

SARAH A. JACOBSON

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Citizenship: United States

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS:

Experimental Economics, Environmental Economics, Development Economics,
Microeconomics, Public Economics

EDUCATION:

PhD Economics, Georgia State University, expected 2010
MA Economics, Georgia State University, 2005
BS Engineering, Harvey Mudd College, 1998

DISSERTATION:

Title: Essays in Experimental and Environmental Economics
Main Advisor: Dr. Ragan Petrie
Other Advisors: Dr. Spencer Banzhaf, Dr. James Cox, Dr. Vjollca Sadiraj

PAPERS PUBLISHED:

“Learning from Mistakes: What Do Inconsistent Choices over Risk Tell Us?” with Ragan Petrie, *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, Vol. 38 No. 2 (April 2009), 143-158.
“Using Laboratory Experiments in Public Economics” with James Alm, *National Tax Journal*, Vol. 60 No. 1 (March 2007), 129-152.

WORKING PAPERS AND RESEARCH IN PROGRESS:

The Girl Scout Cookie Phenomenon: Peer Pressure in Grassroots Fundraising, with Ragan Petrie, mimeo October 2009
The Effects of Conservation Reserve Program Participation on Later Land Use, mimeo October 2009
Risk in Context: Risky Decisions over Commodity Outcomes, in progress (with Marco Castillo and Ragan Petrie)
Favor-Trading as Anti-Social Logrolling, in progress (with Jason Delaney)
Discovered Preferences for Risk, in progress (with Jason Delaney)

RESEARCH GRANTS:

National Science Foundation (NSF) Award SES-0752754. “Doctoral Dissertation Research in Economics: The Girl Scout Cookie Phenomenon – An Experimental Study of Social Effects in Fundraising,” with Ragan Petrie, 2008 (\$8,640)
Georgia State University Dissertation Grant, “Peer Pressure in Grassroots Fundraising: The Girl Scout Cookie Phenomenon,” with Ragan Petrie, 2008 (\$1,000)

AWARDS:

Third Year Paper Award 2008, “The Girl Scout Cookie Phenomenon: Peer Pressure in Grassroots Fundraising” (\$1,000)

Carole Keels Endowed Scholarship in Economics, 2008 (\$200)

Jack Blicksilver Scholarship in Economics, 2007 (\$1,000)

Master of Arts in Economics Award, Georgia State University, 2005

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE (at Georgia State University):

Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. James Cox, August 2009 to present

Graduate Research Assistant for Dr. Ragan Petrie, August 2005 to August 2009

TEACHING EXPERIENCE (at Georgia State University; average rating by students in parentheses):

Instructor, The Global Economy (undergraduate), Spring 2009 (4.78/5)

Teaching Assistant for Optimization and Partial Equilibrium Analysis (PhD-level), Spring 2008 & 2009, with Dr. Ragan Petrie (4.90/5 and 4.74/5)

Teaching Assistant for The Global Economy (undergraduate), Summer 2008, with Dr. Paul Kagundu (4.53/5)

Teaching Assistant for Principles of Microeconomics (undergraduate), Fall 2006, with Dr. Ragan Petrie (3.97/5)

PRESENTATIONS:

American Economic Association Conference, January 2010, Atlanta, GA

Economic Science Association North American Conference, November 2009, Tucson, AZ

Georgia State University Brown Bag Seminar Series, October 2009, Atlanta, GA

Camp Resources XVI, August 2009, Asheville, NC

Georgia State University Urban, Regional, and Environmental Economics Colloquy Brown Bag Seminar Series, March 2009, Atlanta, GA

Southern Economic Association Conference, November 2008, Washington, DC

Georgia State University Andrew Young School Honors Day Dinner, April, 2008, Atlanta, GA (invited speech)

Georgia State University Brown Bag Seminar Series, March 2008, Atlanta, GA

Southern Economic Association Conference, November 2006, Charleston, SC

Georgia State University Brown Bag Seminar Series, October 2006, Atlanta, GA

WORKSHOPS:

Camp Resources XVI Workshop in Resource and Environmental Economics, August 2009, Asheville, NC

