

Instructions for referee reports

1.) Keep the referee report to one to two pages (times new roman, size 12 font). I want it brief and to the point. The purpose of this exercise is to highlight major areas of concern that will hopefully help the author as he/she finishes up a final draft.

2.) Bring TWO copies of each referee report with you next Thursday (4/13). One copy is for the author and should NOT have your name on it. The other copy is for me and should have your name on it.

Example of a referee report that I wrote for the *Journal of Policy Analysis & Management* Review of “School Suspension and the School-to-Prison Pipeline”

Summary: This paper uses data from an urban school district for the period 2002 through 2009 to examine the relationship between school suspension and the likelihood of juvenile justice referral. To conduct the analyses, individual-level school data on suspensions were merged with a juvenile justice referral data set. The authors find evidence suggesting a positive relationship between suspensions and referrals.

Primary concern

1.) Clearly, the main issue the authors face is in addressing the inherently endogenous relationship between suspensions and referrals. The authors motivate their paper, in part, by claiming their results are more policy relevant than the studies by Jacob and Lefgren (2003) and Luallen (2006). While the authors do study a population of students on an important margin, unlike Jacob and Lefgren (2003) and Luallen (2006), they do not exploit a clearly defined natural experiment. As a result, it is very difficult to give the results a causal interpretation as the paper does little to consider *time-varying* omitted variables. The associations in the paper could simply be explained by an overall change in behavior.

2.) While some sections of the paper are better than others, the writing is generally poor. The paper requires a serious proof read for spelling, proper grammar, and sentence structure.

Other comments

1.) If incapacitation effects are important, could an interaction term with in-school suspension be used as a type of falsification test?

2.) The tables look sloppy.

3.) It would be helpful to see descriptive statistics separately for those in the sample who received a juvenile justice referral and for those who did not.

4.) I would prefer to see asterisks to denote statistical significance rather than p-values.

References

Jacob, Brian and Lars Lefgren. 2003. “Are Idle Hands the Devil’s Workshop? Incapacitation, Concentration, and Juvenile Crime.” *American Economic Review* 93: 1560-1577.

Luallen, Jeremy. 2006. “School’s Out...Forever: A Study of Juvenile Crime, At-risk Youths and Teacher Strikes.” *Journal of Urban Economics* 59: 75-106.