

Isaac D. Swensen

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Current Positions

Employment

Associate Professor of Economics, Montana State University, August 2019-present

Assistant Professor of Economics, Montana State University, August 2013-2019

Other Appointments

Associate Editor, *Economic Inquiry*, 2018-Present

Associate Director, Initiative for Regulation and Applied Economic Analysis, August 2019-present

Research Fellow, Center for Financial Security (University of Wisconsin-Madison), June 2021-present

Research Fellow, Initiative for Regulation and Applied Economic Analysis, August 2016-2019

Education

Ph.D. Economics, University of Oregon, 2013

B.A. Economics, Brigham Young University Idaho, *Magna Cum Laude*, 2007

Research Fields

Applied Microeconomics, Crime, Risky Behaviors, Health, and Education

Publications

“Persistent Effects of Violent Media Content” *Journal of Health Economics*. Forthcoming
(with Glen Waddell and Jason Lindo)

We document the effect of violent media on crime. Specifically, we evaluate the effects of The Ultimate Fighter, a hit TV show that features

fighters competing in violent mixed martial arts and which brought Ultimate Fighting Championship into the mainstream. We estimate the effect of exposure to the show’s earliest episodes using panel data from police agencies across the United States and a strategy that uses network ratings prior to the show’s premier as an instrumental variable. We show that this exposure significantly reduced crime: these effects are particularly evident for assault, began in the month the show premiered, and persisted for many years. These estimates do not reflect systematic differences across geographic areas in their trends in crime rates prior to 2005. To complement our main results, we also investigate the effects of “UFC Main Events,” which air in bars and on Pay-Per-View. This analysis additionally suggests reductions in violence caused by viewership.

“The Effect of Concealed-Carry and Handgun Restrictions on Gun-Related Deaths: Evidence from the Sullivan Act of 1911” *The Economic Journal*. Forthcoming
(with Briggs Depew).

The 1911 NY State Sullivan Act (SA) outlawed carrying concealable firearms without a licence, established strict licencing rules, and regulated the sale and possession of handguns. We analyse the effects of the SA using historical data on mortality rates, pistol permits, and citations for illegal carrying. Our analysis of pistol permits and citations reveal clear initial effects of the SA on gun-related behaviours. Using synthetic control and difference-in-differences methodologies, our main analyses show no effects on overall homicide rates, evidence of a reduction in overall suicide rates, and strong evidence of a large and sustained decrease in gun-related suicide rates.

“Is Any Press Good Press? The Unanticipated Effects of Title IX Investigations on University Outcomes” *Economics of Education Review*. 17, 2019
(with Jason Lindo, Dave Marcotte, and Jane Palmer).

Since 2011, when the landmark “Dear Colleague” letter declared that the Department of Education (DoE) would use equal-access requirements of federal law to remediate sexual assault on college campuses, 458 investigations have been opened. This letter was withdrawn in 2017 and it remains uncertain how the DoE will handle the issue in the future. We examine the effects of the investigations arising from the 2011 policy change on university outcomes. We find that applications and enrollment increase in response to Title IX investigations, for both males and females. We find little evidence of effects on degree completion or donations.

“The Decision to Carry: The Effect of Crime on Concealed-Carry Applications” *Journal of Human Resources*, 1016-8287R2, 2018. (with Briggs Depew).

Despite persistent debate on the role of concealed-carry legislation, decisions to legally carry concealed handguns are not well understood. Using detailed data on concealed-carry permit applications, we explore whether individuals apply for concealed-carry permits in response to crime. We find that recent homicides increase applications in areas relatively near to the incident. The effects are driven by gun-related homicides, and are more pronounced for white, male, and Republican applicants. We also find suggestive evidence that applicants are more responsive when they share a demographic characteristic with the homicide victim. The results further indicate that applications after recent homicides are more likely to be renewed, consistent with persistent precautionary behaviors. Our findings provide causal evidence that crime risk influences individual decisions regarding legal gun use.

