historical events to offer new insights, my research also addresses contemporary issues in public economics and the economics of education. In a paper (published in the *Economics of Education Review*) co-authored with Austin C. Smith, we reconcile conflicting evidence regarding whether legal access to alcohol hinders the academic performance of college students. One plausible explanation for differing results across studies is that the change in alcohol consumption that occurs upon attaining the minimum legal drinking age (MLDA) differs across student populations. We test this hypothesis by leveraging predictable variation in adherence to the MLDA across students within the same institution. We find that students with limited underage access to alcohol experience the largest declines in academics upon turning 21, while students with large social networks that likely enable underage consumption experience no effect.