NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp 2018 Application

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Recommendation letter writer: Abhishek Nagaraj

Gauri Subramani

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Berkeley, CA

EDUCATION

University of California, Berkeley, Haas School of Business
PhD in Business and Public Policy, expected in 2020.
Courses taken:
- Microeconomic Theory A and B
- Econometrics A and B
- Applied Econometrics
- Industrial Organization A and B
- Labor Economics
- Research and Theory in Business
- Institutions, Interest Groups and Public Policy
- Auction and Contract Theory
- Corporate Strategy and Technology
- Economics of Institutions

Wellesley College
BA Economics & English, 2012.
Cum Laude, Honors in Economics
Senior Thesis in Economics: The Effect of Health Care Reform on Retirement Rates: Evidence from Massachusetts

WORKS IN PROGRESS

Crowdfunding Campaigns as a Reflection of Political Rights, with Andreea Gorbatai
We study LGBTQ-related campaigns on Indiegogo in the United States from 2008 to 2013. We examine the change in the topics covered and sentiments expressed in campaign descriptions across states over time.

The Value of Existing Online: Evidence from Yelp, with Abhishek Nagaraj and Michael Luca
We evaluate the effects of being added to Yelp for businesses and broader impacts on business communities for restaurants and bars in Texas.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING

University of California, Berkeley
2018: Teaching Assistant to Abhishek Nagaraj
Entrepreneurial Strategy (MBA 295T)
2017: Research Assistant to Jonathan Kolstad and Noam Yuchtman
Evaluate the relationship between political ideology and choice of health plan in the Health Insurance Marketplace created under the Affordable Care Act.
2016: Research Assistant to Jonathan Kolstad
Created a comprehensive dataset of Medicaid managed care plans in the United States and cataloged potential data sources on public insurance coverage. Studied programs targeting Medicare and Medicaid dual eligibles and helped develop a proposal to study the value of a "smart" diabetes management device,

Wellesley College
2011–2012: *Development of Health Insurance in the United States*, Research Assistant to Courtney Coile
2010–2012: *Rural Women's Power in South Asia*, Research Assistant to Pashington Obeng
2011: Introduction to Microeconomics, Teaching Assistant

2009–2010: Calculus II, Teaching Assistant

Work Experience

2017–present: Yelp, Government Affairs Intern
2014–2015: U.S. Department of the Treasury, Office of Economic Policy
Special Assistant to Chief Economist Karen Dynan
2012–2014: CEB, Customer Insights Team
Research Analyst

Writing

Williams, Rachel, Gauri Subramani, Michael Luca, and Geoff Donaker. "Lessons from Yelp's Empirical Approach to Diversity." Harvard Business Review, September, 2017.

Luca, Michael and Joshua Schwartzstein. "Managing Diversity and Inclusion at Yelp." Harvard Business School Case 918-009 (2017).

Honors And Awards

2015–2017: Eugene Cota Robles Fellow, U.C. Berkeley
2012: Social Science Writing Award, Wellesley College
2012: Lyons Writing Award, Wellesley College
2011–2012: Case Economics Fellow
2010–2012: Mellon-Mays Undergraduate Fellow

Computer Skills

Statistical Packages: Stata, R, SQL

I am eager to take part in the NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp, which will help me understand the landscape of entrepreneurship research and the ways in which my work can contribute to this literature. My coursework at Berkeley has provided me with a strong foundation in economic principles and econometric methods, and through the ERBC, I hope to develop a better sense of the research frontier in entrepreneurship economics.

In my own work, I am interested in understanding the drivers of entrepreneurial activity, and specifically in the role of online intermediaries in firm growth and access to resources. Currently, I am studying the responsiveness of individuals' donation behaviors on an online crowdfunding platform to external political shocks. I am interested in how both creators of online campaigns and campaign donors respond to political shocks. I focus on the initiation of campaigns on Indiegogo pertaining to LGBTQ issues and on donations to these campaigns following state-specific proposed changes to the legality of gay marriage. This context allows me to examine the relationship between entrepreneurial activity and political shocks that make specific topics more salient.

I am also working on a project evaluating the effect of being listed on the online platform Yelp on business outcomes. Online review platforms play an important role in business survival and success; customer ratings have a significant effect on market exit and revenues (Fan et al 2016[1], Luca and Luca 2017[2]). Yelp is a particularly valuable setting to study because of its prominence as a review site and availability of both user search and business listing data.

There are several areas of interest here-- we hope to isolate the effects of being added to Yelp for businesses, both for the business on Yelp and neighboring businesses that are not listed. We also plan to examine Yelp's role in encouraging entrepreneurship across categories and geographic areas. To address the first question, we are isolating the revenue effects on businesses added to Yelp and examining the spillover effects of individual businesses being added on Yelp on the outcomes of other geographically proximate businesses, both those on and off the site. To evaluate the development of Yelp more broadly as a market for entrepreneurs, we hope to evaluate how an exogenous increase in listings in a certain category, for example, restaurants, influences the number of listings in an unrelated category, like beauty salons.

