Curriculum Vitae
Lucas C. Coffman

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ADDRESS Ohio State University, Department of Economics
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EDUCATION Harvard University, Ph.D., Business Economics, 2010
Harvard University, M.A., Business Economics, 2007
Case Western Reserve University, B.A., Mathematics, Economics, 2004

PRINCIPAL EMPLOYMENT

08/10 – present	Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Ohio State University
08/11 – 03/12	Visiting Professor of Economics, Yale School of Management

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS

Experimental Economics, Behavioral Economics, Development Economics

TEACHING

Ohio State University:

Spring 2014	Behavioral Economics, Ph.D.-level (with John Kagel)
Fall 2013-Spring 2014	Research Methods in Behavioral & Experimental Econ., PhD and Undergrad (with Katherine Coffman)
Spring 2013	Behavioral Economics, Ph.D.-level (with John Kagel)
Spring 2013	Experimental Economics, Undergraduate-level

Yale School of Management:

Spring I 2012	Experiments as an Analytical Tool, MBA-level

Ohio State University:

Winter 2011	Behavioral Economics, Ph.D.-level (with John Kagel)
Winter 2011	Experimental Economics, Undergraduate-level
Spring 2012	Behavioral Economics, Ph.D.-level (with John Kagel)

(teaching continued)
Harvard University:

Spring 2009	Experimental Economics, Ph.D.-level, Teaching Fellow for Alvin Roth
Fall 2007, 2008	Policy Applications of Psychology and Economics, Undergraduate-level, Teaching Fellow for Sendhil Mullainathan

PUBLISHED PAPERS

"The Schooling Decision: Family Preferences, Intergenerational Conflict, and Moral Hazard in the Brazilian *Favelas*" with Leonardo Bursztyn, UCLA Anderson
***Journal of Political Economy,* June 2012, 120(3): 359-397. (Lead article)**

This paper experimentally analyzes the schooling decisions of poor households in urban Brazil. We elicit parents' choices between monthly government transfers conditional on their adolescent child attending school and guaranteed, unconditional transfers of varying sizes. In the baseline treatment, an overwhelming majority of parents prefer conditional transfers to larger unconditional transfers. However, few parents prefer conditional payments if they are offered text message notifications whenever their child misses school. These findings suggest important intergenerational conflicts in these schooling decisions, a lack of parental control and observability of school attendance, and an additional rationale for conditional cash transfer programs—the monitoring they provide.

"Intermediation Reduces Punishment (and Reward)", *American Economic Journal: Microeconomics,* 3(November 2011): 77-106.

This paper investigates how punishment changes when a transgressor does not directly interact with the injured party. In a laboratory experiment, third party punishment for keeping money at the expense of a poorer player is shown to decrease when an intermediary actor is included in the transaction. This is true (i) for completely passive intermediaries and (ii) even though intermediation can only decrease the payout of the poorest player and hurt equity. Thus current theories of fairness would incorrectly predict intermediation increases or does not affect punishment. Follow-up treatments provide evidence that intermediation reduces punishment predominately because when an intermediary is used, the selfish player does not directly interact with the poorer player; the direct link has been severed. As a result, in treatments when intermediaries are available, and principals can distance themselves from an outcome, punishment is almost entirely ineffective in moderating self-interest, and the poorest players are far worse off than when no intermediary is allowed. This paper also investigates moral decision-making and indirectness in a charity-reward domain. Consistent with the laboratory results, a framed field experiment shows rewards of a charitable behavior (donating mosquito nets) to decrease when the saliency of an intermediary (a charity) is increased. Together, the results show that moral decision-making is not always well predicted by the *overall* fairness of an act but rather by the fairness of the consequences that *follow directly* from an act. The implications of these results are that allowing indirect actions, perhaps through agents, suppliers, arm's-length transactions etc. may lead to increased anti-social behavior.

