The U.S. Congress classified pizza as a vegetable for the purposes of satisfying fruit and vegetable quotas in public school lunches (Salzick 2013) during a nationally recognized childhood obesity crisis. In the following year’s spending bill, Congress prohibited the federal government from restricting the amount of salt in school lunches and created exceptions to whole grain requirements for pasta and tortillas (Pear 2014), despite extensive research linking high sodium and white flour to serious health and weight problems. These two legislative acts significantly impeded progress toward solving an urgent public health issue.

Faced with these types of limitations, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has focused its efforts to reform unhealthy eating habits primarily on the Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition. The center’s mandate is to conduct, sponsor, and disseminate research on food selection, with the objective of incorporating behavioral economics principles into the federal food programs, including the National School Lunch and School Breakfast Program, the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, and the Food Stamp Program. These programs primarily assist low-income individuals and disproportionately serve Blacks, Latinos, Indians, and other racially marginalized groups. The programs’ success therefore has the potential either to perpetuate or to reduce existing socioeconomic and racial health disparities, which contribute significantly to broader inequality.

Behavioral economics represents only one tool among many available to the government to combat obesity and improve health outcomes. For example, the USDA uses high-impact marketing strategies, such as partnerships with fast food companies, to increase consumption of subsidized commodities, which include dairy, corn, wheat, meat, and soy (Shanker 2015; Butler 2014; Fields 2004). These tactics depart significantly from the principles of choice architecture, which is a form of libertarian paternalism that focuses on the environments in which people make choices. Dividing food policy into three categories—hard paternalism, aggressive soft paternalism, and gentle soft paternalism—highlights the differences in the government’s approaches that depend on its objective. This categorization suggests that financial concerns, such as subsidies and industry goodwill, compel the use of strategies proven to influence consumer behavior. Health concerns, in contrast, tend to generate less impactful policies.

The Cornell Center’s studies indicate that nudging, a form of institutional design that seeks to alter behavior predictably without foreclosing options or dramatically changing costs, has the potential to influence food selection. These studies do not, however, demonstrate a significant link between nudging techniques and improved health outcomes. Further, even when experiments show that behavioral economics can positively alter food selection, the USDA has not widely implemented changes to school lunchrooms or other federal food programs accordingly. Nonetheless, the USDA continues to invest in behavioral economics research and favor gentle soft paternalism to boost health through nutrition.

This chapter begins by exploring the three different forms of paternalism available in the food policy arsenal, emphasizing the behavioral economics principles and studies of the Cornell Center. It then discusses the potential of nudging strategies to reduce obesity and improve health outcomes within a number of constraints. It interrogates the disproportionate harm these constraints inflict on socially marginalized communities and concludes by proposing a shift in food policy to a harder paternalistic framework.

**Paternalism in Food Policy**

The government employs a broad range of tactics to meet its nutritional, health, and subsidized commodity sales goals. Most of them represent some form of paternalism, the desire to influence or alter people’s behavior in their own self-interest. Other strategies reflect a mandate to create or sustain a market for subsidized commodities or to satisfy the demands of the food industry. Some paternalistic measures seek to alter the method of arriving at a choice (“means paternalism”), and others strive to affect the choice itself (“ends paternalism”) (Sunstein 2013, 1855–60). Paternalistic methods can be either “hard” or “soft” (Sunstein 2013, 1858–60). With hard paternalistic measures, the government makes the choice for the consumer, or creates significant penalties, usually economic, for making a different choice. Soft paternalism is libertarian; it preserves personal choice. Paternalistic strategies generally lie on a spectrum between these extremes.

This chapter divides soft paternalism into two further categories: aggressive and gentle. Aggressive soft paternalism motivates primarily through economic incentives, and includes marketing techniques such as creating and marketing new food products. Gentle soft paternalism seeks to alter behavior through information provision and other cognitive strategies, including nutrition labeling, public school lunchroom
design, and food payment method innovations. Both forms of soft paternalism strive for asymmetry, aiming to have little or no impact on fully rational individuals while creating opportunities for large gains for individuals who experience bounded rationality (Simon 2000). The negative effects of time, information, and cognitive processes on optimal decision-making create bounded rationality. Food decisions are particularly susceptible to bounded rationality because of the powerful motivations behind them, including hunger, sensory stimulation, and the desire for immediate gratification.

