My research focuses on how individuals make choices in environments with uncertainty. In particular, I test for implications of behavioral theories using large field data, field experiments, and laboratory experiments. The main topic of my thesis is how individuals who face uncertainty about their earnings make decisions about labor supply.

My job market paper, “When to Quit: Narrow Bracketing and Reference Dependence in Taxi Drivers”, reexamines the labor supply decisions of taxi drivers, who have considerable flexibility in when they work but face substantial uncertainty in their earnings. Previous research that has studied taxi drivers has found mixed evidence of income targeting in daily labor supply. By testing for a, previously unexamined, model of reference dependence, I am able to reconcile previous contradictory results and find evidence consistent with drivers having an income target for daily earnings. In contrast to models of reference dependence others have focused on, the reference dependence I find evidence of is associated with drivers being less likely to stop the closer they are to their income target and more likely to stop the further from their target they are on either side of the target. In the paper, I discuss implications these preferences have for optimal contracts and policy.

In a related paper on which I am currently working, “Labor Supply with Wage Uncertainty”, I use my results from the previous paper to motivate a field experiment conducted on Amazon's Mechanical Turk. Participants in this experiment complete “real effort tasks” to simulate doing work in a controlled environment. The wage for completing these tasks is randomly drawn from a known distribution. By varying both the wage distribution and the manner in which uncertainty about the wage for a task is resolved, I am able to estimate a causal effect of wage uncertainty for effort provision, test for implications of income targeting as a result of reference dependence, and relate traditionally measured risk preferences with their implications for real-world decisions.

The third paper of my thesis, “Wage Outcomes and Employee Satisfaction”, uses unique datasets of salaries and employee job satisfaction surveys to relate worker satisfaction with their relative compensation. A worker may be very highly paid at his position but may have low pay relative to peers at his firm or in similar positions at other firms. I examine if an employee’s relative compensation negatively or positively affects his disposition. I also examine whether or not the variation in pay within a firm or across firms for a particular job impacts employee disposition. These results have the potential to guide employer compensation practices in order to maintain better employee morale.

In addition to the three papers that comprise my thesis, I have a pair of on-going experimental projects co-authored with James Andreoni. In “History Dependent Risk Preferences”, we experimentally evaluate theories in the behavioral literature which claim structural preference changes in risk preferences depending on prior outcomes. “GARP Power”, another work in progress with James Andreoni, develops and tests new methodology for estimating individual risk preferences more efficiently using a procedure which requires fewer questions asked of subjects, produces more accurate estimates of risk parameters, and provides a more powerful test of revealed preference violations.