IFREE's 13th Visiting Graduate Student Workshop in Experimental Economics, July 2007, George Mason University, Washington, DC

SERVICE:

Vice President of the Economics Graduate Student Association at Georgia State University, 2008-2009

Dean Search Committee, Andrew Young School of Policy Studies, 2008-2009

ESL Mentor for Economics PhD students Rodney Stanev (2008), Luciana Lopes (2009)

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

Referee: *Agricultural Economics*, *Southern Economic Journal*

Member of: American Economic Association, Southern Economic Association, Economic Science Association, Association of Environmental and Resource Economists, Agricultural and Applied Economics Association

SELECTED COURSEWORK (in addition to PhD Core Coursework):

- Development Economics
- Experimental Economics; Experimental Workshop; Project Development
- Game Theory
- Environmental Economics I, II
- Public Economics I; State & Local Public Economics
- History of Economic Thought
- Seminar for Teaching Economics
- Theory of the Firm; Industrial Organization

OTHER WORK EXPERIENCE:

Senior Systems Engineer, Scientific-Atlanta, Inc., December 2000 to May 2006

Production Test Developer, The Boeing Company, May 1998-December 2000

REFERENCES:

Professor Ragan A. Petrie
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Science (ICES)
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Additional teaching reference:

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DISSERTATION ABSTRACTS:

“The Girl Scout Cookie Phenomenon: Peer Pressure in Grassroots Fundraising,” with Ragan Petrie, mimeo October 2009

Grassroots fundraising seems to leverage favor trading within social networks to support the provision of a public good. We use a laboratory experiment to study the dynamics of this kind of pro-social favor trading. The ability to practice targeted reciprocity increases contributions to the public good by 14%. Subjects discriminate by rewarding group members who have been generous and withholding rewards from ungenerous group members. At least some of this reciprocal behavior is rooted in other-regarding preferences. When someone is not included in the “circle of reciprocity,” he gives much less to the public good than he does in other settings. People thus excluded provide a clean and strict test of indirect reciprocity, since they cannot benefit from a norm of cooperation. We do not observe indirect reciprocity. Using an endogenous typing method, we find two behavioral types in each treatment, differing in their baseline giving but not in their tendency to reciprocate.

“The Effects of Conservation Reserve Program Participation on Later Land Use,” mimeo October 2009

I use a treatment effect framework to investigate whether participation in the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) changes a parcel’s later land use. The CRP, which pays farmers to retire agricultural land, is the United States’ largest conservation program. The program has several goals, including protecting the environment and improving the long-term productivity of farmland. I compare samples of CRP land to samples of non-CRP land to find the causal effect of CRP participation on land use outcome, using regression and matching techniques. By comparing land that exits the CRP to the best counterfactual land (land that faced similar transition costs and probably had similar unobservable qualities), I find that CRP participation makes land 21-28% more likely to be farmed after program exit than it would otherwise have been. This is unsurprising if the CRP improves low-quality land, because that makes the land more attractive to farm. This long-term effect comports with the agricultural goals of the program, but may counteract the environmental benefits of the program. I also find that farmed ex-CRP land is more likely to adopt conservation practices than the most similar land that had not been in the CRP. However, this may not be a result of CRP participation.

“Learning from Mistakes: What Do Inconsistent Choices over Risk Tell Us?” with Ragan Petrie, *Journal of Risk and Uncertainty*, Vol. 38 No. 2 (April 2009), 143-158.

We implement a risk experiment that allows for judgment errors to investigate who makes mistakes and whether it matters. The experiments are conducted with a random sample of the adult population in Rwanda, and data on financial decisions are collected. We find a high proportion of inconsistent choices, with over 50% of the participants making at least one mistake. Importantly, errors are informative. While risk aversion alone does not explain financial decisions, risk aversion and inconsistent choices interact in significant and sensible ways. As we would expect, risk-averse individuals are more likely to belong to a savings group and less likely to take out an informal loan. For those more likely to make mistakes, however, as they become more risk averse, they are less likely to belong to a savings group and more likely to take up informal credit, suggesting that mistakes correlate with less than optimal behavior.

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