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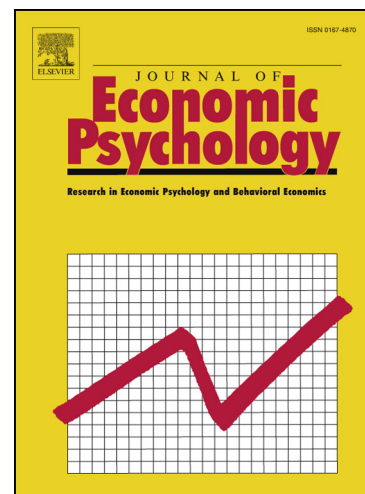
Stigma Mitigation and the Importance of Redundant Treatments

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Stigma Mitigation and the Importance of Redundant Treatments

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Disgust can evoke strong behavioral responses. Sometimes these extreme visceral responses can lead to stigmatization—an overreaction to a risk. In fact, disgust may be so inhibiting that it leads people to refuse to consume completely safe items, such as treated drinking water, leading to important economic and policy implications. Using economic experiments, we provide a measure of the behavioral response to disgust. Our findings suggest that when monetary incentives are provided, the behavioral response may have been exaggerated by previous studies that have relied on survey methods. Furthermore, mitigation steps successfully reduce the stigma behavior. In fact, the results suggest that stigma is primarily reduced not by a specific mitigation step taken but by how many steps are taken consecutively. These results have important implications for policies addressing issues such as the global shortage of drinking water. Some efforts to resolve the shortage have involved recycled water that is completely safe to drink but is often rejected because of reactions of disgust.

Disgust | Stigma Mitigation | Risk | Experimental Economics
JEL C91, D81

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