

SARAH A. JACOBSON

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RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS:

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

EDUCATION:

PhD Economics, Georgia State University, expected completion 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 September 2009

Evaluating Causal Effects of the Conservation Reserve Program on Later Land Use, mimeo September 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)

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” (\$1000)

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

Jack Blicksilver Scholarship in Economics, 2007 (\$1000)

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 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 Professor Ragan Petrie (4.90/5 and 4.74/5)

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

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

PRESENTATIONS:

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*

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)
George Mason University
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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 September 2009

We use a laboratory experiment to study the dynamics of favor-trading in support of a public good, as may happen when peer-to-peer fundraising occurs within a social network. We find that the ability to practice targeted reciprocity increases contributions to the public good by 14%, and that 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 excluded from the “circle of reciprocity,” he gives much less to the public good than he does in other settings. We do not find evidence of indirect reciprocity. We find two behavioral types in each treatment, which differ in their baseline giving but not in their tendency to reciprocate. In each treatment, 61-73% of subjects are of the “low contributing” type. There is some stability in types: a subject of the “low” type in one treatment is much more likely (as compared to a “high” type subject) to be “low” type in the other treatments.

Evaluating Causal Effects of the Conservation Reserve Program on Later Land Use, mimeo September 2009

The Conservation Reserve Program (CRP) retires agricultural land to meet an array of policy goals, including protecting the environment and improving long-run productivity of farmland. Does having been in the CRP have effects on a parcel's land use that persist even after that parcel leaves the program? I answer this question by comparing 1996 land use of land that was in the CRP in previous years to land that was never in the CRP. Selection is a serious issue, since farmers are likely to put their least productive land into the program. For this reason, I provide analyses using different sets of CRP and non-CRP land. I use several techniques, including regressions and matching, to show that ex-CRP land is more likely to be farmed than the most comparable non-CRP land (land that faced similar transition costs and likely had similar unobservable characteristics). This supports the idea that the CRP improves low-quality land and thus increases the returns to agriculture, making the land more attractive to farm. While this may reduce environmental benefits of the program, I also find that farmed ex-CRP land may be more likely to undertake conservation practices than other land.

“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.

Updated October 2009