CV as PDF; see web hosted version here

Dr. David Reinstein

Founder and Co-Director, The Unjournal

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Background: I am the founder and co-director of The Unjournal, a grant-funded nonprofit (over $650k in funding from Survival and Flourishing Fund and others). We commission experts to publicly evaluate and rate research. We aim to make impactful research more rigorous, make academic work more useful, support open science, open access, and transparency, and improve peer-review, helping align research incentives with truth-seeking and social value. We focus on research in economics, policy, and other quantitative social science with potential for global impact. See our output at unjournal.pubpub.org (55+ evaluation packages and 110+ expert evaluations published).

I am an Economist with 25 years experience at UC Berkeley, the University of Essex, the University of Exeter, Rethink Priorities, and in other consulting and teaching roles. My work has involved economics and quantitative social-science research, sharing research tools, and disseminating and promoting the impact of my research; as well as teaching (at undergraduate, postgraduate, and professional/executive levels), research supervision, and educational administration and entrepreneurship. I completed my Ph.D. under the supervision of Professor Emmanuel Saez at the University of California, Berkeley in 2006. I have published a range of peer-reviewed research in journals such as the Journal of Public Economics and The Journal of Industrial Economics, with over 1500 academic citations. I have done consulting and impact work involving behavioral economics, lab, field (A/B testing) and natural experimentation, panel-data econometrics and data science, game theory and mechanism design, and the practical applications of these. I am an active supporter of open, robust, replicable and collaborative science, of the use of data science tools in Economics (e.g., Quarto/R-Markdown dynamic documents), and of effective charitable giving.

In 2021 I left my secure academic post:

1. To pursue greater impact, as a Senior Economist at Rethink Priorities, a think tank "dedicated to figuring out the best ways to make the world a better place."
2. To focus on practical, openly-shared research on motivating and 'marketing' effective giving, and impactful career and life choices (grant-funded projects: barriers to effective charitable giving, innovations in fundraising, and the Effective Altruism Marketing Team).
3. To build tools and programs promoting open, collaborative, robust, useful, and impactful research outside of, and in supplement to traditional institutions. In particular, I founded The Unjournal. We commission research for evaluation and rating, to make impactful research more rigorous & vice-versa. We aim to improve peer-review, helping align research incentives with truth-seeking and social value, and support transparency and open science. We focus on research in economics, policy, and other quantitative social science with potential for global impact. See our output at unjournal.pubpub.org.

Research interests, work and goals:

(i) the determinants and motivators of (effective) charitable giving and the influence of effectiveness information on choices,

(ii) measuring social, psychological, and institutional influences on life choices and consumer behavior, and

(iii) building and measuring tools and policies aiming to improve social outcomes.

I combine microeconomic modeling, analysis of observational data, and field experiments and trials to bring evidence to a variety of interconnected questions, and provide tools for philanthropists, nonprofit organisations, governments, and managers.

I work to produce and encourage open and collaborative research, learning, and positive impact outside of traditional academic settings, and to share tools, skills, and insights from Economics, Psychology, Experimental Design, Statistics and Data Science.

Education: University of California at Berkeley, Ph.D., Economics (2006), supervisor: Professor Emmanuel Saez; George Washington University, B.S. Economics (1998)

Research Interests: Applied Econometrics and data analysis, Microeconomics, Public Economics, Other-regarding Behavior and Philanthropy, Psychology and Economics, Experimental Economics (lab and field), Economics of Education, Public Policy, Meta-science

Strengths

Economic analysis: Behavioral economics, game theory, mechanism design, impact assessment, applications of these

Econometrics, statistics, modeling: Causal inference, predictive and explanatory modeling, analysis, hypothesis testing, machine learning/statistical learning, calibrated uncertainty, Bayesian and decision-relevant approaches

Data cleaning, analysis and visualisation

Experiments (i.e, randomized controlled trials or A/B testing): design, scoping, simulation and data-driven power-analysis, efficient treatment assignment, analysis, open-science approaches

Writing: Technical, academic, scientific, policy reports; non-technical, popular and journalistic; dynamic documents and presentations

Project design, planning and organization

Designing and teaching professional and academic courses

Developing innovative solutions to business and social problems using insights from Economics and Psychology, e.g.,

- Give if you win
- Should we help companies tailor prices to your wage packet?
- Conditionally anonymous environments and 'losing-face'

Positions

2022 - Present Founder and Co-Director, The Unjournal

2021 - 2024 Director, Effective Altruism Marketing Team (no longer running trials; resources remain public)

2021 - 2023 Senior Economist, Rethink Priorities

2021 - 2024 Visiting Assistant Professor, University of Maastricht

2016 - 2021 Senior Lecturer, Department of Economics, University of Exeter Business School.