WORKING PAPERS

"Can Subtle Provision of Social Information Affect What Job You Choose (and Keep)? Experimental Evidence from Teach For America"

Submitted

With Clayton Featherstone, Wharton, and Judd Kessler, Wharton

It has been well documented that information about the actions of others can affect small-stakes decisions. We show that a subtle provision of such social information can also influence a very high-stakes decision: whether to take (and keep) a job as a public school teacher. In an experiment involving thousands of admits to Teach For America (TFA), those provided with data about the high matriculation rate in the previous year are more likely to accept the job. Moreover, this effect persists into the second semester of teaching, even though one-sixth of those in the control group who initially accepted the job have left TFA by then. As expected, the effects are stronger for those more marginal in their decision to join TFA. Our results suggest that social information can have a powerful effect on high-stakes behavior and should be considered as a potential tool for policy.

"The Size of the LGBT Population and Magnitude of Anti-gay Sentiment are Substantially Underestimated"

Submitted

With Katherine Baldiga, Ohio State and Keith M Marzilli-Ericson, Boston U SOM

Measuring sexual orientation, behavior, and related opinions is difficult because responses are biased towards socially acceptable answers. We test whether measurements are biased even when responses are private and anonymous and use our results to identify sexuality-related norms and how they vary. We run an experiment on 2,516 U.S. participants. Participants were randomly assigned to either a "best practices method" that was computer-based and provides privacy and anonymity, or to a "veiled elicitation method" that further conceals individual responses. Answers in the veiled method preclude inference about any particular individual, but can be used to accurately estimate statistics about the population. Comparing the two methods shows sexuality-related questions receive biased responses even under current best practices, and, for many questions, the bias is substantial. The veiled method increased self-reports of non-heterosexual identity by 65% ($p<0.05$) and same-sex sexual experiences by 59% ($p<0.01$). The veiled method also increased the rates of *anti*-gay sentiment. Respondents were 67% more likely to express disapproval of an openly gay manager at work ($p<0.01$) and 71% more likely to say it is okay to discriminate against lesbian, gay, or bisexual individuals ($p<0.01$).The results show non-heterosexuality and anti-gay sentiment are substantially underestimated in existing surveys, and the privacy afforded by current best practices is not always sufficient to eliminate bias. Finally, our results identify two social norms: it is perceived as socially undesirable both to be open about being gay, and to be unaccepting of gay individuals.

“Intermediaries in Fundraising Inhibit Quality-Driven Charitable Donations”
Submitted

Charitable donations are frequently raised by an intermediary: a fundraiser (that is not the charity) solicits and accepts donations and subsequently sends the proceeds to the charity -- e.g. a workplace campaign for United Way or a 5km walk for Susan G. Komen. Such fundraisers can greatly increase donations received by a given charity, but how do they affect what types of charities we support? This paper shows having funds raised by an intermediary can make donors insensitve to charity quality: Unattractive charities can receive the same financial support as attractive charities. In a series of experiments, when donations are framed as going directly, attractive charities receive larger (between 68% and 91% larger average donation across studies) and more (between 19% and 25% higher likelihood of receiving a gift across studies) contributions relative to unattractive charities; however, when donations for the same charities are collected by (meaningless) intermediaries running fundraising campaigns, donations become statistically indistinguishable across charities. The intermediary fundraiser does not affect donor recall of charity identity or evaluation of charity quality. Follow-up experiments suggest information overload in the intermediary fundraiser context clouds the judgment of the donor. Simply put, intermediaries in fundraising do not preclude acquiring information about charities, but the complexity provided by the nature of the transaction all but precludes using it.

“Recent Expectations Do Not Determine Punishment: Reference-Points Are not What You’d Expect”

This paper reports a series of laboratory experiments investigating the hypothesis that expectations affect punishment. Despite support from Moral Psychology and recent reference-dependence experiments in Economics, I find third party punishment does not respond to exogenous changes in expectations of the targeted party's behavior. I use a random process for revealing the true action taken by the actor. This process varies the expectation the punisher holds just before the truth is revealed. Expectations are shown to vary significantly and substantially. However, in non-parametric and instrumental variables regression analyses, expectations are shown not to affect punishment at all. This is true either when expectations are exceeded or failed.

