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Placement Director Gianluca Violante violante@princeton.edu 609-258-4003

Graduate Administrator Laura Hedden lhedden@princeton.edu 609-258-4006

Current Employment

Yale Economic Growth Center

2023-2025

Postdoctoral Associate

Graduate Studies

Princeton University

2017-2023

PhD in Economics

Dissertation: *“Essays on Preference Formation, Norms Transmission, and Healthcare in Development Economics”*

REFERENCES

Professor Janet Currie
Department of Economics
Princeton University
609-258-7393
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Professor Thomas Fujiwara
Department of Economics
Princeton University
609-258-6993
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Professor Rohini Pande
Department of Economics
Yale University
203-432-3637
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Professor Christopher A. Neilson
Department of Economics
Yale University
203-432-3576
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Prior Education

University of St. Gallen

2012-2016

B.A. in Economics

Visiting Student, Harvard University, 2015

Fields

PRIMARY Development Economics

SECONDARY Health Economics, Education Economics, Industrial Organization

Job Market Paper

“Fighting Silent Killers: How India’s Public Healthcare Staffing Expansion Saves Lives by Improving Access and Market Quality.” With Jitendra Kumar Soni.

Millions of adults in low- and middle-income countries die from treatable conditions every year. This paper highlights that an understaffed public healthcare system contributes to high premature mortality rates, both directly and indirectly by enabling low-quality private sector providers to survive. We evaluate a large-scale program that added a healthcare worker to village clinics previously only staffed by a midwife in India. Exploiting quasi-experimental variation in staff allocations caused by program rules, we find that adding a healthcare worker increased patient loads by 58% and reduced all-age mortality in the catchment area by 10% within two years. Eighty percent of the mortality decline is attributable to a decrease in deaths of adults aged 56+ years, increasing their life expectancy by at least three months. Using our own surveys of patients and public and private providers, we show that the program improved performance and service availability in the public sector and also induced private providers to increase their quality. We estimate a structural model of patient demand informed by additional variation in prices and public sector worker availability to decompose mechanisms and evaluate counterfactual policies. We demonstrate that patients undervalue quality, making it important to simultaneously improve public sector quality and access to both support infra-marginal patients and reach additional ones. Ten percent of the decrease in mortality can be attributed to private sector responses. We further find that an allocation of healthcare workers that takes into account local market conditions could have achieved a substantially greater reduction in mortality. We estimate that the reform is highly cost-effective even under conservative assumptions.

Publications

“Investing in the Next Generation: The Long-Run Impacts of a Liquidity Shock.” With Arielle Bernhardt, Erica Field, Natalia Rigol, and Rohini Pande. *American Economic Review*, Sep 2024, Vol 114 (9): 2792-2824.

Poor entrepreneurs must frequently choose between business investment and children’s education. To examine this trade-off, we exploit experimental variation in short-run microenterprise growth among a sample of Indian households and track schooling and business outcomes over eleven years. Treated households, who experience higher initial microenterprise growth, are on average one-third more likely to send children to college. However, educational investment and schooling gains are concentrated among literate-parent households, whose enterprises eventually stagnate. In contrast, illiterate-parent households experience long-run business gains but declines in children’s education. Our findings suggest that microenterprise growth has the potential to reduce relative intergenerational educational mobility.

Working Papers

“Search and Biased Beliefs in Education Markets.” With Claudia Allende, Adam Kapor, Christopher Neilson, and Fernando Ochoa. *R&R at Econometrica*.

When learning about schools requires costly search, search decisions depend on families’ beliefs about the returns. This paper asks how families’ (limited) awareness of schools and (inaccurate) beliefs about schools’ prices, quality ratings, and placement chances distort their search efforts

and application decisions in the context of Chile's nationwide centralized school choice process. We combine novel data on search activity with a panel of household surveys, administrative application data, randomized information experiments, and a model of demand for schools. We find that households are unaware of many relevant schools, and hold inaccurate beliefs about admissions chances, prices, and quality scores, affecting their search decisions and application decisions. Most importantly, households' perceptions systematically overstate the quality ratings of schools that they know and like. Correcting misperceptions about known schools causes students to match to schools with higher quality, equal to what can be achieved under a full-information benchmark, and closes the quality gap between low-SES and high-SES applicants.

"The Economics of Purity Norms: Caste, Social Interaction, and Women's Work in India." With Arielle Bernhardt.

