

Aaditya Dar

Department of Economics
2115 G St NW
Monroe 340
Washington, DC - 20052

Mobile number: (+1) 202-746-4880
Alternative contact: (+1) 202-855-6933
Email address: aaditya@gwu.edu
Website: www.aadityadar.com

Education

Ph.D., Economics, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2018

Dissertation: Essays in Development Economics and Political Economy

Co-directors: Remi Jedwab and Stephen Smith

Readers: James Foster and Sarah Baird

M.Phil., Economics, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2015

M.A., Economics, The George Washington University, Washington, DC, 2014

M.A., Development Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai, 2009

B.A. (Hons.), Economics, Kirori Mal College, University of Delhi, Delhi, 2007

Research Fields

Primary: Development Economics, Applied Microeconomics, Agricultural Economics

Secondary: Political Economy, Environmental Economics, Public Economics

Employment

Consultant, Poverty Global Practice, World Bank, 2018-present

Assistant to Managing Editor, Journal of Development Studies, 2018-present

Visiting Graduate Student, Global Policy and Strategy School, UC San Diego, 2015-16

Faculty host: Gordon McCord

Research Manager, Social and Rural Research Institute, IMRB International, Delhi, 2009-11

Research Experience

Research Assistant to Stuti Khemani, James Habyarimana and Irfan Nooruddin, Bihar health study, Winter 2018

Research Assistant to Paul Niehaus, Karthik Muralidharan and Sandip Sukhtankar, Bihar cash transfer study, Summer 2012

Teaching

Instructor

Intermediate Microeconomics, George Washington University, Fall 2016

Training Workshop in Operationalizing a Field Survey, Kurukshetra University, Haryana, 2013

Teaching Assistant

International Trade Theory and Policy (grading) for Maggie Chen, Spring 2018

Econometrics-II (PhD) for Robert Phillips, Spring 2015

Econometrics-I (PhD) for Robert Phillips, Fall 2014

Introduction to Game Theory and Strategic Thinking for Kaushik Basu and James Foster, Spring 2014 and Spring 2013

Development Economics (grading) for Stephen Smith, Spring 2013

Development Economics (grading) for James Foster, Fall 2011, Spring 2012

Principles of Microeconomics for Irene Foster, Fall 2013, Fall 2012 and Fall 2011

Principles of Macroeconomics for Irene Foster, Spring 2012

Awards

Fellowships

University fellowship (George Washington University), 2011-15

John Whitefield Kendrick Graduate Endowment Fellowship in Economics (George Washington University), 2011-13

Grants

Global Religion Research Initiative, University of Notre Dame, USD 11,000 (Co-PI with Rahul Verma), 2018-19

Azim Premji University Research Grants, USD 22,000 (Co-PI with Ashwani Kumar), 2017-19

International Growth Center, USD 26,000 (Co-PI with Chinmaya Kumar and Pankaj Verma), 2015-17

Election Commission of India, USD 31,000 (multiple studies under aegis of Tata Institute of Social Sciences, Mumbai), 2013-17

International Growth Center, USD 14,000 (Co-PI with Ashwani Kumar), 2013-16

Sigur Center for Asian Studies, USD 6,000, 2014

Professional Activities

Referee: Journal of Development Studies, Journal of South Asian Development, World Bank Economic Review

Organizer: Student Coordinator, Development Lunch Reading Group, George Washington University, 2013-15

Membership: American Economic Association (AEA), Agricultural and Applied Economics Association (AAEA), Urban Economics Association (UEA), American Political Science Association (APSA), Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)

Conferences/Seminars

2018: Southern Economic Association (SEA); North East Universities Development Consortium Conference (NEUDC); DC India Politics Workshop; SANEM-World Bank North America Discussion Forum; Young Economists Symposium (YES); Annual Bank Conference on Development Economics (ABCDE); Midwest Political Science Association (MPSA)

2017: Indian Political Economy Workshop, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace; South Asia Colloquium, Department of Political Science, UC Berkeley; The Annual Bank Conference on Africa (ABCA); ADRI International Conference on Bihar and Jharkhand: Shared History to Shared Vision

2016: International Growth Center (IGC) Bihar Growth Conference; Toward Sustainable Groundwater in Agriculture International Conference (AGW); Environment and Resource Group, Department of Economics, UC San Diego; ADRI International Conference on Development and Growth: Experience and Theories

Skills

Computer: Stata, Python, LaTeX, ArcMap, Git, Open Data Kit, SurveyCTO

Languages: English (fluent), Hindi (fluent), German (advanced)

References

Stephen Smith

Professor of Economics & International Affairs
George Washington University
Phone: 202-994-8086
Email: ssmith@gwu.edu

James Foster

Oliver T. Carr Professor of International Affairs
& Economics, George Washington University
Phone: 202-994-8195
Email: fosterje@gwu.edu

Remi Jedwab

Associate Professor of Economics
George Washington University
Phone: 202-994-9011
Email: jedwab@gwu.edu

Ethan Kaplan

Associate Professor of Economics
University of Maryland, College Park
Phone: 301-405-3501
Email: kaplan@econ.umd.edu

Research Papers

Job Market Paper: Parachuters vs Climbers: Economic Consequences of Barriers to Political Entry in a Democracy

Abstract

Does a legislator's career prior to joining politics impact constituency development? I compile an original dataset of politicians' biographies and use their entry routes into politics to classify them as 'parachuters' – those who are hereditary/dynastic or part of the local socio-economic or cultural elite – and 'climbers', working class politicians who have made their way by rising up the ranks. I use a close election regression discontinuity design to estimate the causal effect of politicians' identity on local economic growth, measured by night time lights. I document three key results: First, political entry barriers have perverse economic consequences. Lights-GDP elasticity estimates imply that electing parachuters leads to 0.2 percentage point lower growth of GDP per capita per year compared to constituencies where climbers are elected. Second, a candidate's background is a key determinant of political selection, even after accounting for conventional factors such as politician's sex, religion and ethnicity. Third, there is suggestive evidence that the impact is driven by misallocation of bureaucratic resources: districts with greater proportion of parachuters have higher turnover of investigating police officers, which in turn is associated with greater economic crime and lower economic growth. These findings indicate at a new mechanism via which elites maintain *de facto* power and persist over time.