Gentle Soft Paternalism

Gentle soft paternalism in food policy consists primarily of nutrition labeling requirements, imposed through the Nutrition Labeling and Education Act (NLEA) and Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (PPACA), and research into choice architecture, through funding of the Cornell Center. The Cornell Center investigates the effects on student food selection of a variety of nudging techniques, including payment systems, pre-ordering, priming through the availability of "trigger foods" (foods that influence selection by their presence, even though they are not themselves selected), convenience, branding, and descriptive food naming (Cornell Center for Behavioral Economics in Child Nutrition 2014). This research relies on a number of behavioral economics observations that may affect food selection.

The foundational behavioral economics principles of the Cornell Center's project are as follows: (1) lack of self-control, resulting from a desire for immediate gratification or simple hunger, is an obstacle to healthy food selection; (2) people tend to select default options because they value what they already possess more highly than items they have not yet acquired; (3) people engage in mental accounting that inclines them to use up an amount designated for a certain type of purchase before deriving into another "account"; (4) people prefer items with fixed costs over ones with variable costs; (5) food decisions more often depend on emotional factors, such as stress and comfort, than on rational cognitive processing; and (6) environmental factors, including noise, lighting, and distractions, influence food choice (Just, Mancino, and Wansink 2007). Other psychological conditions that affect food selection are reactance, an aversion to choices that others appear to force on us (Wansink 2011), and self-attribution, the satisfaction associated with making our own decisions in our own best interests (Just and Wansink 2009).

Based on these underlying principles and insights, the Cornell Center's researchers design nudges intended to help students and other food program participants overcome their cognitive biases. One of these nudges is the preselection of food. Preselection counters struggles with self-control and impulsivity and allows students to make intellectual, instead of emotional, food choices (Gupta 2014; Hanks, Just, and Wansink 2013). Another nudge is the creation of a default option of fruit instead of fries in school lunchrooms (Just and Wansink 2009). For food stamp recipients, the center proposes designating some stamps exchangeable only for healthy foods, to take advantage of the mental accounting process (Just, Mancino, and Wansink 2007). In lunchrooms, permitting payment by prepaid debit cards for nutritious foods while allowing only cash payments for less healthy items promotes healthier choices (Wansink, Just, and Payne 2010). Displaying healthy foods prominently and accessibly appeals to positive emotional impulses (Just and Wansink 2009). Smaller tables combined with brighter lights can render the quality and amount of food consumed more salient, leading to a desire to choose better (Strobel and De Castro 2004).

The Cornell Center also tests the effects of eliminating some unhealthy choices altogether. One study removed chocolate milk from eleven school cafeterias in Oregon (Hanks, Just, and Wansink 2014). As a result, students in those schools drank 10% less milk overall and wasted 29% percent more milk. Their consumption of both sugar and calories decreased. Nonetheless, the study concludes that chocolate milk should remain in school cafeterias. It further recommends shifting the position of white milk to the front of the cafeteria and ensuring that one-third to one-half of the milk on display is white.

In another study, researchers sent an email containing a nutritional report card to the parents of twenty-seven students from kindergarten to twelfth grade in an upscale New York school (Wansink, Just, and Patterson 2012). The report informed parents how many fruits, vegetables, starches, milk, snacks, and a la carte items their children selected from the cafeteria every day for six weeks. The study compares the food choices of students whose parents received emails with a control group. Children whose parents received the report cards took 8% more servings of fruits and vegetables while chocolate chip cookie purchases by this group fell by 56% percent. The study concludes that nudging parents to influence their children's choices is easy, inexpensive, and effective.

Other studies demonstrate that convenience and branding affect food selection. For example, selling apple slices instead of whole apples increases apple sales (Wansink et al. 2013). Children select more apples when a character icon appears with the apple (Wansink, Just, and Payne 2012). Also, adults may be more willing to try new foods that have appealing descriptive names, such as "Satiny Chocolate Pudding" instead of "Chocolate Pudding" and "Grandma's Zucchini Cookies" instead of "Zucchini Cookies" (Wansink, Van Itterbeem, and Painter 2005). The Cornell Center views information as one of the key elements of food selection. This perspective accords with nutritional information's primacy in food policy. Under the PPACA, chain restaurants with more than twenty outlets must post calorie counts (21 U.S.C. §343(i)(5)(H)). The definition of "restaurant" includes vending machines, movie theaters, and grocery stores (Federal Register 79, no. 230 2014). These requirements bring food providers closer in line with food manufacturers, which must display a label titled "Nutrition Facts" listing calories, sugars, fat, saturated fat, vitamins A and C, calcium, iron, fiber, and carbohydrates on their products. Manufacturers may also voluntarily post other nutritional content.
Choice architecture and nutrition labeling are gentle soft paternalistic tactics because they impose minimal, if any, costs on consumers, institutions, and corporations, while unequivocally preserving the individual’s ability to make his or her own food choices.

