

BENJAMIN A. OLKEN

MIT Department of Economics
The Morris and Sophie Chang Building
50 Memorial Drive Room E52-542
Cambridge MA 02142

email: bolken@mit.edu
website: web.mit.edu/bolken
phone: (617) 253-6833

DATE OF BIRTH: April 1975

CITIZENSHIP: United States

EDUCATION

DATE	DEGREE	INSTITUTION
2004	Ph.D. Economics	Harvard University
1997	B.A. <i>summa cum laude</i> Mathematics; Ethics, Politics and Economics	Yale University

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2020 – Jane Berkowitz Carlton and Dennis William Carlton Professor of Microeconomics
MIT Department of Economics

2012 – Director, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)

2012 – 2020 Professor of Economics, MIT Department of Economics

2008 – 2012 Associate Professor with Tenure, MIT Department of Economics

2005 – 2008 Junior Fellow, Harvard Society of Fellows

VISITING POSITIONS

2015 – Guest Investigator, Woods Hole Oceanographic Institution

2015 – 2016 Visiting Professor of Economics, Harvard Department of Economics

2010 – 2011 Visiting Associate Professor of Economics, University of Chicago Booth School

2005 – 2008 Visiting Scholar, MIT Department of Economics and Jameel Poverty Action Lab

NON-ACADEMIC POSITIONS

2019 – Co-Director, Development Economics Program, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)

2012 – Co-Scientific Director, Abdul Latif Jameel Poverty Action Lab Southeast Asia

2014 – Board of Directors Member and Fellow, Bureau for Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD)

2016 – Research Affiliate, International Growth Centre (IGC)

2011 – Research Fellow, Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR)

2010 – Member of Board of Directors and Executive Committee, Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)

2009 – Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)

2019 – 2021 Director, MIT Indonesia Seed Funds

2017 – 2018 Development Economics Advisory Committee Member, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)

2010 – 2019 Co-Chair, Political Economy and Governance, Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)

2010 – 2014 Fellow, Bureau for Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD)

2005 – 2010 Affiliate, Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL)
 2006 – 2010 Affiliate, Bureau for Economic Analysis of Development (BREAD)
 2006 – 2011 Research Affiliate, Centre for Economic Policy Research (CEPR)
 2005 – 2009 Faculty Research Fellow, National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER)
 2001 – 2008 Consultant, The World Bank, Jakarta Office
 1998 – 1999 Business Analyst, McKinsey and Company, New York

FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND INVITED LECTURES

2019 Master Lecture, NBER Summer Institute Development Economics Meetings
 Keynote Address, LACEA / LAMES, Puebla, Mexico
 Sadli Lecture, Jakarta, Indonesia
 Keynote Lecture, Mubiyarto Policy Forum, Yogyakarta, Indonesia
 2017 PEGNet Best Practice Award
 2015 Keynote Address, LACEA, Santa Cruz, Bolivia
 2014 Best Advisor, Graduate Economics Association, MIT
 2005 – 2008 Junior Fellow, Harvard Society of Fellows
 2005 Review of Economic Studies Tour (Declined)
 2004 – 2005 Health and Aging Post-Doctoral Fellow, National Bureau of Economic Research
 2003 – 2004 Justice, Welfare, and Economics Fellowship, Harvard University
 2001 – 2002 Social Science Research Council Fellowship in Applied Economics
 1998 – 2003 National Science Foundation Graduate Student Fellowship
 1997 – 1998 Henry Luce Scholar, The Castle Group, Jakarta

EDITORIAL POSITIONS

2020 – Editor, American Economic Journal: Applied Economics
 2016 – 2019 Co-Editor, American Economic Journal: Applied Economics
 2013 – 2016 Board of Reviewing Editors, Science
 2012 – Associate Editor, Review of Economics and Statistics
 2010 – Associate Editor, Journal of Development Economics

PUBLICATIONS

Forthcoming “The Challenges of Universal Health Insurance in Developing Countries: Experimental Evidence from Indonesia’s National Health Insurance” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Amy Finkelstein, Rema Hanna, Arianna Ornaghi, and Sudarno Sumarto). American Economic Review, forthcoming.

“Cycles of Fire? Politics and Forest Burning in Indonesia” (with Clare Balboni, Robin Burgess, Anton Heil, and Jonathan Old.) AEA Papers & Proceedings 111, May 2011, 111, pp 415-419.

“Comparison of Knowledge and Information-Seeking Behavior After General COVID-19 Public Health Messages and Messages Tailored for Black and Latinx Communities: A Randomized Controlled Trial” (with Marcella Alsan, Fatima Cody Stanford, Abhijit Banerjee, Emily Breza, Arun G. Chandrasekhar, Sarah Eichmeyer, Paul Goldsmith-Pinkham, Lucy Ogbu-Nwobodo, Carlos Torres, Anirudh Sankar, Pierre-Luc Vautrey, and Esther Duflo). Annals of Internal Medicine 174, April 2021, pp. 484-492.

