



Nicola Lacetera
University of Toronto
Toronto, ON
Canada

Ph: 416 978 4423
Email: nicola.lacetera@utoronto.ca

Toronto, May 11 2020

Dear Review Committee:

It is my pleasure to provide you a review of Danijela Vuletic Cugalj's dissertation at Charles University.

Ms. Vuletic Cugalj's thesis exceeds the quality threshold required for her being awarded a degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Economics. I found her work socially relevant, rigorous, creative, and a pleasure to read.

The comments that I make below are meant to provide suggestions as Ms. Vuletic Cugalj continues working on this research agenda and turns these chapters into publishable articles.

Chapter 1:

1. I would motivate the study in a way that is more similar to Study 2. Rather than claiming that according to existing research, direct incentives for blood donation are ineffective (a questionable claim given the current evidence), I would focus on the fact that these incentives are ethically controversial and currently banned in many countries. Therefore, alternative, "softer" ways to motivate donations may be useful. I would also connect the approach of this study more directly to the activities of many "Nudge Units" around the world, to further stress the broad interest and applicability of behavioral interventions and insights.

2. It looks as though the main message from this study is that a simple letter is enough to motivate more people to donate, regardless of the other "behavioral triggers" or nudges in the various versions of the letters. This is interesting and relevant as a practical matter, but also tells us something about the type of behavioral mechanisms perhaps at place. Although we may exclude loss aversion or identifiable victim effects, the letter may have a strong salience effect (in individuals with limited attention and busy schedules), and also reduce the tendency to procrastinate. I would dig a little more

on the experimental literature on reminders to derive insights on how to identify the different mechanisms through which reminders work in experimental settings.

3. Having a one-month period as the short term makes sense. However, perhaps it is interesting to see if there is a difference in the donation timing within that month (e.g. first two weeks vs. last two weeks), by treatment. This might help testing the idea that Ms. Vuletic Cugalj advances about the role of System 1 and System 2 thinking in these kinds of decisions.

4. I would keep the data from the no-letter group in all regressions, and not in a table in the appendix.

5. For the long-term analysis, unless only very few people made more than one donation, I would try also an “intensive-margin” analysis by looking at the number of donations in the 9-10 month period.

6. Ideally, the study would have multiple waves, to test for the robustness of the findings and for seasonal differences. Also, a survey of the participants and in particular of those who donate, with questions on whether they remember receiving a letter, what the content of the letter was, and whether they think that the letter gave them some motivation to donate, may be interesting, even if this would not be scientific evidence in strict sense. However, perhaps too long of a time has passed since the experiment.

Chapter 2:

1. I would leave open the possibility that the gender match effect may be due, again, to salience; perhaps men pay more attention to the information on a man, and women on information by a woman. The asymmetric effect between men and women makes this hypothesis less plausible, because we would have to argue that there is asymmetric salience.

2. The regression equation at page 66 is a little cumbersome. It may be useful to describe of what condition each parameter (or sum of parameters) represents the average effect.

3. I would compare the size of the gender match effects in this study to the size of the letter-effects in Study 1.

In fact, to make a more general suggestion related to point 3 just above, it would be interesting to compare the sizes of the findings in Studies 1 and 2 to those that previous interventions to motivate blood donation behavior have found. Of course, comparisons are tricky because of the

many differences between studies and contexts, but just as a descriptive exercise, this would be good to have.

Chapter 3:

1. My main suggestion about this very interesting and well-executed study is to explore further the policy implications from the findings, at different levels: for doctoral programs, for scientific (sub)communities, for university faculty and administrators, and for the overall education policy of a country.

2. A second, minor comment concerns the greater optimism (or overconfidence?) of foreign students: perhaps they also consider opportunities abroad?

Again, congratulations on this excellent thesis.

Best regards,
Nicola Lacetera

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Nicola Lacetera", is placed on a light blue rectangular background.