



Harvard Kennedy School
79 John F. Kennedy Street
Cambridge, MA 02138

Placement Director: Joseph Aldy
Placement Director: Mark Shepard
Administrative Director: Nicole Tateosian

joseph_aldy@hks.harvard.edu
mark_shepard@hks.harvard.edu
nicole_tateosian@hks.harvard.edu

Education **Harvard Kennedy School**, Cambridge, MA August 2021 – present
PhD in Public Policy (Economics)
Expected Completion: May 2027

Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH June 2019
B.A. in Economics, Minor in Statistics

Fields Primary Field: Development Economics
Secondary Field: Political Economy

References **Augustin Bergeron** **Asim Ijaz Khwaja (Chair)** **Eliana La Ferrara**
abergeron@fas.harvard.edu khwaja@hks.harvard.edu elaferrara@hks.harvard.edu

Teaching **Harvard University**, Cambridge, MA
Ec 10B: Principles of Macroeconomics; for David Laibson and Jason Furman Spring '24–'26
Ec 10A: Principles of Microeconomics; for David Laibson and Jason Furman Fall '23, '25
Ec 1010A: Microeconomic Theory; for Maxim Boycko Fall '24
Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH
Econ 44: Topics in Development Economics; for Eric Edmonds Winter '19
Econ 49: Topics in International Economics; for Nina Pavcnik Winter '19

Research Projects **From the Pulpit to the People: Experimental Evidence on the Impact of Friday Sermons**
Winner of the Louis Pasteur Prize for Best PhD Student Paper, AFE Conference (UChicago)
Job Market Paper

I explore the role of religious institutions in shaping behavior by experimentally varying the content of Friday sermons—one of the most widespread forms of in-person religious persuasion in the Muslim world—in 309 mosques in Pakistan. Working with the Punjab Auqaf Department that administers state religious properties, I randomize mosques to deliver sermons on women's rights, neighbors' rights, or a control condition, with additional variation in whether the arguments used are religious or secular. I find sizable impacts of women's rights sermons (0.23 SD) and neighbors' rights sermons (0.19 SD) on men's behavior as measured through lab-in-field games, field behavioral measures, and survey responses 2–4 weeks after treatments. I find suggestive evidence that effects extend indirectly to wives, who do not hear sermons themselves and yet report more prosocial beliefs. The effectiveness of religious leaders' messaging derives at least partly from the types of arguments made as sermon content is more persuasive when grounded in religious arguments for women's rights but in secular arguments for neighbors' rights. Examining equilibrium dynamics, I document supply-side persistence in prosociality of sermon content alongside demand-side backlash as evidenced by a 20% decline in attendance numbers at mosques that received sermons on women's rights that persists in the long run. These findings highlight the centrality of religious institutions, such as the Friday sermon, in shaping behavior in low-income settings.

Doctor's Orders vs Divine Wisdom

Low trust in secular state institutions can limit the effectiveness of informational interventions among religious populations. Recent work has suggested the potential for religious leaders to be utilized for information dissemination, but research directly comparing the efficacy of religious with secular leaders is lacking. Moreover, what, if any, are the unintended consequences of utilizing religious leaders as frontline agents tasked with achieving state goals? In this project, I explore the educational role of local leaders and compare the ability of local religious and secular leaders to encourage positive health behaviors in the context of a state-sponsored handwashing campaign in Punjab, Pakistan. In collaboration with the Pakistan Ministry of Health, I randomize Pakistani couples to meetings with either their local health worker or religious leader and then evaluate changes in hand hygiene, handwashing behavior, and beliefs about handwashing. Through lab-in-field games, I explore the micro-foundations for separation of Church and State by evaluating whether reliance on religious leaders for information dissemination makes them the preferred choice for information in the future, even on secular topics. In doing so, this work sheds light on the benefits and pitfalls of using religious leaders to achieve policy goals through state-sponsored information campaigns.