I am also exploring entrepreneurial pricing strategies in the context of new product pricing in grocery stores. Using data from a startup that provides real-time, store-level grocery pricing, I am interested in examining the pricing strategies of 1) new food-supply companies, 2) products in a category to which

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[1] Fan, Ying, Jiandon Ju, and Mo Xiao (2016). "Reputation Premium and Reputation Management: Organization, 2016, 46: 63-76.

[2] Luca, Dara Lee and Michael Luca (2017). "Survival of the Fittest: The Impact of Minimum Wage on Firm Exit," Harvard Business School Working Paper no. 17-088.

an existing firm is a new entrant, and 3) new products in an category in which an existing firm already has market share. In this setting, I can examine both the approaches of new firms, as well as the ways in which existing firms behave in entrepreneurial contexts. I hope to use the knowledge and advice I gain at the boot camp to develop this idea further.

I am most looking forward to the opportunity to hear from experts in entrepreneurship economics about their work as well as getting a sense of the topics and approaches that they think emerging researchers like myself should be thinking about. This exposure will help me both frame my own work as well as generate new ideas. I am currently working as TA for an MBA course at Berkeley on entrepreneurial strategy, and through this I have learned about various frameworks that entrepreneurs can use to optimize their decision-making. I hope to gain a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and theory behind such frameworks.

I am also looking forward to learning from the other students at the boot camp and discuss research ideas with them. If admitted, I plan to attend the NBER Entrepreneurship Working Group meeting prior to the boot camp, which will allow me to get an even better sense of the current research and priorities of other faculty in entrepreneurship.

Abhishek Nagaraj
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Berkeley, March 28th 2018

Hello,

I'm writing this letter to express my strongest support for Gauri Subramani, UC Berkeley for the NBER Entrepreneurship Bootcamp.

Gauri is a PhD student in our Business and Public Policy (BPP) department. I have known Gauri since I moved to UC Berkeley in summer 2017. Gauri has been working on a project with me and Michael Luca (HBS) for almost a year at this point. She is also my teaching assistant for my MBA class Entrepreneurial Strategy that is taught to MBA students at UC Berkeley-Haas, and where she has helped write a case about strategy for an emerging startup.

Overall, Gauri is one of the strongest students that I have worked with. She is smart, diligent, professional and creative – all the qualities that one needs to be a strong researcher. She is deeply interested in topics around entrepreneurship and technological innovation. Specifically, she is interested in understanding the drivers of entrepreneurship in digital systems where online intermediaries can shape the process through which entrepreneurs become successful.

In the project we have together with Michael Luca, we are studying the role of digital representation on the performance of small business establishments. Specifically, we are looking at businesses that are "missing from the map" on Yelp by comparing the sample of Yelp establishments with the census of establishments from Tax records in Texas. We are finding that many establishments operating in the physical world are completely missing from digital databases such as Yelp. We then study "coverage shocks" – efforts by Yelp to improve coverage by purchasing business listings from third-party aggregators to understand the causal effects of digital representation on establishment performance. We are finding that a lack of digital representation can have measurable negative effects in the revenue of small business establishments. Gauri has led this entire project as a part-time employee at Yelp, helping process the terabytes of data needed for this project. Further, she has been taking the lead on the econometric analysis and is helping us craft a coherent story from the data and research design we have so far.

In addition to her work with me, Gauri has an excellent project studying the determinants of firm success in online crowdfunding. The basic idea is to understand whether changes in the macro environment (political shocks or social movement campaigns) affect project success. Here also, Gauri has picked a very interesting topic and this project has the potential of making a real contribution to the literature on crowdfunding and entrepreneurship.

I strongly recommend Gauri for the NBER entrepreneurship bootcamp. I think she will learn a lot from interacting with leading scholars in this area – many of which are on the east coast and who she has not interacted with while at Berkeley. Further, she is one of the few students at Haas studying entrepreneurship and would benefit a lot from meeting her peers around the world and developing a sense of community around this topic. Finally, I think she would learn a lot from attending the NBER summer institute sessions to get a sense of what cutting edge research looks like, and who the top scholars in the field are. Attending the bootcamp has the potential to help Gauri make the transition from a promising graduate student interested in the topic of entrepreneurship to a top job-market candidate and junior scholar in the area of innovation and entrepreneurship.

I recommend Gauri without reservation to the NBER entrepreneurship bootcamp. Do not hesitate to contact me if you need any additional information.

Best,

Abhishek Nagaraj