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CITIZENSHIP: Indian

SEX: Female

CURRENT POSITION:

Postdoctoral Fellow, Program on Education Policy and Governance, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Harvard University, 2004-present.

EDUCATION:

Ph.D. in Economics, Cornell University, August 2004.

- Dissertation Title: Impact of Voucher Design on Public School Performance and Student Sorting: Theory and Evidence
- Committee Members: Stephen Coate (Chair)
Ronald Ehrenberg
Miguel Urquiola

M.Phil. in Economics, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University, India, July 1997.

M.A in Economics, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University, India, July 1995.

FIELDS OF CONCENTRATION:

- Public Economics and Public Policy
- Labor Economics and Economics of Education
- Applied Microeconomics
- Applied Econometrics

HONORS AND FELLOWSHIPS:

- Bradley Fellowship, 2004-2005.
- Sage Fellowship, Cornell University, 1997-2003.
- Junior Research Fellowship, University Grants Commission, India, 1995-1997.
- Balvir and Ranjana Memorial Scholarship, Delhi School of Economics, Delhi University, India, 1993-95.
- National Scholarship for B.Sc. (Economics Honors), India, 1989-1992.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE:

- Teaching Assistant, Department of Economics, Cornell University, 1998-1999, 2002-2004. Introductory Microeconomics and Macroeconomics.
- Coordinating Teaching Assistant, Department of Economics, Cornell University, 2001. Introductory Macroeconomics.
- Grader, Department of Economics, Cornell University, 1998. Graduate Macroeconomics.
- Lecturer, Miranda House College, Delhi University, India, 1995. Intermediate Microeconomics.

WORKING PAPERS:

- Vouchers, Public School Response and the Role of Incentives: Evidence from Florida, mimeo, Harvard University, 2006.

This paper analyzes the behavior of public schools facing vouchers. The literature on the effect of voucher programs on public schools typically focuses on student and mean school scores. This paper tries to go inside the black box to investigate some of the ways in which schools facing the threat of vouchers in Florida behaved. Florida schools getting an “F” grade are exposed to the threat of vouchers, while vouchers are implemented if they get another “F” grade in the next three years. Exploiting the institutional details of the program, I analyze the incentives built into the system and investigate whether the threatened public schools behaved strategically to respond to these incentives. There is strong evidence that they did respond to incentives. Using a difference-in-differences estimation strategy as well as a regression discontinuity analysis, I find that the threatened schools tended to focus more on students below the minimum criteria cutoffs rather than equally on all, but interestingly, this improvement did not come at the expense of higher performing students. Second, consistent with incentives, they focused mostly on writing rather than reading and math. Finally, there is not much evidence of relative reclassification of low performing students in to special education categories exempt from the calculation of grades. The latter is consistent with substantial costs associated with such reclassification in Florida during that period. These results are robust to a variety of sensitivity tests and have important policy implications.

- Impact of Voucher Design on Public School Performance: Evidence from Florida and Milwaukee Voucher Programs. Revise and Resubmit, **Journal of Public Economics**.

This paper examines the impact of vouchers in general, and voucher design in particular, on public school performance. It argues that all voucher programs are not created equal. There are often fundamental differences in voucher designs that affect public school incentives differently and induce different responses from them. The 1990 Milwaukee program can be looked upon as a “voucher shock” program that suddenly made low-income students eligible for vouchers. The 1999 Florida program can be looked upon as a “threat of voucher” program, where schools getting an “F” grade for the first time are exposed to the threat of vouchers, but do not face vouchers unless and until they get a second “F” within the next three years. In the context of a formal theoretical model of public school and household behavior, I argue that the threatened public schools will unambiguously improve under the Florida-type program and this improvement will exceed that under the Milwaukee-type program. Using data from Florida and Wisconsin, and a difference-in-differences estimation strategy, I then show that these predictions are validated empirically.

- Can Increasing Private School Participation and Monetary Loss in a Voucher Program Affect Public School Performance? Evidence from Milwaukee. Revise and Resubmit, **Journal of Public Economics**.

