

Workshop on Education Lecture Series
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Behavioral Science for Education Policy Impact

Abstract

Insights from behavioral science have spurred policy interventions that would have been unimaginable 25 years ago, including in the area of education: personalized text message reminders, simplified FAFSA forms, re-framing how we present different student-loan options to families, even pre-K or child-care center recommender “genies.” Most of these interventions involve changes to the choice environment (what Richard Thaler and Cass Sunstein famously called “nudges”) that are both low-cost and easily replicable. Behavioral science thus has seemingly also solved the problem of how to successfully intervene at large scale, a bottleneck that has limited the impact of so many garden-variety policy interventions. Yet the list of examples where behavioral science has had large, population-level impacts on an important problem – in education or any other policy domain – is not nearly as long as we would like. This presentation considers why that is, and what we might do about it.

Short Bio

Jens Ludwig is the Edwin A. and Betty L. Bergman Distinguished Service Professor in the University of Chicago’s Harris School of Public Policy, director of the University of Chicago Crime Lab, and co-director of the Education Lab.