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Academic Positions	Amherst College: Assistant Professor of Economics (2018-Present)	
Education	Cornell University Ph.D., Applied Economics, 2018 Fields: Applied Microeconomics, Behavioral Economics, Public Policy Brown University B.A., Applied Math - Economics, 2009.	
Publications	Debnam, Jakina. "Selection Effects and Heterogeneous Demand Responses to the Berkeley Soda Tax Vote." <i>American Journal of Agricultural Economics</i> 99 (5): 1172-87.	
Invited Presentations	2020	Behavioral Economics Annual Meeting, Salesforce HigherEd Summit
	2019	Williams College, <i>Williamstown, MA</i> , Bowdoin College, <i>Brunswick, ME</i> , University of Alabama at Birmingham, Samford University, <i>Birmingham, AL</i> , Northeast Economics of Education Workshop, <i>Amherst, MA</i>
	2018	AEA Annual Meetings, <i>Philadelphia, PA</i>
	2017	AEA Annual Meetings (x2), <i>Chicago, IL</i> ; AEA Summer Mentoring Pipeline Conference, <i>Lansing, MI</i> ; University of Georgia, <i>Athens, GA</i>
	2016	Southern Economic Association Annual Meetings, <i>Washington, D.C.</i>
	2015	George Mason University, Arlington, VA; AEA Annual Meetings, <i>Boston, MA</i>
	2014	International Conference of Graduate Students, <i>Nanjing, China</i>
Professional Service	2019	<i>Facilitator</i> - Behavioral Economics Training, Inter-American Development Bank; Selected Papers Committee, NAREA
	2016	Diversity and Inclusion Task Force, College of Business, Cornell University
	<i>Member</i>	AEA Committee on the Status of Minority Groups in the Economics Profession Mentoring Program; American Economic, Agricultural & Applied Economics Associations
Referee Service	Labour Economics, Economic Inquiry, Food Policy, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, American Journal of Agricultural Economics	
Teaching	2018 - Current	<i>Professor</i> ; Introduction to Economics, Economics and Psychology, Advanced Behavioral Economics (Amherst College)
	2015-2017	<i>Instructor</i> ; Graduate Mathematics Preparatory Course (Math Camp)
	2015	<i>Grader</i> ; Empirical Strategies for Policy Analysis II (Professor Zhuan Pei)
	2014	<i>Graduate Research Assistant</i> (Professor David Just)
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
Personal

STATA, R, Matlab
Citizenship: USA

Working Papers “Endogenous Responses to Paternalism: Examining Psychological Reactance in the Lab and the Field”, with David R. Just

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 unique set of text and network data from a social network, this paper measures the persuasiveness of peers' communications among college undergraduates' course selection at Cornell University. I use idiosyncratic shocks to students' information sets to create an instrumental variable and find that while in general, the effect of receiving an additional piece of information about a course is a decrease in the likelihood that a student enrolls in the course, if the message-giver is a peer, the effect of this additional message is up to a 7.4% increase in the likelihood that a student enrolls in that course. This finding is consistent with theories of information aggregation where individuals ‘tag’ information with sources as they incorporate these sources into their final decisions. I support key assumptions using exponential random graph models and in-person survey data which I collected from 112 undergraduate students. To the best of my knowledge, this work is the first in economics to empirically investigate theories of social influence using non-experimental field data.

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.