2006-2015 Lecturer (Assistant Professor equivalent), permanency granted 2011, Department of Economics, University of Essex.

2004-5 LECG Consulting, Emeryville, CA, USA. Senior Consulting Intern.

1999-2005 PhD student at University of California at Berkeley; various research and teaching roles.

1998-1999 CNA (Center for Naval Analyses) Corporation, Resource Analysis Division, Alexandria, VA. Research Specialist.

1998 Congressional Budget Office, Special Studies Division, Washington, DC. Economics research intern (paid).

Entrepreneurial and Impact Projects

The Unjournal: Organizing and funding 'public journal-independent evaluation' of research relevant to global priorities; info.unjournal.org, knowledge base, Our evaluations. Funders: Survival and Flourishing Fund ($565k, 2023), EA Funds ($40k for Pivotal Questions pilot, 2024), ACX/Long-Term Future Fund (initial pilot, 2022). **55+ evaluation packages and 110+ expert evaluations published**.

Effective Altruism Market Testing team (EAMT) (directed; no longer running trials, resources remain public): Public 'gitbook' action and reporting space, funder: Longview philanthropy

Innovations in fundraising: ESRC-funded impact project, partners including the Centre for Effective Altruism, Giving for Impact, City Philanthropy, Center for Advanced Hindsight; see Give if you win and innovationsinfundraising.org (archived)

University of Essex (2014): Founded joint undergraduate program with SKKU Global Economics (South Korea)

Book, slides and web (Moodle) tools: "Researching and writing for Economics students"

Web pages and projects

Academic page (Wordpress), LinkedIn, ResearchGate, Google scholar, Bluesky, OSF (Open Science Framework)

EA Market Testing team (past project; resources remain public)

Unjournal: High-status 'peer evaluation & rating' of open project relevant to global priorities

Innovations in Fundraising research hub

"Give if you win"

BITSS catalyst, OSF: registered experiments and projects

GitHub (a variety of projects and shared tools)

Independent consulting projects and partnerships

Profusion (data consultancy): Helping to build and organize Profusion's 'Data Academy' educational program, project scoping/consulting

"Evidence on Framing, Language, and (Retirement) Savings Behaviour": Report for TeamSpirit PR on behalf of large financial services client

Advisory boards, collaboration and affiliations: Donor's Voice Academic advisory board, Momentum app (archived), Giving Alpha (archived), Giving for impact academic review committee, X-econ, Revolutionizing philanthropy research consortium / Knowledge infrastructure OSF link

Publications and research projects

"AI-assisted teams outperform AI-led teams but not human-only teams in assessing research reproducibility in quantitative social science" (Brodeur, A. et al.; large multi-team study, one of many co-authors). Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences 123(22): e2524747123, 2026.

"Measuring Wild Animal Welfare Attitudes: The Attitudes Towards Wild Animal Welfare Scale" (with Willem W. A. Sleegers, David Moss, William H. B. McAuliffe, and Daniela R. Waldhorn). Psychology of Human-Animal Intergroup Relations 4: e17951, 2025.

"Empathic and Numerate Giving: The Joint Effects of Victim Images and Charity Evaluations" (with Robin Bergh (Harvard); Social Psychological and Personality Science 12(3): 407–416, 2021. (Pre-print)

"Ex-ante Commitments to "Give if you Win" Exceed Donations After a Win" (with Christian Kellner [Southampton], Gerhard Riener [Dusseldorf]); Journal of Public Economics 169: 109–127, 2019.

