Spelman College
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ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT
PHONE: 404-270-5697

Applicant Name:

Rebecca Sen Choudhury

Address:

Giles Hall, Room 406
Department of Economics
Spelman College
350 Spelman Lane, Atlanta GA, 30314

Phone Number:

Office: (404) 270-6057; Cell: (603) 285-2374

Email:

rebeccasenchoudhury@spelman.edu

Research Field of Interest:

Areas of Specialization: Applied Microeconomics, Economics of Risky Behaviors, Health Economics
Current Research Focus: Addiction, Obesity, Mental Health and Maternal and Child Health.

Past Grant Applications:

None

Contact information of attestor:

Dr Marionette Holmes

Giles Hall, Room 402
Department of Economics
Spelman College
350 Spelman Lane, Atlanta GA, 30314
(404) 270-5569
mholmes@spelman.edu

REBECCA SEN CHOUDHURY

Department of Economics,
Giles Hall, Room 406
Spelman College
350 Spelman Ln SW, Atlanta, GA, 30314

Phone: Office: (404) 270-6057; Cell: (603) 285-2374
Email: rebeccasenchoudhury@spelman.edu
Website: www.rebeccasenchoudhury.com

RESEARCH AND TEACHING INTERESTS:

- Research: Economics of Risky Health Behaviors, Health Economics, Applied Microeconomics
- Teaching: Microeconomics, Econometrics, Health Economics, Environmental Economics

EMPLOYMENT:

- Assistant Professor of Economics, Spelman College, Fall 2021-

EDUCATION:

- Ph.D., Economics, University of New Hampshire, May 2021
- Cognate in College Teaching, Summer, 2018

  A certificate degree program to prepare individuals to teach at institutions of higher education. Topics include (1) issues in college teaching; (2) teaching with writing; (3) cognition, teaching and learning; (4) classroom research and assessment methods; and (5) teaching economics
- M.A., Economics, University of New Hampshire, May 2015
- M.Sc., Economics, University of Calcutta, India, May 2013
- B.Sc., Economics, University of Calcutta, India, May 2011

DISSERTATION:

"Essays on the Unintended Effects of Tobacco Control Policies on Adolescent Health Behaviors"
Committee: Karen Smith Conway (Chair), Reagan Baughman, Dhaval Dave, Robert Mohr & Deniz Ozabaci

PUBLICATIONS:

"The Effect of Tobacco Policies on Youth Physical Activity," with Karen Smith Conway, *Economics and Human Biology*, 38, August 2020, Article 100872.

WORKING PAPERS:

"Vaping Regulations and Mental Health of High School Students?"
Available at SSRN: http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.3773745

"Extreme Weight Control Behaviors in Teenagers and the Role of Tobacco Policy," (manuscript in preparation)

WORK IN PROGRESS:

"Changes in Cigarette Smoking and Electronic Nicotine Delivery System Use After the Affordable Care Act: A Longitudinal Evaluation Using the US PATH Study Cohort" with Marian Jarlenski, Wyatt Koma and Sabik M. Lindsay *(manuscript in preparation)*

"Cannabis Policies and Birth Outcomes in the United States" with Marian Jarlenski *(manuscript in preparation)*

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:

"Vaping Regulations and Mental Health of High School Students", presented at:

- Eastern Economic Association Meetings, New York, NY, February, 2021 (Virtual)

"Extreme Weight Control Behaviors in Teenagers and the Role of Tobacco Policy", presented at:

- Southern Economic Association Meetings, Washington D.C., November, 2018
- Eastern Economic Association Meetings, Boston, MA, March, 2018

"The Effect of Tobacco Policies on Youth Physical Activity" (with Karen Smith Conway), presented at:

- Poster presentation: Annual Conference of the American Society of Health Economists, Economics and Public Health, Atlanta, GA, June, 2018
- Weekly Seminar Series, University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH, January, 2018

OTHER CONFERENCE CONTRIBUTIONS:

- Discussant "Women in Engineering: The Role of Role Models," Eastern Economic Association Meetings, New York, NY, February, 2021 (Virtual)
- Session Chair, "Tobacco Marijuana and Opioids," Eastern Economic Association Meetings, Boston, MA, March, 2018
- Discussant, "Unemployment Insurance and Cigarette Smoking," Eastern Economic Association Meetings, Boston, MA, March, 2018

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE:

