

PETER Q. BLAIR

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ACADEMIC EMPLOYMENT

Harvard University, Assistant Professor, Graduate School of Education (Fall 2018-Present)

Clemson University, Assistant Professor of Economics (2015-2018)

ACADEMIC AFFILIATIONS

National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER), Faculty Research Fellow (2018-Present)

University of Chicago, Human Capital & Economic Opportunity, Faculty Affiliate (2018-Present)

Stanford University, Center on Poverty and Inequality, Scholar-in-Residence (2019)

George Washington University, Non-Degree Credentials Network, Faculty Affiliate (2019)

EDUCATION

Ph.D., Applied Economics, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania (2015)

M.Sc., Physics, Harvard University (2008)

B.Sc., Physics and Mathematics, Duke University, Magna Cum Laude (2006)

Coursework in Economics and Physics, The College of the Bahamas (2001)

HONORS, SCHOLARSHIPS, FELLOWSHIPS

Top Downloaded Paper British Journal of Industrial Relationships (2020)

NBER Summer Institute, Presenter (2020)

Diversity Initiative for Tenure in the Economics Profession (DITE) Fellowship \$2,500 (2019)

Upjohn Institute Early Career Research Grant, \$5,000 (2019)

NBER Public Economics Program Fall Meeting, Presenter (2019)

NBER Labor Studies Program Fall Meeting, Presenter (2019)

Dean's Distinguished Lecture Harvard University (2018)

NBER Faculty Research Fellow (2018)
NBER Summer Institute, Presenter (2018)
Society of Labor Economics Best Poster (2018)
NBER Labor Studies Program Fall Meeting, Presenter (2017)
Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Working Group Faculty Affiliate (2017)
Harvey Fellowship (2013)
NSF Graduate Research Fellowship (2011)
Amy Morse Prize, \$2,000 (2011)
Lauder Ciber Travel Grant (2011)
Fontaine Society Travel Grant (2011)
Wallace Noyes Fellowship (2010)
Rhodes Scholarship, Finalist (2006)
Graduate Prize Fellowship, Harvard (2006)
University Seal Bearer at Graduation, Duke (2006)
Bell Labs Graduate Research Fellowship (2006)
Barry Goldwater Scholarship (2005)
Mellon Mays Fellowship (2004)

Published Papers

1. “Structural Increases in Skill Demand after the Great Recession” (w/ David Deming):
American Economic Review P&P 110, 362-365 (2020). Press: NBER Spotlight
2. “The Impact of School Finance Reforms on Local Tax Revenues” (w/ Patrick Bayer and Kenneth Whaley):
American Economic Review P&P 110, 416-418 (2020)
3. “How Much of a Barrier to Entry is Occupational Licensing?” (w/ Bobby Chung):
British Journal of Industrial Relations 57 (4), 919-943 (2019) Press: [Marginal Revolution](#),
NBER Spotlight, [Wisconsin Examiner](#), [CATO Institute](#)

Submitted Papers

1. "Job Market Signaling through Occupational Licensing," (joint w/ Bobby Chung, Clemson) NBER Working Paper No. 24791 Press: [Wall Street Journal](#), NBER Spotlight, [Institute for Poverty Research Podcast](#), [Quartz](#), [Axios](#), [HCEO Spotlight](#)

Abstract: We show that an occupational license serves as a job market signal, similar to education in a Spence model. In the presence of occupational licensing, we find evidence that firms rely less on observable characteristics, such as race and gender, in determining employee wages. As a result, licensed minorities and women experience smaller wage gaps than their unlicensed peers. Black men benefit from licenses that signal non-felony status, whereas, white women benefit from licenses with a human capital requirement. Certification, a less distortionary alternative to licensing generates an equivalent wage premium for white men, but lower wage premiums than licensing for women and black men.

Press: [Wall Street Journal](#), [Quartz](#), [Axios](#), [HCEO Spotlight](#)

2. "The Effect of Unilateral Divorce Laws on College Attainment" (joint w/ Elijah Neilson, Clemson) Abstract: Exploiting state variation in the adoption of unilateral divorce laws, we show that both women and men are less likely to report having a Bachelor's degree in states that adopted unilateral divorce laws. This reduction in human capital investment occurs in states with community property laws, where the law requires an even split of the couple's assets in the event of a divorce and is most pronounced for white women and men. We find no distortionary effects of unilateral divorce laws on the human capital decisions of black men or black women, even in states with community property laws.

