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## HARVARD UNIVERSITY

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### **Contact Information**

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**Personal Information:** Citizenship: Sri Lankan

### **Pre-Doctoral Studies:**

Hampshire College, Amherst, MA, 2003-2007  
B.A., Mathematics and Economics, Minor: Public Policy

University of Oxford, Oxford, UK, 2009-2010  
Graduate-level coursework in Mathematics and Economics

### **Doctoral Studies:**

Harvard University, 2010 to present  
Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy  
Examination Fields: Development Economics and Labor Economics  
Dissertation Title: "*Land, Labor and Technology: Essays in Development Economics*"  
Expected Completion Date: May 2015

### **References:**

Professor Asim Khwaja (Committee Chair) Harvard Kennedy School of Government (617) 384-7790, <a href="mailto:akhwaja@hks.harvard.edu">akhwaja@hks.harvard.edu</a>	Professor Lawrence Katz Department of Economics, Harvard University (617) 495-5148, <a href="mailto:lkatz@harvard.edu">lkatz@harvard.edu</a>
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Professor Shawn Cole Harvard Business School (617) 495-6525, <a href="mailto:scole@hbs.edu">scole@hbs.edu</a>	Professor Richard Hornbeck Department of Economics, Harvard University (617) 494-0722, <a href="mailto:hornbeck@fas.harvard.edu">hornbeck@fas.harvard.edu</a>
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### **Teaching and Research Fields:**

Development Economics, Labor Economics, Applied Microeconomics and Agricultural Economics

### **Teaching Experience:**

Spring, 2014      Poverty and Development (Undergraduate), Harvard Economics Department, Teaching Fellow for Prof. Nathan Nunn

Spring, 2014      Rethinking Financial Inclusion (Executive Education), Harvard Kennedy School, Head Teaching Fellow for Prof. Asim Khwaja

## **Research Experience and Other Employment:**

2013-2014	Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School, Research Assistant to Prof. Asim Khwaja (part-time)
2008-2009	Center for Micro Finance/MIT Poverty Action Lab, Research Assistant to Prof. Shawn Cole (India-based. Implementation and analysis of three field experiments)
2007-2008	Finance Unit, Harvard Business School, Research Assistant to Prof. Shawn Cole (Cambridge-based. Data analysis)

## **Professional Activities:**

**Presentations:** The Northeast Universities Development Consortium (NEUDC), 2012, 2013 and 2014.

**Referee Service:** *Economic Development and Cultural Change*, *Journal of African Economies*, *Journal of Development Economics*, *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *Review of Economics and Statistics*, *USAID-DIV Proposal Review Panel (Agriculture/Development)*

## **Honors, Scholarships, and Fellowships:**

2014	Research Grant in Sustainability Science, Harvard Kennedy School
2014-2015	Christopher and Silvana Pascucci Dissertation Completion Fellowship
2013-2014	Sustainability Science Doctoral Fellowship, Harvard Kennedy School
2013	USAID-Development Innovation Ventures, \$162,811, co-PI with Shawn Cole
2012-2013	Norberg-Bohm Doctoral Fellowship, Harvard Kennedy School
2012	Gates Foundation / ATAI, \$156,049, co-PI with Shawn Cole
2011	Harvard Graduate Language Grant
2010-2012	Harvard Kennedy School Graduate Fellowship
2003-2007	Full Tuition Grant with Work Study, Hampshire College

## **Research Papers:**

“Shackled to the Soil: The Long-Term Effects of Inherited Land on Labor Mobility and Consumption”  
**(Job Market Paper)**

Productive assets promote the economic well-being of the rural poor. However, where frictions limit the exchange or ability to relinquish such assets, they may restrict access to high-return economic opportunities and undermine asset benefits causing a microeconomic parallel to the ‘resource curse’. Using variation arising from sibling sex composition and Hindu inheritance customs that favor sons, I test this hypothesis by estimating the long-term causal effect of inheriting land in rural India. Consistent with standard models, inheriting land facilitates borrowing and increases household consumption. Yet, where the ability to fully utilize land through markets is severely constrained by frictions, either cultural obligations or land market transaction costs, the effect on consumption is *entirely* attenuated and *negative* for a subset of the sample. Those who inherit land are significantly less likely to migrate to urban areas and enter non-agricultural work in rural areas; effects that are accentuated by such frictions. These findings suggest that inheriting land greatly influences occupational trajectories and can suppress consumption to an extent that may overwhelm its direct benefit.

“The Value of Advice: Evidence from the Adoption of Agricultural Practices” with Shawn Cole (Harvard Business School)

Attempts to explain the astonishing differences in agricultural productivity around the world typically focus on farm size, risk aversion, and credit constraints, with an emphasis on how they might serve to limit technology adoption. This paper takes a different tack: can managerial practices explain this variation in productivity? A randomized evaluation of the introduction of a mobile phone-based agricultural consulting service, *Avaaj Otalo* (AO), to farmers in Gujarat, India, reveals the following. Demand for agricultural advice is substantial and farmers offered the service turn less often to traditional sources of agricultural advice. Management practices change as well: farmers invest more in recommended agricultural inputs resulting in dramatic increases in yield for cumin (26.3%), and improvements in cotton yield (3.5%) for a sub-group that received frequent reminders to use the service. Peers of treated farmers report limited changes in their information sources and cropping decisions. Farmers appear willing to follow advice without understanding why it is correct: we do not observe gains in agricultural knowledge. We estimate that each dollar invested by a farmer in the service generates a return of \$10 (net of cost). These findings highlight the importance of managerial practices in facilitating technology adoption in agriculture.

**In Progress:**

“Can Diversity Reduce Implicit Bias? Evidence from the Composition of Umpiring Panels in Cricket Matches” with Siddharth Eapen George (Harvard)

Labor market decisions – hiring, firing and promotions – are often strategic, considered choices in which it is difficult to discern bias that is unintentional and outside an individual’s awareness. In contrast, competitive sport lends itself to the study of such implicit bias through requiring split-second decisions by officials. Using data on *international* cricket matches played over the past 130 years, we test whether the nationality of umpires (diversity) influences their on-field decisions using a difference-in-differences strategy. We find evidence that diversity reduces bias: if at least one of the two on-field umpires is *not* from the same nationality as the home team, discretionary decisions that go *against* the away team reduce by 8%. In contrast, decisions that leave little scope for discretion are unaffected by umpire nationality. Further, when the away team is from a different nationality *and* race, this effect is *four times* as large. Tests of the mechanism suggest that diversity operates by mitigating bias rather than leading to symmetric, opposing biases. These results suggest that introducing diversity to a panel of evaluators is an effective means of reducing implicit discrimination.

“Learning or Herding? Testing Between Theories of Technology Adoption with a Cluster Randomized Experiment” with Shawn Cole (HBS) and Hee Kwon Seo (Chicago-GSB)

*Status: Baseline data collection complete, intervention administered, endline survey ongoing.*

“Mental Health and Poverty: Farmer Suicides in post-Green Revolution India” with Supreet Kaur (Columbia)

*Status: Preliminary data collection complete.*

“Contract Farming among Marginal Farmers: A randomized evaluation of RUDI Multi-trade Company” with Sara Hernandez (MIT), Reshmaan Hussam (MIT) and Natalia Rigol (MIT)

*Status: Baseline data collection complete.*

“Experiences from Mobile Phone-Based Data Collection: Evidence from a Randomized Experiment” with Shawn Cole (HBS) and Laura Litvine (UCL)

*Status: Data collection complete. Manuscript in preparation.*