

Divya Singh

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Placement Assistant: Amy Devine, (212) 854-6881, aed2152@columbia.edu

EDUCATION

Last updated: November 15, 2019

Columbia University in the City of New York

Ph.D. in Economics, Expected May 2020.

Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi

Master of Science in Quantitative Economics, 2014.

Miranda House, University of Delhi

B.A. Honors in Economics, 2012.

FIELDS OF SPECIALIZATION

Primary field: Public Economics

Secondary fields: Urban Economics, Development Economics.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Awards

Honorable mention, Best Student Paper prize, Urban Economics Conference, Philadelphia, 2019.

Harriss Prize, Best Second Year Paper, Columbia University, 2016.

Teaching Fellow, Columbia University, 2015-19.

Dean's Fellow, Columbia University, 2014-19.

Honorary Book Grant × 4, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi, 2012-2014.

Sumana Dutta Gold Medal for Best student in economics, Miranda House, Delhi University, 2012.

Fellowships and grants

Dissertation fellowship, Columbia University, 2019-20.

Center for Development Economics and Policy, Columbia University, 2016, 2018.

Dr. Edwin P. and Dr. Beatrice Reubens Fellowship, 2017.

RESEARCH

Job Market Paper

WP1 "Do Property Tax Incentives for New Construction Spur Gentrification? Evidence from New York City"

Recently, many cities have proposed property tax incentives on new construction to counteract rising rents. However, to date, there is little empirical evidence on their local effects. This paper uses a natural experiment in New York City to estimate the local effects of new tax-exempt residential construction. In 2006, the city government decided to make property tax incentives on new construction less generous, but only starting in 2008. Developers rushed to build and claim incentives before the deadline in response. I instrument the number of new units developed within 150 meters from a rental building by the baseline number of vacant parcels available within the same distance. Using a new dataset of rents and investment at the level of a building, I find that the existing rental building's rent increased by 2.3% in response to an additional tax-exempt unit built within a 150 meters radius. I provide evidence consistent with the hypothesis that new residential investment rendered neighborhoods more desirable by attracting affluent households and facilitating the entry of businesses and consumption amenities. Overall, the results indicate that tax-exempt new construction spurred gentrification.

Working Papers

WP2. “Merging to Dodge Taxes? Unexpected Consequences of VAT Adoption in India”

This paper investigates whether tax evasion creates incentives among firms to reorganize their production. Value Added Tax (VAT) is the world's most popular consumption tax and is considered revenue efficient since cross-reporting of firm-to-firm transactions leads to self-enforcement. However, the ability to evade tax on firm to consumer transactions creates incentives for the last two firms in the production chain to integrate vertically. I test this hypothesis by using a quasi-experiment in India where sales tax was replaced with VAT in a staggered manner between 2003 and 2008 and provided an exogenous shock to tax evasion opportunities along the production chain. Difference-in-difference analysis reveals that after the reform, treated firms sourced more “upstream” products and had greater vertical mergers, indicating increased vertical integration under VAT. In addition, the effect is largest for firms which are closest to final demand indicating that tax-evasion is one of the channels. Overall, the results suggest that VAT is no longer production efficient in settings of low compliance.

WP3. “Safer Elections, Women Turnout and Political Outcomes: Evidence from India.”

This paper measures the effects of improving security at the polling booths in a significant state election in India. Using a novel dataset on voting and political outcomes at the booth-level and a regression discontinuity design, I find that the women share in total turnout is higher by 1.4 percentage points in the booths with a greater probability of treatment. Additionally, there are effects on political outcomes. In particular, the incumbent party, corrupt candidates lose, whereas the educated candidates gain vote shares, as a result of poll-booth safety. Overall, the evidence suggests that improving safety in elections has consequences for the political-economic equilibrium.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Conference presentations (* indicates scheduled)

	<i>Paper</i>	<i>Year</i>
Urban Economics Association Meetings, Philadelphia	WP1	2019
National Tax Association Meetings*, Tampa, Florida	WP1,2	2019
Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management, Denver	WP1	2019
Young Economists Symposium, Columbia, New York	WP1	2019
Independent Budget Office, New York	WP1	2019
NY Fiscal Policy Breakfast, Federal Reserve, New York	WP1	2019
The Mayor’s Office of Management and Budget, New York	WP1	2019
ZEW, Advances in Empirical Public Economics, Mannheim, Germany	WP1	2019
Conference on Value Added of Value Added Taxes, World Bank, DC	WP2	2019
Conference on Public Finance in Developing countries, Zurich	WP2	2018
Poster at National Tax Association meeting, New Orleans	WP2	2018
Young Economists Symposium, NYU	WP2	2018
Development and Political Economy Conference, UC Berkeley	WP2	2018
PhD Conference, University of Warwick, Coventry, UK	WP2	2018
PhD Conference, George Washington University, Washington D.C.	WP3	2018
Poster at Women in Science at Columbia	WP3	2018
Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development, ISI Delhi	WP3	2017
APPAM Regional Student Conference, Washington, D.C.	WP3	2017

Attendance

NBER Graduate student workshop and Conference in Business Taxation, 2018.

(Co)-organization

Summer reading group in Public finance, Columbia University, 2018.

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistantships

Professor Francois Gerard, Columbia University, Summer & Fall, 2016.

Professor Suresh Naidu, Columbia University, Summer 2015.

Professor Tridip Ray, Indian Statistical Institute, Summer 2013.

Internships

Consultant, World Bank, D.C., Summer 2016.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Full instructor:

- International trade, 2017.

Teaching assistant:

- Public Economics, Fall 2017 and 2018.
- Economic development, Spring 2018, Spring 2019.
- American Economy, Fall 2016.
- Principles of Economics, Fall 2015, Spring 2016, Summer 2018.

PERSONAL

Languages: English (fluent), Hindi (native)

Citizenship: India

REFERENCES

Wojciech Kopczuk (Sponsor)

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Ragnar Nurkse Professor of Economics

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