

Chinmaya Kumar

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Education

Undergraduate Studies

B.A. (Hons), Economics
University of Delhi, 2008

Masters

MPhil. in Development Studies
University of Oxford (on Rhodes Scholarship), 2011

Graduate Studies

University of Chicago, 2017 to present
Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy
Expected Completion Date: June 2023

References:

Professor Marianne Bertrand
University of Chicago
(773) 834-5943
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Professor Christopher Blattman
University of Chicago
(510) 207-6352
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Professor Leonardo Bursztyn
University of Chicago
(617) 888-0842
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Professor Michael Kremer
University of Chicago
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Research Fields

Primary fields: Development Economics, Political Economy

Secondary fields: Behavioral Economics, Labor Economics

Research Experience and Other Employment

2011-2016 International Growth Centre, India-Bihar, Country Economist

2008-2009 Center for Development Finance, Chennai, India, Research Associate

Research Grants

- 2011-2016 NSF's Doctoral Dissertation Improvement Grant in Economics: \$ 25,000
- 2020-2022 J-PAL's Jobs and Opportunity Initiative: \$ 37,000
- 2019-2022 BFI's Development Economics Initiative: \$ 15,000
- 2018-2019 The Weiss Fund (with M R Sharan): \$ 31, 385
- 2018-2020 Rockefeller Grant for Technology and Governance (with M R Sharan through the IDFC Institute, Mumbai): \$ 300,000
- 2015-2017 International Growth Centre (with Pankaj Verma and Aaditya Dar): \$ 23,290
- 2014-2017 International Growth Centre Research Programme (with Sanjay Jain): \$ 20,173
- 2012-2013 International Growth Centre (with Maitreesh Ghatak and Sandip Mitra): \$22,387

Teaching Experience

- 2021, 2022 Political Economy of Development (Ph.D.)
Teaching Assistant for Prof. James Robinson and Christopher Blattman
- 2020 Advanced Microeconomics (Ph.D.)
Teaching Assistant for Prof. Damon Jones
- 2020, 2019 Order and Violence (MPP)
Teaching Assistant for Prof. Christopher Blattman
- 2018 Economics for Public Policy (Undergraduate)
Teaching Assistant for Prof. Kerwin Charles

Professional Activities

- Presentations NEUDC 2022, IGC Growth Week 2013, IGC South Asia Growth Conference 2013
- Discussant American Economic Association: ASSA 2021 Annual Meeting, NEUDC 2019

Research Papers

"Complaint Resolution Systems: Experimental Evidence from Rural India" (Job Market Paper)

Abstract: We study whether access to complaint resolution systems can resolve hold-up problems in implementing public good projects. We run a field experiment involving 1629 low-caste local representatives who were unable to start public goods projects in their constituencies due to bureaucratic hurdles. We randomize offers to file complaints regarding public good project initiation on their behalf and track its effects. Our treatment leads to a 40 percentage points jump in complaint filing rate and is effective in improving project implementation: treated constituencies see a 26% rise in public good projects. We also find that the treatment increases project initiation in neighboring constituencies

by 23%. Our analysis suggests that the mere threat of a formal complaint technology could cause project initiation in neighboring wards. However, resolution rates go down when multiple complaints are filed against the same higher bureaucrat. Surprisingly, treated representatives did not gain any electoral returns in the local elections held two years after the treatment.

“The Distributional Consequences of Political Reservation” (with M. R. Sharan)

Abstract: A key goal of affirmative action policies is to reduce disparities between disadvantaged minority groups and others. We study one such policy: mandated political representation in favor of low caste (Scheduled Castes/SC) groups in Bihar, India. Using a regression discontinuity design framework, we study how political reservation affects inter-group disparities in the short- and long-run. We show that political reservation in favor of SCs for the post of local government head (a) lowers SC-non-SC disparities in access to public goods in the short-run (5 years later) and long-run (13 years later), (b) lowers inter-group private asset inequality modestly in the short-run and substantially in the long-run (c) has no efficiency consequences in the short-run and (d) increases political participation and presence of low caste members in local government in the long-run. Turning to mechanisms, we show that government programs are better targeted towards low castes in reserved constituencies. Our results suggest a virtuous cycle between political representation and resource access, which reap significant benefits for minority groups in the long run.

Research Papers in Progress

“Selection, Sorting and Discrimination in Labor Supply Decisions: Experimental Evidence from India”

Abstract: Minorities are underrepresented in enterprise ownership and leadership positions in big firms. Why? This paper empirically investigates the role of one potential reason for this: discrimination against minority employers by subordinate workers. I embed a field experiment in the recruitment of entry-level workers by a set of firms based in India. The field experiment aims to answer two main research questions: 1) Do minority employers face discrimination from below in labor markets? 2) What are the underlying motivations? I specifically test for two potential motives: attention discrimination and social image concerns. Preliminary results show that applicants are 30% less likely to apply for jobs advertised by minority employers. I also find strong evidence for ‘attention discrimination’ against minority employers.

“Persistent Prejudice: De-Biasing and the Demand for News,” with Christopher Blattman, Leonardo Bursztyn, Kailash Rajah, Chris Roth

Abstract: Identity groups often hold incorrect and biased beliefs about competing groups. These beliefs may be persistent and difficult to correct. Why is that? We hypothesize that people exposed to information counter to their group identity may work to re-bias themselves by increasing their selective exposure—their consumption of biased news and information. We design an experiment in which we randomly provide Hindu respondents with information to correct a biased belief about Muslims using informational videos. We first confirm that the videos shift their beliefs during the experiment. We then examine their demand for new information—having been de-biased, are they more likely to seek information from a biased source?

*“Leader Led Growth: Social Identity and Performance of Economic Enterprises in Rural India,”
with M. R. Sharan*

Abstract: Minority groups face discrimination across multiple markets – capital, product, labor – that limits the entry and growth of their enterprises. This paper empirically investigates whether exposure to low caste (Scheduled Castes/SC) leaders at the local level can help SC entrepreneurs overcome some of the barriers and improve the performance of their enterprises. Using a regression discontinuity design, we find that exogenous exposure to SC leaders has a strong positive effect on the entry and growth of SC-run enterprises: There is a 20% increase in the number of enterprises and a 27% increase in workers employed by SC-owned enterprises. We find evidence for positive spillovers on mid-level caste groups (OBCs) but no effects on higher-caste groups.

*“Strengthening Citizen Led Monitoring: Experimental Evidence from India,” with Aaditya Dar
and M R Sharan*

Abstract: Improving the quality of public goods and services remains a challenge in most developing countries. Collective action problems among citizens can limit the effectiveness of bottom-up accountability initiatives. Using a field experiment in rural Bihar, we test whether supporting group formation of aggrieved citizens strengthens their voice and, in turn, results in a more responsive state. First, we test how exogenous variation in group size and ethnic composition of the groups affects the likelihood of group formation. Second, we study the bureaucratic response to citizens’ collective demands.

*“Bargaining Out of Poverty? Experimental Evidence on Income Shocks and Pricing Behavior of
Microentrepreneurs in India”, with Varun Kapoor*