

M. ALLOUSH

Ph.D. Candidate at the University of California, Davis
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DOCTORAL STUDIES

University of California, Davis, 2013 to present
Ph.D. Candidate in Agricultural and Resource Economics (expected June 2019)
Dissertation Title: *Poverty Dynamics and Mental Health*

Research Fields

Primary: Development Economics, Behavioral Economics, and Applied Econometrics
Secondary: Labor Economics and Health Economics

References

Michael R. Carter
Dissertation Committee Chair
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Ahish Shenoy
Dissertation Committee
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UNDERGRADUATE AND MASTERS EDUCATION

American University of Beirut, Beirut, Lebanon
Bachelor of Arts in Economics (Minor in Political Science), with distinction, June 2008

Georgetown University, Washington, DC
Master of Public Policy, May 2010

PEER-REVIEWED PUBLICATIONS

Economic Life in Refugee Camps (2017). *World Development*, 95(6), 334-347.
(with J. E. Taylor, I. Rojas, A. Gupta, and E. Gonzalez)

The Economic Impact of Refugees (2016). *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 113(27), 7449-7453.
(with J.E. Taylor, M. Filipski, A. Gupta, I. Rojas, E. Gonzalez)

Informality and Exclusion: Evidence from Matched Employer-Employee data for Lebanon and Syria (2013). *IZA Journal of Labor Policy*, 2(1), 1-18.
(with R. Gatti, J. Silva, and C. Chartouni)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Associate Instructor at the University of California, Davis
Economic Development (Undergraduate)

Teaching Assistantships at the University of California, Davis
Econometric Foundations (Ph.D.)
Economic Development (Undergraduate)
Intermediate Microeconomics (Undergraduate)

Teaching Assistantships at Georgetown University
Advanced Regression and Program Evaluation Methods (Masters)
Intermediate Microeconomic Theory (Masters)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

The World Bank

Impact Evaluation Specialist - Consultant, November 2016 – Present

Junior Professional Associate, October 2010 – July 2012

Consultant, December 2009 – October 2010

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS

Academic (Including Scheduled)

2018 North American Meeting of the Econometrics Society, Pacific Development Conference, Agricultural & Applied Economics Association, Midwest International Economic Development Conference, University of San Francisco, American University of Beirut

2017 South Africa Labor & Development Research Unit, University of Cape Town

2016 Temporary Migration Cluster (UC-Davis)

2015 Agricultural and Resource Economics (UC-Davis)

2011 Southern Economic Conference

Outreach

2018 Socioeconomic Status & Mental Health (University of California Mental Health Week)

REFEREE SERVICE

National Bureau of Economic Research (book chapter), American Journal of Agricultural Economics, Journal of Development Studies, Essential of Development Economics (Textbook by Taylor & Lybbert)

GRANTS AND FELLOWSHIPS

2017 \$200,000 Grant: UK-DFID for Building Evidence on Protracted Forced Displacement (World Bank assisted impact evaluation: Lebanon Poverty Graduation program)

2013 Provost Fellowship \$25,000 Stipend (UC-Davis)

2008 Master of Public Policy Scholarship (Georgetown University)

JOB MARKET PAPER

Income, Psychological Well-being, and the Dynamics of Poverty

Abstract: Evidence across disciplines suggests that economic well-being affects an individual's psychological well-being, while other studies show that psychological disorders can have substantial negative effects on individual income. Together these studies suggest a feedback loop that may trap some in poverty. However, estimating the causal links between income and psychological well-being is difficult due to this simultaneous causality. In this paper, I overcome this endogeneity with a panel GMM approach to estimate a dynamic system of equations that identifies both causal links. Using a nationally representative panel dataset from South Africa, I find evidence of impacts in both directions. Further investigation of the heterogeneity of these impacts shows that the average effect of changes in psychological well-being on income is mainly driven by the large effect of changes near the threshold used by psychologists to screen for depression. Furthermore, the effect of changes in income on psychological well-being is especially pronounced among the poor, indicating the possibility of a strong feedback loop among an especially vulnerable subgroup -- the poor with low levels of psychological well-being. An impulse response function analysis suggests that this bi-directionality nearly doubles the long-term impact of shocks while a simulation exercise suggests that this relationship can explain prolonged poverty spells and low resilience to shocks. A formal test for poverty traps shows that individuals with low levels of psychological well-being exhibit different income dynamics that suggest the existence of a multi-equilibrium poverty trap.

WORKING PAPERS

Economic Well-being, Poverty Dynamics, and Happiness

Abstract: Evidence across disciplines suggests that economic well-being affects happiness and life satisfaction. However, the debate is inconclusive; estimating this relationship is fraught with endogeneity. In this paper, I overcome this endogeneity with a panel GMM approach to estimate a dynamic equation that identifies the causal effect of changes in income on life satisfaction and happiness. Using nationally representative panel datasets from the United Kingdom, Indonesia, and South Africa, I find evidence that changes in economic well-being affect life satisfaction for nearly all levels of income, however, the effects are larger among the poor.

Personality Traits and Economic Shocks among the Ultra-poor

with Sikhar Mehra and Yaniv Stopnitzky

Abstract: Personality characteristics and non-cognitive skills are strong determinants of decision-making and economic outcomes. While personality is commonly believed to be fairly stable, especially after age 30, some evidence exists that changes in occupational and social roles can affect certain personality characteristics. In this paper, we study the short-term effects of two kinds of shocks on personality traits among youth from ultra-poor households in Uganda. In particular, we examine experimentally the impact of an income-generating asset transfer as well as a particular climate shock--a drought--on the most common personality measures from psychology: The Big Five personality traits. We find that the poverty graduation program as well as exposure to drought significantly affect measures of Extroversion, Conscientiousness, and Agreeableness. These findings suggest that both environmental factors and social programs can have substantial effects on personality traits known to be important in shaping economic outcomes.

WORK IN PROGRESS

Measuring Resilience: The Role of Psychological Well-being and Cognitive/Executive Functions

with Michael Carter

Impact Evaluation of the South Africa Land Restitution Program

with Michael Carter and Malcolm Keswell

Impact Evaluation of the Poverty Graduation Program in Lebanon

(Principal Investigator) with Rene Solano and Jumana Alaref (World Bank)

Psychological Well-being and Preferences: Evidence from ACTIVATE South Africa

with Rowan Spazzoli and Malcolm Keswell