"Losing Face" (open-access version) with Thomas Gall, Southampton. Oxford Economic Papers 72(1): 164–190, 2020

"The Economics of the Gift" in: Gift giving and the "embedded" economy in the ancient world, edited by Filippo Carlà and Maja Gori, Universitätsverlag Winter Heidelberg, 2014, pp. 83-99.

"Anonymous Rituals" (with David Hugh-Jones, UEA) Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, 81, 478, 2012.

"Decomposing Desert and Tangibility Effects in a Charitable Giving Experiment" (with Riener). Experimental Economics, 1-12, 2012.

"Reputation and Influence in Charitable Giving: An Experiment" (with Riener). Theory and Decision, pp. 1-23, 2012.

"Efficient Consumer Altruism and Fair Trade Products" (With Joon Song, Sungkyunkwan University). Journal of Economics and Management Strategy, Volume 21 Number 1, Spring 2012.

"Does One Contribution Come at the Expense of Another? Empirical Evidence on Substitution Among Charitable Donations." The B.E. Journal of Economic Analysis & Policy, Vol. 11: Iss. 1 (Advances), Article 40, 2011.

"The Influence of Expert Reviews on Consumer Demand for Experience Goods: A Case Study of Movie Critics" with Professor C. M. Snyder, Journal of Industrial Economics, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 27-51, March 2005

Ongoing and recent projects (dynamic documents)

Impact of impact treatments on giving: field experiments and synthesis

"EA Market testing data analysis" (Quarto dynamic document) (EAMT trials concluded; analysis remains public)

Increasing effective charitable giving: The puzzle, what we know, what we need to know next (with various collaborators) (Mostly on hiatus)

Working papers

"Does Impact Information Affect Charitable Giving? A Field Experiment with 170,000 Red Cross Donors" (with Deborah Kistler and Jan Schmitz), preregistered field experiment with the International Committee of the Red Cross, draft in progress

"When Does Charity Effectiveness Matter to Donors? The Role of Ratings and Expectations about Cost-Effectiveness" (with Janek Kretschmer and Paul Smeets), SSRN working paper, 2025

"Just Ask the Model: One-Shot LLM Research Evaluation and Structured Expert Review" (with V. Klotzbücher, L. Pacchiardi, and T. M. Zhang), working paper, 2026 (project workspace). An intermediate draft; the text is largely AI-generated under the authors' direction.

"A Comment on 'The Political Consequences of Green Policies: Evidence from Italy'" (with Florian Caro, Asher Labovich, Chidubem Okechi, and Maria Clara Rodrigues), I4R Discussion Paper 168, 2024

"Listen to the market, hear the best policy decision, but don't always choose it," (with Joon Song, SKKU)

"Does one contribution come at the expense of another? Empirical evidence on substitution between charitable donations" (preparing updated version based on new lab and field experiments with Gerhard Riener, Dusseldorf and Danielle Vance-McMullen, DePaul)

"Exclude the bad actors, or learn about the group", (preparing updated version based on new experiments with David Hugh-Jones and Hannes Titeca)

Unjournal evaluation summaries: 50+ evaluation summaries written or co-written as evaluation manager (unjournal.pubpub.org)

Other projects: "The impact of effectiveness information on fundraising" (Field experiment, with Dean Karlan [Northwestern], Janek Kretschmer, and Paul Smeets); "Peer effects on donations in social fundraising" (Field experiment with Oska Fentem and Ben Grodeck [Monash]); "Impact of impact information on giving: field experiments and synthesis" (with Scott Dickinson [Exeter] and Kiki Koutmeridou [Donor's voice]); "The Returns to Higher Education Institutions in the Netherlands: Estimates Based on Randomized Assignment" (With Matthias Parey [Surrey] and Nathan Vellekoop [Toronto]); "Does where you go to university determine where you will live afterwards?" (With Matthias Parey [Surrey]; "Does laboratory 'real effort' really respond to incentives?"; "Crowding-out, Timing, Substitution, and Misallocation of Aid to Natural Disasters"; "Price Discrimination by Income in Theory and Practice"; "New Horizons for Data-Sharing, Transparency, and Verification in Experimental Social Science" (with Antoine Malezieux)

