

Tushar Kundu

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Education

Columbia University, New York, NY August 2019 – Present
Ph.D. Candidate in Economics (expected May, 2025)

Swarthmore College, Swarthmore, PA August 2013 – June 2017
Bachelor of Arts, Honors in Economics and Mathematics (Emphasis on Statistics)

Fields of Interest

Education, Development, Labor, Applied Microeconomics

Teaching Experience

Teaching Assistant, **Columbia University**, New York, NY

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

Instructor, **Columbia University**, New York, NY

Public Economics (Undergraduate/Graduate)	Summer, 2023
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Research in Progress

Improving Parent-teacher Communication about Student Well-being (Job Market Paper)

I study the potential of enhancing parent-teacher communication to improve the development of student well-being, focusing on a holistic view of human capital. I conduct an intervention where information on parent preferences regarding the relative importance of various human capital dimensions is systematically provided to teachers across 10 schools in 4 regions across India. I survey parents of elementary, middle, and high school students to gauge their preferences across a comprehensive range of domains covering academic, social, and emotional skills. Concurrently, teachers are surveyed to measure their perceptions about parent preferences and their degree to which their beliefs align with the true parent preferences. I estimate the impact of providing teachers information on student outcomes, teacher beliefs, as well as parent satisfaction. The expectation is that by informing teachers about student needs, proxied by parent preferences, this study could reveal a cost-effective method for nurturing holistic student development, with implications for educational systems looking to integrate non-cognitive skill growth alongside academic learning.

What do People Want? (with Daniel Benjamin, Kristen Cooper, Ori Heffetz, and Miles Kimball)

A typical strategy for modeling states of the world, and preferences over them, is to define states based on market goods. However, non-market goods, such as social position, health, and life meaning clearly matter for well-being. In this paper, we focus on a list of 2000 fundamental aspects of well-being that

aims to be exhaustive in identifying all final goods that individuals care about. We answer (i) what do people want, (ii) how much to people differ in what they want, and (iii) what drives individual differences in preferences. We survey 5,831 MTurk participants about their levels (current amounts) and preferences over the 2,152 aspects of well-being. We find that people place a high importance on non-market goods. Further, there is significant individual heterogeneity in terms of what people value. Despite individual variation, there is wide agreement across demographics about what is important, with level differences explaining some of the variation in preferences.

Bias and Information in Technical Interviews (with Peter Bergman and Kadeem Noray)

Jobs in the technology sector pay well, but there are concerns about demographic representation. In this project, we study one part of the pipeline that may lead to these gaps - the interview process. Specifically, we study the role of interviewer behavior during interviews, and differential interviewee response to feedback using data from an online platform for mock interviews. We find that gender gaps in interviewee performance are larger for male interviewers relative to female interviewers. We supplement the interview data with labor market outcomes from LinkedIn and show that critical interviewers have a positive impact on probability of getting a new job, and working at a high quality (FAAMG) firm.

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.

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

Columbia Center for Development Economics and Policy Student Research Grant	Summer, 2023
Weiss Fund for Research in Development Economics	Spring, 2023
Columbia Program for Economic Research Summer Funding	Summer 2022, 2023
Dean’s Fellowship, Columbia University	August 2019 – Present

Relevant Experiences

<i>Research Assistant for Miles Kimball and Daniel Benjamin, USC and NBER</i>	July 2017 – July 2019
<i>Global Attitudes Summer Intern, Pew Research Center</i>	June 2016 – Aug 2016
<i>Associate Business Analyst, American International Group (AIG)</i>	June 2015 – Aug 2015
<i>Research Assistant, Swarthmore Mathematics Department</i>	June 2014 – June 2017

Skills & Interests

- Computer: Proficient in R, STATA, Stan; Working knowledge of Python, JavaScript, HTML, and ArcGIS
- Languages: Fluent in English, Proficient in Spanish and Bengali