

IFREE Final Report

With this funding, we ran three experiments between May 2016 and May 2018. The results from two of the experiments are reported in the manuscript “The Problem of Dishonesty in Government Safety Nets”. Please find the paper’s abstract below. The results have also been reported in multiple conference presentations which are also reported below. We are currently in the process of analyzing the data from the third experiment. We greatly appreciate IFREE’s support for this research.

Paper Abstract: Many governments provide benefits to unemployed citizens but someone might claim unemployment even when they actually have a job. Here we use economic experiments to examine how the rules of social insurance institutions affect people’s honesty. In an unemployment game, participants interact in a difficult job market where they can claim unemployment to request help. In Experiment 1, participants were more honest about unemployment when they repeatedly interacted with the same partner compared to when they switched partners. In Experiments 2 and 3, participants could request benefits from a public fund that was financed by taxes on employed workers. When benefits were unregulated, participants frequently (67%) made false unemployment claims. However, when we apply common regulations from real-world unemployment programs, including limits, bans, and fines, participants were dishonest at considerably lower rates (33%-40%). We discuss implications for the efficient relief of hardship and the experimental study of social insurance institutions.

Conference Presentations

Bokemper, S.E., & DeScioli, P. (2018, June). An experiment on dishonesty and support for social insurance. At the Center for the Study of American Politics conference, Yale University, New Haven, CT.

Bokemper, S.E., & DeScioli, P. (2018, April). The problem of honesty in government safety nets. At the Midwest Political Science Association meeting, Chicago, IL.

Bokemper, S.E., & DeScioli, P. (2018, October). The problem of honesty in government safety nets. At Creighton University, Omaha, NE.

Bokemper, S.E., & DeScioli, P. (2018, October). The problem of honesty in government safety nets. At the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, Lincoln, NE.

Bokemper, S.E., & DeScioli, P. (2016, Sept). Experiments on social safety nets. At American Political Science Association Meeting, Philadelphia, PA.

Bokemper, S., & DeScioli, P. (2016, May). Experiments on social safety nets. Poster presented at the Behavioral Models of Politics Conference 2016, Pittsburgh, PA.