

Canishk Naik

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FIELDS

Primary: Public Economics

Secondary: Psychology & Economics

EDUCATION

PhD Economics , LSE	2021 – present
Advisors: Johannes Spinnewijn, Nava Ashraf, Daniel Reck	
Visiting Research Fellow in Economics, Brown University	Spring 2022
MRes Economics <i>with Distinction</i> , LSE	2019 – 2021
MSc Applicable Mathematics <i>with Distinction</i> , LSE	2017 – 2018
BA Mathematics , University of Cambridge	2014 – 2017

WORKING PAPERS

“Mental Health and the Targeting of Social Assistance” (*Job Market Paper*)

People living with mental disorders are particularly vulnerable to needing income-support, but also find it difficult to overcome barriers to access. This paper investigates whether social assistance effectively reaches people with poor mental health. I develop a theoretical framework showing that average take-up levels combined with responses to changes in benefits and barriers allow for the identification of both the marginal value of benefits (need) and the cost of overcoming barriers, crucial for assessing targeting effectiveness. I empirically examine take-up behaviour using Dutch administrative data and quasi-experimental policy variation. Individuals suffering from mental disorders have a 65% higher cost of barriers relative to those with good mental health, while they need benefits twice as much. These estimates imply that people with poor mental health are inefficiently screened-out of social assistance by barriers. Consequently, reducing barriers to take-up would be twice as effective as increasing benefits.

“Intrapersonal Utility Comparisons as Interpersonal Utility Comparisons”, with Daniel Reck (UMD)

We consider the optimal policy problem of a benevolent planner, who is uncertain about an individual’s true preferences because of inconsistencies in revealed preferences across behavioral frames. We adapt theories of expected utility maximization and ambiguity aversion to characterize the planner’s objective, which results in welfarist criteria similar to social welfare functions, with intrapersonal frames replacing interpersonal types. Under paternalistic risk aversion or ambiguity aversion, a policy is less desirable to the planner, holding all else fixed, when it leads to more disagreement about welfare from revealed preferences. We map some examples of behavioral models into our framework and describe how this notion of robustness plays out in applied settings.

“A Welfare Analysis of Public Housing Allocation Mechanisms”, with Neil Thakral (Brown University)

When allocating scarce resources such as public housing units to applicants in a waiting list, welfare depends on applicants’ preferences (match values and waiting costs) as well as their choices (which may involve errors). To trade off between allowing agents to wait for better matches and prioritizing agents with high waiting costs, allocation mechanisms impose restrictions on choices. Public housing allocation mechanisms in the UK restrict the set of available options that an applicant may accept, while mechanisms in the US restrict the number of times an applicant may reject. We examine how these different ways of restricting choices influence welfare, both theoretically and empirically. Using data on preferences for public housing in the US and the UK, we show how welfare compares under rationality and explore the sensitivity of the mechanisms to choice-error.

WORK IN PROGRESS

“The Socio-Economic Determinants of Mental Health”, with Jonathan Kolstad (UC Berkeley), Will Parker (LSE) and Johannes Spinnewijn (LSE)

This paper documents and analyzes the relationship between socio-economic factors and key measures of mental health. We demonstrate a sharp deterioration of mental health below an income threshold around the poverty line, while the impact of income beyond the threshold level are remarkably flat. The persistence of low socio-economic status further increases the risk of poor mental health. We find that the socio-economic gradients are strongest for working-age individuals, are not driven by access to health care and mostly explained by work status. Big economic events such as physical health shocks and job losses seem not to contribute much to the overall gradient. Rather, the evidence suggests social drift as the primary mechanism: those with poor mental health sort into lower incomes over the lifecycle.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Presentations:

2024: LSE Public Economics Work in Progress Seminar, Dutch Bureau for Economic Policy Analysis (CPB), LSE CEP Wellbeing Seminar, IFS-CAGE Workshop on the Economics of Mental Health, IIPF Annual Congress, NTA Annual Congress.

2023: LSE Public Economics Work in Progress Seminar, briq Summer School in Behavioral Economics (Participant).

2022: SJDM Annual Meeting (Poster), Brown University Theory/Experimental Lunch Seminar, LSE Public Economics Work in Progress Seminar.

2021: UEA North American Meeting, LSE Public Economics Work in Progress Seminar.

Experience:

Research Assistant to Daniel Reck, LSE

Summer 2020

Economist, The Behaviouralist

2019 – 2021

GRANTS AND AWARDS

LSE Class Teacher Award (*Highly Commended in 2024*) 2023, 2024
STICERD Grant. £9,677.29 2022

Awarded for the project “Mental Health and the Targeting of Social Assistance”.

Race Equity Innovation Fund. £2,000 2022

Awarded for the project “Review of the Economics Curriculum”, together with other members of the Diversity and Inclusion Committee in Economics (DICE) at LSE

Excellence in Education Award, LSE School of Public Policy 2022, 2023, 2024

Economic and Social Research Council Doctoral Studentship 2019 – 2024

Economics Departmental Fellowship, LSE 2019 – 2024

Haya Freedman Prize for Best MSc Dissertation, LSE 2018

Top Overall Performance MSc Applicable Mathematics, LSE 2018

TEACHING AND OUTREACH

Teaching:

LSE School of Public Policy (Graduate): *Public Economics for Public Policy* 2022 – 2024

LSE Economics Dept (Graduate): *Intro Probability and Statistics (math camp)* 2022 – 2024

LSE Economics Dept (Undergraduate): *First-year Micro- and Macroeconomics* 2021 – 2023

Outreach:

Organiser of LSE Public Economics Work in Progress Seminar 2022 – 2023

Applicant Mentor for the [LSE Economics PhD AMP](#) 2020 – present

Founding member of LSE Diversity and Inclusion Committee in Economics 2020 – present

PERSONAL INFORMATION

Date of Birth: 9th May 1996

Citizenship: Canada, Ireland, UK Residency