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Education

University of Chicago , Ph.D. in Economics	2020–2026
Harvard University , B.A. in Applied Mathematics in Economics, Cum Laude in Field	2018

References

Professor John List (Chair) University of Chicago Kenneth C. Griffin Department of Economics jlist@uchicago.edu	Professor Michael Dinerstein Duke University Department of Economics michael.dinerstein@duke.edu
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Research and Teaching Fields

Primary:	Labor Economics
Secondary:	Economics of Education, Experimental Economics

Job Market Paper

What Do Blind Evaluations Reveal? How Discrimination Shapes Representation and Quality

Abstract: *Concealing candidate identities during evaluations (“blinding”) is often proposed to combat discrimination. I study how blinding affects the composition and quality of selected candidates, and the forms of discrimination driving effects. I implement a field experiment with an academic conference, running each submitted paper through blind and non-blind review, and collecting proxies of paper quality—citations and publication statuses five years later. I find that blinding significantly reduces gaps in reviewer scores and acceptances by student status and institution rank, with no significant changes by gender. However, blinding does not lead to selecting lower-quality papers. To understand mechanisms, I elicit reviewer predictions of future submission outcomes in a second experiment and estimate a model of reviewer scores that decomposes non-blind disparities into distinct forms of discrimination: accurate and inaccurate statistical discrimination, considerations of alternative objectives (such as favoring authors who may benefit more from acceptance, or benefit others), and bias. I find that the nature of discrimination differs by trait: student score gaps are attributable to (mis)perceptions of paper quality and pursuit of alternative objectives, while institution rank gaps are consistent with bias.*

Publications

Measuring Racial Educational Disparities Over Time Amongst Top Achievers (with Udit Karna, Andrew Simon, Min Sok Lee, and John List), *Nature*, 2025

Abstract: Educational disparities remain a key contributor to increasing social and wealth inequalities. To address this, researchers and policymakers have focused on average differences between racial groups or differences among students who are falling behind. This focus potentially leads to educational triage, diverting resources away from high-achieving students, including those from racial minorities. Here we focus on the ‘racial excellence gap’—the difference in the likelihood that students from racial minorities (Black and Hispanic) reach the highest levels of academic achievement compared with their non-minority (white and Asian) peers. There is a shortage of evidence that systematically measures the magnitude of the excellence gap and how it evolves. Using longitudinal, statewide, administrative data, we document eight facts regarding the excellence gap from third grade (typically ages 8–9) to high school (typically ages 14–18), link the stability of excellence gaps and student backgrounds, and assess the efficacy of public policies. We show that excellence gaps in maths and reading are evident by the third grade and grow slightly over time, especially for female students. About one third of the gap is explained by a student’s socioeconomic status, and about one tenth is explained by the school environment. Top-achieving racial minority students are also less likely to persist in excellence as they progress through school. Moreover, state accountability policies that direct additional resources to reduce non-race-based inequality had minimal effects on the racial excellence gaps. Documenting these patterns is an important step towards eliminating excellence gaps and removing the ‘racial glass ceiling’.

Working Papers

Minimum Wage and Racial Discrimination in Hiring: Theory and Evidence from a Field Experiment (with Alec Brandon, Justin Holz, Andrew Simon)

2nd round of revisions at *American Economic Journal: Applied Economics*

Abstract: When minimum wages increase, firms may respond by substituting away from disadvantaged workers. We test this hypothesis using a correspondence study with 35,000 applications around ex-ante uncertain minimum wage increases in three U.S. states. Before the increases, applicants with distinctively Black names were 18 percent less likely to receive a callback than equivalent applicants with distinctively white names. Announcements of minimum wage hikes substantially reduced callbacks for all applicants but shrunk the racial callback gap by 80 percent. The effects are only partially explained by changes in firm composition, suggesting that minimum wage hikes also reduce discriminatory hiring.

Resources or Rewards? The Impact of School District Funding and Incentives on Student Outcomes (with Clara Kyung)

Abstract: School funding reforms and test-based accountability are ubiquitous policy levers in the US, but their efficacy in improving student outcomes remains contested. We study the impacts of a statewide education reform in Texas that (1) changed the formula that links school district characteristics to funding and, in a novel shift from test-based accountability, (2) introduced financial bonuses for districts based on high school graduates’ attainment outcomes, including college enrollment and attainment of an industry-based certification. We construct simulated instruments that isolate policy-driven, between-district changes in (1) per-pupil spending driven by the funding formula change and (2) incentives to improve attainment outcomes due to the bonus policy. We find that both increases in spending and incentives improve the composite attainment measure targeted by the incentive policy. These gains are driven by industry-based certifications, with little effect on college enrollment. When scaled by government cost, incentives yield comparable increases in the composite attainment outcome at a lower cost than funding increases. Neither district spending nor incentives affect the share of 12th graders who are employed or enrolled in a two- or four-year college one year after graduation, but incentives increase

annual earnings among students who do not enroll in college. However, we document an unintended consequence of the incentive structure: by tying rewards to graduates' outcomes, the policy inadvertently incentivized districts to retain 12th graders who were unlikely to meet the attainment criteria, reducing graduation rates and increasing dropout rates. In contrast, funding changes generate little change in graduation and dropout.

Five Facts About the First-Generation Excellence Gap (with Udit Karna, Andrew Simon, John List)

Abstract: Parents are crucial to children's educational success, but the role of parental education in fostering academic excellence remains underexplored. Using longitudinal administrative data covering all North Carolina public school students, we document five facts about first-generation excellence gaps. We find large excellence gaps emerge by 3rd grade across all demographics and persist through high school. Yet, socioeconomic status and school quality explain only one-third of the gaps. The overarching facts reveal that excellence gaps reflect deeper challenges rooted in parental human capital that manifest early and compound over time, rather than merely consequences of socioeconomic disadvantage or school quality differences.

Here Today, Gone Tomorrow? Toward an Understanding of Fade-out in Early Childhood Programs (with John List)

Abstract: An unsettling stylized fact is that decorated early childhood education programs improve cognitive skills in the short-term, but lose their efficacy after a few years. We implement a field experiment with two stages of randomization to explore the underpinnings of the fade-out effect. We first randomly assign preschool access to children, and then partner with the local school district to randomly assign the same children to classmates throughout elementary school. We find that the fade-out effect is critically-linked to the share of classroom peers assigned to preschool access—with enough treated peers the classic fade-out effect is muted. Our results highlight a paradoxical insight: while the fade-out effect has been viewed as a devastating critique of early childhood programs, our results highlight that fade-out is a key rationale for providing early education to all children. This is because human capital accumulation is inherently a social activity, leading early education programs to deliver their largest benefits at scale when everyone receives such programs.

Using a Field Experiment to Understand Skill Formation in the Adolescence (with Juanna Joensen, John List, Anya Samek)

Work in Progress

Demand for Teachers and Courses: How Teacher Assignments Steer Student Decisions

Effects of Community College Advisors on Student Outcomes (with Rohen Shah)

Awards, Scholarships, and Grants

University of Chicago Provost Dissertation Fellowship	2025
Becker Friedman Institute Public Economics Initiative Grant	2025
Becker Friedman Institute Program in Behavioral Economics Grant	2025
Becker Friedman Institute Public Economics Initiative Grant	2024
UChicago Economics Department George S. Tolley Award for third-year paper	2023
University of Chicago Graduate Council Research Fund	2023
Becker Friedman Institute Political Economics Initiative Grant	2023
Association for Education Finance and Policy Roe L. Johns Student Travel Grant	2023

