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Undergraduate and Masters Education:

Diplom (*equivalent to graduate level*), Economics, Friedrich-Schiller University of Jena, 2008
MPA in International Development, Harvard Kennedy School, 2010

Doctoral Studies:

Harvard University, 2012 to present
Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy
Dissertation Title: "Essays in Development and Labor Economics"
Expected Completion Date: May 2017

References:

Professor Rema Hanna Harvard Kennedy School rema_hanna@hks.harvard.edu, 617-496-1140	Professor Lawrence Katz Harvard University, Economics Department lkatz@harvard.edu, 617-495-5148
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Professor Asim Khwaja Harvard Kennedy School khwaja@hks.harvard.edu, 617-384-7790	Professor Michael Kremer Harvard University, Economics Department mkremer@fas.harvard.edu, 617-495-9145
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Teaching and Research Fields:

Primary: Development Economics, Labor Economics
Secondary: Behavioral Economics

Teaching Experience:

Spring 2016	Harvard Kennedy School, Economic Development Policy Design (PED 102), Teaching Fellow for Professor Asim Khwaja, Rohini Pande, Lant Pritchett
Fall 2011	University of Cape Town, Econometrics (Eco 3021), Instructor
Fall 2009	Harvard University, Introductory Economics (EC 10), Teaching Fellow for Professor Greg Mankiw, <i>Distinction in Teaching Award 2009</i>

Professional Activities:

<u>Presentations</u>	2016: MIT (NEUDC), UMass Amherst, Middlebury College, Bowdoin College 2015: Brown University (NEUDC), UC San Diego (PacDev), University of Cape Town, Stellenbosch University 2014: Boston University (NEUDC), Yale University (Behavioral Conference), Oxford University (CSAE)
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Referee Service *Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Human Resources, Quarterly Journal of Economics, The World Bank Economic Review, World Development*

Affiliations Harvard University Institute for Quantitative Social Science (IQSS)
South African Labour and Development Research Unit (SALDRU)

Research Experience and Other Employment:

2010-2012 Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), University of Cape Town, Research Manager
2009 UNICEF, Knowledge Community for Children in India, Consultant
2007 Institute for the World Economy, Visiting Scholar

Research Grants:

2016-present Research Grant from Saudi Arabia Labor Market Research Fund, joint with R.Hanna and R.Pande
2015-present Research Grant from Gender Innovation Lab (World Bank), joint with R.Burger and P.Piraino, \$103,000
2015 Research Grant from Gender Innovation Lab (World Bank), \$15,000
2014-present Research Grant of Programme to Support Pro-poor Policy (South Africa), joint with R.Burger and P.Piraino, \$115,000

Job Market Paper:

“The Value of Reference Letters: Experimental Evidence from South Africa?”

(with Rulof Burger and Patrizio Piraino) [[paper](#)]

Abstract: Information asymmetries about workers' skills can adversely affect both match quality and equity in labor markets. Reference letters from former employers could play a role in alleviating these asymmetries, but they are rarely used in developing country settings. We conduct a series of field experiments to investigate the value and usage of standardized reference letters among young job seekers in South Africa. A resume audit study finds that including a reference letter with the application increases employer call-backs by 60%. Women, traditionally excluded from many referral networks, particularly benefit: firms pay closer attention to the content of letters sent by women and increase response rates by 89%. A second experiment, which encourages job seekers to obtain and use a reference letter, finds similar results. Men are not more likely to find jobs, but employment rates for women who have reference letters double, thus fully closing the employment gender gap in our sample after three months. Letters are effective because they provide accurate information about workers' skills that firms use to select applicants of higher ability, unless they deem letters to be implausibly positive. Despite these positive findings, reference letters are not widely adopted, partly because job seekers underestimate their potential value.

Additional Research Papers:

“(De-)Biasing on a Roll: Changing Gambling Behavior through Experiential Learning”

(with Shawn Cole and Bilal Zia), *Under Review* [[paper](#)]

Abstract: Gambling is a common pastime in many countries, especially among poorer parts of society. This paper tests experiential learning as a debiasing tool against gambling behavior in South Africa. We implement a simple, interactive dice game that simulates worsening winning odds through dice rolling. Individuals who need above-median number of rolls to obtain simultaneous sixes play the lottery significantly less than the control group in the following year. The converse is true for individuals who needed below-median number of rolls. We find suggestive evidence that the debiasing affected sensitivity to varying winning odds. Changes in entertainment utility or risk preferences cannot explain these findings, rather results are consistent with changes in risk beliefs.

