

OFFICE CONTACT INFORMATION

MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-301
Cambridge, MA 02139
gkocks@mit.edu
<https://economics.mit.edu/people/phd-students/geoffrey-kocks>

MIT PLACEMENT OFFICER

Professor David Autor
dautor@mit.edu
617-253-4669

HOME CONTACT INFORMATION

100 Memorial Drive, Apt. 2-21B
Cambridge, MA 02142
Mobile: 810-908-1223

MIT PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATOR

Mrs. Shannon Robinson
shmay@mit.edu
617-324-5857

DOCTORAL STUDIES Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
PhD, Economics, Expected completion June 2026
DISSERTATION: "Essays on the Economics of Education"

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE AND REFERENCES

Professor Parag Pathak
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-426
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-7458
ppathak@mit.edu

Professor Joshua Angrist
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-436
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-8909
angrist@mit.edu

Professor Amy Finkelstein
MIT Department of Economics
77 Massachusetts Avenue, E52-442
Cambridge, MA 02139
617-253-4149
afink@mit.edu

PRIOR EDUCATION Brown University 2018
Bachelor of Science with Honors in Applied Mathematics-Economics
Bachelor of Arts in Hispanic Studies
Magna cum laude

CITIZENSHIP USA **GENDER:** Male

LANGUAGES English (fluent), Spanish (professional proficiency)

FIELDS Primary Fields: Labor, Education
Secondary Fields: Applied Econometrics, Health

MIT Economics

GEOFFREY KOCKS

SEPTEMBER 2025-- PAGE 2

TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Applied Econometrics (graduate and undergraduate, MIT course 14.387) Teaching Assistant to Professor Joshua Angrist (overall rating: 6.9/7.0)	2023
	Why is There No Cure for Health? (undergraduate, Harvard course GenEd 1079) Teaching Assistant to Professor David Cutler (overall rating: 4.8/5.0) <i>Harvard University Certificate of Distinction in Teaching</i>	2021
RELEVANT POSITIONS	Research Assistant for Professor Parag Pathak MIT Blueprint Labs	2020-23
	Full-Time Research Assistant for Professor Amy Finkelstein MIT	2018-20
	Research Assistant for Professor Emily Oster Brown University	2016-18
FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS	National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship (2022-2026) Center on Reinventing Public Education (CRPE) Post-Pandemic Recovery and Renewal Grant (2024-2025) MIT Integrated Learning Initiative (MITili) Learning Effectiveness Grant (2023-2024) NBER Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Identifying and Developing Mathematical Talent Among Youth (2023-2024) NBER Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Aging and Health Economics (2022-2023) MIT Castle Krob Fellow (2020-2022) Phi Beta Kappa (2018) Samuel Lamport Prize for Outstanding Honors Thesis in Economics (2018) Voss Undergraduate Research Fellowship: Institute at Brown for Environment and Society (2017)	
PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES	Referee: <i>AER: Insights</i> (Excellence in Refereeing Award 2021, 2022), <i>Journal of Population Economics</i>	
	Presentations: Junior Workshop in the Economics of Education, CESifo/ifo, Munich, 2025 AEFP Annual Conference, Baltimore, 2024 AEA CSQIEP PhD Student Conference, San Diego, 2024 AEFP Annual Conference, Denver, 2023 NBER Conference on Racial and Ethnic Health Disparities, Cambridge, 2023	

NBER Fall Education Program Meeting, Cambridge, 2022

Professional Affiliations:

US Census Bureau, Special Sworn Status

Service:

MIT Econ Application Assistance and Mentoring Program Mentor

MIT Undergraduate Research Opportunities Program Mentor

Math Tutor, Providence Public Schools

PUBLICATIONS

“Heterogeneity in Damages from a Pandemic” (with Amy Finkelstein, Maria Polyakova, and Victoria Udalova).

Review of Economics and Statistics, 2024.

Abstract: We use nationally-representative linked survey and administrative data to document socioeconomic and demographic disparities in the economic and health effects of the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States during its first two years. Impacts on all-cause mortality and on employment were concentrated in the same racial/ethnic, education, industry, and occupation groups. Black-White and Hispanic-White disparities in mortality impacts narrowed over the two years, but educational disparities persisted. For economic impacts, only Hispanic-White disparities narrowed. Lower-income individuals experienced greater mortality impacts and this gradient steepened in the second year. Our findings, using consistent methods and measures, highlight the pandemic's heterogeneous impacts.

