LAN NGUYEN

Contact Information:

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Academic Position:

July 2020 – Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Economics and Education Research Alliance for New Orleans, Tulane University

Research Interests:

Industrial Organization, Applied Microeconomics, Economics of Education, Market Design

Education:

2020	Ph.D.	Economics	Columbia University
2017	M.Phil.	Economics	Columbia University
2016	M.A.	Economics	Columbia University
2013	B.A. *Honors - Class I*	Economics	University of Queensland

Publication:

- *Price Staggering in Cartels (with Heiko Gerlach) – International Journal of Industrial Organization*

Working Papers:

- *The Effects of Hurricane Katrina and the Subsequent New Orleans Charter-Based School Reform on Youth Crime (with Douglas Harris and Stephen Barnes)*

Hurricane Katrina, in addition to being one of the nation's worst natural disasters, triggered various policy changes in New Orleans, including extensive market-based school reforms, which turned the city into an almost all-charter school district. We provide some of the first evidence on the effects of these combined events on the rate of criminal convictions of students who attended New Orleans public schools before and after the storm. Using the Synthetic Control Group method and a unique student-level longitudinal statewide data set from Louisiana, we find that Katrina reduced conviction rates for students who returned to New Orleans over a long horizon of more than a decade. We also adapt the synthetic control method in the spirit of a triple-difference approach to test whether school reform was a key mechanism. Using the ratio of the conviction rates between these returnees and young adults who did not experience the reforms, to account for non-school factors, we find that the school reforms were likely the main driver of these crime reductions.

- *Predicting the Effect of Affirmative Action Plans in New York City Elite Public High Schools*

In recent years, there have been concerns about the lack of diversity in schools, especially elite schools that select students based on exams. This paper studies the impact of two possible affirmative action plans in New York City by estimating students' underlying preferences and then simulating their actions under the two proposed plans. There is a trade-off between promoting diversity and maintaining student quality in elite schools. A tier-based plan similar to that in Chicago does little to increase the overall racial diversity of this sector, but it preserves the quality of incoming students. In contrast, a plan to guarantee elite school seats to students who placed in the top seven percent (by academic performance) of each public middle school causes substantial exchanges of students between the elite and regular sectors, thereby giving more access to Black and Hispanic students at the cost of lower student quality. The two plans also change the distribution of diversity across schools in different ways. The Chicago plan reduces the differences among schools within the elite sector, while the Top 7% plan bridges the gap in diversity between the two sectors even as it increases within-sector dispersion. Both plans result in considerable changes in school assignments in the regular school sector.

- *Matching and Learning – An Experimental Study (with Guillaume Haeringer and Silvio Ravaioli)*

We use a lab experiment to study the patterns and effects of learning in two classic centralized matching mechanisms widely used in school choice and other real-world settings. We focus on the Deferred Acceptance algorithm (DA, strategyproof but not efficient) and contrast it with the Immediate Acceptance algorithm (IA, efficient but not strategyproof). Each matching problem (round) is repeated for several periods: after being informed about the match outcome of the previous period, subjects are asked again the order in which they would apply to the same schools. Each participant experiences multiple rounds of the same mechanism. Our design allows for two types of learning: to coordinate within the same environment (within round) as well as to understand the underlying mechanisms (across rounds). We observe that subjects are more truthful under the DA mechanism and achieve higher payoffs under the IA mechanism. We provide additional evidence to previous work that the majority of the deviations from truth-telling in DA do not affect payoffs. Furthermore, by explicitly analyzing learning, we can confirm that at least some of the participants learn about the optimality of truth-telling, and their departures from it happen primarily when the same environment is repeated. Finally, we find that when learning to coordinate, agents tend to retain their previous strategy when the payoff from this strategy is high, which is suggestive of reinforcement learning.

Works in Progress:

- *The Effects of Charter Renewal Policy on School Choice and Student Outcomes*
- *Does Preparation for the Entrance Examination Matter for Performance in College? Evidence from Vietnam*

Presentations:

2018	45th Annual Conference of the European Association for Research in Industrial Economics (EARIE 2018)
2021	Economics of Crime Online Seminar
	Annual Meeting of the Southern Economic Association (scheduled)
2022	APPAM 2021 Fall Research Conference (scheduled)

Honors and Awards:

2019 – 2020	Dissertation Fellowship, Department of Economics, Columbia University
2014 – 2019	Dean's Fellowship, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University
2017 – 2018	Trudy and Paul Woodruff Fellowship, Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Columbia University

Teaching:

Fall 2020	Economics of Education (Undergraduate), Tulane University

Research Assistantships:

2016 – 2017	Mike Riordan, Department of Economics, Columbia University
2012 – 2014	Heiko Gerlach, School of Economics, University of Queensland

Teaching Assistantships:

Spring 2019	Market Design (Undergraduate), Guillaume Haeringer, Columbia University
Fall 2018	Principles of Economics (Undergraduate), Prajit Dutta, Columbia University
Spring 2018	Market Design (Undergraduate), Guillaume Haeringer, Columbia University
Spring 2016	Industrial Organization (Undergraduate), Mike Riordan, Columbia University
Fall 2015	Principles of Economics (Undergraduate), Nicola Zaniboni, Columbia University
2012 – 2013	Industrial Economics (Undergraduate), Heiko Gerlach (two semesters), University of Queensland
2012 – 2013	Benefit-Cost Analysis & Project Evaluation (Undergraduate & Master), Richard Brown (two semesters), University of Queensland
2013	Behavioural and Evolutionary Economics (Undergraduate), Paul Frijters, University of Queensland
2012	Quantitative Economic & Business Analysis B (Undergraduate), Do Won Kwak (two semesters), University of Queensland

Personal:

Citizenship: Vietnam
Languages: Vietnamese (native), English (fluent), French (passive)
Programming and Software: Python, Stata, R, Mathematica, Matlab

References:

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