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MIT PLACEMENT ADMINISTRATOR

Mrs. Shannon Robinson
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CURRENT POSITION Postdoctoral Academy Scholar (2025-2027)
Harvard Academy for International and Area Studies

DOCTORAL STUDIES Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT)
PhD, Economics, completed June 2025
DISSERTATION: “Essays in Development Economics and Trade”

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE AND REFERENCES

Professor Dave Donaldson
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Professor Esther Duflo
University of Zurich
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Professor Abhijit Banerjee
University of Zurich
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PRIOR EDUCATION London School of Economics 2018
MSc Economics
(*Distinction*)

London School of Economics 2015
BSc Economics
(*First Class Honours*)

CITIZENSHIP United Kingdom, Canada

GENDER: Male

LANGUAGES English, French

MIT Economics

EDWARD WILES

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FIELDS	Primary Fields: Trade Secondary Fields: Development Economics	
TEACHING EXPERIENCE	Development Economics: Micro (PhD level) TA to Professors Esther Duflo and Ben Olken (MIT) Political Economy and Development (Undergraduate level) TA to Professors Ben Olken and Abhijit Banerjee (MIT) The Challenge of World Poverty (Undergraduate level) TA to Professors Esther Duflo and Frank Schilbach (MIT) Macroeconomics (Masters level) TA to Professor Alwyn Young (LSE)	2021, 2024 2022, 2024 2021, 2023 2018
RELEVANT POSITIONS	Research Assistant to Professor Nava Ashraf (LSE)	2018-2019
HONORS AND AWARDS	TA of the Year Award Awarded annually to one TA in economics by the MIT Undergraduate Economics Association. Graduate Student Council Teaching Award Awarded annually to one instructor in each of MIT's five schools for excellence in teaching a graduate-level course. Arrow Award Awarded to the best paper in health economics in English in 2020, by the International Health Economics Association. Kennedy Scholarship National merit scholarship awarded annually to up to ten British graduate students to study at MIT or Harvard. John Hicks Prize Awarded annually to the highest ranked student in LSE MSc Economics.	2024 2022 2020 2019 2018
RESEARCH GRANTS	Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries (£14,600) with V. Bassi, D. Houeix, M. Keenan. Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries (£19,500) with D. Houeix. International Growth Centre (£18,561) with D. Houeix International Science Partnerships Fund (£99,866) with N. Ashraf, O. Bandiera, V. Mukonka. International Growth Centre (£19,981) with N. Ashraf, O. Bandiera. George and Obie Shultz Fund (\$15,833.33) with D. Houeix International Growth Centre (£20,000) with N. Ashraf, O. Bandiera.	2025 2025 2025 2024 2024 2024 2023

Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries (£31,000) with D. Houeix.	2023
Private Enterprise Development in Low-Income Countries (£20,720) with T. Garg.	2023
George and Obie Shultz Fund (\$14,251.67) with D. Houeix	2023
George and Obie Shultz Fund (\$14,982.76) with D. Houeix	2022
George and Obie Shultz Fund (\$6,000) with T. Garg	2022
Structural Transformation and Economic Growth (£11,960) with T. Garg.	2021
George and Obie Shultz Fund (\$12,000) with I. Puri	2020
International Growth Centre (£9,346) with N. Ashraf.	2019

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Referee: *American Economic Review, Econometrica, Economica, Journal of Development Economics, Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization, Journal of Political Economy, Labour Economics, Quarterly Journal of Economics*

Conference and Workshop Presentations:

NBER International Trade and Investment, Fall Meeting	2026
Conference on Urban and Regional Economics (Columbia)	2026
NBER Summer Institute, Development Economics	2026
Theoretical Research in Economic Development (Geneva)	2026
IGC/EGC Conference on Firms, Trade, and Development (Yale)	2025
Institutions, Trade, and Economic Development (Alberta)	2025
NBER Summer Institute, International Trade and Investment	2025
NEUDC (Northeastern)	2024
Cities and Development Workshop (Harvard)	2024
Junior Trade Workshop (LSE-Warwick)	2024

PUBLICATIONS

[**Losing Prosociality in the Quest for Talent? Sorting, Selection, and Productivity in the Delivery of Public Services**](#) (with Nava Ashraf, Oriana Bandiera, and Scott S. Lee). *American Economic Review*, 2020, 110(5): 1355-1394.

