

# ROSS MATTHEIS

mattheis@g.harvard.edu

Cell 209-327-0116

ramattheis.github.io



# HARVARD UNIVERSITY

Littauer Center 228  
1805 Cambridge St  
Cambridge MA 02138

Placement Director: Jeremy Stein  
Placement Director: Gabriel Chodorow-Reich  
Administrative Director: Brenda Piquet

jeremy\_stein@harvard.edu 617-496-6455  
chodorowreich@fas.harvard.edu 617-496-3226  
bpiquet@harvard.edu 617-495-8927

**Academic Positions**    **Postdoctoral Fellow**  
Department of Economics, Harvard University, 2024-2025

**Education**    **Harvard University**  
Ph.D. Economics, 2024  
  
**University of California, Berkeley**  
B.A. Applied Math (with honors), 2018

**Fields**    Economic History, Labor Economics, Econometrics

**References**    Claudia Goldin    Isaiah Andrews  
cgoldin@harvard.edu    iandrews@mit.edu  
  
Lawrence Katz    Edward Glaeser  
lkatz@harvard.edu    eglaeser@harvard.edu

**Fellowships & Awards**    Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Harvard University, 2023-24  
Thomas Cochran Fellowship in Business and Economic History, Harvard University, 2021-22  
Certificate of Distinction in Teaching, Harvard University, 2020-23

**Teaching**    Natural Experiments (Sophomore Seminar), Harvard University, instructor, 2021-23  
Introduction to Econometrics, Harvard University, teaching fellow, 2020

**Job Market Paper**    *Spurious Mobility in Imperfectly Linked Historical Data*

When was the United States a land of opportunity? This paper revisits the history of intergenerational mobility in the US, accounting for the impact of imperfectly linked census data. Incorrectly linked observations typically attenuate ordinary least squares (OLS) estimates, such as the association of income ranks among fathers and sons. This attenuation exaggerates levels of mobility, as mobility is inversely related to the strength of the relationship between parents' and children's outcomes. I address bias due to imperfectly linked data from the perspective of nonclassical measurement error and propose a class of models for misclassification—error in discrete data—that rely on a repeated, conditionally independent measure of the misclassified variable. A natural source for such a repeated measure can be found by linking observations into an additional sample. In a validation exercise, the proposed estimator reduces bias by 50-90% relative to OLS, with a larger reduction in bias on more severely misclassified samples. After correcting for misclassification error, estimates of the rank-rank slope of occupation status for White men born between 1832 and 1910 are 50-100% higher than OLS estimates, depending on the cohort. Revised estimates suggest a U-shape pattern for intergenerational mobility in US history. Individuals born before the Civil War experienced levels of mobility comparable to the present, while those born between the Civil War and WWI—who entered the workforce during the highest levels of inequality in the US before the present—experienced lower levels of mobility than in any region in the US today.

<b>Working Papers</b>	<p><i>There's No Such Thing as Free Land: The Homestead Act and Economic Development</i>, with Itzhak Raz</p> <p>The 1862 Homestead Act provided free land conditional on five years of residency and cultivation to settlers of the American West. In total, the Act granted 10% of the land in the United States to 1.6 million individuals. This study examines the impact of the Act on long-run development. Using spatial regression discontinuity and instrumental variable designs, we find that areas with greater historical exposure to homesteading are poorer and more rural today. The impact on development is not only driven through differences in the urban share of the population; cities in homesteading areas are less developed and non-agricultural sectors are less productive. Using newly georeferenced historical census data, we document the path of divergence starting from the initial settlement. We find that homesteading regions were slower to transition out of agriculture. We hypothesize that the transitory distortions caused by the Act's residency and cultivation requirements increased settler turnover and slowed population growth. This, in turn, inhibited the development of non-agricultural sectors and the subsequent benefits of agglomeration.</p>
<b>Papers in Progress</b>	<p><i>Our Crowd? Intra-ethnic Frictions in the Economic Integration of Immigrants</i> with Sara Benetti and Elijah Locke</p> <p>How does the arrival of new waves of immigration affect the assimilation of earlier coethnic migrants? Larger group size may lower the incentive to assimilate with the majority (Lazear, 1999). Alternatively, incumbents may wish to differentiate themselves from newcomers in response to discrimination by the majority group. We address this question in the context of two waves of Jewish migration to the United States, which differed substantially along economic and cultural dimensions. The earlier group of Jewish migrants, arriving between 1840 and 1870, was predominantly German, religiously liberal, and experienced rapid upward mobility in the US. The latter wave, arriving between 1880 and 1914, was primarily from the Russian Empire, religiously Orthodox, and relatively poor and illiterate. Using burial records from a Jewish Genealogical site, we construct a new set of distinctively Jewish surnames to study the Jewish population in the US Census. To provide a richer picture of the cultural response, we digitize information from the American Jewish Yearbooks on Jewish institutions including religious schools, synagogues, clubs, and charities in the US between 1890 and 1927. In a staggered difference in differences design, we find evidence consistent with migration out of Jewish enclaves and greater rates of name Americanization in the German Jewish population after the arrival of Russian Jewish migrants. Stayers in the German Jewish population are more likely to retain distinctively Jewish first names and occupations, at rates that cannot be explained by selective migration alone, suggesting heterogeneous effects.</p>
<b>Other Research</b>	<p>Research Assistant, Harvard University, Claudia Goldin, 2019  Research Assistant, Harvard University, Melissa Dell, 2019</p>
<b>Seminars &amp; Conferences</b>	<p>NBER Summer Institute DAE virtual session, "Spurious Mobility", 2023  Association for the Study of Religion, Economics, and Culture, "Our Crowd?", 2023  LBS Trans-Atlantic Doctoral Conference, "There's No Such Thing as Free Land", 2021  Society for Institutional &amp; Organizational Economics, "There's No Such Thing as Free Land", 2021</p>
<b>Academic Service</b>	<p>Referee for: <i>Quarterly Journal of Economics</i>, <i>Journal of Political Economy</i>, <i>Journal of Urban Economics</i>, <i>Labour Economics</i></p> <p>Organized the Graduate Student Workshop in Economic History, Harvard University, 2021-2023</p>
<b>Research Grants</b>	<p>Research Grant, LEAP Program, Harvard University, (with Itzhak Raz) 2019</p>
<b>Other Service</b>	<p>Resident Co-Pizzaiole at Harvard Economics (with Aakaash Rao), 2020-present</p>