

Tushar Kundu

PHD CANDIDATE | COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, DEPARTMENT OF ECONOMICS

tk2859@columbia.edu | tusharkundu.github.io | tusharkunduinca@gmail.com

Last updated: April 4, 2025

EDUCATION

Columbia University, New York, NY

August 2019 – Present

PhD in Economics (expected May 2026)

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA

August 2013 – June 2017

Bachelor of Arts, Honors in Economics and Mathematics (Emphasis on Statistics)

FIELDS OF INTEREST

Education, Labor, Development, Gender

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching Assistant, Columbia University, New York, NY

- Introduction to Econometrics (Undergraduate) Fall 2020, Fall 2021
- Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate) Spring 2022, Fall 2023, Spring 2025
- Public Economics (Undergraduate/Graduate) Fall 2022, Spring 2023

Instructor, Columbia University, New York, NY

- Public Economics (Undergraduate/Graduate) Summer 2023

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Parent-Teacher Alignment in Multidimensional Skill Development

(Job Market Paper)

I examine how teachers incorporate parent preferences into their decisions about allocating effort towards cognitive versus non-cognitive skill development. Using data from 300 classrooms across five Indian private schools, I elicit parent preferences over improving academic, emotional, and social dimensions of human capital. I combine this with a randomized trial providing teachers structured information about parent priorities to see how this information influences teacher beliefs, teacher behavior, and ultimately skill development for students. I find teachers underestimate parents' academic emphasis, with misalignment increasing for parents they communicate with frequently. When communication is limited, teachers project their own preferences onto parents. Analysis of skill ratings and improvement priorities reveals production constraints increasingly drive differential outcomes in skill development as students age. These findings suggest structured parent-teacher information exchange offers a low-cost approach to improving educational outcomes in resource-constrained settings with large class sizes.

What do People Want?

with Daniel Benjamin, Kristen Cooper, Ori Heffetz, and Miles Kimball

We elicited over a million stated preference choices over 126 dimensions or "aspects" of well-being from a sample of 3,351 respondents on Amazon's Mechanical Turk (MTurk). Our surveys also collected self-reported well-being (SWB) questions about respondents' current levels of the aspects of well-being. From the stated preference data, we estimate relative log marginal utilities per point on our 0-100 response scale for each aspect. We validate these estimates by comparing them to alternative methods for estimating preferences, and show that our estimates reflect a precise notion of marginal value. Our findings provide empirical evidence that both complements and challenges historical philosophical perspectives on human desires and values. Our results support Aristotelian notions of eudaimonia through family relationships and Maslow's emphasis on basic security needs, yet also suggest that contemporary theories of well-being may overemphasize abstract concepts like happiness and life satisfaction, while undervaluing concrete dimensions of family well-being, financial security, and health that respondents place the highest marginal utilities on. We document substantial heterogeneity in preferences across respondents, with current SWB levels explaining a significant portion of the variation.

Explainable AI and Human Decision Making: Preferences, Beliefs, and Biases

with Peter Bergman and Kadeem Noray

Increasingly, AI is being used as a gatekeeper to key areas that affect economic mobility. AI is screening applicants for jobs, loans, healthcare and housing. Generative AI has accelerated this trend; its pre-trained models can readily be deployed across a variety of contexts. However, there are concerns that these models discriminate against protected groups. We construct a model of applicant selection that distinguishes between different forms of discrimination – taste-based discrimination, statistical discrimination, and biased beliefs – at the employer or recruiter level. We collect data that allow us to record resume review and hiring outcomes for applicant profiles and overcome the selection issue of observing hiring outcomes only for interviewed applicants. We compare AI decision making to the distribution of human decision makers and use the model to simulate policies such as blinding resume characteristics ("ban the box") and to build non-discriminatory screening algorithms.

Signaling in Female Education

with Akanksha Vardani

We study the role of labor market and marriage market considerations in motivating investment in female education. We replicate previous work contrasting the signaling and human capital accumulation models of educational attainment conducted on a US sample in the developing country contexts of India and Zambia. In India, we find that increased access to secondary school shifts the entire distribution of educational attainment upwards, with more ambiguous effects in Zambia. We extend the analysis to include marriage market considerations, and test to see if shifts in educational attainment depend on marriage payment norms. We find that shifts are attenuated among populations that practice marriage payments.

Community and Household Networks and Women's Workforce Entry

with Akanksha Vardani

Seniority and the Gender Wage Gap

with DongIk Kang

Empowering Youth with Digital Skills: A Large-Scale Clustered Randomized Intervention in Kenya

with Palaash Bhargava, Daniel Chen, Tommaso Batistoni, Ken Maina

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

- | | |
|---|-----------|
| • Dissertation Fellowship, Columbia University | 2024-2025 |
| • Wueller Award for Best T.A. for Undergraduate Electives (Runner Up) | 2022-2023 |
| • Dean's Fellowship, Columbia University | 2019-2020 |

RESEARCH GRANTS

- | | |
|---|----------------|
| • Columbia PER Field & Experimental Research Award (\$10,000) | 2024 – Present |
| • Columbia CDEP Student Research Grant | 2023, 2024 |
| • Weiss Fund | 2023 |

PROFESSIONAL SERVICE

Refereeing

- *Quarterly Journal of Economics*

SELECTED CONFERENCES AND SEMINARS

- | | |
|-----------------------------------|------|
| • Advances with Field Experiments | 2024 |
| • ASSA Annual Meeting | 2025 |

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCES

- | | |
|--|------------------------|
| • Clean Energy Research Assistant, Planet Reimagined | October 2024 - Present |
| • Research Assistant for Daniel Benjamin, USC and NBER | July 2017 – July 2019 |
| • Global Attitudes Summer Intern, Pew Research Center | June 2016 – Aug 2016 |
| • Associate Business Analyst, American International Group (AIG) | June 2015 – Aug 2015 |
| • Research Assistant for Steve Wang, Swarthmore Mathematics Department | June 2014 – June 2017 |

SKILLS & INTERESTS

- **Technical:** Stan, R, Python, Latex, Qualtrics
- **Languages:** Fluent in English, Proficient in Spanish and Bengali