“Substance-Abuse Treatment Centers and Local Crime” *Journal of Urban Economics*. 104, 2018 (with Samuel Bondurant and Jason Lindo).

In this paper we estimate the effects of expanding access to substance-abuse treatment on local crime. We do so using an identification strategy that leverages variation driven by substance-abuse-treatment facility openings and closings measured at the county level. The results indicate that substance-abuse-treatment facilities reduce both violent and financially motivated crimes in an area, and that the effects are particularly pronounced for relatively serious crimes. The effects on homicides are documented in two sources of homicide data and are concentrated in highly populated areas.

“College Party Culture and Sexual Assault” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 10(1), 2018 (with Jason M. Lindo and Peter Siminski).

This paper considers the degree to which events that intensify partying increase sexual assault. Estimates are based on panel data from campus and local law-enforcement agencies and an identification strategy that exploits plausibly random variation in the timing of Division 1 football games. The estimates indicate that these events increase daily reports of rape with 17-24 year old victims by 28 percent. The effects are driven largely by 17-24 year old offenders and by offenders unknown to the victim, but we also find significant effects on incidents involving offenders of other ages and on incidents involving offenders known to the victim.

“Substance-Abuse Treatment and Mortality” *Journal of Public Economics*, 122, 2015.

Drug-overdose deaths, which have more than doubled over the past decade, represent a growing public-health concern. Though substance-abuse treatment may be effective in reducing drug abuse, evidence for a causal effect of treatment on drug-related mortality is lacking. I analyze the effect of substance-abuse treatment on mortality by exploiting county-level variation in treatment facilities driven by facility openings and closings. The estimates indicate that a 10-percent increase in facilities lowers a county’s drug-induced mortality rate by 2 percent. The estimated effects persist across individual and county characteristics and further indicate that spillovers of treatment reduce other related causes of death.

“Alcohol and Student Performance: Estimating the Effect of Legal Access” *Journal of Health Economics* 32(122), 2013 (with Jason M. Lindo and Glen R. Waddell).

We consider the effect of legal access to alcohol on student achievement. Our preferred approach identifies the effect through changes in one’s performance after gaining legal access to alcohol, controlling flexibly for the expected evolution of grades as one makes progress towards their degree. We also report RD-based estimates but argue that an RD design is not well suited to the research question in our setting. We find that students’ grades fall below their expected levels upon being able to drink legally, but by less than previously documented. We also show that there are effects on women and that the effects are persistent. Using the 1997 National Longitudinal Survey of Youth, we show that students drink more often after legal access but do not consume more drinks on days on which they drink.

“Are Big-Time Sports a Threat to Student Achievement?” *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*, 4(4), 2012 (with Jason M. Lindo and Glen R. Waddell).

We consider the relationship between collegiate-football success and non-athlete student performance. We find that the team’s success significantly reduces male grades relative to female grades. This phenomenon is only present in fall quarters, which coincides with the football season. Using survey data, we find that males are more likely than females to increase alcohol consumption, decrease studying, and increase partying in response to the success of the team. Yet, females also report that their behavior is affected by athletic success, suggesting that their performance is likely impaired but that this effect is masked by the practice of grade curving.

Working Papers

“The Effects of Expanding Access to Mental Health Services on SS(D)I Applications and Awards”
(with Matt Messel and Carly Urban)

“Stable Income, Stable Family” (with Jason Lindo and Krishna Regmi)

Work in Progress

“Unexpected Cues from Lottery Participation: Effects on Violent Crime”

“Legal Gun Ownership and Crime: Evidence from North Carolina”

“SS(D)I Participation and SNAP Work Requirements” (with Zach Fone and Matt Messel)

“The Effect of Unemployment Insurance on Suicide” (with Andrew Hill and Krishna Regmi)

Other Articles and Policy Reports

“Layoffs, Divorce, and the Effect of Unemployment Insurance,” *Econofact*, 10/2020, (with Jason Lindo and Krishna Regmi)

“Any Press is Good Press? Study Finds Federal Investigations of University Responses to Sexual Misconduct Cases May Help Enrollments,” *ProMarket.org*, 8/2018, (with Jason Lindo, Dave Marcotte, and Jane Palmer)

“Football, College Party Culture, and Sexual Assault,” *Econofact*, 7/2018, (with Jason Lindo and Peter Siminski)

“Access to Substance Abuse Treatment, Drug Overdose Deaths, and Crime,” *Econofact*, 3/2018, (with Sam Bondurant and Jason Lindo)

Selected Media Coverage

Paper: “Persistent Effects of Violent Media Content”

Podcast Episode 33. 8/2020. *Probable Causation*.

