Zeeshan Samad

Curriculum Vitae, March 2020

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Vanderbilt University
Department of Economics
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Doctoral Education

Ph.D. in Economics, Vanderbilt University, June 2020 (expected)
Dissertation Title: Essays on Biases and Self-Deception
Research Fields: Behavioral Economics, Applied Microeconomics

M.A. in Economics, Vanderbilt University, May 2016

References

Professor Myrna Wooders (chair of committee)
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Professor Andrew Daughety and *Professor Jennifer Reinganum* (joint letter)
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Professor Gregory Leo
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Professor Bradley Malin
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Professor Mattias Polborn (Placement Director)
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Prior Education

Master of Public Policy, University of Maryland, May 2014
Thesis Title: Impact of Minimum Wage Law on Informal Sector Wages

B.Sc. Economics, LUMS, Pakistan, May 2010
Exchange Semester: Malardalen University, Sweden, Fall 2009

Teaching Experience

   Instructor, Vanderbilt University
      Principles of Microeconomics, Summer 2018 and Summer 2017
      Methods of Economic Analysis, Summer 2018
      Behavioral Economics, Summer 2017

   Co-Instructor, Johns Hopkins University
      Principles of Macroeconomics, Summer 2016
      Principles of Microeconomics, Summer 2016

   Teaching Assistant, Vanderbilt University
      Microeconomic Theory (PhD level), Spring 2016
      Intermediate Microeconomics, Fall 2015
      Strategic Analysis in Game Theory, Fall 2015

Other Employment and Research Experience

   Short-term Consultant, Tennessee Department of Education, May – Aug, 2019
   Research Assistant, Economics Department, Vanderbilt University, 2016 - 2020
   Research Analyst, Hagler Bailly Pakistan (consultancy firm), 2011 - 2012
   Research Analyst, SNL Financial LLC (consultancy firm), 2010 - 2011

Awards

   Research Grant, Council of Economics Graduate Students, Vanderbilt University, Spring 2020
   Graduate Fellowship, Center for Genetic Privacy and Identity, VUMC, Fall 2016 - Spring 2020
   Graduate Fellowship, Economics Department, Vanderbilt University, Fall 2014 - Spring 2015
   Research Grant, Council of Economics Graduate Students, Vanderbilt University, Fall 2018
   Fulbright Scholarship, US Department of State, Fall 2012 - Spring 2014
   Tydings Regents Fellowship, University of Maryland School of Public Policy, Fall 2013 - Spring 2014
   Erasmus Exchange Scholarship, Fall 2009

Computer Skills

   Programming: STATA, Python, OTree, ZTree, SQL, Javascript
   Other: Excel, Qualtrics, RedCap, LaTex, Photoshop

Research Papers

   Lying to Yourself: A Mechanism of Self-deception [Job Market Paper]
      This paper studies how people deceive themselves in order to maintain a favorable self-image. I present an experiment in which a donation made to a charity gets transformed into an ambiguous lottery (i.e. a lottery in which probabilities are unknown). In the experiment, subjects make a charitable donation and also state their belief about the probability with which the charity will get the higher amount. Next, subjects participate in another task that elicits their true belief about the same probability. I find that selfish subjects self-servingly misstate their beliefs – to themselves, no less – while altruistic subjects do not. That is, selfish subjects deceive themselves in order to maintain an altruistic self-image. Altruistic subjects, who have already demonstrated their altruism to themselves, are honest with themselves. The experiment demonstrates a mechanism of self-deception in which subjects behave selfishly and then manipulate their beliefs to absolve themselves – or rather their altruism – from being responsible for their selfish behavior.

[Risk, Trust, and Altruism in Genetic Data Sharing](#) [with M. Wooders, B. Malin, & E. Vorobeychik]
This study investigates an individual's attitudes towards privacy risks associated with the sharing of personal information. We conduct behavioral experiments to elicit attitudes with respect to several conditions. First, we consider two distinct settings to understand how the type of information shapes behavior: 1) genetic data shared with a healthcare provider and 2) financial data shared with a money manager. In the former, the uncertain benefit is stated in terms of health outcomes, whereas the latter setting involves solely financial benefits from investment. Both settings involve identical decisions and monetary stakes, allowing us to focus on how the framing of the problem influences attitudes. Second, we design the experiments to investigate the motivations behind these decisions in terms altruism and trust in the data sharers. Third, we consider whether data recipients protect the shared data when protection is costly and only benefits the data sharers. Our findings (with 162 subjects) indicate that individuals are more willing to risk a loss to privacy of their genetic data (for an anticipated return in health benefits) than of financial data (for an anticipated return in financial benefits). We further observe that trust has a significant impact in the investment frame, but not in the genetic frame. Finally, we find that 50-60% of data recipients choose to protect the data, with no significant differences between genetic and investment frames.

Behavioral Effects of a Minimum Wage Law
What happens to the wage of informal sector workers when a minimum wage is implemented in the formal sector? I answer this question empirically, using household-level data from Pakistan – a country with one of the largest informal sectors in the world – and using a difference-in-differences framework. My main result is that increases in the minimum wage positively impact informal sector wages, even though the law is not enforced in the informal sector. In addition, I find that the impact on informal sector wages is greater in poorer regions of the country where the minimum wage law has a greater 'bite'. I argue that this result is best explained by informal sector employers' concern for social reputation.

Own-Type Bias: Mechanism Behind False-Consensus Bias
This paper hypothesizes that the mechanism behind the false-consensus bias is individuals' inaccuracy in predicting distribution of types. In particular, individuals hold biased beliefs about the distribution of types, thinking that the distribution is skewed towards them. That is, their prediction of particularly the third central moment (i.e. skewness) is systematically inaccurate in the same direction in which their types is relative to the distribution mean. The first part of the paper develops a theoretical model that explains this idea. The second part of the paper presents a laboratory experiment to empirically test the hypothesis. In the experiment, subjects first play a dictator game and then guess the distribution of choices made by others playing the same game. The results show that selfish (altruistic) subjects overstate the proportion of people who are selfish (altruistic), but correctly predict other aspects of the distribution. This is akin to being incorrect about the distribution's third central moment while being accurate about the first and second central moments. Moreover, I find that selfish subjects exhibit a greater bias than altruistic subjects.

Presentations of Research
Lying to Yourself: A Mechanism of Self-deception
New York University in Abu Dhabi, ESA Conference, Jan 2019
Vanderbilt University, Departmental Seminar, Nov 2018

Risk, Trust, and Altruism in Genetic Data Sharing
New York University in Abu Dhabi, ESA Conference, Jan 2019
Vanderbilt University, Departmental Seminar, Feb 2018