Following a Wisconsin Supreme Court ruling in 1998, the Milwaukee voucher program saw a major shift and entered into its second phase when religious private schools were allowed to participate for the first

time in 1998. This led to more than a three-fold increase in the number of private schools and almost a four-fold increase in the number of choice students. Moreover, some changes in funding provisions led to an increase in revenue loss per student from vouchers in the second phase. In a theoretical model, the paper argues that the choice of parameters in a voucher program is crucial and that these changes will lead to an improvement of the treated public schools in the second phase as compared to the first phase. Following Hoxby (2003a, 2003b) in treatment-control group classification, using Wisconsin data from 1987 to 2002, and a differences-in-differences estimation strategy, the study then shows that this has indeed been the case.

- Do Vouchers Lead to Sorting under Random Private School Selection? Evidence from the Milwaukee Voucher Program,” **Under Review**.

This paper analyzes the impact of voucher design on student sorting. Much of the existing literature investigates the question of sorting where private schools can screen students. However, the publicly funded U.S. voucher programs require private schools to accept all students unless oversubscribed and to pick students randomly if oversubscribed. This paper focuses on the Milwaukee voucher program and two of its crucial features---random private school selection and the absence of topping up of vouchers. In a theoretical model, the study argues that random private school selection alone cannot prevent student sorting. However, random private school selection coupled with the absence of topping up can preclude sorting by income, though not sorting by ability. Using a logit model and student level data from the Milwaukee program, it then shows that these predictions are validated empirically.

- Gains from a Redrawing of Political Boundaries: Evidence from State Reorganization in India, **Under Review**.

This paper analyzes the impact of a redrawing of political boundaries on voting patterns. It investigates whether secession of states leads to gains in terms of better conformity of the electorate's political preferences with those of the elected representatives. It studies these issues in the context of reorganization of states in India. Madhya Pradesh, the biggest state in India before the reorganization, was subdivided into Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh in 2000, the latter being much smaller in size and with different socioeconomic composition and political preferences. We first argue in a theoretical context that when it is part of the same state, Chhattisgarh would vote strategically to elect representatives with preferences more closely aligned to those of the bigger region. Once it constitutes a separate state however, this motive would no longer operate. Exploiting detailed data on state elections for 1993, 1998 and 2003 and a difference-in-differences estimation strategy, the paper then shows that these predictions are validated empirically. These results have important policy implications.

WORKS IN PROGRESS:

- The Intended and Unintended Consequences of the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act: Evidence from Wisconsin
- Are Charter Schools Better than Regular Public Schools? Evidence from Michigan
- A Game Theoretic Approach to Early Admissions in U.S. Colleges: Strategic Interactions and the Equity-Efficiency Tradeoff

SELECTED MEDIA CITATIONS:

- Tierney, John, A Chance to Escape, **The New York Times**, June 7, 2005, Section A.
- Chatterjee, Satyajit, Ores and Scores: Two Cases of How Competition led to Productivity Miracles, **Business Review, Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia**, Q1 2005.
- Tierney, John, City Schools that Work, **The New York Times**, March 7, 2006, Section A.

SEMINAR AND CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS (PAST AND FORTHCOMING):

- Cornell University, Department of Economics, Spring 2003
- Cornell University, School of Industrial and Labor Relations, Fall 2003
- University of Georgia, Carl Vinson Institute of Government, Spring 2004
- Harvard University, Program on Education Policy and Governance Colloquium, Fall 2004
- Harvard University, John F. Kennedy School of Government, Spring 2005, Fall 2005 and Spring 2006
- American Education Finance Association Annual Conference, 2005 and 2006
- American Political Science Association Annual Meeting, 2005 and 2006
- APPAM (Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management) Fall Conference, 2005
- North American Summer Meeting of the Econometric Society, 2004
- North American Winter Meetings of the Econometric Society, 2005 and 2006
- Econometric Society World Congress, 2005
- NCES (National Center for Education Statistics) Summer Data Conference, 2004
- NEUDC (North East Universities Development Consortium) Conference, 2004
- Society of Labor Economists Annual Meeting, 2005 and 2006
- Southern Economic Association Meetings, 2004, 2005 and 2006

OTHER PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES:

- **Conference Organizer:** “Mobilizing the Private Sector for Public Education”, 2005 at Harvard University with Paul Peterson, Harvard University and Harry Patrinos, World Bank
- **Discussant:** “Adequacy Lawsuits: Their Growing Impact on American Education” Conference, 2005 at Harvard University

REFERENCES:

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Kiplinger Professor of Public Policy
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