Retrieved from <https://www.probablecausation.com/podcasts/episode-33-jason-lindo>

Podcast Episode 5/26/20 Episode (46th minute). *Vox’s The Weeds*.

Retrieved from <https://cms.megaphone.fm/channel/theweeds?selected=VMP5183780568>

Paper: “Any Press is Good Press? The Unanticipated Effects of Title IX Investigations on University Outcomes”

“Do campus rape investigations damage colleges? Actually, the opposite may be true”. 7/2018, *Salon*

Paper: “College Party Culture and Sexual Assault”

“Study Links Big College Football Games to Spike in Rape Reports”. 3/2018, *Wall Street Journal*

“Party Schools and Sexual Assault” 1/2018, *AEA Research Highlights*

“Reports of Rape Rise on College Football Game Days” 12/2015, *Bloomberg*

“College Football, Parties and Rape” 1/2016, *Inside Higher Ed*

“The disturbing truth about college football and rape” 12/2015, *Washington Post*

“What We Can Learn From That Paper About Campus Rape on Game Days” 12/2015, *Slate*

“Study: Rape Rates Spike on Game Day at Big Football Schools” 1/2016, *NY Mag*

“Report: Rape rates at big football colleges spike on game day” 1/2016, *CBS News*

“Study: Sexual assault reports jump 28% on college game days” 1/2016, *USA Today*

Paper: “Substance-Abuse Treatment Centers and Local Crime”

“Economist: Keeping Rehab Facilities Open is Worth The Investment”. 5/2018, *TAMU Today*

Paper: “Are Big-Time Sports a Threat to Student Achievement?”

“How Does Football Success Affect Student Performance?” 10/2012, *Chronicle of Higher Education*

“Rethinking The Benefits of College Athletics,” 3/2012, *Forbes*

“How Big-Time Sports Ate College Life,” 1/2012, *New York Times*

“College Football Victories = Worse Grades?” 1/2011, *Freakonomics.com*

“Study Links Winning Football and Declining Grades,” 1/2011, *New York Times*

“Football Team Wins, Grades Plummet,” 12/2011, *The Wall Street Journal*

“Study: Male Students’ Grades Drop When Football Teams Win,” 12/2011, *USA Today*

“Winning Football, Declining Grades,” 12/2011, *Inside Higher Education*

“Study: As Ducks Win, Male Grades Drop,” 12/2011, *ESPN*

Grants and Awards

MSU Faculty-Staff Award for Excellence, 2021

“The Effects of Expanding Access to Mental Health Treatment on SS(D)I Applications and Awards,” Center for Financial Security RDRC Grant (administered through the Social Security Administration, (\$113,438), with Carly Urban, 2020

Research Fellowship funding, MSU Initiative for Regulation and Applied Economics, 2016-2019

NBER Award for funded access to Nielsen Survey Data, 2018

Scholarship and Creativity Grant, Montana State University, 2016

Research Enhancement Award, Montana State University, 2016

Faculty Excellence Grant, Montana State University, 2015,

US Department of Justice Research Grant (\$40,000), Co-PI with Jason M. Lindo, Award 2014-R2-CX-0015, 2014

Texas Census Research Data Center Seed Grant (\$7,000), with Jason M. Lindo, 2014

Research Enhancement Award (\$1,600), Montana State University, 2014

Kleinsorge Research Fellowship (\$4,000), University of Oregon, 2012

Graduate Teaching Fellowship, University of Oregon, 2008 - 2013

Professional Activities

Journal Referee:

