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**DOCTORAL STUDIES**

Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)  
 PhD, Economics, Expected completion June 2026  
 DISSERTATION: Essays in Behavioral Development Economics

## DISSERTATION COMMITTEE AND REFERENCES

Professor Esther Dufo  
 MIT Department of Economics  
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**PRIOR EDUCATION**

University of Chicago  
 Master of Arts in Public Policy (MACRM Program)  
*With Honors*

2018

The University of Adelaide  
 Bachelor of Civil and Structural Engineering (First Class Honors)  
*University Medal*

2013

**FIELDS**

Primary Fields: Development Economics, Behavioral Economics

**TEACHING EXPERIENCE**

Psychology and Economics (Undergraduate MIT course 14.13)  
*(Future) Teaching Assistant for Professor Frank Schilbach*  
 Randomization Theory and Practice, JPAL/IPA Research Staff  
 Training

2026

2024

2024

# MIT Economics

KAILASH RAJAH

OCTOBER 2025-- PAGE 2

	Conducting Field Research, JPAL/IPA Research Staff Training	2014
	Engineering Modelling and Analysis (Undergraduate)	
	<i>Teaching Assistant at The University of Adelaide</i>	
<b>RELEVANT POSITIONS</b>	Research Assistant for Esther Duflo	2022-25
	Research Assistant for Frank Schilbach	2022-25
	Pre-doc for Chris Blattman and Leonardo Bursztyn	2018-20
	Research Assistant for Raul Sanchez de la Sierra and Cyrus Samii	2015-16
	Research Intern at Innovations for Poverty Action, Sierra Leone	2014
<b>FELLOWSHIPS, HONORS, AND AWARDS</b>	Armen Avanessians (1981) Fellow, MIT	202-2022
	King Harris Scholarship, University of Chicago	2017-18
	University Scholarship, University of Chicago	2017-18
	Sir Arvi Parbo Medal, University of Adelaide	2013
	<i>Top engineering student in graduating class of approx. 600 students</i>	
	University Medal University of Adelaide	2013
	<i>Top 18 undergraduate student across all majors</i>	
	Robin Memorial Prize, University of Adelaide	2013
	<i>Best civil engineering final year thesis</i>	
	Water and Environmental Research Group Prize, University of Adelaide	2013
	Dean's Merit List, The University of Adelaide	2008-12
	Provost's Honors University of California, San Diego	2011
	Mobility in Asia and the Pacific Exchange Scholarship	2010
	SA Water Undergraduate Scholarship in Civil Engineering, University of Adelaide	
<b>PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>Presentations:</b>	
	North East Universities Gender Day, Yale University	2025
	SITE, Gender Session	2025
	Advances with Field Experiments, University of Chicago	2025
	North-American Economic Science Association Conference	2025
	Northeastern Universities Development Consortium, Tufts University	2025
	<b>Grants</b>	
	Weiss Research Grant	2024
	George and Obie Shultz Fund	2021-24
	Weiss Travel and Piloting Grant	2023
	PEDL Exploratory Research Grant	2023
	The Agency Fund	2023
<b>PUBLICATIONS</b>	<b>Children's Arithmetic Skills Do Not Transfer Between Applied and Academic Math</b> (with Abhijit Banerjee, Swati Bhattacharjee, Raghavendra Chattopadhyay, Esther Duflo, Alejandro Ganimian, Elizabeth Spelke)	
	<i>Nature</i> (2025), 639, 673–68 <a href="https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-08502-w">https://doi.org/10.1038/s41586-024-08502-w</a>	
	Many poor children worldwide fail to master school mathematics and yet some use	

mental arithmetic extensively outside of school. To investigate whether mathematics skills acquired in real-world settings transfer to the classroom and vice versa, we studied children working in markets in Kolkata and Delhi, India ( $N = 1,436$ ). Nearly all the children used complex arithmetic effectively at work. They were also proficient in solving hypothetical market problems and verbal math problems that were anchored to concrete contexts. However, they failed to solve arithmetic problems of equal or lesser complexity when presented in the abstract format typically used in school. Children's performance in market math is not explained by memorization, access to help, lower stress with more familiar formats, or high incentives for correct performance in markets. In contrast, children with no market-selling experience ( $N = 471$ ), enrolled in nearby schools, showed the opposite pattern: They performed more accurately on simple abstract problems but only 1% could correctly answer an applied market problem that over a third of working children solved ( $p < 0.001$ ). School children used highly inefficient written calculations and could not combine different operations, arriving at answers too slowly to be useful in real-life or higher mathematics. These findings highlight the importance of educational curricula that bridge the gap between intuitive and formal mathematics.

