GHARAD TOMAS BRYAN

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Current Positions

London School of Economics, Lecturer (Assistant Professor) (2011 – present)

Affiliate, Innovations for Poverty Action (IPA) (2011 – present)

Affiliate, Jameel Poverty Action Lab (J-PAL), (2014 - present)

Affiliate, Bureau for Research and Economic Analysis of Development (2014- present)

Co-program Director, International Growth Center, Cities Theme. (2014 – Present)

Education

PhD.,   Yale University Department of Economics, December 2011
      Dissertation Title: *Ambiguity and Insurance*

MPhil., Yale University, 2010

MA.,   Yale University, 2007

LLB.,   The University of Melbourne (with honors), 2004

BCom., The University of Melbourne (with honors), 2003

Publications

"Randomizing Religion: The Impact of Protestant Evangelism on Economic Outcomes" with James Choi and Dean Karlan.
Quarterly Journal of Economics, Forthcoming.

"Blue Porches: Finding the Limits of the Internal Validity of the Endowment Effect'' with Matthew Grant, Kareem Haggag, Dean Karlan, Meredith Startz and Chris Udry.
Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Forthcoming.

"Cities in the Developing World," with Ed Glaeser and Nick Tsiviandis.
Annual Review of Economics, Forthcoming.

"The Aggregate Productivity Effects of Internal Migration: Evidence from Indonesia," with Melanie Morten.
Journal of Political Economy , 2019 127(5): 2229-2268.

"Ambiguity Aversion Decreases Demand for Partial Insurance: Evidence from African Farmers."
Journal of the European Economic Association, 2019, 17(5): 1428-1469.

"Referrals: Peer Screening and Enforcement in a Consumer Credit Field Experiment," with Dean Karlan and Jonathan Zinman.
American Economic Journal: Microeconomics, 2015, 7(3): 174–204.

"Underinvestment in a Profitable Technology: The Case of Seasonal Migration in Bangladesh," with Shyamal Chowdhury and Mushfiq Mobarak.
Econometrica, 2014, 82(5), 1671-1758.

"Commitment Devices," with Dean Karlan and Scott Nelson.
Annual Review of Economics, 2010, 2: 671-698.

Working Papers

"Can Developing Countries Benefit from Market Design" (2018), with Jonathan De Quidt and Tom Wilkening.

Funded Work in Progress

Migration and Urbanization

"Incentives for Migration in Myanmar" (with Shyamal Chowdhury, Melanie Morten, Mushfiq Mobarak and Joeri Smits).

This project will extend the experimental approach to estimating the impacts of seasonal labor migration pioneered in Bryan, Chowdhury and Mobarak (2014). The project will take place in Myanmar and will study whether incentives can effectively increase permanent migration of workers into the garment sector, the returns to such migration, the extent of worker self-selection by productivity and the impacts of permanent migration on the family staying behind.

> Status: piloting to begin after COVID 19.
> Funding: EURO 334,000 (IZA).

"Incentive for Seasonal Migration in Bangladesh" (with Mushfiq Mobarak, Shyamal Chowdhury and Ashraf Shenoy)

This project follows up research presented in Bryan, Chowdhury and Mobarak (2014) expanding the sample size and attempting to study spillover effects of migration on destination labor markets.

> Status: Surveying complete, summary paper in progress.
> Funding: Over USD 1,000,000 (Evidence Action)

"Urban density and Labour markets: Evaluating Slum Redevelopment in Addis Ababa" (with Simon Franklin and Girum Abede).

In 2017 the government of Addis Ababa announced a large sale slum clearance program, which will see over 20,000 households displaced from informal settlements. Building on a baseline sample of 30,000 geo-referenced household surveys conducted prior to the announcement, combined with detailed maps of the locations ear market for clearance, this project will use a special discontinuity approach to evaluate the impact of the program on those forced to move.

> Status: Endline delayed due to COVID 19.
> Funding: Euro 269,615 (DFID's GLM LIC)

"Transportation, Gentrification, and Urban Mobility: The Inequality Effects of Tanzania's BRT system" (with Clare Balboni, Melanie Morten, and Bilal Siddiqi)

Roads, rail, and other public transport in a city are ``place-based,'' in that they are built in specific neighborhoods. Do such investments benefit the poor? If people are mobile within a city, then any such place-based investment can lead to neighborhood changes, such as rent increases, which change who can afford to live near these investments and hence who benefits from them. We provide a tractable urban commuting model to study the distributional effects of urban infrastructure improvements. We derive intuitive ``exact hat'' expressions for the welfare change of initial residents after investment. We then apply the method to study the Dar es Salaam BRT system, using original panel data tracked on two dimensions (following households if they move, and surveying all new residents of buildings). We estimate a welfare gain of 9.5% for low-income residents living near the BRT, compared with a 4.8% gain on average to low-income residents across the city.

> Status: Draft complete
> Funding: GBP 249,447 (3IE). USD 91,559 (World Bank). GBP 150,000 (IGC).