3. "Disentangling Peer Effects and Economic Incentives in Customer Acquisition" (joint w/ Clarence Lee, Cornell)

Abstract: We study the role of peer effects and economic incentives on customer adoption decisions using A unique panel from a university alumni reunion. The data consist of the alumni sign-up date, complete offline social graph (formed a decade prior), time-series airfare prices, demographics, and social media advertising efforts. We leverage the plausibly exogenous social graph and airfare prices faced by customers to separate the influence of peer decisions from the effect of economic costs on customer adoption. Our results have implications for the broader study and interaction of digital advertising with traditional pricing methods of new products and events.

4. "Outside Options (Now) More Important than Race in Explaining Tipping Points in US Neighborhoods"

Abstract: I develop a revealed-preference method for estimating neighborhood tipping points. I find that census tract tipping points have increased from 15 percent (1970) to 42 percent (2010). The corresponding MSA tipping points have also increased from 13 percent (1970) to 35 percent (2010). While tipping points are traditionally associated with the racial attitudes of white households, I find that cross-sectional differences in MSA tipping points, from 1970-2010, depend less on differences in the racial attitudes of white households and more on the outside options faced by white households. These results support a continued role for place-based policies in mitigating residential segregation.

Awards: Best Poster Society of Labor Economists (2018)

5. "The Effect of Selective Property Rights Restrictions on Economic Growth"

Abstract: I estimate that per capita GDP in the Bahamas grew by an additional two percent to three percent per year, for 12 years, in response to a law that limited the ability of non-natives to buy and sell land. I show that this growth occurred in spite of a downturn in net foreign direct investment due to law, which weakened the property rights of non-native investors relative to those of native Bahamians. The results of this study highlight the economic importance of distinguishing between the protection of private property for natives and non-natives as separate channels through which institutions cause economic growth.

Working Papers

1. "Searching for STARS: Work Experience as a Job Market Signal for Workers without Bachelor's Degrees" (with: Tomas Castagnino, Erica Groshen, Papia Debroy, Byron Auguste, Shad Ahmed, Fernando Garcia Diaz, Cristian Bonavida) NBER Working Paper No. 26844 Press: [EducationDive](#), Yahoo Finance

Abstract: The demand for a skilled workforce is increasing even faster than the supply of workers with college degrees. The result: rising wage inequality by education levels, and firms facing a skills gap. While it is often assumed that increasing the number of college graduates is required to fill this gap, this paper explores the extent to which workers without Bachelor's degrees can help fill this gap. To find workers without Bachelor's degrees who are potentially skilled through alternative routes (STARS), we use data on the skill requirements of jobs to compute the "skill distance" between a worker's current occupation and higher wage occupations with similar skill requirements in their local labor market. Based on our calculations, of the 16 million non-college-educated workers with skills for high-wage work (> twice median earnings), 11 million whom we term "Rising STARS" are currently employed in middle- to low-wage work. We propose a general taxonomy for STARS to identify potential job transitions to higher wage work within their current earnings category and across earnings categories.

2. "Why Don't Elite Colleges Expand Supply?" (joint w/ Kent Smetters, Wharton)

Abstract: While college enrollment has more-than doubled since 1970, elite colleges have only slightly increased supply, instead reducing admit rates. We show that straightforward reasons cannot explain this behavior. We propose a model where colleges compete on prestige, measured as relative (1) selectivity or (2) admit rates. Higher demand decreases [increases] the admit rate if the weight on prestige is above [below] a critical value, consistent with experience in elite [non-elite] colleges. The calibrated model closely replicates the data while counter-factual simulations without prestige fail. The "prestige externality" is Pareto inefficient, with schools and students worse off, producing large welfare losses.

3. "The Effect of (Un)Imposed Labor Market Flexibility on Gender Wage Gaps" (joint w/ Ben Posmanick, Clemson)

Abstract: We document the unconditional gender wage gap between women and men in part-time work from 1976-2016. During this time, the part-time gender wage gap is

consistently smaller than the full-time gender wage gap by 10-20 percentage points. This fact, which is robust to controlling for observable worker characteristics and to instrumenting for female labor supply using state-variation in tax rates, supports the Goldin (2014) hypothesis that labor market flexibility reduces labor market inequality. By contrast, we show that the imposing labor market flexibility through federal and state-mandated family and medical leave laws, slowed gender wage convergence for women.

Works in Progress

1. Federal Funding Premia for Elite Universities (w/ Salman Khan)
2. Occupational Licensing in the Digital Economy (w/Mischa Fisher)

INVITED TALKS/CONFERENCES (INCLUDING SCHEDULED)

2020: Harvard (Kennedy School of Government), MIT, Duke, NBER Summer Institute (Urban Economics), Harvard (Law), Brown, American University, UVA, UC Irvine, Econometric Society World Congress (Milan, Italy), Sant'Anna School of Advance Studies (Pisa, Italy), Western Economic Association, Midwestern Economic Association, Nigeria National Internship Conference.