- University of New Hampshire, Department of Economics, Durham, NH
  - Graduate Research Assistant to Dr. Andrew Houtenville, University Center for Excellence in Disability (UCED), Summer, 2018
  - Graduate Research Assistant to Dr. Karen Conway, Summer, 2018
  - Graduate Research Assistant to Dr. Joseph Sabia, Spring, 2017
  - Graduate Research Assistant to Dr. Karen Conway, Spring, 2015
- Research Assistant to Dr. Thomas Gruen, Department of Marketing, University of New Hampshire, Summer, 2019
- Research Assistant, *Institute of Health Management and Research (IIHMR)*, India, Summer, 2013

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

Spelman College, Atlanta, GA

- Senior Seminar in Economics, Fall, 2021
- Women in the Economy, Fall, 2021
- Econometrics, Spring 2022

- Principles of Microeconomics, Spring 2022

University of New Hampshire, Durham, NH

- *Instructor*, Principles of Macroeconomics, Fall, 2019
- *Instructor*, Principles of Microeconomics, Spring, 2020; 2018; Fall, 2017; 2016
- *Teaching Assistant*, Research Skills (Capstone Paper Course), Spring, 2016
- *Teaching Assistant*, Graduate level Econometrics I, Fall, 2015
- *Teaching Assistant*, Principles of Microeconomics (Honors), Fall, 2015
- *Teaching Assistant*, Principles of Microeconomics (General), Fall, 2014

Loreto College, India

- *Guest Lecturer*, Principles of Microeconomics (Honors), 2013-2014
- *Guest Lecturer,* Principles of Microeconomics (General), 2013-2014

AWARDS AND DISTINCTIONS:

- Dissertation Fellowship (DYF) Award, Department of Economics, University of New Hampshire, 2018
- Outstanding Graduate Student Teacher Award, Department of Economics, University of New Hampshire, 2018
- Outstanding Graduate Teaching Assistant Award, Department of Economics, University of New Hampshire, 2016
- Summer Teaching Assistant Fellowship, University of New Hampshire, 2016
- Elizabeth Bogan Award for Outstanding Academic Achievement, University of New Hampshire, 2015
- Full Tuition Scholarship, University of New Hampshire, 2014-2018

REFEREE SERVICE:

- *Economics and Human Biology*

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES, SERVICE AND MEMBERSHIP:

- Mentee, "Academy Health" Health Economics Mentoring Program, American Society of Health Economists (ASHEcon), 2021-2022
- Committee on the Status of Women in Economics (CSWEP), American Economic Association (AEA), Liaison at Spelman College, 2022-
- Judge at the Undergraduate Research Conference (URC), University of New Hampshire, 2018-2019
- Graduate Mentor for M.A. Economics, Capstone Paper, University of New Hampshire, 2015-2020
- American Economic Association (AEA), 2021-
- American Society of Health Economists (ASHEcon), 2021-
- Omicron Delta Epsilon, University of New Hampshire, 2015-

LANGUAGE AND PROGRAMING SKILLS:

- Language skills: English (Full professional proficiency)
- Programming skills: STATA (primary software used for analysis), SAS, R, MATLAB, Latex document system, Microsoft Office

REFERENCES:

Karen Conway (Thesis Chair)

Professor of Economics,
University of New Hampshire
Karen.Conway@unh.edu
(603) 862-3386

Michael Goldberg (Teaching)

Professor of Economics,
University of New Hampshire
Michael.Goldberg@unh.edu
(603) 862-3385

Dhaval Dave (Research)

Stanton Research Professor of Economics,
Bentley University
Research Associate (NBER)
Research Fellow (IZA)
ddave@bentley.edu
(781) 891-2268

Andrew Houtenville (Research)

Professor of Economics,
Center Director, CMDR, Institute on Disability
University of New Hampshire
Andrew.Houtenville@unh.edu
(603) 862-4004

Proposed Research Projects:

Social Welfare and Public Health Effects of Marijuana Legalization

1. Marijuana Legalization and Foster Care:

While growing legalization for either medical or recreational purposes has made marijuana more available over the last couple of decades, the effects of changing marijuana legislation on social welfare are still largely under scrutiny. Parental consumption of marijuana is often associated with increased likelihood of and neglectful parenting and child abuse. Substantial evidence suggests that majority of all foster system cases involve caregiver drug use allegation at some point in time with marijuana being one of the most commonly cited drugs. Furthermore, there are significant racial disparities with Black, Latino, and Native American children being separated from their families at much higher rates than White children. Minority parents, parents of color and poor households are often held to a different standard forming an overwhelming majority of those tested for cannabis use, arrested and reported to child welfare agencies.