Aggressive Soft Paternalism

Aggressive soft paternalism also maintains personal choice but creates strong incentives for individuals to make specific food selections through the regulation of taxes and advertising. Additionally, it seeks to influence consumers through marketing strategies employed to sell subsidized commodities, which involve substantial expenditures of taxpayer dollars. Aggressive soft paternalism has either a direct or indirect economic impact on consumers and businesses, as opposed to simply an emotional or behavioral one. These methods therefore tend to be more effective than the intellectual and cognitive appeals of genteel soft paternalism. The marketing of subsidized commodities, however, is not clearly paternalistic because it advances the government’s objective of promoting certain agricultural industries instead of the individual’s self-interest in good health. Nonetheless, to the extent that individuals’ interests are aligned with their government’s goals, these tactics are paternalistic because policies that advance the common good also benefit the individual, even if indirectly.

Several scholars advocate for the imposition of “junk food taxes” on either consumers or manufacturers to make healthy food relatively more affordable in comparison to and to correct for the artificially low cost of fast food resulting from agricultural subsidies. Although other countries, most notably Mexico, successfully use taxes to control harmful food consumption, the United States generally resists this type of measure (O’Connor 2016). In 2014, however, the City of Berkeley became the first municipality to impose a soda tax (Goetz 2014). Studies of this tax will indicate its potential efficacy in reducing soda consumption. Research to date demonstrates that significant price increases deter some Americans from unhealthy eating, but minor alterations in price do not affect consumer behavior (Golan, Mancino, and Unnevehr 2009). Manufacturers, however, may be more responsive than consumers to small changes in costs through taxation because of their scale of production.

Restrictions on food advertising, another form of aggressive soft paternalism, generate strong opposition from food companies, which argue that First Amendment commercial speech principles guarantee freedom in advertising. Thus, although countries such as England, Ireland, South Korea, Spain, and France restrict food advertising directed at children (World Cancer Research Fund International 2014), Congress has failed to pass similar bills modeled on World Health Organization guidelines and American Academy of Pediatrics recommendations. So far, organizations representing food corporations and advertising agencies that oppose these bills have lobbied successfully for self-regulation instead of government intervention. An exception to this trend is the proposed rule restricting the advertisement of specific products in school lunchrooms (Federal Register 79, no. 38 2014, 10693). These restrictions, however, would guide rather than foreclose companies’ advertising, by allowing, for example, ads for Diet but not regular Coca-Cola.

The USEA’s attempts to promote dairy consumption through marketing represent another form of aggressive soft paternalism. To reduce the surplus of high-fat milk resulting from the federal Dietary Guidelines’ advice to consume low-fat dairy products, the USDA used a dairy farmers’ check-off program to establish a marketing breach, DMI (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2010). DMI created the wildly successful twenty-year “Got Milk?” advertising campaign featuring celebrities with milk mustaches. It also entered into covert partnerships with fast food companies to devise new products with increased amounts of cheese, such as Dominos’ seven-cheese American Legends pizza line (Moss 2010). DMI additionally worked with supermarket chains to set up sampling displays of cheese products across the country.

Aggressive soft paternalistic strategies generally succeed at altering consumer behavior. That is why the industry strongly opposes their implementation when threatened with reduced sales, and the government seeks to hide its use of these tactics when they run against consumer interest.

Hard Paternalism

Bans and restrictions represent the hardest form of paternalism in food policy. Congress, state legislatures, and municipal bodies have overlapping authority to prohibit or limit food ingredients, based on their harmfulness to health or other reasons, such as import rules. Congress, however, is generally reluctant to regulate harmful foods. For example, in 2013, the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) proposed removing trans fats from its “generally recognized as safe” category. This proposal came more than fifteen years after medical research revealed that trans fats cause 7,000 deaths and 20,000 heart attacks in the United States every year (U.S. Food and Drug Administration 2013). Instead of responding to these discoveries with a ban, as other countries did, the FDA took the less aggressive path of imposing labeling requirements on products containing trans fats over a five-year span (U.S. Food and Drug Administration 2013).

