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Nathaniel G. Hilger

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Professional Positions

Assistant Professor of Economics, Brown University	2013 –
Faculty Research Fellow, National Bureau of Economic Research	2015 –

Education

Ph.D. in Economics, Harvard University	2013
B.A., Economics, Stanford University, with Honors and Distinction	2004

Publications

“How Does Your Kindergarten Classroom Affect Your Earnings? Evidence from Project STAR.” With Raj Chetty, John Friedman, Emmanuel Saez, Diane Whitmore Schanzenbach and Danny Yagan. *Quarterly Journal of Economics* 126(4): 1593-1660, 2011.

Working Papers

“*The Great Escape: Intergenerational Mobility Since 1940*”

Abstract: Tax records indicate that intergenerational mobility (IM) has been stable for cohorts entering the labor market since the 1990s. I show that when using educational attainment as a proxy for adult income, stable IM is a new phenomenon: IM rose significantly for cohorts entering the labor market from 1940 to 1980. I measure IM directly in historical Census data for children still living with their parents at ages 22-25, and indirectly for other children using an imputation procedure that I validate in multiple data sets with parent-child links spanning the full 1940-2000 period. Post-war mobility gains were larger in the South and for blacks, and were driven by gains in high school rather than college enrollment. Controlling for region and year, states with higher IM have had lower income inequality, higher income levels, more educational inputs, higher minimum dropout ages, and lower teen birth rates. IM gains plausibly increased aggregate annual earnings growth by 0.125-0.25 percentage points over the 1940-1980 period.

“*Parental Job Loss And Children's Long-Term Outcomes: Evidence From 7 Million Fathers' Layoffs*”
(Under Review)

Abstract: How does parental job loss affect children's long-term outcomes? This question has important policy implications but has proven difficult to answer due to the endogeneity of parental layoffs. I address this problem by exploiting the timing of 7 million fathers' layoffs when children are age 12-29 in administrative data for the United States. While fathers' layoffs during adolescence dramatically reduce family income, they have only small adverse effects on college enrollment and quality, and no significant

effect on young adult earnings. Effects on college are largest for middle-income families and can be fully accounted for by predicted income losses from layoff. These small effects are fully consistent with observed patterns in parental college spending and financial aid. I also use the timing approach to assess the more common identification strategy of instrumenting for layoffs with firm closure. I find that firm closures generate much larger effects on all child outcomes, but these larger effects stem entirely from selection on unobservables into employment at closing firms.

“Why Don’t Consumers Trust Experts? Credence Goods with Unobserved Cost Functions”
(Revise and resubmit, Journal of Law and Economics)

Abstract: Credence goods such as health care require experts to diagnose and treat uninformed consumers. Mistreatment of consumers appears widespread empirically, but has resisted simple theoretical explanation. I derive equilibrium mistreatment in the model developed by Dulleck and Kerschbamer (2006) by relaxing the assumption that consumers observe expert cost functions. Credence goods with unobserved cost functions generalize Akerlof’s “lemons” model from one good to a menu of goods. Whereas lemons create foregone trade, credence goods create mistreatment. While pooling on product price eliminates foregone trade in lemon markets, only pooling on input prices eliminates mistreatment in credence good markets. The model also relates mistreatment to market characteristics in potentially testable ways.

Teaching

Inequality of Opportunity in the U.S. – Senior Seminar

Public Finance – Graduate

Public Finance – Undergraduate

Previous Employment

Federal Reserve Bank of New York Research Group, Research Assistant 7/04 – 10/06

Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships

Dissertation Completion Fellowship	2011
Justice, Welfare, and Economics Dissertation Fellowship	2010
National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship	2007 – 2009
Firestone Award for Undergraduate Research	2004
Phi Beta Kappa	2004

Professional Activities

Affiliations: Brown Population Studies and Training Center, NBER

Referee: *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *American Economic Review*, *Journal of Political Economy*, *American Economic Journal – Economic Policy*, *American Economic Journal – Applied Economics*, *Journal of Public Economics*, *Journal of Health Economics*, *Journal of Human Resources*, *Journal of Policy Analysis and Management*, *Economics of Education Review*, *Journal of Law and Economics*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*

Presentations: UC Berkeley, NBER Education, NBER Labor Studies, NBER Summer Institute Labor Session, Public Economics United Kingdom, Harvard Workshops in Labor Economics, Organizational Economics, and Econometrics, Harvard Public Finance Seminar, Brown Applied Microeconomics Seminar,

Developing Standards in Benefit-Cost Analysis Conference, Bright Beginnings Education Policy Conference, Northeastern Educational Research Association Annual Conference, UC Santa Cruz, Kellogg School of Management – Management and Strategy Group, Mathematica, Consumer Financial Protection Bureau, American Economics Association meetings