2020 “Cumulative Impacts of Conditional Cash Transfer Programs: Experimental Evidence from Indonesia.” (with Nur Cahyadi, Rema Hanna, Rizal Adi Prima, Elan Satriawan, and

Ekki Syamsulhakim). American Economic Journal: Economic Policy 12 (4), November 2020, pp. 88-110.

“The (lack of) Distortionary Effects of Proxy-Means Tests: Results from a Nationwide Experiment in Indonesia.” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, and Sudarno Sumarto). Journal of Public Economics Plus 1, 2020.

“Banerjee, Duflo, Kremer, and the Rise of Modern Development Economics.” Scandinavian Journal of Economics 122 (3), July 2020.

“The Development Effects of the Extractive Colonial Economy: The Dutch Cultivation System in Java.” (with Melissa Dell). Review of Economic Studies 87 (1), January 2020, pp 164-203.

2019 “Designing Anti-Poverty Programs in Emerging Economies in the 21st Century: Lessons from Indonesia for the World.” Bulletin of Indonesian Economic Studies 55 (3), December 2019, pp 319-339.

“Does Elite Capture Matter? Local Elites and Targeted Welfare Programs in Indonesia” (with Vivi Alatas, Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, Ririn Purnamasari, and Matthew Wai-Poi). AEA Papers & Proceedings 109 (5), May 2019, pp. 334–339.

“Private Outsourcing and Competition: Subsidized Food Distribution in Indonesia” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, Jordan Kyle, and Sudarno Sumarto). Journal of Political Economy 127 (1), February 2019, pp 101-137.

“Firm Growth and Corruption: Empirical Evidence from Vietnam” (with Jie Bai, Seema Jayachandran, and Edmund Malesky). Economic Journal 129 (618), February 2019, pp. 651–677.

“Making Moves Matter: Experimental Evidence on Incentivizing Bureaucrats through Performance-Based Transfers.” (with Adnan Khan and Asim Khwaja). American Economic Review 109 (1), January 2019, pp. 237-270.

2018 “Universal Basic Incomes vs. Targeted Transfers: Anti-Poverty Programs in Developing Countries.” (with Rema Hanna). Journal of Economic Perspectives 32 (4), Fall 2018, pp 201-226.

“Tangible Information and Citizen Empowerment: Identification Cards and Food Subsidy Programs in Indonesia” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, Jordan Kyle, and Sudarno Sumarto). Journal of Political Economy 126 (2), April 2018, pp. 451-491.

2017 “Debunking the Stereotype of the Lazy Welfare Recipient: Evidence from Cash Transfer Programs Worldwide.” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, and Gabriel Kreindler). World Bank Research Observer 31 (1), August 2017, pp 155-184.

“Citywide effects of high-occupancy vehicle restrictions: Evidence from "three-in-one" in Jakarta.” (with Rema Hanna and Gabriel Kreindler). Science vol 357 (6346), 7 July 2017, pp. 89-93.

- “The Personnel Economics of the State.” (with Frederico Finan and Rohini Pande). in Handbook of Field Experiments, Abhijit Banerjee and Esther Duflo (eds), North Holland.
- 2016 “Hassles versus Prices,” Science, vol 353, issue 6302, 26 August 2016 (Perspectives Section), pp. 864-865.
- “Can Electronic Procurement Improve Infrastructure Provision? Evidence from Public Works in India and Indonesia.” (with Sean Lewis-Faupel, Yusuf Negggers, and Rohini Pande). American Economic Journal: Economic Policy, vol 8, issue 3, August 2016, pp 258-283.
- “Network Structure and the Aggregation of Information: Theory and Evidence from Indonesia” (with Vivi Alatas, Abhijit Banerjee, Arun Chandrasekhar, and Rema Hanna). American Economic Review, vol 6, issue 7, July 2016, pp. 1663-1704.
- “Self-Targeting: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia.” (with Vivi Alatas, Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, Matthew Wai-Poi, and Ririn Purnamasari). Journal of Political Economy, vol 124, issue 2, April 2016, pp 371-427.
- “Tax Farming Redux: Experimental Evidence on Performance Pay for Tax Collectors” (with Adnan Khan and Asim Khwaja). Quarterly Journal of Economics, volume 131, issue 1, February 2016, pp 219-271.
- 2015 “Promises and Perils of Pre-Analysis Plans.” Journal of Economic Perspectives, volume 29, issue 3, Summer 2015, pp 61-80.
- 2014 “Should Aid Reward Performance? Evidence from a field experiment on health and education in Indonesia.” (with Junko Onishi and Susan Wong). American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, vol 6, issue 4, October 2014, pp. 1-34.
- “What Do We Learn from the Weather? The New Climate-Economy Literature” (with Benjamin F. Jones and Melissa Dell). Journal of Economic Literature, vol 52, issue 3, September 2014, pp 740-798.
- “The Missing ‘Missing Middle’” (with Chang-Tai Hsieh). Journal of Economic Perspectives, vol 28, issue 3, Summer 2014, pp. 89-108.
- 2012 “The Political Economy of Deforestation in the Tropics” (with Robin Burgess, Matthew Hansen, Peter Potapov, and Stefanie Sieber). Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol 127, issue 4, November 2012, pp. 1707-1754.
- “Temperature Shocks and Economic Growth: Evidence from the Last Half Century” (with Melissa Dell and Benjamin F. Jones) American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics, vol. 4, issue 3, July 2012, pp. 66-95.
- “Corruption in Developing Countries” (with Rohini Pande). Annual Review of Economics, vol 4, July 2012, pp 479-505.
- “Targeting the Poor: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia” (with Vivi Alatas, Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, and Julia Tobias). American Economic Review, vol 104, issue 2, June 2012, pp. 1206-1240.

