

# JOHN ERIC HUMPHRIES

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## EMPLOYMENT

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Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Yale University 2018 – present

Cowles Postdoctoral Fellow, Department of Economics, Yale University 2017 – 2018

## EDUCATION

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Ph.D., Economics, The University of Chicago, 2017

- References: James J. Heckman, Magne Mogstad, Erik Hurst

B.A., Economics, The University of Chicago, 2009

## RESEARCH FIELDS

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Primary fields: Labor Economics, Economics of Education.

Secondary fields: Applied Microeconomics, Self-Employment.

## PUBLICATIONS

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Journal Articles:

- “Returns to Education: The Causal Effects of Education on Earnings, Health, and Smoking” (with James J. Heckman and Gregory Veramendi), *Journal of Political Economy*, 126, (2018): S197-S246.
- “The Nonmarket Benefits of Education and Ability” (with James J. Heckman and Gregory Veramendi), *Journal of Human Capital*, 12(2), (2018): 282-304.
- “On the Interpretation of Non-cognitive Skills - what is being measured and why it matters” (with Fabian Kosse), *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, 136, (2017): 174-185.
- “What Do Grades and Achievement Tests Measure” (with Lex Borghans, Bart H. H. Golsteyn, and James J. Heckman), *Proceedings of the National Academy of Science*, 113(45), (2016).
- “Dynamic Treatment Effects” (with James J. Heckman and Gregory Veramendi), *Journal of Econometrics*, 191(2), (2016): 276-292.
- “Taking the Easy Way Out: How the GED Testing Program Induces Students to Drop Out” (with James J. Heckman, Paul A. Lafontaine, and Pedro L. Rodriguez), *Journal of Labor Economics*, 30(3), (2012): 495-520.

- “Identification Problems in Personality Psychology” (with Lex Borghans, Bart H. H. Golsteyn, and James J. Heckman), *Personality and Individual Differences*, 51, (2011): 315-320.
- “Design and Implementation of a Privacy Preserving Electronic Health Record Linkage Tool in Chicago.” (with Abel N. Kho, John P. Cashy, Kathryn L. Jackson, Adam R. Pah, Satyender Goel, Jörn Boehnke, Scott Duke Kominers, Bala N. Hota, Shannon A. Sims, Brad A. Malin, Dustin D. French, Theresa L. Walunas, David O. Meltzer, Erin O. Kaleba, Roderick Jones, and William L. Galanter), *Journal of the American Medical Informatics Association*, 22(5), (2015): 1072-1080.

#### Books:

- *The Myth of Achievement Tests, The GED and the Role of Character in American Life* (edited with James J. Heckman and Tim Kautz), The University of Chicago Press (2014).

#### Book Chapters:

- “The GED” (with James J. Heckman and Nicholas S. Mader), *Elsevier: Handbook of Economics of Education*, Volume 3, (2011): 423-483.
- “Growth in GED Testing,” in *The Myth of Achievement Tests, The GED and the Role of Character in American Life* (editors: James J. Heckman, John Eric Humphries, and Tim Kautz), The University of Chicago Press (2014): 109-136.
- “The Economic and Social Benefits of GED Certification” (with James J. Heckman and Tim Kautz), in *The Myth of Achievement Tests, The GED and the Role of Character in American Life* (editors: James J. Heckman, John Eric Humphries, and Tim Kautz), The University of Chicago Press (2014): 171-267.
- “Who Are the GEDs” (with James J. Heckman and Tim Kautz), in *The Myth of Achievement Tests, The GED and the Role of Character in American Life* (editors: James J. Heckman, John Eric Humphries, and Tim Kautz), The University of Chicago Press (2014): 139-170.
- “The GED Testing Program Induces Students to Drop Out” (with James J. Heckman, Paul A. Lafontaine, and Pedro L. Rodriguez), in *The Myth of Achievement Tests, The GED and the Role of Character in American Life* (editors: James J. Heckman, John Eric Humphries, and Tim Kautz), The University of Chicago Press (2014): 293-317.
- “What Should Be Done?” (with James J. Heckman and Tim Kautz), in *The Myth of Achievement Tests, The GED and the Role of Character in American Life* (editors: James J. Heckman, John Eric Humphries, and Tim Kautz), The University of Chicago Press (2014): 431-435.

- “The Causes and Consequences of Self-Employment over the Life Cycle”  
[[latest draft](#)]

This paper uses population panel data from Sweden to investigate the causes and consequences of self-employment over the life cycle, and to evaluate how self-employment decisions can be influenced by policy. In the first part of the paper, I use machine learning methods to summarize the patterns of self-employment behavior observed in the data. I find that careers involving self-employment fit into a small number of economically distinct groups. Some self-employment spells are short, with minimal capital investment and rapid return to paid employment, while others persist and have substantial capital devoted to the business from the outset. Guided by these descriptive results, I develop and estimate a dynamic Roy model in which self-employment decisions depend on factors such as cognitive and non-cognitive skills, prior work experience, the cost of capital, and other labor market opportunities. The model integrates traditional models of dynamic career choice that feature human capital investment and models of business start-up that feature physical capital investment. I estimate the model and use it to evaluate policies designed to promote self-employment. Cognitive and non-cognitive skills, education, and prior work experience are important determinants of the types of businesses individuals start, how much capital they employ, and how long they remain in self-employment. Subsidies that incentivize self-employment are generally ineffective, both in terms of promoting long-lasting firms and in terms of improving the welfare and earnings of those induced to enter self-employment.

- “Does Eviction Create Poverty? Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Cook County, IL” (with Nicholas Mader, Daniel Tannenbaum, and Winnie van Dijk).