The last time the FDA declared a food additive unsafe was in 1969, when it banned the artificial sweetener cyclamate due to its links to birth defects, bladder cancer, and liver damage (Pierson, Hsu, and Morin 2013). There are many food ingredients banned in other countries, however, that remain legal and in common usage in the United States, despite their links to serious health issues such as brain cancer, nerve cell deterioration, organ damage, infertility, and birth defects. These ingredients include petroleum-based artificial dyes, dextrin, brominated vegetable oil, potassium bromate, azodicarbonamide, butylated hydroxyanisole (BHA), butylated hydroxytoluene (BHT), the synthetic growth hormones rBGH and rBST, and arsenic (Calton and
Calton 2013) They are present in a range of popular foods, from M&Ms to milk to macaroni and cheese.

State and local governments, on the other hand, have experimented with harder restrictions. Twenty-one states have the sale of unpasteurized milk (Hendrick and Par- quhar 2012). California and New York City banned trans fats from restaurants (Public Health Law Center 2009). New York Mayor Michael Bloomberg attempted to ban the sale of large sugary-sweetened beverages, but a judge overturned the ban (New York Statewide Coalition of Hispanic Chambers of Commerce v. New York City Depart- ment of Health and Mental Hygiene 2014). Mississippi, conversely, has a law prohibiting food bans by the state (M.S. S.B. 2687 2013). These laws represent hard paternalism because they remove choice from the consumer, except for Mississippi’s statute, which takes a strong anti-regulatory stance.

Instead of banning foods outright, the government can place restrictions on them, by location, amount, or consumer. For example, the FDA imposed some limits on the amounts of fat, calories, sugar, and sodium in products sold in school vending machines and cafeterias, such as sodas and sports drinks, beginning in 2015 (Federal Register 78, no. 125 2014, 30968). These requirements follow on the heels of states, including California, Massachusetts, and New York, that restrict the amount of fat and sugar in products that school lunchrooms sell to students (CA S.B. 12 2005; Rock 2005). A San Francisco law conditioned the inclusion of toys in McDonald’s Happy Meals, marketed to children, on the meals’ meeting certain nutritional stan- dards (Park 2013). These restrictions constitute hard paternalism because they limit consumers’ control over their food choices.

Government subsidies also function as a type of hard paternalism because financial support for certain foods creates high supply levels. Subsidization lowers costs for farmers and producers, which allows them to harvest and produce more. Wider avail- ability of the food item combined with lower production costs leads to lower prices, which induce consumers to purchase more. The dairy, corn, soy, and wheat industries receive substantial support from the USDA, leading to their presence in a large num- ber of products available in grocery stores, restaurants, and federal food programs (Coppens and Paulson 2014; Collins 2014; Kick 2014). The USDA also distributes formula, containing either dairy or soy, free through its nutrition program for Women, Infants, and Children (Freeman 2013, 2015a).

In some instances, subsidies create a surplus that can drive other food policies and practices geared toward selling the surplus to consumers (Freeman 2015c). For exam- ple, the subsidies that the USDA provides to corn growers go primarily to large agricultural operations. These large-scale farms use growing techniques that render the corn they produce unpalatable for direct consumption. The farmers must therefore sell this corn to other industries, primarily sweetened beverage manufacturers, which use high-fructose corn syrup in soft, energy, and sports drinks. This interde- pendency gives the USDA a high stake in the sales of these beverages, which may account for the government’s reluctance to ban them from schools.