## RESEARCH PAPERS

### **The Female Labor Supply Constraints of Spousal Jealousy: Experimental Evidence from India (Job Market Paper)**

This study presents evidence from two field experiments studying the role of spousal jealousy in constraining married women's employment. In a first experiment ( $N=1,400$ ), I randomize married women in India to receive a two-week job in either a mixed or women-only workplace. Women randomized to the women-only workplace are 46 percent more likely to apply for a job (13 percentage points) and 31 percent more likely to turn up at the workplace (6 percentage points). A cross-randomized safety treatment suggests that workplace safety is not the main mechanism. Instead, the treatment effects are significantly stronger among women who report having more jealous and controlling husbands. In a second experiment ( $N=210$ ), I directly test for a spousal jealousy mechanism by measuring whether women are more willing to interact with a male colleague if their husbands can monitor the interaction. I offer women a job that comes with a compulsory online peer support program and give them the option to forgo 20-35% of their salary to guarantee that the peer they are matched with will be a woman rather than a man. Fifty-three percent of women pay for the female peer when these remote interactions are one-on-one, but this drops to 34 percent once their husbands have the option of joining and can therefore monitor the conversations. One-third of households still pay for a female peer even if the mentoring simply involves watching pre-recorded videos of the peer, suggesting even the most innocuous interactions are enough to raise jealousy concerns.

**Breadwinning Norms: Experimental Evidence from India**

(with Ishaana Talesara)

How important are social norms in shaping women's labor supply relative to neo-classical economic forces? The widely studied "breadwinner norm" holds that it is socially undesirable for married women to earn more than their husbands. We test this prediction using a field experiment in India ( $N = 4,834$ ). We randomly vary wage offers for salaried jobs among married women. If the norm binds, labor supply should be discontinuous or flatten when women are offered wages above their husband's income. We find no evidence that women withdraw from the labor force when offered wages that exceed their husbands' incomes and can reject negative discontinuities as small as 1.5 percentage points. Instead, labor supply is highly responsive to wages, consistent with standard economic models. These findings hold even in the most conservative households.

**Financial Incentives, Health Screening, and Selecting Into Mental Health Care: Experimental Evidence from College Students in India**

(with Emily Breza, Kevin Carney, Vijaya Raghavan, Thara Rangaswamy, Gautam Rao, Frank Schilbach, Sobia Shadbar and James Stratton)

Young adults worldwide experience high rates of depression and anxiety, but few seek treatment. While financial incentives may increase uptake, they might misallocate scarce resources to individuals with low clinical need. We conducted a randomized controlled trial in Chennai, India ( $N=340$ ) to test how modest financial incentives and personalized mental health feedback affect the uptake of free therapy among college students. Despite 56% of students screening positive for at least mild depression or anxiety, only 3% in the control group attended therapy. A small cash incentive (~\$6 USD) increased appointments by 9 pp ( $p=0.06$ ) and slightly improved targeting. Personalized recommendations increased appointments by 10 pp ( $p=0.08$ ) among symptomatic students while reducing them among asymptomatic students, thus improving targeting. Combining cash incentives with personalized recommendations increased appointments by 23 pp ( $p < 0.01$ ) among symptomatic individuals, without generating take-up by asymptomatic individuals. These findings suggest that low-cost incentives coupled with screening information can effectively increase uptake while targeting limited mental health care resources to those with greater need.

**OTHER  
PUBLICATIONS****Changes to the Temporal Distribution of Daily Precipitation** (with Seth Westra, Michael Leonard, Gabriella Petrakis, Alice Turner, Tess O'Leary)*Geophysical Research Letters* (2014), 41, no. 24: 8887-8894.<https://doi.org/10.1002/2014GL062156>

Theoretical models of climate change generally predict that, at the global scale, increases in extreme precipitation will come at the expense of moderate and light precipitation events. We test this theory using a Gini coefficient to create a new measure of rainfall variability which we apply to data from over 12,000 rainfall stations. Contrary to standard models, we find that while some regions such as East

Asia, Central America, and Brazil have experienced a decrease in light precipitation days, other regions such as the US, South America, and Australia have experienced an increase in wet and light precipitation days. Our findings call for a more nuanced model of how the temporal and spatial distribution of rainfall may respond to global warming.