“Labor Market Discrimination and Sorting: Evidence from South Africa” [[paper](#)]

Abstract: Using a unique data set of classified ads in South Africa, I explore whether employers discriminate against foreigners in the hiring process. Stating that one is a foreigner reduces the probability that an employer visits the job seeker's profile page by 10-20%. Exploiting variation in the applicant pool composition due to the timing of postings, I find that both foreigners and natives benefit from being pooled with foreign job seekers.

These results are consistent with a simple tournament model in which foreigners are penalized. Next, I test whether discrimination affects search behavior. Controlling for location fixed effects, I find suggestive evidence for sorting: foreigners search farther away and higher discrimination in the residential area is positively correlated with the decision to search in different suburbs.

“Bridging the Intention-Behavior Gap: Increasing Job Search and Employment through Action Planning” (with Rulof Burger and Patrizio Piraino)

Abstract: We test the effectiveness of action planning through an experiment with 1,097 job seekers in South Africa. As part of a counseling workshop, participants compile a detailed plan for their weekly job search. In surveys after 5 weeks and 3 months, we find the facilitation of a job search action plan leads to large positive employment effects. Job search outcomes for which we document an intention-behavior gap (number of application submitted) increase, but there is no change in outcomes for which participants' behavior and goals are aligned (hours spent searching). This result suggests that the treatment helps participants to bridge the intention-behavior gap. We further find that the effect of action planning is not increased by sending participants weekly reminders of their goals or by letting job seekers nominate a peer who is informed about their action plan goals.

“Unintended Labor Supply Effects of Cash Transfer Programs: Evidence from South Africa’s Old Age Pension” [\[paper\]](#)

Abstract: Old age pensions play a critical role in the welfare system of many countries as resources are often redistributed within families. Using South Africa’s first nationally representative panel data set, I find that the presence of pension recipients in the household reduces the probability of employment of both previously employed and unemployed prime-aged adults. Adverse employment effects are found for both salaried and self-employed workers, making it unlikely that liquidity constraints explain South Africa's low rates of entrepreneurship. Exploiting institutional features of the disability grant to isolate the pension's income effect suggests that the effects operate through the income mechanism by increasing reservation wages and reducing hours worked. By contrast, there is no evidence that pensioners enable household members to work by providing childcare as concluded by previous studies.

“Long-run Effects of Forced Resettlement: Evidence from Apartheid South Africa” [\[paper\]](#)

Abstract: In an attempt to divide and marginalize the black opposition, the apartheid regime forcefully relocated some 3.5 million South Africans to rural homelands. Using newly geocoded data on relocation camps, I explore long-term effects of what is considered one of history’s largest social engineering exercises I find that former resettlement communities have higher levels of social capital than surrounding communities as measured by levels of trust and crime. Exploring causal mechanisms, I document that resettlement areas are more ethnically diverse and that diversity is positively correlated with measures of social capital *only* in areas affected by relocation. The formation of new support networks and adoption of a shared identity as displaced people may explain why relocation communities have higher levels of social capital despite potential short-term conflict over resources. These findings are important as solidarity among suppressed people is believed to be a critical factor in explaining the demise of the apartheid regime.

Research in Progress:

“Do people use interactions with people from different races to infer future behavior? Evidence from a Repeated Trust Game” (with Justine Burns)

Summary: We conduct a lab experiment with college students in South Africa, in which we randomly vary the race of the partner in a repeated trust game. We investigate whether participants use past experience to infer the trustworthiness of a newly assigned member of the same racial group. Preliminary results suggest that both black and white students severely penalize deviating behavior of blacks, resulting in a low-trust equilibrium.

“Barriers to Female Labor Force Participation and Employment in Saudi Arabia”

(with Rema Hanna and Rohini Pande)

Summary: We investigate potential barriers to (female) labor force participation in Saudi-Arabia. We first estimate how much the unemployed value certain job characteristics and elicit beliefs on the returns to job search across sectors. In a second step, we conduct a (survey) experiment to provide labor market information and test how this affects both job search behavior and employment using social security data.