

# Alexandra (Alex) Ballyk

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**Research Interests:** Experimental Economics, Behavioral Economics

## EDUCATION

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Ph.D. in Economics, University of Toronto 2025 (Expected)  
*Committee:* Yoram Halevy (supervisor), Tanjim Hossain, Anne-Katrin Roesler  
M.A in Economics, University of Toronto 2019  
B.A.&Sc. in Economics and Chemistry (Dean's Honor List), McGill University 2018

## RESEARCH

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**Paternalistic Persuasion** (Job Market Paper)  
**Gender Differences in Job Application Strategies: An Experimental Investigation**  
*with Annabel Thornton*  
**Preference Aggregation in Social Choice Under Risk**

## GRANTS AND AWARDS

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### Grants

UofT Economics Ph.D. Student Grant (\$7,139.50) 2024  
Institute for Gender and the Economy (GATE) Grant (\$5,000.00; with Annabel Thornton) 2023  
UofT Economics Ph.D. Student Grant (\$2,800.00) 2021

### Awards

Ontario Graduate Scholarship (\$15,000.00) 2024  
Ontario Graduate Scholarship (\$10,000.00 × 2) 2023, 2019  
Canada Graduate Scholarship - Master's (\$17,500.00) 2018  
Faculty of Arts and Sciences Graduate Admission Award (\$6,333.00) 2018  
Arts Research Internship Award (\$4,000.00) 2017  
Tomlinson Engagement Award for Mentoring (\$300.00 × 2) 2017, 2016  
J.W. McConnell Scholarship (\$3,000.00) 2014

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

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**Course Instructorships** 2022  
Applied Game Theory (ECO316)

**Teaching Assistantships** 2018 - present  
Behavioral and Experimental Economics (ECO438/1250, ECO421, ECO331)  
Game Theory (ECO326, ECO316)  
Intermediate Microeconomic Theory (ECO206, ECO204, ECO200)  
Principles of Microeconomics (ECO101)

**Research Assistantships** 2017-2021  
Shari Eli, Marlène Koffi and Aloysius Siow (University of Toronto)  
Yoram Halevy (University of Toronto)

Chris Barrington-Leigh (McGill University)

## CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS

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**2024:** GATE Research Roundtable, CIREQ Ph.D. Students' Conference, Canadian Economics Association Meetings, ESA World Meetings (accepted), ESA North American Meetings (scheduled)

**2023:** CIREQ Ph.D. Students' Conference, Canadian Economics Association Meetings

**2022:** Spring School in Behavioral Economics (poster)

## PROGRAMMING SKILLS

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**Programming Languages and Software:** Python, MATLAB, oTree, Stata

**Web Development:** HTML, CSS, JavaScript

## CITIZENSHIP AND LANGUAGES

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**Citizenship:** Canadian

**Languages:** English (native), French (fluent), Spanish (proficient)

## REFERENCES

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Yoram Halevy  
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**Paternalistic Persuasion** (Job Market Paper)

Paternalistic experts (“Advisors”) often seek to make decision-makers (“Choosers”) better off by persuading them to change their behavior. Given that Choosers may be unwilling to make certain behavioral changes, an optimal recommendation accounts for Choosers’ response to the recommended change. In a setting where Choosers are wary of recommenders’ incentives, I experimentally investigate whether Advisors send optimal recommendations and why they may fail to do so. I find that up to 79% of Advisors fail to send optimal recommendations. Instead, up to two-thirds send recommendations that would only be optimal if Choosers were required to follow them. When it comes to correcting this mistake, I show that prompting Advisors to think about Choosers’ likely response to a recommended change is much more effective than repeating the interaction and providing feedback about Choosers’ behavior. The initial mistake is thus consistent with a failure to focus on recommendations that Choosers are likely to accept.

**Gender Differences in Job Application Strategies: An Experimental Investigation**

*with Annabel Thornton*

Job-seekers may react strategically to their beliefs about a job opening’s “competitiveness”: the quantity and quality of people applying to it. We investigate how gender differences in such beliefs may make women less likely to apply for high-paying yet competitive jobs. We design a job application game where members of a group are either ranked randomly or based on their performance on a math and science test. Without knowing their rank, they select one of three “jobs”: two yield large payoffs to the best-ranked player who selects them, while the third guarantees a small payoff to all who select it. We find that willingness to apply to a job decreases in the perceived competitiveness of its applicant pool, but is more sensitive to the believed quality of the pool than the believed size thereof. Furthermore, gender differences in these beliefs create gaps in willingness to apply to the highest-paying competitive job. Our findings highlight when and how policies that reveal the competitiveness of a job’s applicant pool (e.g., by disclosing the current number of applications) may increase the proportion of qualified female applicants.

**Preference Aggregation in Social Choice Under Risk**

Many types of group leaders make “social choices”: choices that influence both their own and others’ welfare. This paper investigates whether and when decision-makers accommodate preferences that differ from their own when making social choices. I introduce an experimental framework that can answer these questions in two-person social choice problems, and apply it to study social choice under risk. I find that over one-third of decision-makers are willing to aggregate (i.e., accommodate) a recipient’s risk preferences. These decision-makers aggregate wide ranges of preferences, but tend to favour preferences that are similar to their own. Additional results suggest that recipients’ preferences carry the greatest weight when the decision-maker’s own preferences are incomplete.