The Market for Religious Content: Evidence from Friday Sermons in Pakistan

What drives religious content? In this project, I explore this question from both the demand and supply side in the context of mosques in Punjab, Pakistan. On the demand side, I provide congregants with “content information” (i.e. sermon content of nearby mosques) or “mosque information” (i.e. amenities and congregation characteristics of nearby mosques) and evaluate impacts on mosque choice. On the supply side, I provide religious leaders with “market information” (i.e. congregants’ preferences and sermon content of nearby mosques) or “top-down information” (beliefs of senior religious leaders) and look at endogenous changes to sermon content. Results have implications for policymakers seeking to understand the drivers of local hate speech and polarization and ways in which increased information can reduce the influence of controversial leaders.

Why Families Pay: Misperceptions and the Persistence of Dowry with Abdullah Shahid

Dowry payments routinely amount to several times a household’s annual income in many developing contexts, pushing families into debt and inviting marital violence on daughters. Existing work has largely neglected the role of beliefs in helping explain the persistence of dowry, despite how beliefs about what other households privately think of the practice, the religious acceptability of dowry, and what the payment buys a daughter, are crucial to the decision of how much to give and may each be systematically skewed. Working with a sample of households with soon-to-marry daughters in rural Punjab, Pakistan, we document the extent to which such misperceptions exist and whether information correcting beliefs can shift dowry decisions. We document misperceptions by comparing individuals’ beliefs to ground truths constructed from surveys of the local population, randomize households to a correction of each of these three beliefs, and evaluate changes in realized dowry payments. Results have implications for the optimal design of anti-dowry policy.

Past Experience	Center for Economic Research in Pakistan (CERP) , Lahore, Pakistan Research Assistant to Asim Khwaja	June – August 2022
	Zell/Lurie Real Estate Center, Wharton , Philadelphia, PA Pre-Doctoral Research Assistant to Maisy Wong and Nina Harari	August 2019 – June 2021
	Dartmouth Economics Department , Hanover, NH Research Assistant to Eric Edmonds, Patricia Anderson, and Diego Comin	March 2017 – June 2019
	Edgeworth Economics , Washington, D.C. Economic Consulting Intern	June – August 2018

Affiliations	Graduate Research Fellow, Harvard Weatherhead Research Cluster on Identity and Conflict			2026–
	Graduate Student Affiliate, Harvard Weatherhead Center			2024–
	Graduate Student Affiliate, Harvard Institute for Quantitative Social Science			2024–
	PhD Affiliate, Harvard Center for International Development			2023–
	Graduate Student Fellow, Center for Economic Research in Pakistan			2023–
Research Grants	\$9,000	Weatherhead Center	Market for Religious Content	2026
	\$47,186	The Weiss Fund	Doctor’s Orders vs Divine Wisdom	2025
	\$2,000	South Asia Institute	Market for Religious Content	2025
	\$1,000	IQSS	Doctor’s Orders vs Divine Wisdom	2025
	\$12,967	The Weiss Fund	Doctor’s Orders vs Divine Wisdom	2024
	\$3,910	Weatherhead Center	Doctor’s Orders vs Divine Wisdom	2024
	\$2,000	IQSS	Doctor’s Orders vs Divine Wisdom	2024
	\$2,000	Harvard SAI	Doctor’s Orders vs Divine Wisdom	2024
	\$74,162	IGC	From the Pulpit to the People	2024
	\$9,846	J-PAL GI	From the Pulpit to the People	2023
Fellowships & Awards	Louis Pasteur Prize for Best PhD Student Paper, AFE Conference (UChicago)			2026
	Dissertation Completion Fellowship, Harvard Griffin GSAS			2026
	High Honors in Economics, Dartmouth College			2019
	Magna Cum Laude, Dartmouth College			2019
Seminars & Conferences	CID Development Retreat, AFE (UChicago)			2026
	CID Development Retreat, ASREC Graduate Workshop			2024
Languages	Urdu (native), English (fluent), Hindi (conversational)			
Citizenship	Pakistani			