

Dissertation Abstract

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Does an intra-household flypaper effect exist? Evidence from the education fee reduction reform in rural China (Job market paper)

Abstract:

This paper is the first to show the existence of an intra-household flypaper effect in conditional cash transfer programs in developing countries. I evaluate the impact of recent education fee reductions in rural China on different categories of household expenditures, including spending on individual children. Using data from waves of the Gansu Survey of Children and Families that pre- and post-dated the reform, I exploit cohort comparisons, the variation in the extent of education fee reductions across different villages, and the variation in the transfers received by children enrolled in different grades within the same family to identify the impacts of the reform. I find that a one *Yuan* increase in the individual intended transfer from the reform leads to 0.448 *Yuan* decrease in the individual required education expenditure, but leads to a 0.519 *Yuan* increase in the individual voluntary education expenditure. But there is no significant impact on household total income per capita, total expenditure per capita, and other categories of expenditures, including expenditure on food, non-food consumption and service, and health care. Households with more educated mother spend more of the benefits on voluntary educational expenditures, and more is spent on education of girls, older kids and kids enrolled in middle schools.

Famine, fertility, and fortune in China

Abstract:

In this paper, I investigate the long-term effects of China's Great Famine of 1959-1961, exploiting the interaction of cohort variation in exposure to the famine and geographic variation in famine's severity. I provide a conceptual framework to demonstrate how different selections in response to the famine may bias estimates and then deal with the problem empirically. Using China's 2000 population census data, I find that, women exposed to famine with 10% higher death rate than normal year in the first year of life completed 0.024 fewer years of schooling, had 0.54 percent point lower probability to complete high school, worked 0.014 fewer days per week, and lived in houses with 0.005 fewer rooms per capita and 0.199 square meters smaller housing area per capita. I do not find significant effects of the famine on men. I also do not find significant effects of experiencing famine in utero and in the second year. In addition, I find that, if not controlling for fertility selection in the famine, those negative effects become weaker. Finally, I provide evidence showing the existence of negative selection right after the famine.

Does school quality matter? A natural experiment in rural China (with Albert Park, Chang-tai Hsieh, and Xuehui An)

Abstract:

This paper investigates the impact of school quality on students' educational attainment using a regression discontinuity research design that compares students just above and below entrance examination score thresholds that strictly determine admission to the best high schools in China's rural counties. Using data from Gansu Province in China, we find that attending the best high school in one's county of residence decreases the probability to take college entrance examination by 14.9 percentage points, increases college entrance scores by 0.256 standard deviations and increases the probability of entering college by 22.5 percentage points. This paper is the first paper exploiting China's magnet school system and regression discontinuity design to exam the impacts of school quality on students' educational attainments.