**Limits on the Effectiveness of Gentle Soft Paternalistic Food Policy**

Food policy grounded in gentle soft paternalism, specifically nudging and nutri- tion labeling, faces major obstacles to the effective reform of eating habits and the broader goal of improving health outcomes (Freeman 2015b). The Cornell Center identi- fies price, income, and information as the three major elements of food selection (Just, Mancino, and Wanink 2007). Convenience and taste are also significant. Re- search shows, however, that preferences for unhealthy food are “sticky,” meaning re- sistant to change through behavioral and cognitive manipulation, for a number of reasons. One is that food companies devote large amounts of resources to finding the ideal combination of sugar, salt, and fat that will make food addictive (Moss 2013). The pleasure and comfort induced by the resulting products may have particular appeal to individuals who struggle financially or suffer from health issues. Food com- panies also study how to increase consumption once hunger is satiated, focusing on emotional rather than nutritional needs (Lambert et al. 1991; McCormick 2001). Be- havioral economics techniques employed by food marketers, in addition to social conditions and industry capture of government policy, also reduce the potential to im- prove food selection and health through cognitive-based methods.

Information about the nutritional content of food, delivered on menu boards and product labels, may affect food selection but does not appear to improve health out- comes. One study reports that, although adults and teenagers notice calorie counts in restaurants, they do not alter their choices because of them (Harnack et al. 2008). Behavioral economics provides two possible explanations for this. First, information acquisition simply may not have the power to increase self-control. Individuals tend toward impulsivity in food selection, and environmental factors at the point of pur- chase, such as colors, smells, and positioning of products, often exert greater influ- ence than rational thinking about diet and health. Second, people have a limited capacity to process new information—they simply do not have room for it in their heads at the moment that they confront it.

Another study shows that posted calories can lead to healthier choices, but that consumers reward themselves for making better selections by adding on an unhealthy item, such as fries or a dessert, making the overall meal less healthy (Wisdom, Downs, and Loewenstein 2010). Studies of nutrition labeling, however, reveal no decrease in intake of calories, saturated fats, or sodium (Varzynki 2008). Instead, research indicates that nutrition information is most valuable to consumers who are already healthy, leading to no overall societal benefit (Varzynki 2005; Wis- dom, Downs, and Loewenstein 2010). This outcome is inapposite to the goals of asym- metric paternalism (Camerer et al. 2003), because the information affects only those who appear to be operating with full rationality while having no impact at all on those experiencing bounded rationality.

Labeling might, however, have a greater effect on consumer behavior if its mes- sages were clearer. The former head of the FDA, David Kessler, proposed a radical...
change to product labeling that would list the three top ingredients, the number of calories per serving, and the amount of additional ingredients on a clearly visible label on the front of each product (Keeney 2014). This design might increase consumers’ comprehension of the nutrition label and lead to healthier choices. Also, using plain language about the actual effects on the body of consuming the product appears to alter behavior. For example, six corner stores in predominantly Black Baltimore neighborhoods posted large, brightly colored signs on refrigerators that contained sweetened beverages stating how long it would take to walk off the calories in the drink (Bleich et al. 2014). There was a corresponding decrease in the number of calories purchased and the amount of adolescent shoppers selecting sugary beverages dropped from 98% to 89%. Similarly, a study conducted at Massachusetts General Hospital used labels coded with red, yellow, and green (colors associated with traffic lights) to indicate items that were healthy, less healthy, or contained little or no nutritional value (McGreevey 2012). This intervention increased sales of healthy foods and decreased purchases of unhealthy ones.

Despite these promising results, there are significant structural constraints on the ability of any type of information to improve health. The relationship between price and income, identified as crucial to food selection by the Cornell Center, represents more than a desire to maximize the amount of calories available for purchase on a fixed budget. Price and income are two factors among many socioeconomic conditions that determine food choice, including wealth (assets beyond income), debt, neighborhood, access to transportation, number of jobs held, and familial responsibilities, including childcare. The potential for behavioural economics to alter food selection becomes irrelevant when the sole purveyor of grocery items in a neighborhood does not offer any products with healthful ingredients. Similarly, if fast food is the only type of restaurant within walking distance, working families who rely on public transportation and have limited time to cook will eat it. In these and other ways, a person’s socioeconomic status and race, both correlated to and distinct from class, determine food choice.

Social and economic constraints render the nutritional content of government-provided food of paramount importance. Food assistance is essential for the 50 million Americans living under the poverty line (Boyce 2014), the 31 million children eating school lunches (Hellmich 2013), and the more than 9 million women and children receiving Special Nutritional Assistance for Women and Children (U.S. Department of Agriculture 2014). Children in school lunch programs consume more than half of their daily calories at school (Story, Kaphingst, and French 2006). Although market forces shape the eating environment outside schools, particularly in low-income and rural areas, the government has the power to act independently of the market and provide nutritious food in the sites where it exercises control.