WORKS IN PROGRESS

"Belief Formation of Returns to Schooling: Evidence from India and the Dominican Republic"

With Jim Berry, Cornell University
Funded by a grant from the International Growth Centre

In the developing world, school is not perceived to be as valuable as it actually is. Many households hold downwardly biased beliefs of how much wages increase across level of schooling attained. Importantly, it has been shown that changing beliefs of average wages can greatly increase schooling attainment. In Chennai and Ajmer, we design and run novel experiments to understand the source of the bias. The main questions are - what data do they have access to (e.g. neighborhood effects), do they understand how these data are biased, and what of these data do they use when they form their beliefs (e.g. availability bias)? Further, how do they control for sampling problems, namely the selection into schooling. The second stage of this project will be to develop a tool to de-bias people most effectively.

"Interpersonal Influence"

With Paul Niehaus, UCSD

We conduct an experimental analysis of communication and decision-making to better characterize interpersonal influence. We create naturalistic settings in which a buyer must decide how much he is willing to pay for a good, a seller's payoff increases in the buyer's willingness to pay, and the seller can communicate with the buyer. We find that (1) sellers are influential, despite their conflict of interest; (2) influence works primarily through changes in buyers' perceived self-interest ("persuasion"), and yet (3) a minority of sellers intentionally manipulate other-regard and outperform as a result; and (4) variation in influence is driven less by who is selling than by who is buying, as well as (5) by buyer-seller homophily.

"Aggregating the Sands of Time: Small Consequence Decision-Making and Intertemporal Choice"

with Daylian Cain, Yale SOM, and George Loewenstein, Carnegie Mellon SDS, and Muriel Niederle, Stanford

BOOK CHAPTERS

"Intermediation and Diffusion of Responsibility in Negotiation: A Case of Bounded Ethicality"
in Handbook of Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, Oxford Press, Rachel Croson & Gary Bolton eds.

With Neeru Paharia, Harvard Safra Institute, and Max Bazerman, Harvard Business School

NEWS COVERAGE

Press for Coffman, Coffman & Ericson (2014):
The Atlantic, LA Times, Time, Pew Research, Slate, Psychology Today, Bloomberg (by Cass Sunstein), NPR Los Angeles, Freakonomics

Wall Street Journal "Why the NFL Draft Drives Economists Crazy," Sports Section, by Reed Albergotti, April 22, 2010.

GRANTS AND AWARDS

2013 Research Grant from Fundación INICIA (Dominican Republic), $100,000
2012 Behavioral Decision Making Initiative Grant (Ohio State)
2011 International Growth Centre Grant (LSE and Oxford)
2009 Harvard University Dissertation Completion Fellowship
2006, 2009 Harvard University Paul Warburg Funds, Research Award
2008 Harvard Program on Negotiation, Next Generation Grant

REFEREEING

American Economic Review, Quarterly Journal of Economics, Games and Economic Behavior, Economic Journal, Management Science (Meritorious Service Award 2013), Mind & Society, Journal of the European Economic Association, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Economic Inquiry, Experimental Economics

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

- Stanford, Spring 2014 scheduled
- Experimental Methods in Policy Conference (Curaçao), Spring 2014 scheduled
- Ohio State Human Sciences Dept, Spring 2014 scheduled
- UC San Diego and UC San Diego Rady, Fall 2013
- Economic Science Association North America Meeetings (Santa Cruz), Fall 2013
- Florence Behavioral and Experimental Economics Workshop, Spring 2013
- Boston SOM, Fall 2012
- Carnegie Mellon SDS, Notre Dame, Spring 2012
- Cornell University, Colgate University, New York University, Fall 2011
- Stanford Institute for Theoretical Economics, Experimental Economics, 2011, 2013
- Stanford Institute for Theoretical Economics, Psychology and Economics 2010
- Economic Science Association North America Meeting 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009, 2010, 2011; World Meeting 2007, 2008, 2011, 2013 (scheduled); European Meeting 2008
- Behavioral Decision Making Meetings 2008
- Princeton Psychology and Economics PhD Student Workshop 2008
- Harvard University Student Theory Workshop 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008, 2009
- Harvard Business School, NOM Unit Seminar 2009