

Neel Lal

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EDUCATION

University of Maryland

Graduate Student

Jun. 2025 – Present

College Park, MD

Grinnell College

Bachelor of Arts, Economics (Honors) & Biochemistry (Honors)

Aug. 2018 – May 2022

Grinnell, IA

WORKING PAPERS

Work Requirements and Child Tax Benefits (With Jacob Goldin, Tatiana Homonoff, Ithai Lurie, Katherine Micheltore, and Matthew Unrath), Revise and Resubmit, *Review of Economics and Statistics*.

Abstract: Many U.S. safety-net programs condition benefit eligibility on work. Eliminating work requirements would better target benefits to the neediest families but attenuates pro-work incentives. Using administrative records, we study how expanding a California child tax credit to non-workers affected maternal labor supply. We rely on quasi-random birth-timing and a novel method for using placebo analyses to maximize estimator precision. Eliminating the work requirement caused very few mothers to exit the labor force; our 95% confidence interval excludes reductions over one-third of one percent. Our results suggest expanding tax benefits to the lowest-income families need not meaningfully reduce workforce participation.

A Tale of Two Policies: Alcohol Restrictions and Public Safety

Abstract: This paper explores the effects of two recent alcohol policy changes in Austin, Texas, on crime and traffic accidents. The first policy, implemented statewide, expanded the permitted hours for Sunday alcohol sales, allowing sales to begin at 10:00 AM instead of 12:00 PM. The second policy lifted restrictions on public drinking in specific neighborhoods in East Austin. Using a difference-in-discontinuity (DRD) model for the first policy, this paper finds no significant effects on either traffic accidents or crime. For the second policy, a difference-in-differences (DiD) model suggests that allowing public drinking led to substantial reductions in violent and public order crimes, with no increase in traffic crashes. These findings challenge conventional assumptions about public drinking, suggesting that liberalized alcohol restrictions may not compromise public safety.

PUBLICATIONS

Crime During Power Outages (With Logan Lee and Jason Query), *American Law and Economic Review* (Forthcoming),

Abstract: In February of 2021, Texas experienced a winter storm that caused rolling blackouts throughout the state. We exploit the pseudo-random variation of blackouts in Austin to unravel the relationship between electrical power, light, and crime. Using hour by ZIP code level data and relying on fixed effects to absorb variation caused by cold temperatures or similar factors, we find that power outages do not impact crime and we rule out large effects in either direction. We estimate a 95% confidence interval of the elasticity of crime with respect to power outages of -0.004 to 0.002. We also explore the extent to which the “random” outages disproportionately affected poor and minority residents of Austin. We find that areas with more foreign and Hispanic residents experienced significantly more outages than other areas

AWARDS & FELLOWSHIPS

Flagship Fellowship

University of Maryland

Aug. 2026 – Jun. 2030

College Park, MD

Gilbert DeBartolo '69 Memorial Prize in Economics

Grinnell College

May 2022

Grinnell, IA

Founders' Merit Scholarship

Grinnell College

Aug. 2018 – May 2022

Grinnell, IA

RESEARCH & RELEVANT WORK EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant to Professor Jacob Goldin

The University of Chicago, Coase-Sandor Institute for Law and Economics

Sep. 2023 – Present

Chicago, IL

Research Associate, Labor and Employment Division

NERA Economic Consulting

Jun. 2022 – Jul. 2023

Los Angeles, CA

Research Assistant to Dr. Logan Lee

Department of Economics, Grinnell College

Nov. 2019 – Sep. 2021

Grinnell, IA

SKILLS

Languages: Stata, SQL, R, Python.

Software: PowerBI, ArcGIS.

Communication: Competed at the California State tournament in extemporaneous speaking (2018); Recognized as an Academic All-American & member of Superior Distinction (2018) of the National Speech and Debate Association.

Hobbies: Chess, Golf, Fantasy Football, & Reading.