Selected non-academic essays and outreach

See my posts on the EA Forum, such as EA Survey 2020 series: Donation Data and Marketing Messages Trial for GWWC Giving Guide Campaign

Should we help companies tailor prices to your wage packet? (The Conversation, 2015)

How to win in the marathon (Society Central, 2013; archived copy)

Charitable Giving: Applying and testing research insights

Occasional posts, regular engagement on the EA Forum

Podcasts/podcast involvement:

Reproducibilitea episode: "Revolutionizing Scientific Publishing with David Reinstein" (2023)

Wyclif's Pod, pilot episode 1: The Unjournal (2024)

"Found in the Struce"

The EA Forum podcast (co-founder, regular reader, assisted transition to professional narrated version, later moved to AI narration)

Profusion data podcast

Recorded talks:

BITSS Annual Meeting 2025, lightning talk (2025)

"Journal-independent public evaluation and The Unjournal" (2024)

"The Unjournal: Bridging the gap between EA and academia" (EA Anywhere, 2024)

Teaching and university administration

University of Exeter: Co-founded undergraduate Economics dissertation module (see web-book), Economic Principles and Policy, Intermediate Microeconomics, Microeconomics (MSc)web-book.

University of Essex: Undergraduate Economics Project Director (including employer-linked projects), Economics of Incentives (MSc), Public Economics, Advanced Microeconomics: Game theory and modeling

University of California (Berkeley): Principles of microeconomics, Microeconomics and strategy (MBA)

Other: Behavioral Economics and the Economics of Altruism (SKKU international summer school), Economics of the UK Welfare State (Chinese and Japanese visiting delegations)

Director, ESSExLab 2014-15

Student-staff liaison coordinator, director of mentoring program, seminar organizer

PhD Chair: Stefano Alderighi, Chiara Cavaglia, Claudio Deiana, Robert Nistico, Eugenia Suarez Moran

Editorial Boards and Affiliations

Scientific Data (Nature), editorial board

Catalyst, Berkeley Initiative for Transparency in the Social Sciences

Awards and Grants

2024 EA Funds grant ($40k) to support The Unjournal's Pivotal Questions project pilot

2023 Survival and Flourishing Fund grant to The Unjournal ($565k), publicly shared application

2022 ACX/Long-Term Future Fund grant to pilot The Unjournal, to organize and fund 'public journal-independent evaluation' of EA-relevant/adjacent research, encouraging this research by making it easier for academics and EA-organization researchers to get feedback and credible ratings. Project link

2021 Independent grant to pursue research into motivators and barriers to effective giving, and the impact of information about effectiveness on giving choices

2017 Giving for Impact grant

October 2016 ESRC Active Engagement Award (Impact Acceleration): Innovations in Fundraising

July 2016 Above and Beyond award for service to BID research cluster (Exeter)

June 2016 ESRC Impact Cultivation Award: Innovations in Fundraising

July 2015 British Academy/Leverhulme Small Research Grant: "Experiments on Political Ideology, Empathy, and Charitable Giving" (Co-investigator: Patrick Lown)

February 2014 British Council Researcher Links: "Listen to the market, hear the best policy decision, but don't always choose it."

April 2013 Leverhulme Trust Visiting Fellowships Grant Scheme (Co-investigator 1, PI: Nadine Chlass)

February 2013 Data Without Borders Grant (with Mathias Parey). Title: "The Impact of a University: Evidence from Admissions Lotteries, and Implications for Higher Education in Europe"

May 2012 Building partnerships for Knowledge Exchange Grant for work with the UK Cabinet's Behavioural Insights Team on randomized controlled trials involving Payroll Giving.

