

# Ajinkya Keskar

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Rice University  
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## RESEARCH AND TEACHING FIELDS

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Primary: Development Economics, Applied Microeconomics

Secondary: Labor Economics

## EDUCATION

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Ph.D. in Economics, Rice University	2016-2022 (Expected)
M.S. in Economics, University of Wisconsin-Madison	2014-2016
B.E. in Electronics and Communication (Distinction), PES University, India	2009-2013

## SCHOLARSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS

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Dagobert L. Brito Award for Best Performance by a Recitation Instructor in Economics, Rice University  
Social Sciences Research Institute Graduate Student Conference Travel Grant  
Rice University's Department of Economics Graduate Fellowship  
Master's Program's Best Research Paper Award, University of Wisconsin-Madison  
Distinction GPA Award, PES University

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

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Research Assistant for Professor Steven Durlauf, University of Wisconsin-Madison	March 2015 - March 2016
Research Assistant for Professor Isabelle Perrigne, Rice University	January 2019 - May 2019
Project Assistant, Indian Institute of Science, Bangalore, India	August 2013 - May 2014

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

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<b>Teaching Assistant</b> , Rice University	2016-Present
Applied Econometrics (Undergraduate) , Development Economics (Undergraduate)	
<b>Tutor</b> , Division of Intercollegiate Athletics, University of Wisconsin-Madison	2015-2016
Labor Economics (Undergraduate), Microeconomics (Undergraduate), Game Theory (Undergraduate)	

## PUBLICATIONS

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“Dowries, resource allocation, and poverty”, *Journal of Economic Behavior & Organization*, Vol. 192, pp. 268-303 (with Rossella Calvi)

## RESEARCH PAPERS

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### Matching on Height in India (**Job market paper**)

In India, height is greatly valued in the marriage market, and the child stunting rate remains strikingly high. In this paper, I juxtapose these two seemingly unrelated facts and investigate the role of parents’ marital sorting and matching in determining children’s height. First, I develop a two-sided matching model of the Indian marriage market to structurally estimate preferences for height. I do so while considering other critical drivers of marital sorting and matching, such as education and family wealth. I find evidence of significant positive assortative matching on height across religion-caste groups. Next, I study changes in complementarities in height over time, finding a mild increase on average but substantial heterogeneity by caste and religion. Finally, using the model estimates, I simulate parents’ counterfactual joint height distribution under several hypothetical scenarios. Based on insights from the medical literature, I compute children’s potential height distribution (and hence their risk of being stunted) given the counterfactual distribution of matches. I find marital sorting and matching to have a limited impact on children’s average height, but a significant one on the level of inequality in children’s height. Specifically, my analysis indicates that complementarities in height in the marriage market can increase the standard deviation of the distribution of potential height by up to 3% and can increase the prevalence of stunting by up to 4 percentage points.

### ‘Til Dowry Do Us Part: Bargaining and Violence in Indian Families (with Rossella Calvi) *Under Review*

We develop a non-cooperative bargaining model with incomplete information linking dowry payments, domestic violence, resource allocation between a husband and a wife, and separation. Our model generates several predictions, which we test empirically using amendments to the Indian anti-dowry law as a natural experiment. We document a decline in women’s decision-making power and separations, and a surge in domestic violence following the amendments. These unintended effects are attenuated when social stigma against separation is low and, in some circumstances, when gains from marriage are high. Whenever possible, parents increase investment in their daughters’ human capital to compensate for lower dowries.

### Dowries, Resource Allocation, and Poverty (with Rossella Calvi)

We study the relationship between dowries – wealth transfers from the bride’s family to the groom or his family at the time of marriage – and individual-level poverty in rural India. Based on the estimates of a collective household model, we show that the share of household consumption expenditure allocated to a woman is strongly associated with the dowry she paid at the time of her marriage. We compute poverty rates separately for women and men and find that women’s poverty relative to men decreases with dowry. Moreover, women who paid dowries are less likely to be poor relative to women who did not, even when their households’ consumption expenditures are the same. Our counterfactual policy analysis indicates that abolishing or reducing dowries (through anti-dowry laws or taxes, for example) may have the unintended effect of aggravating intra-household inequality and increasing women’s risk of living in poverty after marriage.

## WORK IN PROGRESS

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Child Poverty, Resource Allocation and Child Stunting

Effects of Birth Order on Marriage, Human Capital and Health: Evidence from India

## POLICY WRITING

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“Til Dowry Do Us Part: Bargaining and Violence in the Indian Marriage Market” with Rossella Calvi  
**VoxDev** (March 2021)

“Downside of Dowry Crackdown — Women’s Decision-making Power Falls, Domestic Violence Goes Up”  
with Rossella Calvi

**The Print** (March 2021)

“Dowries and women’s well-being post marriage” with Rossella Calvi

**Ideas for India** (April 2021)

## CONFERENCES

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2020: North East Development Consortium Conference at Dartmouth College, Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting

2021: European Society for Population Economics, Asian Meeting of the Econometric Society, Australian Meeting of the Econometric Society, European Economic Association-Econometric Society Meeting, Globalization and Development Conference, Association for Mentoring and Inclusion in Economics, Society of Economics of the Household, Annual Meeting - Population Association of America (Poster Presentation), Southern Economic Association Annual Meeting (Scheduled)

## REFeree SERVICE

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Journal of Human Capital, PLOS One, Journal of International Development

## MENTORSHIP PROGRAMS

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2021: Association for Mentorship and Inclusion in Economics (*mentee*)

## OTHER

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Languages: Marathi (Native), English (Fluent), Hindi (Fluent)

Programming Skills: Stata, Matlab, R, Python, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X

## REFERENCES

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Professor Rossella Calvi (Co-chair)  
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Rice University  
[rossella.calvi@rice.edu](mailto:rossella.calvi@rice.edu)

Professor Yinghua He  
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