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Affiliations

School of Economics, University of Nottingham
The Center for Decision Research and Experimental Economics, Nottingham
The ESRC Network for Integrated Behavioral Science

Research Interests

Networks, Behavioral and Experimental Economics, Applied Microeconomics

Working Papers

Job Market Paper: “Hierarchy and Nestedness in Networked Organizations” [PDF]

Abstract: This paper uses a network approach to study how a planner should design the interaction structure between a set of agents—who interacts with whom, and to what extent—to achieve her goals. The assumption is that the agents’ actions exhibit strategic complementarities; such complementarities appear in workplaces and many social and economic settings. I show that the optimal interaction structure (as represented by the networks designed by the planner) is hierarchical such that all agents have different centrality, even if the agents are ex ante identical. Hierarchy and inequality thus arise endogenously. This is true even when the planner has a preference for equality. This paper is the first to characterize optimal networks with weighted and directed links under strategic complementarities, and a new concept, nested core-periphery network, is proposed for the characterization.

“Fairness Perceptions and Punishment Types: an Experimental Study” [PDF], with Lucas Molleman (MPI Berlin) and Dennie van Dolder (VU Amsterdam)

Abstract: Previous studies suggest that whether individuals perceive a behavior as fair depends on how prevalent it is in the population. Using a prisoner’s dilemma game experiment, we test whether informing individuals of a higher proportion of cooperators in the population affects the legitimacy of free riding and changes their punishment of free riders. Different from previous studies, we use the strategy method to obtain each participant’s complete punishment strategy. We find co-existence of four different punishment types and show that no single existing theory captures the rich heterogeneity in punishment behavior.

“Norm-based Resentment and the Evolution of Cooperative Norms” [PDF]

Abstract: This paper investigates how cooperative norms emerge and evolve over time. I construct a stochastic dynamic model based on the idea that cooperation between strangers is sustained by endogenous social norms. The model shows how cooperation and punishment of defectors co-evolve. Recent empirical studies find that (1) cooperation between strangers is positively correlated with law enforcement across societies, and that (2) cooperation is higher in large, modern societies with higher degrees of market integration compared to small-scale societies. The model explains these regularities. Specifically, the ability to “vote with feet” is critical in generating the high level of cooperation in large, modern societies.

Work in Progress

“**Social Competition and Economic Consequences: Theory and Experiment**”, with Michael Muthukrishna (LSE) and Robin Schimmelpfennig (LSE) [SLIDES presented on the Inaugural Cultural Evolution Society Conference, 2017]

Abstract: First, we show theoretically that social competition is a double-edged sword: on the one hand, it might increase the incentive to work more in order to earn more income than others, which would improve productivity; on the other, however, it might lead to dramatic conspicuous consumption and conflicts between individuals, which would suppress productivity. The overall effect of social competition on productivity thus depends on the trade-off between the two. Then, we design an experiment to test the theory. We have recently collected the pilot data, and the preliminary analysis confirms our predictions.

Education

- 10/2013-Present Ph.D. in Economics (thesis submitted), University of Nottingham
Thesis title: The Socially Embedded Individual
Supervisors: Abigail Barr, Silvia Sonderegger
- 09/2012-09/2013 M.Sc. in Behavioral Economics, Distinction, University of Nottingham
Thesis title: The Norm of Inequity Aversion on Charitable Giving and Third-Party Punishment
- 09/2008-06/2012 B.A. in Financial Management, Jinan University (China)
Thesis title: Financial Fraud: A Model of Moral Hazard
Prize: Best Degree Paper of Jinan University

Academic Visits

- 02/2017 Department of Psychological and Behavioral Science, London School of Economics and Political Science

Conference Presentations

- 11/2017 Invited talk “Hierarchy and Nestedness in Networked Organizations”, Bridges Program, Warwick, UK
- 09/2017 “Social Competition: Theory and Experiment”, Inaugural Cultural Evolution Society Conference, Jena, Germany
- 12/2016 Invited talk “Resentment and the Evolution of Social Norms of Cooperation”, Cultural Transmission and Social Norms Workshop, Norwich, UK
- 07/2016 “Resentment and the Evolution of Social Norms of Cooperation”, Economic Science Association World Meeting, Jerusalem, Israel
- 05/2016 “Resentment and the Evolution of Social Norms of Cooperation”, CBESS-CeDEx-CREED Meeting, Amsterdam, Netherlands
- 09/2015 “Emergence and Transmission of Cooperative Norms: Variations and Correlations in Cooperation and Punishment”, Economic Science Association European Meeting, Heidelberg, Germany
- 05/2014 “A Simpler Theory of Reciprocity”, CBESS-CeDEx-CREED Meeting, Nottingham, UK

Summer Schools

- 06/2016 The 27th Jerusalem School in Economic Theory: The Theory of Networks, The Hebrew University of Jerusalem
- 05/2015 Experimentics, University of East Anglia
- 06/2014 Experiments and Economics of Organization, University of East Anglia
- 06/2014 Behavioral Game Theory, University of East Anglia

Funding

- 2013-2016 Ph.D. Studentship by the Network of Integrated Behavioral Science (NIBS), £16,726 per annum
2013-2016 Vice-Chancellor's Scholarship for Research Excellence (International), covering tuition fees for international students
2012-2013 Research Centre (CeDEx) Scholarship by the School of Economics, University of Nottingham, £2,445

Teaching

- 2017-2018 Graduate teaching assistant for Principles of Microeconomics, University of Nottingham
2016-2017 Graduate teaching assistant for Foundations of Microeconomics, University of Nottingham
July 2015 Lecturer for Introductory Game Theory, Summer School for Senior Undergraduates, Jinan University (China)
2014-2015 Graduate teaching assistant for Mathematical Economics, University of Nottingham

Data Analysis and Programming Skills

Stata, R, Lioness Lab (Live Interactive Online Experimental Server Software), NetLogo, L^AT_EX

Languages

English (fluent), Chinese Mandarin (native), Cantonese (native)

Academic References

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