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## **HARVARD UNIVERSITY**

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### **Undergraduate Studies:**

B.A., Behavioral Economics, Economics, and Mathematics, Cornell University, *Summa Cum Laude*, 2005

### **Graduate Studies:**

Harvard University, 2005 to present  
Thesis Title: "Selective Attention and Coarse Thinking"  
Expected Completion Date: June 2010

### **References:**

Prof. Andrei Shleifer Department of Economics, Harvard University 617-495-5046, ashleifer@harvard.edu	Prof. Drew Fudenberg Department of Economics, Harvard University 617-496-5895, dfudenberg@harvard.edu
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Prof. Sendhil Mullainathan  
Department of Economics, Harvard University  
617-496-2720, mullain@fas.harvard.edu

### **Teaching and Research Fields:**

Primary fields: Behavioral Economics, Microeconomic Theory

### **Teaching Experience:**

Spring, 2009	Game Theory, Harvard, teaching fellow for Drew Fudenberg
Fall, 2008	Economic Design Lab, Harvard, teaching fellow for Sendhil Mullainathan

### **Research Experience and Other Employment:**

Summer, 2004 Paid Project Intern, Federal Reserve Board (Capital Markets Section)

**Referee:**

*Quarterly Journal of Economics, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*

**Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships:**

2009, 2008	Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Aging and Health Economics, NBER
2007	Price Theory Scholar, Becker Center on Chicago Price Theory, University of Chicago
2005	National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship

**Publications:**

“Coarse Thinking and Persuasion” (with S. Mullainathan and A. Shleifer), *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, 2008, 123(2): 577-619

We present a model of uninformative persuasion in which individuals “think coarsely”: they group situations into categories and apply the same model of inference to all situations within a category. Coarse thinking exhibits two features that persuaders take advantage of: (i) transference, whereby individuals transfer the informational content of a given message from situations in a category where it is useful to those where it is not, and (ii) framing, whereby objectively useless information influences individuals' choice of category. The model sheds light on uninformative advertising and product branding, as well as on some otherwise anomalous evidence on mutual fund advertising.

**Research Papers:**

“Selective Attention and Learning” (Job Market Paper)

What do we notice and how does this affect what we learn and come to believe? I present a model of an agent who learns to make forecasts on the basis of freely available information, but is selective as to which information he attends because of limited cognitive resources. I model the agent's choice of whether to attend to and encode information along a dimension as a function of his current beliefs about whether such information is predictive, taking as given that he attends to information along other dimensions. If the agent does not attend to and encode some piece of information, it cannot be recalled at a later date. He uses Bayes' rule to update his beliefs given encoded information, but does not attempt to fill in missing information. I show that, as a consequence of selective attention, the agent may persistently fail to recognize important empirical regularities, make biased forecasts, and hold incorrect beliefs about the statistical relationship between variables. In addition, I identify factors that make such errors more likely or persistent. The model sheds light on a set of systematic biases in inference, including the difficulty people have in recognizing relationships that prior theories do not make plausible, and the overattribution of cause to salient event features. The model is applied to help understand the formation and stability of erroneous stereotypes, as well as discrimination based on such stereotypes.

“Litigation and Regulation” (with A. Shleifer)

We ask whether regulation can usefully supplement litigation in a model of optimal social control of harmful externalities. In our model, firms choose activity levels in addition to precautions. In contrast to the usual analysis, we assume that social returns to activity are higher than private returns before taking harmful externalities into account. We also assume that both courts and regulators make errors in assessing whether it is efficient for a given firm to take precautions. We show that regulation can, in some circumstances, improve resource allocation. Regulatory preemption of litigation may be efficient when social returns to activity exceed the expected harm that could result from a firm taking too few precautions. The optimal structure of law enforcement is influenced by the divergence between private and social returns to activity as well as the competence of regulators and courts.

**Research Papers in Progress:**

“Optimal Public Policy with Behavioral Agents” (with S. Mullainathan)