“Racial Disparities in Excess All-Cause Mortality During the Early COVID-19 Pandemic Varied Substantially Across States” (with Maria Polyakova, Victoria Udalova, Katie Genadek, Keith Finlay, and Amy Finkelstein).

Health Affairs, 2021.

“Initial economic damage from the COVID-19 pandemic in the United States is more widespread across ages and geographies than initial mortality impacts” (with Marya Polyakova, Victoria Udalova, and Amy Finkelstein).

Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, 2020.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Job Market Paper: “Sorting or Supporting? The Effect of Gifted Education on Achievement and Access” (with Jimmy Chin)

Abstract: We study the impacts of New York City’s kindergarten gifted and talented (G&T) programs on achievement and access to elite secondary schools. We combine two research designs: a regression discontinuity at a qualifying exam cutoff and a lottery design arising from centralized assignment. The latter permits the identification of effects for students scoring above the cutoff. While G&T markedly changes the classroom environment, there is no impact on achievement using both empirical strategies, with precise and insignificant

effects smaller than 0.04σ when pooling the designs. In contrast, G&T boosts applications and enrollment in elite middle schools among lottery students. Effects on school access are largest among low-income students and those with the highest baseline abilities. We use our estimates to predict how a recent admissions reform that replaced the G&T entrance exam with teacher recommendations affects elite school access. The reform increased the share of low-income students in G&T from 22 to 28 percent. A structural model of G&T demand shows that it also decreased the mean baseline ability of enrollees. The decline in baseline ability outweighs the gains in low-income enrollment, lowering the average treatment effect on elite school access for G&T enrollees. We trace out a policy frontier, revealing that both admissions regimes are suboptimal. Alternative policies could simultaneously increase diversity and treatment effects on access.

“The Algorithm Advantage: Ranked Application Systems Outperform Decentralized and Common Applications in Boston and Beyond” (with Christopher Avery and Parag Pathak)

NBER Working Paper No. w34207

Abstract: School choice systems increasingly use common applications, where students can apply to multiple schools on a single form, though schools make admission decisions independently. We model three application systems: a common application, a decentralized system with costly separate applications, and a ranked-choice system using a matching algorithm. Our model shows that while a common application may expand access, it increases competition and may produce worse matches than a decentralized system where application costs encourage more selective applications. Ranked-choice systems combine reduced application costs with preference-based matching that reduce mismatches. We examine these predictions by analyzing how Boston's charter school sector was affected when it adopted an online common application. Counterfactual simulations suggest the common application performs no better than alternatives on several metrics and did little to increase access for disadvantaged groups. A ranked system consistently outperforms a common application across various levels of competition and assumptions on preference stability between application and enrollment stages.

“School Desegregation and Long-Run Health”

Abstract: I investigate the impact of court-ordered school desegregation that followed *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) on long-run health outcomes and behaviors among Black Americans. Using detailed survey data on adults older than 50 years old from the Health and Retirement Study and a difference-in-differences design, I find that desegregation improved self-reported health, preventive care use, and mortality decades later. I find no detectable changes in chronic conditions or unhealthy behaviors such as smoking and drinking. Across demographic subgroups, self-reported health improvements are related to desegregation's positive effects on racial integration and high school completion, but changes in preventive care and mortality are not. Therefore, while desegregation's consequences for educational attainment may have

facilitated improvements in some health outcomes, desegregation itself was also important for health, independent of its educational impacts.

**RESEARCH IN
PROGRESS**

“Massachusetts Charter School Recovery from Pandemic Learning Loss”

**“Algorithmic Assignment and Determinants of Teacher Retention:
Evidence from Teach for America”**

**“State-Level Charter School Policies and Effects on School Closures and
Student Achievement”** (with Yang Song)

**POLICY
WRITING**

“After a Debacle, How California Became a Role Model on Measles” (with
Emily Oster).

The New York Times, January 2018.