Personally, I participated with a small group (Ferrari, Gati, Evers-Kiebooms, Ubel, Wills) discussing the problems of teaching about clinical decision making, to trainees who will become clinicians, or who are already practicing. Issues we discussed included that this audience, though highly motivated to make good decisions, is not particularly interested in learning about how to do research on decision making. I would love to hear from others who teach JDM concepts to such students. I hope to discuss this with people attending the Society for Medical Decision Making meetings (San Francisco, October 21-24, www.smdm.org).

Rob Hamm, Robert-hamm@ouhsc.edu, 405 271 5362 ext 32306.

Book review: Not so Freakonomics

Steven D. Levitt and Stephen J. Dubner, *Freakonomics: A Rogue Economist Explains the Hidden Side of Everything* (New York, New York: William Morrow, 2005).

By Gregory Todd Jones[†] & Reidar Hagtvedt[††]

Steven Levitt is clearly a bright guy. Armed with an undergraduate degree in economics from Harvard, a Ph.D. in economics from M.I.T., and a three year stint as a junior fellow in the Harvard Society of Fellows, Levitt has set up shop at the University of Chicago where he has produced an impressive record of creative scholarship that helped him earn the prestigious John Bates Clark Medal, which is awarded every other year to the best American economist under the age of forty.

Levitt marshals his impressive pedigree and a decade or so of research to deliver for readers of *Freakonomics* an astounding claim that certainly impacts judgment and decision making: "Incentives are the cornerstone of modern life." The problem is that this idea is not astounding at all. Certainly not "freak-ish" or "rogue-ish." In fact, it would be hard to be more conventional. The actual leading edge of economic research explores behavioral explanations for why humans fail to rationally integrate incentives into decision making. The highly multidisciplinary field of neuroeconomics seeks anatomical and biochemical explanations for departures from economic rationality. As Richard Thaler predicted, *Homo Economicus* is evolving into *Homo Sapiens*.

In fairness, large portions of the book that summarize some of Levitt's academic research are quite interesting. Levitt provides empirical evidence of the agency problem that real estate commissions create, of cheating by teachers in public schools motivated by the Bush administration's No Child Left Behind, and of the very small impact that campaign expenditures have on election outcomes. He claims that much of what parents do to help their children be successful has, in fact, little impact. And in his most controversial claim, the claim that has armchair economists and the politically correct grumbling far and wide, Levitt suggests that the precipitous drop in crime during the 1990s is due, not to innovative policing or tough-minded law and order politics, but instead to the Supreme Court's legalization of abortion in *Roe v. Wade*. Levitt argues that *Roe* disproportionately affected poorer women, whose children, if not aborted, would have been more likely to become criminals in their early teens—coinciding with the early 1990s.

[†] Consortium on Negotiation and Conflict Resolution, Georgia State University College of Law.
[††] School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, Georgia Institute of Technology.

Unfortunately, each chapter of the book is wrapped in annoying excerpts from Stephen Dubner's *New York Times* profile of Levitt that originally sparked their association. Dubner is clearly smitten. It was he that dubbed Levitt a "rogue," a virtual superhero capable of "explor[ing] the hidden side of everything." At one point, he even characterizes Levitt as a "demigod." Such hyperbole would for most of us provoke embarrassment, made even worse by the fact that these writings appear in a text of which Levitt himself is the first author. Which leaves us wondering why Levitt would have agreed to such a project.

The explanatory note in the front of the book explains a lot. Responding to queries from publishers, Levitt is quoted as saying, "Write a book? I don't want to write a book." He should have stuck to his guns (and to his academic writings). Then again, with the *New York Times'* Dubner and the marketing department at William Morrow on the job (they even have a web site that sells Freakonomics t-shirts), the book has created quite a stir, and more importantly sold lots of copies. As we know, incentives matter.

Recent publications by SJDM members

Blackwell Handbook of Judgment and Decision Making
edited by Derek J. Koehler and Nigel Harvey

Contributors: David Over; Jonathan Baron; William M. Goldstein; Gerd Gigerenzer; Gideon Keren & Karl H. Teigen; John W. Payne & James R. Bettman; Jerome R. Busemeyer & Joseph G. Johnson; David A. Lagnado & Steven A. Sloman; Dale Griffin & Lyle Brenner; Craig R. M. McKenzie; David R. Shanks; Nicholas Epley; Neal J. Roese; Paul J. H. Schoemaker; Jennifer K. Phillips, Gary Klein, & Winston R. Sieck; Richard P. Larrick; Eldar Shafir & Robyn A. LeBoeuf; Christopher K. Hsee, Jiao Zhang & Junsong Chen; Dilip Soman; George Wu, Jiao Zhang, & Richard Gonzalez; Daniel Read; Yuval Rottenstreich & Suzanne Shu; Robert D. Sorkin, Shenghua Luan & Jesse Itzkowitz; Simon Gächter; Incheol Choi, Jong An Choi, & Ara Norenzayan; Markus Glaser, Markus Nöth, & Martin Weber; Natalia Kotchetova & Steven Salterio; Jeffrey J. Rachlinski; Gretchen B. Chapman; Nick Pidgeon & Robin Gregory.

"What I like so much about this book is that so many of the chapters are written by young scholars with fresh perspectives and new ideas." --Richard H. Thaler, University of Chicago

"....Exactly what a good handbook should be; comprehensive, representative, authoritative, authentic and well-written" --Kenneth R. Hammond, University of Colorado

For more information about the *Handbook*, including a table of contents, see:
http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/Book.asp?ref=1405107464

Shih-Kung Lai recently wrote a paper entitled "A Spatial Garbage Can Model," which has been accepted by Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design. In that paper, Shih-Kung tries to extend Cohen, March, and Olsen's garbage can model into a spatial context to simulate how urban development processes evolve. The main finding is that institutional constraints as manifested by structural relationships between problems and choice opportunities are more important than other