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Graduate Study

I am a third-year PhD student in Economics at the University of Pittsburgh, enrolled since June 2024. I have completed the two years of PhD coursework and passed the qualifying exams. My fields are experimental economics, behavioral economics, and labor economics. My advisor is Osea Giuntella, and Lise Vesterlund serves on my committee.

Research Interests

My research asks how people form beliefs about complex economic environments and how AI tools can be designed to help them decide well. I work at the intersection of behavioral and labor economics, with a focus on low-income workers navigating the social safety net. I am particularly interested in AI as a decision aid: when a conversational assistant improves understanding rather than simply supplying an answer, how much of the reasoning it should leave to the user, and how to evaluate AI tools against the information products that governments and agencies already provide.

Current Project

"Seeing the Cliff Before You Fall: Workers' Misperceptions of Benefit Cliffs and the Delivery of Benefit Information" (with pre-registration AEARCTR-0018135)

Low-income workers can lose more in public benefits than they gain from a raise, yet we know little about whether they see these "benefit cliffs" coming. In a pre-registered experiment with 458 benefit recipients, I find that workers substantially misperceive how a job offer would change their household resources: the average error exceeds the average loss itself, and 37 percent of workers facing a cliff expect the offer to leave them better off.

I then randomize how the same program rules reach the worker: through the Atlanta Fed's Policy Rules Database dashboard, or through an AI assistant built on the same database that explains how each program changes but deliberately does not state the net change, so that the worker must assemble the answer. The assistant reduces the misperception by about $260 a month relative to the dashboard, roughly a third of the baseline error, and the result holds under the pre-registered specification. The full conversation transcripts allow me to audit the assistant, whose reported program amounts matched the database in 61 of 62 checkable statements, and to show that the correction is concentrated among workers who actually engage with the conversation. I presented this work at the AFE 2026 conference and will present it at APPAM 2026 in November, as well as to the Allegheny County Department of Human Services.

Next Project: A Field Experiment on AI Decision Aids

Building on these results, I am designing a field experiment with the Allegheny County Department of Human Services in Pittsburgh. After several conversations with the department, the county is on board, and we have begun the design. Each participating household will predict

its total monthly resources at several earnings levels around its own cliff, computed from its actual benefits with the Atlanta Fed's Policy Rules Database, before and after a randomly assigned tool: the existing dashboard, an AI assistant that withholds the net change, or one that states it. A follow-up survey without any tool will test whether what households learn carries over to new offers. Adapting the approach of Rees-Jones and Taubinsky (2020) to benefit schedules, the design separates two questions that matter for the design of AI tools in public services: whether an assistant makes people more accurate today, and whether it builds an understanding they keep.

Why This Tutorial

The questions at the heart of this agenda are questions of AI design: how much an assistant should do for its user, how to tell learning apart from copying an answer, and how to evaluate AI tools at the scale of public programs. The tutorial comes at the exact moment when I am finalizing the design of the field experiment, and the chance to learn from and interact with leading researchers in digital economics and AI would directly shape how I build and evaluate the assistant, measure what households learn, and think about scaling these tools. I would be grateful for the opportunity to take part, and to bring to the discussion an applied setting in which AI tools meet some of the most consequential decisions low-income families face.

Dissertation

Working title: "Misperception and AI-Assisted Decisions in the Social Safety Net." The first chapter is the project above, and the second is the field experiment with Allegheny County. Committee: Osea Giuntella (advisor) and Lise Vesterlund.