

**EMMA RACKSTRAW**  
Doctoral Candidate, Harvard University  
Job Market Candidate 2023-24  
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**PERSONAL INFORMATION**

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**EDUCATION**

- Harvard University, Ph.D. in Public Policy (Economics Track), Expected Spring 2024
  - PhD Exchange Scholar at The Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 2022-23
- Wellesley College, B.A. in Economics (Major) and Music (Minor), 2014

**RESEARCH INTERESTS**

Primary: Labor/public economics  
Additional: Economics of crime, experimental economics, behavioral economics, economics of discrimination

**REFERENCES**

Committee Chair: Will Dobbie Professor of Public Policy Harvard Kennedy School <a href="mailto:will_dobbie@hks.harvard.edu">will_dobbie@hks.harvard.edu</a> 617-599-0854	Committee Member: Desmond Ang Assistant Professor of Public Policy Harvard Kennedy School <a href="mailto:desmond_ang@hks.harvard.edu">desmond_ang@hks.harvard.edu</a> 617-495-1339	Committee Member: Larry Katz Elisabeth Allison Professor of Economics Harvard Department of Economics <a href="mailto:lkatz@harvard.edu">lkatz@harvard.edu</a> 617-495-5148
Committee Member: Crystal Yang Bennett Boskey Professor of Law Harvard Law School <a href="mailto:cyang@law.harvard.edu">cyang@law.harvard.edu</a> 617-496-4477	Teaching Reference: Tim Layton Associate Professor Harvard Medical School <a href="mailto:layton@hcp.med.harvard.edu">layton@hcp.med.harvard.edu</a> 617-432-4465	

**WORKING PAPERS**

- **Job Market Paper:** When Reality TV Creates Reality: How “Copaganda” Affects Police, Communities, and Viewers. Available at [SSRN](https://ssrn.com/abstract=4111111).  
*Abstract:* Television shows with police officer protagonists are ubiquitous on American television. Both fictional shows and reality shows portray a world where criminals are nearly always apprehended. However, this is a distortion of reality, as crimes mostly go unsolved and police officers infrequently make arrests. What does the omnipresence of this genre mean for the general public’s conception of police, for the practice of policing, and for the communities being policed? I use department-level and officer-level arrest data to find that arrests for low-level, victimless crimes increase by 20 percent while departments film with reality television shows, concentrated in the officers actively followed by cameras. These arrests do not meaningfully improve public safety and come at the cost of the local public’s

confidence. I then document quasi-experimentally and experimentally that these shows – particularly their overrepresentation of arrests – improve non-constituent viewer attitudes towards and beliefs about the police. The results are consistent with “copaganda” shows inflating trust in police nationally while subjecting some to harsher but not more effective enforcement. I consider the implications for police reform.

- Bias-Motivated Updating in the Labor Market. Available at [SSRN](#).

*Abstract:* In the canonical economics literature on discrimination, it is assumed that statistical discrimination based on inaccurate beliefs will not persist since agents have clear incentives to update as Bayesians based on accurate information. However, if beliefs about group productivity are driven by bias rather than by an agnostic lack of information, agents may be resistant to updating in the face of accurate information that contradicts stereotypes. In this experiment, I ask Prolific workers to report their beliefs about and make incentive-compatible wage offers to other workers based on anonymized resumes both before and after providing noisily accurate signals about performance by various groups. I find that these employers’ response to information about the labor market productivity of Black and White workers is a function of their implicit biases. Employers with stronger implicit biases against Black workers update their beliefs more in response to signals that are consistent with their biases (i.e. that imply the racial gap in productivity is higher than it really is) than they do in response to signals that are inconsistent (i.e. that imply the racial gap in productivity is smaller or even reversed). The existence of such bias-motivated asymmetric updating suggests that providing information about the labor market productivity of historically stigmatized groups may not be sufficient on its own to correct inaccurate beliefs or end inaccurate statistical discrimination.

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

- Background Check Adjudication & Fair Chance Hiring. (with Amanda Agan & David Autor)
- Sticky Stereotypes: Inaccurate Beliefs and Observability. (with Anna Gifty Opoku-Agyeman)

## EMPLOYMENT

- Research Assistant for Will Dobbie, Harvard Kennedy School, 2019 - 2022
  - Provided research assistance for criminal justice and discrimination related projects and courses
- Research Consultant
  - PDQuery (unpaid), 2022-present
  - Crime and Justice Policy Lab, University of Pennsylvania, 2021-present
  - Everytown for Gun Safety, 2018-19
- Associate Fellow (Academic IPA), Office of Evaluation Sciences, 2019
  - Designed curriculum on research methods and evaluation
- Senior Policy Associate, J-PAL North America at MIT, 2016 - 2019
  - Led Crime and Political Economy & Governance sectors
- Research Economist, Council of Economic Advisers, 2014 - 2016
  - Provided economic analysis in labor and education policy

## FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

- 2023: Program in Criminal Justice Grantee, Stone Program in Wealth Distribution, Inequality, and Social Policy Research Grantee, Institute for Quantitative Social Science Grantee, Academy of Management Doctoral Consortium Scholarship
- 2021: ReSTAT Research Grantee, Mind Brain Behavior Initiative Grantee
- 2020: HKS Wiener Center for Social Policy Pilot Grantee; Peggy Howard Fellowship for Graduate Study in Economics; Radcliffe Engaged Summer Grantee
- 2019: National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program
- 2014: Natalie Bolton Faculty Prize in International Economics; Phi Beta Kappa

## PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

External Conferences and Workshops:

- 2023: American Economic Association Meeting (AEA), Western Economic Association International Meeting (WEAI), National Bureau of Economic Research Summer Institute (NBERSI), Academy of Management Meeting (AoM), American Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM)
- 2022: Texas Economics of Crime Workshop (TxECW)
- 2019: Association of American Law Schools (AALS)
- 2018: American Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM)

Invited Seminars:

- 2024: Penn Criminology Colloquium, Virtual Crime Economics (ViCE) Seminar
- 2023: HKS Economics and Social Policy, Wellesley Initiative for Scholars of Economics (WISE)

Referee Service: Journal of Public Economics, Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences, Justice Quarterly.

## TEACHING

Teaching Interests: Econometrics, Labor Economics, Microeconomics, Experimental Economics, Academic Writing, Causal Inference, Discrimination, Behavioral Economics

Teaching Experience:

- Empirical Methods II for MPPs, Harvard Kennedy School, 2021
- Evaluation Course for Chief Evaluation Officers, Office of Evaluation Sciences, 2019
- Executive Education Course in Randomized Evaluation, J-PAL at MIT, 2019
- Econometrics for Undergraduates, Wellesley College, 2013

## SKILLS

**Data & Software:** Stata (Advanced), R (Proficient), L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X (Proficient), Zotero (Proficient), Excel (Proficient), Python (Basic)

**Languages:** English (Native), French (Proficient), Spanish (Basic)

**Talents:** Singing (Semi-Professional), Glassblowing (Amateur)

## **SERVICE**

**Professional Service:** Kennedy School PhD Students' Association President (2021-2022), PhD Peer Mentor (2020-present), HKS Anti-Racism in Economics Founding Member (2020-2022), Organizer of Economics of Discrimination Reading Group (2020-2021)

**Community Service:** Morris Animal Refuge Volunteer (2022-present), Prison Volunteer in MA DOC (2017-2020) and PA DOC (2022-present), Meals on Wheels Volunteer (2020-present)