Impacts of the Green Revolution on Infant Mortality in the Developing World (with Ram Fishman, Prabhat Barnwal, Nathaniel D. Mueller, Jan von der Goltz and Gordon C. McCord) *Revise and Resubmit, Nature*

Abstract

There is considerable debate on the potential for modern staple seed varieties (MVs) to advance nutrition, and little is known about the contribution of MV diffusion during the 'Green Revolution' to the global reduction in mortality achieved during the 20th century. Here we provide global scale estimates of the relationship between MV diffusion and infant mortality between 1960–2000 by constructing a novel, spatially-precise indicator of MV diffusion and leveraging child-level data from over 600,000 children across 21,604 sampling locations in 37 developing countries. Results indicate that the diffusion of MVs reduced infant mortality by 2.4–5.3 percentage points (from a baseline of 18%), with stronger associations for male infants. These findings are unaffected by adjusting the statistical model to control for a wide range of potential confounders. The sizable contribution of MV adoption to improved welfare should inform global food and development policy.

Electoral Cycles in Food Prices: Evidence from India (with Pranav Gupta and Rahul Verma)

Abstract

Do prices of essential food commodities vary with the timing of elections? Using weekly retail price data of 16 food items between 1993 and 2012 in 28 cities across India, we find robust evidence for existence of a political price cycle in onions and not in other commodities, confirming

a commonly held but (hitherto) empirically untested view that onion prices are an electorally salient issue. These cycles are strongest when: (a) incumbent state governments are aligned with the center, (b) incumbents win with large majorities, and (c) in periods when the market is unregulated and governments do not have access to legal instruments to control prices. The findings can be explained by a model that emphasizes the role of informal regulatory strategies and trader's expectations.

Designing Policy in Weak States: Unintended Consequences of Alcohol Prohibition in Bihar (with Abhilasha Sahay)

Abstract

We study the impact of an alcohol-prohibition policy on crime in the Indian state of Bihar, where nearly 1.5 percent of the world's population lives. Using a difference-in-difference empirical strategy, we show that banning the sale and consumption of alcohol led to an increase in crime, even after adjusting for prohibition-related cases. The rise in violent and property crime is highest in districts with greater black-market prices of country liquor. Since state capacity and supply of police is fixed, diverting law enforcement resources towards implementing the alcohol ban effectively reduces institutional bandwidth to prevent crimes. The findings can be reconciled with a model where crime is deterred by both police enforcement and collective action. In places where public support for the policy was strongest, we find that the rise in crime was the smallest. Our results caution against 'big-bang reforms' in states with weak institutions.

Reducing Corruption in Bihar's Public Distribution System (with Chinmaya Kumar and Pankaj Verma)

Abstract

India spends 1 percent of its GDP on providing food at subsidized rates (one-tenth of the market rate) to the poor. However, since people often rely on the shopkeeper to inform them about the arrival of food-grains in the village, there is a significant scope for arbitrage and black-marketing. The main objective of the study is to estimate the prevalence of corruption in the Public Distribution System (PDS) in Bihar and examine possible mechanisms through which an information campaign can increase transparency. We randomize 175 villages in Bihar, a low-income setting in northern India, to receive an automated voice call a day after the food-grains have arrived at the shop. Findings suggest that relaxing household's information constraints might be one way to empower them and reduce corruption.

In Progress

"All is Water": Historical Causes of Agricultural Development in India

The Groundwater Constraint: Responses to Falling Water Tables in India (with Ram Fishman and Meha Jain)

Public or Private Leviathan? Crime and Development in Contemporary Bihar (with Ashwani Kumar)

Does the Identity of Street-level Bureaucrats matter for Public Goods Provision? (with Poulomi Chakrabarti)

Non-Academic/Policy Research

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2017) "Engaging Indian Overseas Electors: Online Competition Results and Survey Findings". Submitted to Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2015) "Inclusive Elections in India: A Study on Domestic Migration and Issues in Election Participation". Submitted to Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Tata Institute of Social Sciences (2013) "Analysis of KABBP surveys". Submitted to Election Commission of India, New Delhi.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2011) "Monitoring and evaluation of ASHA project". Submitted to PepsiCo India, Gurgaon.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2011) "Research on KHUSHI clinics at petrol pumps". Submitted to Transport Corporation of India Foundation, Gurgaon.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2011) "Assessing the effectiveness of integrated health education in micro-finance". Submitted to The David and Lucile Packard Foundation, New Delhi.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Assessing private partnerships in development". Submitted to International Finance Commission (IFC), Washington, DC.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Young health survey in 5 resettlement and rehabilitated colonies in Delhi". Submitted to Plan International (India Chapter), New Delhi.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Baseline survey for Maternal and Newborn Health Survival Initiative (MANSI) in Jharkhand". Submitted to American India Foundation, New Delhi.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2010) "Behavioral surveillance survey in 35 districts in Maharashtra". Submitted to AVERT Society, Mumbai.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2009) "Participatory vulnerability analysis from a child rights perspective in a slum in Mumbai". Submitted to Plan International (India Chapter), New Delhi.

Social and Rural Research Institute (2009) "Impact assessment of Digital Equalizer program in Punjab". Submitted to American India Foundation, New Delhi.