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Citizenship: USA

Fields of Concentration:

Primary: Development Economics

Secondary: Applied Microeconomics, Political Economy, Labor Economics

Desired Teaching:

Development Economics

Applied Econometrics

Political Economy

Labor Economics

Microeconomics

Comprehensive Examinations Completed:

2013: (Oral): Development, Political Economy (*with distinction*)

2012: (Written): Microeconomics, Macroeconomics

Dissertation Title: *Essays on Poverty and Labor Markets*

Committee:

Professor Christopher Udry (chair)

Professor Mark Rosenzweig

Professor Nicholas Ryan

Professor Ebonya Washington

Expected Completion Date: May 2017

Degrees:

Ph.D., Economics, Yale University, 2017 (expected)

M.Phil., Economics, Yale University, 2013

M.A., Economics, Yale University, 2012

B.A., Economics and Mathematics (with high honors), Swarthmore College, 2010

Fellowships, Honors and Awards:

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship, 2011-2016
Yale University Graduate Fellowship, 2015-2017
Yale Economic Growth Center Fellowship, 2011-2015
Phi Beta Kappa, 2010
Brinkmann Prize for Best Paper, Swarthmore Mathematics Department, 2010
Adams Prize for Best Paper, Swarthmore Economics Department, 2009

Research Grants

SYLFF Foundation Research Grant, 2015, “*Jobs for Sale: Bribery and Misallocation in Hiring*”, \$20,000
USAID Research and Innovation Fellowship, 2014, \$13,500
JPAL Governance Initiative, 2012, “*Beliefs and Bribes: Police Corruption in India*”, \$250,000

Teaching Experience:

Yale University
Econometrics and Data Analysis I (Instructor: Doug McKee), Fall 2015
Introductory Microeconomics (Instructor: Chris Udry), Fall 2013
Swarthmore College
Intermediate Econometrics (Instructor: Philip Jefferson), Fall 2009
Intermediate Microeconomics (Instructor: Ellen Magenheim), Fall 2008

Research and Work Experience:

Research Associate to Professors Abhijit Banerjee, Rohini Pande and Michael Walton;
Jameel Poverty Action Lab, New Delhi, India; 2010-2011
Research Assistant to Professor Emily Oster; University of Chicago; Summer 2009

Working Papers:

“Jobs for Sale: Bribery and Misallocation in Hiring”, (November 2016), *Job Market Paper*
“Minimum Wage and Retail Price Pass-through” with Sharat Ganapati, (September 2016)

Works In Progress:

“The Rise of Dowry in India” with Gaurav Chiplunkar
“Designing Hiring Systems: Theory and Empirical Evidence”
“Beliefs and Bribes: Police Corruption in India” with Abhijit Banerjee, Esther Duflo, John Firth, Dan Keniston and Ben Olken

Conference Presentations:

NEUDC (MIT), November 2016
Empirics and Methods in Economics (Northwestern), October 2016
EconCon (Princeton), August 2016
Development and Political Economy Bay Area Conference (Berkeley), April 2016
NEUDC (Brown), November 2015

Referee Service:

Journal of Development Economics

Languages:

English (native), Hindi (limited working proficiency, spoken and written)

References:

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Dissertation Abstract

My dissertation examines topics related to labor markets and poverty in the developing world and United States.

Jobs for Sale: Bribery and Misallocation in Hiring [Job Market Paper]

This paper examines a common, yet poorly understood phenomenon: corruption in hiring for public sector jobs. I collect original data from a hiring process for managerial positions in a developing country health bureaucracy, and find that hires paid large bribes, averaging 17 months of salary. Although existing literature has speculated that corruption will lead to low quality hires, I find that hires are among the best candidates and compare favorably to those who would have been hired under plausible alternative hiring processes.

Since hires oversee community health workers, their performance can be measured using improvements in delivery of health services after hiring. Based on estimation via LASSO, I find five supervisor characteristics related to better services delivery and construct an index (Supervisor Performance Index, or SPI) from these variables. To ensure that these improvements are caused by the supervisor rather than the set of workers to whom they are assigned, I leverage exogenous variation in the assignment of supervisors to workers and create an instrument for supervisor SPI. The instrumented regressions demonstrate that supervisor quality, as measured by SPI, has a causal and economically important impact on delivery of health services.

A unique feature of the data is that it covers the universe of those eligible to apply for the position, including those who did not apply in the observed hiring process. I structurally estimate an entry model to determine who would have applied and been hired under various alternative hiring procedures, such as standardized testing, and compare them to actual hires using SPI. Surprisingly, actual hires are of comparable or superior quality. For example, as compared to hires under a

knowledge-based test, actual hires are 4.3-8.7 percentage points closer to the predicted optimal set of hires. Using the data, I show that this is explained by a novel mechanism in my model: bribery leads to selection on wealth and willingness to pay, so if these are positively correlated with quality, higher quality candidates will be selected.

The paper has two main policy implications. First, the estimated effects of higher quality supervisors show that even in dysfunctional bureaucracies, the quality of mid-level managers is tremendously important for service delivery. This suggests that greater attention should be paid to hiring for those positions. Second, the degree of misallocation from corruption in hiring will depend on the correlations of wealth/willingness to pay with quality; in the studied context, misallocation was minimal due to the positive nature of the correlations. Given that anti-corruption resources are limited, this produces useful guidance on where they should be allocated, i.e. to hiring processes in which wealth/willingness to pay will be strongly negatively correlated with quality, such as for police officers.

The Rise of Dowry in India [Joint with Gaurav Chiplunkar; in progress]

Dowry payments are an important part of household finances in India, typically exceeding a year of household earnings. Yet there is little empirical evidence on determinants of dowry payments or rigorous documentation of practices: existing work has relied on small and non-representative samples. We leverage data on over 76,000 marriages between 1900 and 1999 to document new facts about dowry and marriage practices, and test theories of dowry. We show large changes on the extensive margin: between 1900-1940, the proportion of marriages with dowry payments remained constant at between 35% and 45%, while between 1940 and 1975, this increased to nearly 90% of marriages. Over this time period, real dowry payments increased alongside dowry prevalence, but decreased after 1975. We empirically test and reject the major existing theories of changes in dowry practices, such as changes in sex ratios (marriage squeeze hypothesis), emulation of high caste individuals (Sanskritization hypothesis), and cross-caste competition for grooms (Anderson, 2003). Instead, the changes in dowry prevalence and size are explained by changes in the distributions of education of brides and grooms. For example, as there is a relative increase in the pool of educated men relative to women, this increases prevalence and average size of dowries, though decreases the average dowry paid to educated men. These results suggest that dowry amount will continue to decline with modernization.

Minimum Wage and Retail Price Pass-Through [Joint with Sharat Ganapati]

While the vast majority of research on the minimum wage has focused on labor market outcomes, this project examines its effect on prices. Utilizing the Nielsen Retail Scanner and Consumer Panel datasets, we find minimal pass-through of minimum wage changes onto retail and grocery prices. This finding is robust to a number of identification strategies, such as matching counties across state boundaries, and is precisely estimated. We also find no evidence of anticipation/retrospective adjustment in prices, heterogeneous responses based on the size of the minimum wage change, or heterogeneous effects on consumers of different income groups. Data from the Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages rationalize these findings. Since labor is a relatively small portion of total costs in this sector and the effect of the minimum wage on labor costs is modest, this leads to a low price response. Estimates from other industries suggest that, aside from the restaurant and fast-food sectors, this low pass-through holds more generally.