

Divya Singh

Department of Economics, Columbia University | 420 West 118th Street | New York, NY 10027
divya.singh@columbia.edu | <https://econ.columbia.edu/e/divya-singh/> | +1(917) 979-9295

Placement Chairs: Donald Davis drd28@columbia.edu, Martin Uribe mu2166@columbia.edu

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

EDUCATION

Last updated: December 26, 2019

Ph.D. in Economics

2020, Columbia University in the City of New York.

Master of Science in Quantitative Economics

2014, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi.

B.A. Honors in Economics,

2012, Miranda House, University of Delhi.

FIELDS OF SPECIALIZATION

Primary field: Public Economics

Secondary fields: Urban Economics, Development Economics.

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.

AWARDS AND FELLOWSHIPS

Awards

- 2019, Honorable mention, Best Student Paper prize, Urban Economics Conference, Philadelphia.
- 2016, Harriss Prize, Best Second Year Paper, Columbia University.
- 2015-19, Teaching Fellow, Columbia University.
- 2014-19, Dean’s Fellow, Columbia University.
- 2012-2014, Honorary Book Grant $\times 4$, Indian Statistical Institute, Delhi.
- 2012, Sumana Dutta Gold Medal, Best student in economics, Miranda House, Delhi University.

Fellowships and grants

- 2019-20, Dissertation fellowship, Columbia University.
- 2016, 2018, Center for Development Economics and Policy, Columbia University.
- 2017, Dr. Edwin P. and Dr. Beatrice Reubens Fellowship.

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Conference presentations

Year		Paper
2019	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
2018	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
2017	Annual Conference on Economic Growth and Development, ISI Delhi	WP3
2017	APPAM Regional Student Conference, Washington, D.C.	WP3

Attendance

- 2018 NBER Graduate student workshop and Conference in Business Taxation

(Co)-organization

- 2018 Summer reading group in Public finance, Columbia University

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistantships

2016, Professor Francois Gerard, Columbia University
2015, Professor Suresh Naidu, Columbia University
2013, Professor Tridip Ray, Indian Statistical Institute.

Internships

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

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Full instructor:

2017, International trade

Teaching assistant:

2017, 2018, Public Economics
2018, 2019, Economic development
2016, American Economy
2015, 2016, 2018 Principles of Economics

PERSONAL

Languages: English (fluent), Hindi (native)

Citizenship: India

REFERENCES

Wojciech Kopczuk (Sponsor)

Professor of Economics
Department of Economics and SIPA
Columbia University
Email: wojciech.kopczuk@columbia.edu
Phone: (212) 854-2519

Brendan O'Flaherty

Professor of Economics
Department of Economics
Columbia University
Email: bo2@columbia.edu
Phone: (212) 854-2449

Bernard Salanie

Professor of Economics
Department of Economics
Columbia University
Email: bs2237@columbia.edu

Michael Carlos Best

Assistant Professor of Economics
Department of Economics
Columbia University
Email: michael.best@columbia.edu
Phone: (415) 316 5006

Donald Davis

Ragnar Nurkse Professor of Economics
Department of Economics
Columbia University
Email: drdavis@columbia.edu