In Cook County, IL, more than 35,000 eviction cases appear before the circuit court every year, the majority involving tenants from the poorest areas in Chicago. Prior research suggests that eviction may not only be a symptom of poverty but may, in fact, cause or exacerbate poverty by contributing to circumstances that are adverse to economic mobility. Yet those facing eviction are likely to have recently faced negative economic shocks, which makes establishing the proposed causal relationship difficult. This paper proposes the first quasi-experimental design for evaluating the causal impact of eviction on employment, social, and schooling outcomes. Using over 400,000 eviction case histories, our research design leverages Cook County’s random assignment of eviction court cases to judges, where some judges are more lenient than others. This provides a source of exogenous variation in eviction outcomes, allowing us to study the effect of eviction on a wide range of short- and long-run household outcomes associated with poverty. *[This project has been selected as part of the “Using Linked Data to Advance Evidence-Based Policy making” initiative in partnership with the Census Bureau and the Arnold Foundation to facilitate policy evaluation through linking records to Census Bureau micro-data.]*

- “Complementarities in High School and College Investments” (with Juanna Joensen and Greg Veramendi). [[latest draft](#)]

The process of skill specialization starts before college, with different skills affecting students’ choice of major and later labor market returns. This paper studies the role of multi-dimensional ability and high school track choices in college preparedness and labor market outcomes. We do so by estimating a sequential choice model of education using Swedish administrative data. Individuals sort at each stage based on prior choices and three dimensions of ability: cognitive, interpersonal, and grit. We find strong absolute and differential sorting on abilities in both high school and college choices. Both abilities and high school track choices are important determinants of college enrollment, college major choice, college graduation, and labor market outcomes. The labor market returns to abilities and high school track choices vary considerably by degree and major. Not accounting for multidimensional abilities and high school choices can overstate the role of preferences and understate selection on gains and the heterogeneous returns to different abilities across different college majors. While high school track choices tend to exacerbate inequality, we show that policies encouraging students to take more challenging high school tracks can help ameliorate it.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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### Instructor:

- Econometrics and Data Science I (B.A.), Yale University (spring 2018)
- Computational Methods in Economics (B.A.), The University of Chicago (spring 2014, spring 2015).
- Practical Computing for Economists (co-teaching, Ph.D.), The University of Chicago (spring 2014, winter 2015, winter 2016).
- Research Experience for Undergraduates (co-teaching, B.A.), The University of Chicago (summer 2014, summer 2015, summer 2016, summer 2017).

### Teaching Assistant:

- Price Theory I & II (Becker and Murphy, Ph.D.), The University of Chicago (fall 2013, winter 2014).
- Price Theory (Murphy, Ph.D.), University of Chicago (fall 2014).
- The Origins & Consequences of Inequality (Heckman, Ph.D.), The University of Chicago (winter 2014).
- Microeconomics (Stole, Executive MBA), The University of Chicago Booth School of Business (summer 2014).
- Microeconomics (Gibbs, Executive MBA), The University of Chicago Booth School of Business (summer 2014).
- Honors Workshop in Economics (Lima and Tsiang, B.A.), The University of Chicago (2016).

## GRANTS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

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- National Science Foundation Award SES-1757186 (2018).
- Merton J. Peck Prize for excellence in undergraduate teaching (2018).
- Review of Economic Studies Tour (2017).
- Theodore W. and Esther Schultz Economic Fellowship (2016-2017).
- Bradley Fellowship for Meritorious and Promising Graduate Students, The University of Chicago (2015).
- Outstanding Graduate Lecturer for an Economics Topics Course Award, The University of Chicago (2015).
- Finalist for the University of Chicago's Excellence in Course Design Award, The University of Chicago (2014).
- Division of the Social Sciences Summer Research Grant, The University of Chicago (2013).
- National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellow (2012-2015).
- Division of the Social Sciences Fellowship, The University of Chicago (2011-2012, 2015-2016).
- The Lawrence G. Goldberg Honors Prize for Undergraduate Research in Economics, The University of Chicago (2009).

## ACADEMIC ACTIVITIES

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### Invited Seminars:

- 2018 (incl. scheduled): CESifo; McGill University; New York University; University of Michigan; University of Oslo.
- 2017: Brown University; Cornell University; Duke University; Harvard Business School; Microsoft Research; Northwestern University; Princeton University; Rochester University; Stanford Graduate School of Business; University College London; The University of Chicago; The University of Chicago Booth School of Business; University of Wisconsin; Yale University.
- 2016: IZA at University of Bonn; The University of Chicago; ZEW at Mannheim University.

### Conferences and Workshops:

- National Tax Association annual meetings (2018)
- APPAM annual meetings (2018)
- Urban Economics Association Meeting (2018)
- 30th year Anniversary Reunion of the Review of Economic Studies Tour Conference (2018)
- Society of Labor Economists Annual Meetings (2018)
- 3rd Annual Empirical Microeconomics Conference at Arizona State University (2018)
- Japanese-American-German Kavli Frontiers of Science Symposium (2017)
- Workshop on Human Capital and Public Policy; Stockholm School of Economics; co-organizer (2017)
- Review of Economic Studies Tour (2017)
- IZA workshop: Education Interventions and Experiments; University of Bonn (2016)
- ZEW Summer Workshop; Mannheim University (2016)

### Refereeing:

American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, American Economic Review, Demography, Econometrica, Economics of Education Review, Industrial Relations, Journal of Applied Econometrics, Journal of Labor Economics, Journal of Labor Research, Journal of Political Economy, Journal of Public Economics, Labour Economics, Oxford Economic Papers, Review of Economic Studies, Sage Open, Scandinavian Journal of Economics, Quarterly Journal of Economics.

### Affiliations:

- CESifo Research Network Affiliate, University of Munich, 2018 – present
- Member of the Human Capital and Economic Opportunity “Inequality: Measurement, Interpretation, and Policy” working group (MIP).