# Application to Digital Economics and AI Tutorial

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***Course of graduate study pursued:***
Fourth year PhD in economics
Primary fields: Labor, behavioral, political economics

***Research projects in progress:***
**Title**: Social Media, Body Image, and Economic Decisions (with Hannah Solheim)
**Abstract**: The rise of social media has coincided with growing mental health challenges, including depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. Low-income individuals, who spend more time on screens, and young women, exposed to unrealistic beauty standards, are especially vulnerable. Simple policies may be able to alleviate these effects. We seek to provide proof of concept of interventions to improve people's social media experience and to mitigate its adverse impacts on mental health. Specifically, can modifying the content seen on social media improve well-being? We are currently running a field experiment on TikTok, the most popular social media app for U.S. teens, in which young women are randomly assigned to view content featuring plus-size creators. We hypothesize that exposure to plus-size TikTok creators will (1) enhance well-being by broadening beauty standards to include larger bodies and (2) foster empathy and reduce discrimination against plus-size individuals. Outcomes include beauty ideals, body image, mental health, health behaviors, discrimination against plus-size individuals, and demand for body-positive content. Conservative power calculations suggest that we are powered to detect differences of 0.2 SD in body satisfaction between treatment and control, which is smaller than treatment effects reported in prior studies and suggested by our pilot.

**Title**: Playing Lowball: The Roles of Initial Offers and Negotiation in the Gender Earnings Gap (with Nagisa Tadjfar)
**Abstract**: What factors drive early-career gender earnings gaps? We use MIT student data on immediate post-graduation compensation packages to study the roles of initial offers and negotiation in the gender earnings gap. We document two novel facts: (1) there is a 5% gender gap in total compensation within employer and occupation, and (2) the salary gap is precisely zero. Moreover, these earnings differences are explained by firms low-balling initial bonus offers to women. Surprisingly, we find that negotiation neither widens nor closes this gap. We also find no evidence for frequently cited gender differences in negotiation, such as negotiation aversion, skill (percentage returns to the initial offer), or number of outside offers. To unpack mechanisms driving these results, we conduct an online audit study on recruiters.

**Title**: Getting Your Foot in the Door: The Value of Ability Signals via Technical Interviews in the Tech Sector (with Maxim Massenkoff and Nagisa Tadjfar)
**Abstract**: Technical interviews evaluating coding skills have become increasingly commonplace among the highest-paying jobs in the tech sector. Conducting these interviews is costly, which has

led to the rise of online marketplaces that screen workers on the basis of technical ability and match them to employers. Using data from an online interviewing platform, we study the effects of an ability signal to both workers and employers on labor market outcomes. Users who meet an exogenous ability threshold receive a signal from the platform that they are "one of the best-performing coders on the platform" and gain access to anonymous interviews at top tech companies (e.g., Google, X, Lyft). Studying ~7,000 users on this platform using a fuzzy RD design, we find that workers who gain access are 20% more likely to switch jobs within a year. They are also 21% more likely to work at a top tech firm and work at companies with 12% higher expected compensation. These results are driven by inexperienced workers from non-top universities who did not previously work at a top firm. Job access from platform matches alone cannot explain the entirety of these job outcomes - only 150 job offers were accepted through the platform while more than 800 users with access switched jobs. These findings are consistent with increased and more ambitious worker search after receiving a credible signal about their ability.

***Committee members:*** David Autor, Frank Schilbach