

# Zachary Barnett-Howell

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## ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS

- 2018 | **Yale University MacMillan Center**  
Postdoctoral associate in Economics and Political Science  
Appointments at the [Yale Research Initiative on Innovation & Scale](#) and the South Asian Studies department

## EDUCATION

- 2018 | **Ph.D. in Applied Economics and Political Science, University of Wisconsin–Madison**  
Subfields: Development Economics, International Relations, Quantitative Methods  
Dissertation title: *Migration and Optimization under Uncertainty*
- 2009 | **M.A. in History, Bogazici University**
- 2007 | **B.A., University of Washington**  
Majors: Political Science (Honors) and International Studies

## JOB MARKET PAPER

“No Small Potatoes: Agricultural Risk and Investment under Uncertainty”

This paper investigates the role of learning in the use of agricultural technologies by smallholder farmers in low-income countries. I conduct a randomized experiment in Bangladesh to show that a risk-reducing technology can lead farmers to invest more in inputs such as fertilizer. Specifically, I use an alert system to enable farmers to take precautionary measures against crop disease. The intervention leads to higher yields as a result of increased investment. This outcome is driven by farmers who learn over the course of the season that they are receiving accurate alerts. This paper demonstrates how the effectiveness of an intervention is determined by how rapidly people can learn about its efficacy.

## PUBLICATIONS

“The Benefits and Costs of Social Distancing in Rich and Poor Countries” (with OJ Watson and A. Mushfiq Mobarak). Forthcoming in the *Transactions of the Royal Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene*

Covered in international newspapers including *El Pais*, *Hindustan Times*, *Daily Star*

“Social Networks Analysis in Agricultural Economies.” (with A. Mushfiq Mobarak) forthcoming in *The Oxford Handbook of Agricultural Economics, volume 5*, eds. Chris Barrett and David Just.

## WORKING PAPERS

- “Labor Shocks and Migration in Southern Mali” (with Jeremy Foltz). R&R *Land Economics*
- “Should I Stay or Should I Go: Microeconomic Determinants of Migration.”  
Featured in the [World Bank Development Impact blog](#)
- “Seasonal shocks and their effects on consumption.” (with Kelsey Jack and A. Mushfiq Mobarak)
- “Policy Determinants of International Migration.”
- “Power Plant Closures and Neighborhood Well-Being” (with Rachel Frattarola and Cristian Hernandez).

## IN PROGRESS

- “Tracking the spread of COVID-19 in Bangladesh using Symptomatic Data.” (with Caroline Buckee, Steve Luby, Ayesha Mahmud, A. Mushfiq Mobarak) [data collection started]
- “The limitations of technical solutions: water storage, education, and time use.” (with A. Mushfiq Mobarak) [data collection complete]
- “Inducing technology adoption in post-earthquake Nepal.” (with Norihiko Matsuda and Naoki Nishimura) [data collection complete]
- “Responses to insecurity and unexpected shocks.” (with Elaine Denny and Libby Jenke) [laboratory game complete]
- “Approximate Bandit Computation: Using Contextual Bandits to Estimate Recreation Choice.”

## MEDIA WRITING

- 2020 | “[The value of social distancing is not equally distributed.](#)” in VoxEU CEPR
- “[Poor Countries Need to Think Twice About Social Distancing.](#)” in *Foreign Policy*

## TEACHING

- 2018-2021 | *Yale University*:
  - Development Economics ECON 325: Fall and Spring 2018-2019, Spring 2020
  - Development Economics ECON 452: Fall 2020
  - Political Economy of Migration ECON 483: Fall 2019, Spring 2021
  - Senior thesis advisor: Eric Youshao, Elizabeth Dolan, Onyx Brunner

## FIELD RESEARCH

- 2017 | Ethiopia: Addis Ababa, Debre Markos, Bahir Dar (with NSF INFEWS research team)

## F E L L O W S H I P S   A N D   G R A N T S

2020	Weiss Family Foundation: Monitoring COVID-19 through Pharmacies in Bangladesh, \$75,000
2017	BRITE Lab Grant: Debating immigration policy, \$2,500 Political Science Summer Initiative Funding, \$2,000 Wisconsin Project on International Relations Grant, \$1,000 BRITE Lab Grant: optimal stopping time decisions under uncertainty, \$2,000 SRGC Travel Research Award: working at RIKEN AIP, \$2,000
2013–2015	Academic Year Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship: Kazakh, \$15,000/yr
2013	Summer Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowship: Kazakh, \$5,000

## S E L E C T E D   P R E S E N T A T I O N S

2020	AAEA: What Matters in Agricultural Economics? (invited) Zoom Conference.
2019	Y-RISE Annual Conference. Grand Cayman, Cayman Islands. South Asian Studies Council Colloquium at Yale University (invited). New Haven, CT. Student Conference on U.S. Affairs at West Point (invited chair). West Point, NY. Florida International University (invited). Miami, FL. Japanese Development Economics Conference. Tokyo, Japan. MidWest International Economic Development Conference. Madison, WI. Pacific Conference for Development Economics. Los Angeles, CA.
2018	Stanford Eleventh International Conference on Migration and Development. Palo Alto, CA. Harvard Experimental Political Science Graduate Conference. Cambridge, MA. Oxford Centre for the Study of African Economies Conference. Oxford, UK.
2017	Annual Meeting of the Society for Political Methodology. Madison, WI. Population Association of American Annual Conference. Chicago, IL.
2016	Agricultural & Applied Economics Association Annual Conference. Boston, MA.

## P R O F E S S I O N A L   S E R V I C E

2019	<i>Organizer.</i> Yale Political and Economic Development Conference
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## S K I L L S

*Languages:* Turkish, Kazakh, English (native)

*Computing:* R, Python, Stata

## REFERENCES

Ahmed Mushfiq Mobarak  
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Daniel Phaneuf  
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