December 2011 Conference co-organizer, Academy of Sciences of Heidelberg, Germany, "From Social Altruism to Commercial Exchange: Gift Economy and the Embedded Economy in the Ancient World", (23 Feb. 2012)

`February 2010` British Academy Small Research Grant. "Reputation and Influence in Charitable Giving"

`July 2007` British Academy Small Research Grant. "Experimental Evidence on Charitable Giving"

`June 2007` Teaching and Learning Innovation Fund (TALIF) award

`2005-2006` X-lab Competitive Grant, X-lab Pilot Grant, University of California, Berkeley

Invited Seminar and Conference Presentations

BITSS Annual meeting (2025), Institute for Applied Economics and Social Value, WZB Berlin, IMEBESS workshop, Center for Advanced Hindsight, EA Global London, Loughborough University London, Science of Philanthropy Initiative, Advances in Field Experiments, London Experimental Workshop, First Conference on Psychological Game Theory, GW4 Game Theory Workshop, University of Exeter, M-Bees, Journées d'Economie Publique Louis-André Gérard-Varet, University of Southern California, Sheffield, TWI/Konstanz, EC-JRC Vaccination Workshop (Ispra), SKKU Seoul, FUR conference, APET conference, SUNY Albany, UC Santa Barbara, Cal State SLO, University of Queensland, University of New South Wales, Royal Economics Society 2013, ESRC "Generosity and Well-Being" Workshop 2013, British Academy "Nudge and Beyond" Conference, University of Oxford, Workshop on the Determinants and Implications of Prosocial Behavior (Southampton); University of St. Andrews, ALISS-INRA (Paris),IAREP workshop (Kent), University of Amsterdam, University of Nottingham, Erasmus University, European Meeting of the Econometric Society, ESI Workshop (Max Planck), Warwick University, University of Bristol (CMPO), University of Guanajuato, University of San Francisco, UC Berkeley, EARIE 2008 – Toulouse, University of East Anglia, Bocconi University, University of Essex, IMT Lucca, Italy, Catholic University of Portugal, Cornerstone Research, ARNOVA (nonprofit research) conference 2006, Economic Science Association (ESA) world meeting 2007, 2008, 2012, 2016.

Referee and Editorial Activities

Sage Open, Environmental and Resource Economics, BE Press, Economic Journal (4X), Empirical Economics, European Economic Review (2X), International Game Theory Review, International Journal of Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Marketing, International Tax and Public Finance, Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics (2X), Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization (2X), Journal of Economic Psychology (2x), Journal of Economics and Management Strategy (2X), Journal of Industrial Organization, Journal of International Economics, Journal of Public Economics (5X), Journal of the Economic Science Association, Nonprofit and Voluntary Sector Quarterly (3x), NSF grant, Rand Journal of Economics, Review of Economics and Statistics (2x), Review of Economic Studies (2X), Scientific Data (Nature), Theory and Decision, Thomson-Reuters, UK ESRC grant.

Refereeing policy: In future, I will be selective in agreeing to review papers submitted to non-open-access journals run by for-profit publishers. I will generally be happy to review and evaluate work for non-profit & open access journals, archives, and networks.

Software/tech

AI and agentic tools (daily): Claude Code and OpenAI Codex, used about equally, for research pipelines, data work, writing, websites and operations. I build custom skills, hooks, subagents and MCP integrations (Notion, Coda, Gmail, Slack) and run scheduled agent jobs. LLM APIs (OpenAI, Google Gemini) for structured research-evaluation pipelines (LLM research-evaluation project).

Data, statistics and programming: R (tidyverse), Stata, SAS; Python and SQL (SQLite, Datasette), mostly through AI coding agents

Version control and project management: Git/GitHub, Coda (including its API), Notion

Presentation, documents, web content: Quarto, Markdown/R-markdown, Pandoc, Bookdown, Reveal.js, LaTeX, Hugo/blogdown, Netlify, PubPub, Gitbook

Content and input: ViM, Obsidian, Hypothes.is, MS Office and Google suites

Systems: Command line (Bash), Mac (launchd/cron automation), Linux servers (Linode), Windows

Familiarity: Matlab, Z-tree/O-tree, Qualtrics, Airtable, n8n

Personal Information

Citizenship: USA, UK; spouse of EU citizen

Preferred and frequented locations: Western Massachusetts (home), West of Boston, Exeter UK, Upstate NY, Tenerife, Berkeley CA, LA, Leiden, Maastricht, Seoul

Hobbies: Being a jazz snob, musician (trombone and tuba), hiking, outdoor swimming/snorkeling/scuba

Languages: English (native), Spanish, Portuguese