2019: Harvard (Economics), Stanford (Education), NBER (Labor Studies), NBER (Public Economics), University of Chicago (HCEO), Stanford (SITE Conference), Brookings (Economics), Brookings (Future of Middle Class Initiative), University of Wisconsin-Madison (Economics), University of Wisconsin-Madison (Institute on Poverty Research), National University of Singapore, University of Missouri, Michigan State University, De La Salle University (Manilla, Philippines), Bank of Mexico (Mexico City, Mexico), AEA Annual Meeting, University of Nebraska, Boston University, Southern Economic Association, Sant'Anna School of Advance Studies (Pisa, Italy)

2018: Harvard, Stanford, Columbia, Brown, Cornell, LSE, Federal Reserve Board, Federal Trade Commission, University of Memphis, Bowdoin, University of Bonn (Germany), Population Association of America Annual Meeting, Society of Labor Economist Conference (Toronto, Canada), AEA Annual Meeting, Advances in the Field, Urban Economics Association, NBER Summer Institute, Federal Reserve Bank of Chicago, Southern Economic Association

2017: NBER Labor Studies Fall Meeting, Southern Economic Association, North American Regional Science Conference (Vancouver, Canada), University of the Bahamas, 7th European Meeting of the Urban Economics Association (Copenhagen, Denmark), Collegio Carlo Alberto (Turin, Italy), South Carolina Applied Micro Day

2016: AEA Annual Meeting, Southern Economic Association Conference, University of Chicago, West Point Military Academy, Georgia State University, South Carolina Applied Micro Day, Clemson Public Workshop, Clemson Jr. Faculty Workshop

2015: Clemson, Federal Reserve Bank (Cleveland), MIT, Emory, Purdue, Swarthmore, NASRC Annual Conference (Washington, DC), Lovely Professional University (Jalandhar, India)

2014: Wharton Applied Economics Faculty Seminar, NASRC Annual Conference (Washington, DC)

2013: University of Chicago (MIP Conference on Segregation), Tax Reform Symposium (Nassau, Bahamas)

2012: University of Chicago (Summer School on Inequality), Korean Military Academy, Lovely Professional University (Jalandhar, India)

2011: University of the West Indies (SALISES), Central Bank of Barbados, Bank of Jamaica

2010: Caribbean Science Foundation (Trinidad)

WORKSHOP & CONFERENCES ATTENDED (INCLUDING SCHEDULED)

2019: NBER Education

2018: NBER Labor Studies Spring & Fall, NBER Children's & Education Spring & Fall, NBER Summer Institute

2017: NBER Education Spring Meeting, NBER Labor Studies Fall Meeting, NBER Summer Institute

2016: NBER Summer Institute

2015: NBER Public Fall Meeting

2014: Handbook of Regional and Urban Economics Conference

2013: Price Theory Workshop, Wharton IDDEAS Minority Recruitment Workshop (Mentor)

2012: Summer School on Socioeconomic Inequality, Institute on Behavioral Economics (Singapore)

2010: Advances with Field Experiments, PIER Conference on Political Economics

TEACHING

2018-Present: Economics of Education through the Lens of Race & Inequality (A206)

How is the Future of Work Shaping the Future of Education? (T022)

2015-2018: Economics of Race (Ph.D. course), The Economics of Education

SERVICE

2019-2020: PhD Steering Committee, Comprehensive Exam Grader, Comprehensive Exam Writer, Masters Advising (12 students), PhD Advising, Informal PhD Advising, Colloquium, Dissertation Reader (3), RSI Scholars Mentor, PhD Exe

2018-2019: PhD Steering Committee, Masters Admissions, Comprehensive Exam (Alternate Grader), PhD Advising, Master's Advising (12 students), Informal PhD Advising, Colloquium, Dissertation Reader (1)

2015-2018: Job Search Committee, PhD Advising, Social Committee, Colloquium, Black Girls Golf Faculty Advisor, Masters Dissertation Committee

STUDENT PLACEMENT

Elijah Neilson, Assistant Professor, Southern Utah State University (2020)

Benjamin Posmanick, Assistant Professor, St. Bonaventure (2020)

Kenneth Whaley, Economist, Caterpillar Research (2020)

Bobby Chung, Postdoctoral Fellow, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (2020)

REFEREE

Quarterly Journal of Economics, American Economic Review, Review of Black Political Economy, Journal of Human Resources, Journal of Public Economics, Management Science, Journal of Policy Analysis and Management, Eastern Economic Journal, Sir John Templeton Foundation.

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

American Economic Association

Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Global Working Group

National Bureau of Economic Research

National Economic Association

Society of Labor Economists,

Urban Economics Association

LANGUAGES

French (fluent), Haitian Creole (conversational)