Jakina R. Debnam

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Education

Cornell University
Ph.D., Applied Economics, 2012 - 2018 (Expected).
Fields: Applied Microeconomics, Behavioral Economics, Public Policy
Committee: David R. Just (Chair), Dan Benjamin, Drew Margolin

Brown University
B.A., Applied Math - Economics, 2009.

Research & Teaching	2013 - Current	*Principal Investigator*; "Economic Experiments on Reactance" (IRB Protocol # 1310004203)
	2015-2017	*Instructor*; Graduate Mathematics Preparatory Course (Math Camp)
	2015	*Grader*; Empirical Strategies for Policy Analysis II (Professor Zhuan Pei)
	2014	*Graduate Research Assistant* (Professor David Just)
Presentations	2018	AEA Annual Meetings (scheduled), *Philadelphia, PA*
	2017	AEA Annual Meetings (x2), *Chicago, IL*; AEA Summer Mentoring Pipeline Conference, *Lansing, MI*; University of Georgia, *Athens, GA*
	2016	Southern Economic Association Annual Meetings, *Washington, D.C.*
	2015	George Mason University, Arlington, VA; AEA Annual Meetings, *Boston, MA*
	2014	International Conference of Graduate Students, *Nanjing, China*
Invited Conferences	2014-2017	NBER Summer Institute, Cambridge, Massachusetts
	2015	Making Markets Matter, Somerset West, South Africa
Professional Service	2016	Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, College of Business, Cornell University
	2015 - Current	AEA Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession Mentoring Program; Member: American Economic, American Agricultural Economics Associations
Referee Service		Labour Economics
Honors & Awards	2016	AEA Mentoring Program ($1,011); Conference Travel Grant, Cornell U ($235)
	2015	Recipient, Richard D. Aplin Teaching Excellence Fund ($500)
	2013	National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship
	2012	State of New York Diversity Fellowship ($43,700 X2)
Languages		STATA, R, Matlab
Personal		Citizenship: USA
Publications		Debnam, Jakina. "Selection Effects and Heterogeneous Demand Responses to the Berkeley Soda Tax Vote." *American Journal of Agricultural Economics* 99 (5): 1172-87. *(Job Market Paper 1 of 2)*
Working Papers		"Endogenous Responses to Paternalism: Examining Psychological Reactance in the Lab and the Field", with David R. Just *(Job Market Paper 2 of 2)*

Working Papers (cont.)

By accounting for limited human computational ability, willpower, and rationality within economic models, work in behavioral economics has highlighted the ways in which individuals' choices may systematically deviate from their own best interest. As a result, policymakers have considered any number of paternalistic policies (both overt taxes and restrictions, or more subtle "nudges") to move individuals closer to optimal outcomes. Much work, however, remains to characterize optimal design within this new class of policy instruments and to understand their aggregate impact. We present a theoretical framework of individual response to paternalistic interventions which considers, in addition to the set of behavioral responses explicitly incentivized by the policy, an additional behavioral outcome – the agent's impulse to re-establish whatever perceived choice set he had before the intervention occurred. We refer to this behavioral outcome as psychological reactance, a concept introduced by Brehm (1966). In support of this framework, we first provide evidence on the nature and magnitude of reactance responses from a laboratory experiment designed to measure response to paternalistic advertisements. We then present evidence of consumption responses to paternalistic advertisement in and around New York City during the policy debate surrounding then Mayor Bloomberg's proposed restrictions on sugary drink consumption within city limits (popularly referred to as a "soda ban"). Our findings support the existence of real interaction effects of paternalistic public policies.

"What Do Happiness Data Mean? Evidence from a Survey of the Respondents", with Daniel J. Benjamin, Marc Fleurbaey, Ori Heffetz, and Miles Kimball

With a specially designed survey, we examine how respondents understand the meaning of subjective well-being (SWB) survey questions, including commonly used measures of life satisfaction and happiness. In particular, we study how respondents identify the time frame of the questions and the components of their life that fall within the scope of the questions. We also study how respondents come up with a number on a bounded scale for rating their own SWB, and we investigate the reference points and reference distributions to which they compare their own situation. We devote particular attention to heterogeneity of these various aspects across respondents. Our results have implications for interpreting responses to SWB questions; in particular, our results shed light on the extent to which responses are interpersonally comparable.

"Peers and Persuasion Across Collegiate Social Networks"

Using a novel set of behavioral social network data which captures online "friendship", messaging, and academic outcomes from undergraduate students, I use exponential random graph modeling to estimate the role of sociodemographic characteristics – gender, race, first-generation status and citizenship – in peer network formation over time. I then use network characteristics and textual analysis to evaluate the consistency of undergraduate decision-making with prominent theories of information aggregation. Finally, I exploit plausibly exogenous variation in the number of messages received by undergraduate students to investigate the causal effects of information receipt on undergraduate decision-making.

Works in Progress

"Correcting Subjective Well-Being Measures for Cross-Sectional Difference in Scale Use", with Daniel J. Benjamin, Marc Fleurbaey, Ori Heffetz, Miles S. Kimball

Subjective well-being (SWB) measures are measured on numerical or verbal scales that may be interpreted differently by different respondents. This paper addresses how to correct SWB measures for cross-sectional differences in use of numerical scales when a numerical scale is also used for other questions for which cross-sectional differences in answers can be assumed to arise primarily (aside from i.i.d. differences) from differences in scale use. Regression results using scale-use-corrected SWB measures as the dependent variable are contrasted with results when regressing raw SWB measures on the same set of regressors.