Instead, unfortunately, the market presently operates inside, in addition to outside, schools. Fast food companies provide essential financial support to underfunded schools and receive access to classrooms and cafeterias in return (Freeman 2007). The food industry also maintains a close relationship with the government through well-resourced lobbying efforts, generous political campaign contributions, and a “revolving door” between prominent government and industry positions. Food companies’ resulting influence manifests itself in many areas of food policy, including the development of standards for school lunches and the recommendations provided by the (federal) Dietary Guidelines (Nestle 2007).

Food Oppression: Disproportionate Racial and Socioeconomic Effects of USDA Policy

The harms arising from industry control over food policy are universal, but they have a disproportionate negative impact on certain communities. For example, selling subsidized commodities to consumers primarily through fast food, prepackaged processed foods, and sweetened beverages disproportionately harms low-income, urban communities of color. Individuals living in these settings have diets high in fast food and “junk” foods due to structural factors that include lack of access to healthy foods in their neighborhoods (Freeman 2007). These groups also rely heavily on food assistance programs such as school lunches and food banks (Feeding America 2010). Health data reveal racial disparities in food-related illnesses and deaths, with Blacks, Latinos, Native Hawaiians, and other racialized groups suffering from significantly higher incidences of many serious food-related conditions such as cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and high blood pressure (Hurt et al. 2010; Center for Medicare Advocacy 2014; Agency for Health Care Research and Quality 2011). The disproportionate, harmful impact on socially and politically marginalized individuals of food policy is a form of food oppression.

Food oppression is institutional, systemic, food-related action or policy that physically devalues a socially subordinated group (Freeman 2013). Food oppression theory attributes racial and socioeconomic health disparities to policies and practices that appear neutral yet disproportionately harm vulnerable individuals. Popular narratives about personal responsibility exacerbate these disparities by obscuring the structural factors that truly determine food choice and negating the government’s responsibility to ensure its citizens’ good health. Racial stereotypes that, for example, characterize Blacks and Latinos as lazy, weak-willed, and unintelligent (Puhl and Heuer 2012), embodied in tropes such as the “welfare queen” and the “illegal immigrant,” further the misperception that health corresponds to individual attributes.

The food policy focus on behavioral economics embraces the paradigm of health as a reflection of personal choice. Behavioral economics research’s role in food policy is to use government resources to discover how to alter individual decision-making in one’s own interest. Approaching food policy from this perspective overlooks the structural factors that create and enforce the parameters of food choice, causing them to disappear...
from view as health determinants. Racial stereotyping reinforces the ideas that structural reform would be both irrelevant and futile, making strategies such as behavioral economics appear more appropriate. Therefore, although behavioral economics has some potential to improve health by influencing individual choices, it will not be effective unless it is one of many policy tools used to expand the choices of less privileged individuals. Expending resources on behavioral economics without enacting laws and regulations designed to improve the health of individuals who depend on federal food programs therefore represents a form of food oppression.

Conclusion

"[When social welfare calls for a stronger response (than nudging), we should give it serious consideration"] (Sunstein 2013, 1035). Poor diet and exercise overtook smoking as the leading cause of premature deaths in the United States in 2014 (National Center for Chronic Disease Prevention and Health Promotion 2015). The high number of illnesses and deaths associated with poor nutrition, particularly in comparison to similarly situated nations (Tandon et al. 2000, 18), along with dramatic racial health disparities point to the need for direct interventions in the form of hard paternalistic measures. The USDA should alter agricultural subsidies to reflect desired consumption choices, emphasizing fruits and vegetables over milk, corn, soy, meat, and wheat. To achieve this, the USDA should not be tasked with the conflicting roles of promoting both healthy eating and agricultural industries. It should be free from the influence of the food and beverage industries through campaign contributions, lobbying efforts, and revolving-door positions.

The USDA should also transform school lunches by taking choice architecture to its logical conclusion and offering only healthy food choices. Faced with this reality, hungry students will eat. Generally, the USDA should shift its resources away from behavioral economics, information provision, and education, and toward systemic changes in the food system that would promote the production and distribution of healthy food to individuals serviced by nutrition assistance programs. As a first step, the USDA should recognize the limits of nudging, and prioritize consumer over industry health.

References


134 Andrea Freeman


Behavioral Economics and Food Policy 135