Caste norms, the religious and social rules that underpin the Hindu caste system, impose strong constraints on behavior: women should stay secluded within the home, caste groups should stay segregated, and certain foods should not be eaten. This paper shows that caste norms are weakened when Hindus live alongside Adivasis, an indigenous minority outside of the caste system. Using a number of estimation strategies, including a historical natural experiment that led to local variation in Adivasi population share, we show that having more Adivasi neighbors decreases Hindus' adherence to a wide range of caste rules. Hindu women in Adivasi-majority villages are 50% more likely to work and have substantially higher earnings. Individuals higher on the caste hierarchy are less likely to practice "untouchability" towards those lower than them and villages are more likely to be integrated. We argue that Hindus adhere to caste norms as an investment in status within the caste system, and that this investment is less valuable when Adivasis - a lower-status out-group - form a larger share of the village population. Consistent with this explanation, caste norms are weaker in areas where British colonial policy led Adivasis to hold more land and political power, increasing the returns to social and economic interactions with Adivasis independent of their population share.

"The Making of a Public Sector Worker: The Causal Effects of Temporary Work Assignments to Poor Areas." With Mariel Bedoya.

Can temporary work assignments to poor areas affect worker preferences, beliefs, and career choices? We provide evidence on this question using random variation in the assignment of psychologists within a one-year mandatory rural service program in Peru. Psychologists who completed the program in poorer places are later 15% more likely to work for the public sector and 86% more likely to work in the poorest districts in the country. We provide survey evidence that points to increased prosociality as an important mechanism. Additional findings suggest that the results are not driven by inertia or differences in hireability.

Work in Progress

"Optimal Teacher Allocations When Identity Matters: Evidence from a Large-Scale Teacher Lottery in India." With Arielle Bernhardt, S.K. Ritadhi and Rohit Joseph.

"Heterogeneity in Hospital Value Added and Delivery Choices: Evidence from 1.5 Million Births in India." With Sagar Saxena.

“Research Information and the Last-Mile: Evidence from a Scale-Up Experiment with Secondary Schools in the Dominican Republic.” With Daniel Morales, Christopher Neilson, and Sebastian Otero.

Additional Work

“Lessons from the Covid Care Centers in West Bengal.” With Abhijit Chowdhury, Jishnu Das, Parthasarathi Mukherjee, and Satyarup Siddhanta, 2022. *Center for Policy Research Working Paper*.

“Gender Gaps and Economic Growth: Why Haven’t Women Won Globally (Yet)?” With Orazio Attanasio, Pinelopi Goldberg, Aishwarya Lakshmi Ratan, Rohini Pande, Michael Peters, Charity Troyer Moore, and Fabrizio Zilibotti, 2024. *EGC Discussion Paper*.

Research Experience

Research Assistant to Prof. Christopher Neilson	<i>2018</i>
Research Assistant to Prof. Rohini Pande	<i>2016 - 2017</i>

Teaching Experience

<i>Princeton University</i>	
Junior Independent Work, TA for Prof. Christopher Neilson, Prof. Hope Corman, Prof. Colleen Carey	<i>2021, 2022</i>
Economic Analysis of Development (Advanced), TA for Prof. Anne Case	<i>2019, 2020, 2021</i>
International Development, TA for Alicia Adsera	<i>2019</i>

Honors, Scholarships, Fellowships, and Grants

J-PAL Cash Transfers for Child Health Initiative / BMGF (\$41,306)	<i>2022</i>
SurveyCTO Data Collection Grant (\$2,000)	<i>2022</i>
J-PAL Gender and Economic Agency Travel Grant (\$9,898)	<i>2020</i>
Weiss Family Grant (\$49,614)	<i>2020</i>
NSF Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant (\$31,500)	<i>2020</i>
Princeton Center for Health and Wellbeing Graduate Research Grant (\$9,808)	<i>2019, 2020</i>
Princeton Program in Latin American Studies Travel Grant (\$2,100)	<i>2019, 2022</i>
Princeton Institute for International and Regional Studies Travel Grant (\$2,600)	<i>2019, 2022</i>
Princeton Graduate Economics Fellowship	<i>2017–2022</i>
German National Merit Foundation Fellowship	<i>2012–2016</i>

Professional Activities

Presentations

Midwest International Economic Development Conference, German Development Economics Conference, North East Universities Development Consortium Conference, Princeton University, Yale University, Institute of Economic Growth, National Health Systems Resource Centre

Refereeing

American Economic Review: Insights, Review of Economics of the Household, American Economic Journal: Applied Economics

Languages

German (native), English

Last updated: November 2024