Even though cannabis legalization has increased, there hasn't been a corresponding liberalization of child welfare laws analogous to cannabis policy. The changing legislation around marijuana has made it extremely challenging for child welfare professionals to come up with a standardized way to determine best policies and procedures to deal with issues related to neglectful parenting and child abuse. Legalization has led to a growing gap between what's considered legal vs what raises red flags for child-welfare agencies. Further adding to the fuzziness is the fact that different states are guided by different statutes concerning child neglect and abuse.

Amid this policy environment, it becomes increasingly crucial to examine the impact of cannabis laws on child-protection caseloads related to drug use. On one hand marijuana legalization may cause more people to use marijuana and indulge in abusive and neglecting parenting. However, there is also a possibility that as a result of legalization and decriminalization, less people get into legal issues and fewer children are separated from their parents by child welfare agencies. It is also possible that families who were separated due to parental drug abuse in the past are able to reunify more easily. Using data from the Adoption and Foster Care Analysis and Reporting System (AFCARS) merged with other relevant state level policies and controls, the purpose of this study is to investigate the likelihood of increases in legalization to influence a child's entry into and length of time spent in foster care and reunification rates. AFCARS is a federal data collection system that collects individual level information on all children removed from their parents and placed in foster care, along with the date of foster care entry and exit for each child, information on the child's demographic characteristics including reasons for removal. Any spillover effect of cannabis laws on foster outcomes will add to existing knowledge and evidence on how state drug laws can substantially impact child abuse and neglect, an important societal concern with significant consequences for the affected children, their families, and society at large.

2. Marijuana Legalization and Perinatal Mental health:

According to Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) 1 in 8 women report experiencing symptoms of maternal depression. Perinatal depression can have drastic consequences for mothers and their children. There is substantial evidence that depression during pregnancy (antepartum depression) is significantly associated with a host of adverse pregnancy outcomes such as low birth weight, intrauterine growth restriction, preterm birth and poor breast-feeding outcomes. Moreover, it is also the greatest predictor of postpartum depression in women which has been widely linked to delays in cognitive, linguistic, and social and emotional development in infants and toddlers. Besides harmful effects during infancy, there may be adverse long-term effects of perinatal depression in the form of multiple early childhood developmental problems, including impaired cognitive, social and academic functioning that may carry over into adolescence. Economic studies have also linked maternal depression to poor labor market outcomes and food insecurity.

Use of cannabis to self-medicate against depression and other mental health conditions is becoming increasingly common among pregnant women. There is growing evidence that pregnant women with depression are much more (almost 3 times more) likely to use cannabis than those without depression. Whether marijuana has a causal effect on maternal mental health is unclear. There is evidence from randomized control trials that cannabinoids, compounds found in marijuana, can improve sleep quality and help alleviate the symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder and can also have potential antidepressant and mood modulating effects. On the other hand, there is little medical evidence that cannabis use might serve as a contributor to mental health disorders in pregnancy.

Current studies that document a positive correlation between marijuana use and symptoms of depression in pregnant women are largely descriptive. The association likely reflects self-medication or difficult-to-measure confounders at the individual level that affect both marijuana use and mental health. This study will use data from CDC's Pregnancy Risk Assessment Monitoring System (PRAMS) to study the causal effect of cannabis use on maternal mental health. Specifically, this study will exploit exogenous changes in state policies legalizing cannabis use and a difference-in-differences methodology to identify changes in cannabis use and perinatal depression.

As more states legalize cannabis for medical or recreational purposes its use during pregnancy is sharply increasing, along with the potential for abuse or dependence to treat pregnancy related mental health conditions. Recent research finds that cannabis use disorders increased dramatically in prenatal hospitalizations in the last decade. Legalization has also likely reduced fears about its risks in pregnancy in the form of harmful fetal effects. Ongoing policy changes underscores the need to explore the impact of cannabis laws on maternal mental health. Findings from this study are likely to encourage more rigorous research into the benefits and potential harms from the use of marijuana in pregnancy and promote safer use especially among the vulnerable population using it to treat mental health conditions.