- 2011 “Informal Taxation” (with Monica Singhal), American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, vol. 3, issue 4, October 2011, pp. 1-28
- 2010 “Direct Democracy and Local Public Goods: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia” American Political Science Review, vol. 104, issue 2, May 2010, pp. 243-267
- “Climate Shocks and Exports” (with Benjamin F. Jones) American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings, vol. 100, issue 2, May 2010, pp. 454-459
- 2009 “Do TV and Radio Destroy Social Capital? Evidence from Indonesian Villages” American Economic Journal: Applied Economics, vol. 1, issue 4, October 2009, pp. 1-35
- “Corruption Perceptions vs. Corruption Reality” Journal of Public Economics, vol. 93, issue 7, August 2009, pp. 950-964
- “Hit or Miss? The Effect of Assassinations on Institutional Change and War” (with Benjamin F. Jones) American Economic Journal: Macroeconomics, vol. 1, issue 2, July 2009, pp. 55-87
- “The Simple Economics of Extortion: Evidence from Trucking in Aceh” (with Patrick Barron) Journal of Political Economy, vol. 117, issue 3, June 2009, pp. 417-452
- “Temperature and Income: Reconciling New Cross-Sectional and Panel Estimates” (with Melissa Dell and Benjamin F. Jones) American Economic Review Papers and Proceedings, vol. 99, issue 2, May 2009, pp. 198-204
- “A Biological Model of Unions” (with Michael Kremer) American Economic Journal – Applied Economics, vol. 1, issue 2, April 2009, pp. 150-175
- 2008 “The Anatomy of Start-Stop Growth” (with Benjamin F. Jones) Review of Economics and Statistics, vol. 90, issue 3, August 2008, pp. 582-587
- 2007 “Monitoring Corruption: Evidence from a Field Experiment in Indonesia” Journal of Political Economy, vol. 115, issue 2, April 2007, pp. 200-249
- 2006 “Corruption and the Costs of Redistribution: Micro Evidence from Indonesia” Journal of Public Economics, vol. 90, issue 4-5, May 2006, pp. 853-870
- 2005 “Do Leaders Matter? National Leadership and Growth since World War II” (with Benjamin F. Jones) Quarterly Journal of Economics, vol. 120, issue 3, August 2005, pp. 835-864
- “Revealed Community Equivalence Scales” Journal of Public Economics, vol. 89, issue 2-3, February 2005, pp. 545-566

WORKING PAPERS

- 2021 “Tax Administration vs. Tax Rates: Evidence from Corporate Taxation in Indonesia” (with M. Chatib Basri, Mayara Felix, and Rema Hanna). May 2021. Prior version: NBER Working Paper #26150. Conditionally Accepted, American Economic Review.
- “Food vs. Food Stamps: Evidence from an At-Scale Experiment in Indonesia” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Rema Hanna, Elan Satriawan, and Sudarno Sumarto). March 2021. NBER Working Paper #28641.
- “The Origins and Control of Forest Fires in the Tropics” (with Clare Balboni and Robin Burgess). March 2021.
- 2020 “Messages on COVID-19 prevention in India increased symptoms reporting and adherence to preventive behaviors among 25 million recipients with similar effects on non-recipient members of their communities.” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Marcella Alsan, Emily Breza, Arun G. Chandrasekhar, Abhijit Chowdhury, Esther Duflo and Paul Goldsmith-Pinkham). July 2020
- “Designing Effective Celebrity Messaging: Results from a Nationwide Twitter Experiment on Public Health in Indonesia.” (with Vivi Alatas, Arun Chandrasekhar, Markus Mobius, and Cindy Paladines). July 2020. Earlier version: NBER WP 25589.
- “In Praise of Moderation: Suggestions for the Scope and Use of Pre-Analysis Plan for RCTs in Economics.” (with Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, Amy Finkelstein, Lawrence F. Katz and Anja Sautmann) April 2020. NBER Working Paper #26993.
- 2019 “The Brazilian Amazon's Double Reversal of Fortune.” (with Robin Burgess and Francisco Costa). NBER Working Paper #24861. August 2019.

Updated June 2021