

JAMES REISINGER

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Contact Information

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Undergraduate Studies:

BA, Political Science, Georgetown University, 2009

Graduate Studies:

MA, Economics, Barcelona Graduate School of Economics, 2014

Harvard University, 2016 to present

Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy (Economics track)

Thesis Title: “Social Spillovers in Beliefs, Preferences, and Well-being”

Expected Completion Date: May 2022

References:

Professor Michela Carlana
Harvard Kennedy School
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Professor Claudia Goldin
Harvard University
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Professor Matthew Rabin
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Teaching and Research Fields

Behavioral Economics, Political Economy, Labor Economics

Teaching Experience:

Fall 2019, 2020	Microeconomic Theory (MPP), Harvard Kennedy School, Head Teaching Fellow for Chris Avery
Spring 2019, 2020	Intro. to Econometrics (Undergraduate), Harvard University, Head Teaching Fellow for Greg Bruich
Fall 2018	Intro. to Econometrics (Undergraduate), Harvard University, Head Teaching Fellow for Jim Stock
Fall 2017	Econometrics 1 (PhD-level), Harvard University, Teaching Fellow for Steve Cicala

Research Experience and Other Employment:

2019-2020	Harvard University, RA for Matthew Rabin
2017-2018	Harvard University, RA for Michael Kremer and Gautam Rao
2014-2016	Princeton University, Research Specialist
2014-2016	Busara Center for Behavioral Economics, Senior Associate
2009-2013	Kaiser Associates (Management Consulting), Project Manager

Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships:

2021-2022	Harvard Dissertation Completion Fellowship
2017-2018	Harvard Mind, Brain, and Behavior Graduate Student Award
2016-2018	Harvard Graduate Fellowship

Research papers:

Southernization: The Long-Term Effect of Migration on Racial Prejudice and Political Preferences [Job market paper]

Abstract: Between 1940 and 1970, eight million white southerners left the US South and settled in states outside that region bringing with them their distinctive political preferences, religious practices, and racial attitudes. I demonstrate that their settlement had a large effect on the Republican vote share in northern and western counties even in the 2020 election, fully 50 years later. The political impact of these southern migrants was largely due to their adherence to evangelical Protestantism. I also show that the migration caused a long-lasting increase in anti-Black hate crimes and is reflected in measures of implicit and explicit racial bias of the white population. I obtain causal estimates of these effects through the use of a shift-share instrument to isolate plausibly exogenous variation in the southern push-factors that drove the migration. Importantly, I show using survey data that these effects partly operated through a spillover on non-southerners. The impact of southern migrants on the beliefs, actions, and politics of northern and western communities was not simply the result of a compositional change of the population.

Subjective Well-being and Social Desirability

Abstract: Survey measures of depression are increasingly used by economics researchers to provide a nuanced account of well-being. I show that levels of depression reported using such measures are significantly understated and levels of happiness significantly overstated in survey interviews conducted using a response mode that does not allow for anonymous reporting compared to a mode that does in three longitudinal surveys widely used in economics research. I exploit randomized assignment to survey mode, as well as panel methods, to show that this reflects the causal effect of survey mode, not selection. The difference in reported depression and happiness between modes is comparable to the difference between individuals in the 25th and 75th income percentiles. This finding suggests perceptions of social desirability may substantially bias measures of subjective well-being.

Is Your Gain My Pain? Effects of Relative Income and Inequality on Psychological Well-being [with Johannes Haushofer and Jeremy Shapiro]

Abstract: We test the causal effect of changes in own wealth, relative wealth, and inequality on psychological well-being and consumption by leveraging exogenous changes in household wealth, village mean wealth, and village inequality resulting from a randomized controlled trial of unconditional cash transfers in Kenya. We find that increases in own wealth lead to large and robust increases in well-being. Increases in neighbors' wealth, proxied by the mean wealth of a village, have a negative effect on

an index of psychological well-being variables. This effect is driven by a negative effect on life satisfaction; we find no effect of relative wealth on measures of happiness, depression, or stress. We also find suggestive evidence of a negative consumption response to increases in village mean wealth, though it is imprecisely estimated. Finally, we are able to speak to the casual effect of changes in overall comparison group inequality, holding constant an individual's rank within the group. We find that such changes in inequality have no effect on well-being or consumption.