Journal of Labor Economics, Journal of Human Resources, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, American Economic Journal: Applied, American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, Economics of Education Review, Journal of Health Economics, Journal of Law and Economics, Education Economics, Journal of Urban Economics, Health Economics, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Journal of Sports Economics, Economic Development and Cultural Change, Education Finance and Policy, Economic Inquiry, Contemporary Economic Policy, Eastern Economic Journal, Preventing Chronic Disease, American Journal of Public Health, Applied Economic Perspectives & Policy

Other Reviews:

2019: *National Science Foundation*

Presentations

2021: Western Economic Association Annual Meeting, Center for Financial Security Household Finance Seminar Series, Indiana University, Niskanen Center Summer Panel Series: Reducing Violence Across the U.S., Center for Financial Security RDRC Fall Research Workshop

2019: UC-Merced, UNLV, Montana State University 10X10 Roadshow, Southern Economics Association Annual Meeting, Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management Fall Conference

2018: Montana State University CLS Rising Stars Event, Economic Perspectives on Reproductive Health Policies (Montana State University), West Point Military Academy, Texas A&M University

2017: Western Economic Association Annual Meeting, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

2016: NBER Children's Program and Education Program Meetings, Western Economic Association Annual Meeting, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

2015: Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

2014: Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

2013: Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, Brigham Young University, Middle Tennessee State University, University of California–Merced, Louisiana State University, Towson University, Montana State University

2012: Western Economic Association Annual Meeting

Other Conference Participation

Workshop Organizer: Economic Perspectives on the Minimum Wage, Montana State University, March 2022

Workshop Organizer: The Economics of Unemployment Insurance, Montana State University, Jan 2021

Session Chair/Organizer: Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, 2019

Workshop Organizer: Economic Perspectives on Reproductive Health Policies, Montana State University, 2018

Session Chair: CRAEA Health Conference, 2018

Session Chair/Organizer: Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, 2017

Session Chair: CRAEA Poverty Conference, 2017

Session Chair/Organizer: Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting, 2016

Session Chair: "Incentives to Work," American Economic Association Annual Meetings, 2015.

Teaching Experience

University of Oregon

Course Instructor

Labor Economics, (Fall '12)

Urban Economics, (Fall '11, Spring '12)

Principles of Microeconomics, (Summer '10, Fall '10, Summer '11)

Labs and Discussion Sections

Contemporary Economic Issues (2009)

Principles of Microeconomics (2008-2009)

Principles of Macroeconomics (2008)

Econometrics (2009)

Montana State University

Course Instructor

Labor Economics, (Spring '14–Current)

Intermediate Microeconomics with Calculus, (Fall '16–Current)

Research Methodology (co-instructor), (Fall '17–Fall '18)

Principles of Microeconomics, (Fall '13 - Spring '16)

Independent Study (Zhang Huafeng, “Needle Exchange Programs”, '15)

Guest Lecturer

Economics of the Presidential Election (Fall '20, Fall '16)

Research Methods Seminar (Fall '13–Current)

Other Service

Graduate Student Supervision

Committee Chair: Ridge Petterson, Joe Baan, Md Tahmeed Hossain, Kate Salemo, Conner Dwinnell, Chase Stefani

Committee Member: Mitchel Harris, Samuel Bridgewater, Scott Lantz, Eric Wert, Nicholas Holom, Logan Hendrix, Kadeem Noray, Myron Inglis, Portia Conant, Jackie Haines, James Sears, Case Stiglbauer

External PhD Thesis Examiner: Nguyen Doan (Victoria University of Wellington)

Department Service

Resident Instruction Committee Chair (2018–Current)

Post-Doctoral Job Search Committee Chair (2020)

Graduate Affairs Committee (2017–2018)

Advisory Committee (2014–2016)

Job Search Committee (2016, 2017)

Presentation to CLS Advisory Committee (2018)

University Service

Undergraduate Scholars Review Panel (2018-Current)

College of Agriculture Curriculum Committee (2019-2021)

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