Behavioral Economics and Mental Health

"Escaping Poverty: Cognitive Behavioral Therapy and Social Protection" (with Richard Appiah, Nate Barker, Elizabeth Bradley, Nathanael Goldberg, Dean Karlan, Angela Ofori-Atta, Christopher Udry, and Julia Vaillant)

The Escaping Poverty (EP) Project is a 7,330 household multi-arm randomized controlled trial in Ghana that studies the link between mental health and efforts to improve economic productivity for those in extreme poverty. The main arms in the study are as follows: a 12-week cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) program; the same CBT program followed by a multi-faceted anti-poverty asset transfer and training program; the multi-faceted program without CBT; a one-time cash transfer equivalent to the cost of the asset and training in the multi-faceted treatment arms; and a control group. The asset and training program has been tested in Ghana as well as six other countries (Banerjee et al., 2015; Bandiera et al., 2017).

> Status: Midline complete. Paper reporting midline results of CBT currently under preparation. Endline delayed due to COVID 19.
> Funding: USD 208,000 (NSF). USD 1,100,000 (Ford Foundation)

"Learning to See a World of Opportunity" (with Nava Ashraf, Alexia Delfino, Ashley Pople, Leonardo Locovone and Emily Holmes)

This project studies how people may future choices in settings of uncertainty. We posit that information about the performance of different strategies is stored in the brain in a way that can only be accessed by mental visualization. We further hypothesise that people who have experienced trauma will struggle to undertake this visualization for fear of encountering traumatic memories. To test this theory we developed a curriculum to teach would be entrepreneurs in Bogota how to visualize the likely outcomes of their choices. We will study the impacts of this program on their psychological well-being and business performance.

> Status: Midline delayed by COVID, replaced by smaller phone survey currently in progress.
> Funding: GBP 100,000 (JPAL). USD 120,000 (IPA). USD 40,000 (World Bank). GBP 71,436 (IGA-Rockefeller Foundation)

Market and Contract Design

"Developing and Testing a Market Design Solution for Land Trade" (with Jon de Quidt, Tom Wilkening and Mariajose Silva)

This project builds on the work by Bryan, de Quidt, Wilkening and Yadav 2018. Land is not like other commodities, and historically, private markets have been slow to reallocate land. Economic theory suggests several important constraints that can impede efficient land trade. Importantly, they arise even in the presence of tradable property rights. Governments have responded with large-scale centralized land reforms or land consolidation programs, such as Storskiftet and Enskiftet in Sweden, or Denmark's Jordfordelingsloven. But such programs are costly, challenging to implement effectively, and sometimes coercive. We propose to use the tools of market design to develop new solutions that address key frictions in the land market. In this proposal we describe a three-stage project in Uganda that seeks to 1) measure key properties of the land trade problem, 2) develop a computerized trading platform adapted to those properties, and 3) evaluate its performance, relative to status quo forms of trade, in a realistic field setting.

Status: Piloting delayed by COVID 19
Funding: AUD 196,776 (Australian Research Council). 262,000 GBP (Swedish Research Council).

"Graduating Micro-enterprises" (with Dean Karlan and Adam Osman)

While research evidence suggests that there are no larger returns to microfinance programs, it remains an open question whether some groups can benefit marketdly from access to more finance. One particular group has seen a great deal of attention – those who already run successful micro-level businesses. In this project we work with Alexandra Business Association (ABA) to target this group. ABA randomly increased the size of available loans to existing businesses by 10 fold. This project studies the average and heterogeneous treatment effects of this large credit expansion.

Status: Endline complete.
Funding: GBP 326,000 (DFID/PEDL). GBP 35,000 (IGL).

Program Evaluation

"Lalonde 30 Years After" (with Roland Rathelot, David Bernard, Sylvain Chabé-Ferret, Jonathan de Quidt, Greg Fischer and Jasmin Fliegner).

Consider a policy maker choosing between programs of unknown impact. She can inform her decision using observational methods, or by running a randomised controlled trial (RCT). The proponents of RCTs would argue that observational approaches suffer from bias of an unknown size and direction, and so is uninformative. This project treats this as an empirical claim that can be studied. The project develops a large-scale, standardised, hands-off approach to assessing the performance of observational methods. First, we will collect and categorise data from a large number of RCTs in the past 20 years. Second, we will implement new methods to understand the size and direction of expected bias in observational studies, and how bias depends on measurable characteristics of programmes and settings. This will allow us to predict in which context observational studies can provide reliable guidance on the impact of policy interventions. Third, we will create an online platform to crowdsource new data, enhancing its reliability over time, and to make our results accessible to a broad audience.

Status: Data collection currently underway.
Funding: GBP 65,000 (DFID/CEDIL).

Fellowships, Honors and Awards

British Academy Mid-Career Fellow 2015-2016

Kauffman Dissertation Fellowship 2008-2011

Raymond Powell Teaching Prize, Yale University, 2007-2008

Yale University Graduate Fellowship, 2006-2010

Yale University Economics Department Prize, 2005 -2009
Ryoichi Sasakawa Young Leaders Fellowship, Yale University, 2006-2007