

# PETER Q. BLAIR

Harvard University, Graduate School of Education  
13 Appian Way, Cambridge, MA 02138  
pqblair@gmail.com · 617-458-6010 · [www.peterqblair.com](http://www.peterqblair.com)

---

## Employment

**Harvard University**, Assistant Professor in Graduate School of Education, Fall 2018.

**Clemson University**, Assistant Professor of Economics, Fall 2015-Summer 2018.

## Education Experience

**PhD in Applied Economics**, *Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania* (2015)

**MSc in Physics**, *Harvard University* (2008)

**BSc in Physics and Mathematics**, *Duke University, Magna Cum Laude* (2006)

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

## Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships

|      |  |
|------|--|
| 2019 | Stanford Center on Poverty and Inequality Scholar-in-Residence   |
| 2018 | Dean's Distinguished Lecture Harvard University<br>NBER Faculty Research Fellow<br>NBER Summer Institute (Presenter)<br>Society of Labor Economics Best Poster |
| 2017 | NBER Labor Studies Program Fall Meeting (Presenter)<br>Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Working Group Faculty Affiliate                                  |
| 2013 | Harvey Fellowship  |
| 2011 | NSF Graduate Research Fellowship<br>Amy Morse Prize<br>Lauder Ciber Travel Grant<br>Fontaine Society Travel Grant  |
| 2010 | Wallace Noyes Fellowship   |
| 2006 | Rhodes Scholarship (Finalist)<br>Graduate Prize Fellowship (Harvard)<br>University Seal Bearer at Graduation (Duke)<br>Bell Labs Graduate Research Fellowship  |
| 2005 | Barry Goldwater Scholarship  |
| 2004 | Mellon Mays Fellowship   |

## Submitted Papers

1. *“Job Market Signaling through Occupational Licensing,”* (joint w/ Bobby Chung, Clemson)  
NBER Working Paper No. 24791

**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. *How Much of Barrier to Entry is Occupational Licensing?* (joint w/ Bobby Chung, Clemson)  
*Revise and Resubmit*

**Abstract:** We exploit state variation in licensing laws to study the effect of licensing on occupational choice using a boundary discontinuity design. We find that licensing reduces equilibrium labor supply by an average of 17%-27%. The negative labor supply effects of licensing appear to be strongest for white workers and comparatively weaker for black workers.

3. *“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% (1970) to 42% (2010). The corresponding MSA tipping points have also increased from 13% (1970) to 35% (2010). While tipping points are traditionally associated with the racial attitudes of white households, I find that cross-sectional differences in MSA tipping points, going 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)

4. *“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 an 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.

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 2%-3% 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. *“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.

2. *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.

3. *“Unilateral Divorce Laws Reduce the College Attainment of Whites but not Blacks” (joint w/ Elijah Neilson, Clemson)*

**Abstract:** During the 1970's thirty US states replaced mutual consent divorce laws with unilateral divorce laws that allowed for either spouse to initiate divorce proceedings. The change from a mutual consent to unilateral divorce regime redefined property rights within marriages and changed the incentives for women and men to invest in human capital. Exploiting the variation across states and over time in the adoption of unilateral divorce laws, we show that white males and white females are less likely to report having a bachelor's degree or higher in states that adopted unilateral divorce laws. This distortion of the human capital decision only 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.

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.

### **Works in Progress**

1. *“The Effect of Decentralized Racial Preferences on Segregation” (joint w/ Patrick Bayer, Duke)*
2. *“Estimating the Causal Effect of School Funding on the Neighborhood Choices of Households” (joint w/ Kenneth Whaley, Clemson)*
3. *“Using the Moving To Opportunity Experiment to Assess the Validity of Non-experimental Instruments for House Prices.”*
4. *“Why are Distinctively Black Names Associated with Positive Outcomes for Blacks in the Pre-Civil Rights Era and associated with negative outcomes for Blacks in the Post-Civil Rights Era?” (joint with Jhacova Williams, LSU)*
5. *“The Effect of Merit-based Aid on Student Outcomes in India” (joint w/ Smriti Bhargava, Clemson)*
6. *“Federal Funding Premia for Elite Universities” (joint w/ Michael Dinerstein, UChicago)*
7. *“The Effect of Financial Incentives on Research Output of Faculty: Evidence from India”*

### **Invited Talks/Conferences (including scheduled)**

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

**Workshops Attended**

2018: NBER Labor Studies Spring Meeting, NBER Children's & Education Spring Meeting  
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**

Economics of Race (PhD course), The Economics of Education (Masters and Undergraduate course)

**Referee:** *Quarterly Journal of Economics, Journal of Public Economics, Management Science, Review of Black Political Economy, Eastern Economic Journal, John Templeton Foundation*

**Professional Associations:** American Economic Association, Society of Labor Economists, National Economic Association, Urban Economics Association, Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Global Working Group, National Bureau of Economic Research

**Languages:** French (fluent), Haitian Creole (conversational)