We embed a field experiment in a nationwide recruitment drive for a new health care position in Zambia to test whether career benefits attract talent at the expense of prosocial motivation. In line with common wisdom, offering career

opportunities attracts less prosocial applicants. However, the trade-off exists only at low levels of talent; the marginal applicants in treatment are more talented and equally prosocial. These are hired, and perform better at every step of the causal chain: they provide more inputs, increase facility utilization, and improve health outcomes including a 25 percent decrease in child malnutrition.

Awarded the Arrow Award for the best paper published in health economics in English in 2020 by the International Health Economics Association.

RESEARCH PAPERS

Aggregate Consequences of Relationship Dynamics in Trade (Job Market Paper) (with Pulak Ghosh)

Most trade takes place in buyer–seller relationships that both expand gradually over time and use future surplus to sustain trade when formal enforcement is limited. We study how these relationship dynamics affect aggregate adjustment to trade shocks. Using rich firm-to-firm transactions data from India, we document that: (i) trade within a typical relationship doubles in value over its first two years, (ii) this gradual expansion is stable across the firm size, age, and product experience distributions, and (iii) relationships start meaningfully closer to maturity in states where contract enforcement is stronger. To study the aggregate consequences of these micro-level features, we develop a dynamic multi-state general-equilibrium model that embeds optimal relational contracts within a tractable Ricardian framework. Following a trade shock, adjustment is gradual because firms must build new supplier relationships, while changes in future surplus endogenously reshape the contracts supporting existing and new relationships. We estimate the model using the firm-to-firm data and use it to study the dynamics of the transition following a reduction in interstate trade costs calibrated to a major 2017 Indian economic integration reform, finding that the short-run change in trade is only around half of the long-run change.

Relational Frictions along the Supply Chain: Evidence from Senegalese Traders (with Deivy Houeix)

We study search and trust frictions in international sourcing, and whether the growth of “social commerce” in lower-income countries can alleviate them. We document that firms use social media as sourcing infrastructure in ways related to these frictions. Guided by a relational-contracting model, we run a field experiment with 1,862 Senegalese garment retailers, matching them to suppliers in Türkiye (search) and cross-randomizing information about types (adverse selection) and incentives (moral hazard). New matches expand access to varieties and quality, but only develop into relationships when trust frictions are alleviated. Structural estimates imply trust frictions are complements and substantially limit trade.

Quantifying the Sensitivity of Quantitative Trade Models (with Habib Chenguiti Ansari and Dave Donaldson)

Modern quantitative trade models emphasize cross-country heterogeneity in productivity across goods as the source of trade and its benefits. In workhorse versions, this heterogeneity is assumed to follow specific functional forms, such as i.i.d. Frechet or Pareto. We provide a systematic exploration of how sensitive the gains from trade estimated from these models are to relaxing this assumption--first, with a new formula for sharp bounds on gains from trade across all possible distributions, and then with a numerical characterization for the case where distributions must be close to the workhorse form. Importantly, for each candidate distribution we ensure that its implied trade model is consistent with standard estimation methods such as the ability to match all bilateral trade data points and an exogeneity assumption. Our estimated bounds are wide, even for small departures from the canonical model: the maximal gain is about four times larger and the minimal gain is zero. Imposing high-level restrictions on the distributions considered---for example, maintaining Frechet or Pareto marginals while relaxing independence, or vice versa---does little to shrink these bounds.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

Trade Credit and Digital Records: Evidence from Cote d'Ivoire (with Deivy Houeix)

Trade credit—suppliers allowing buyers to purchase inventory now and pay later—is central to firm-to-firm commerce but depends on trust. In settings with limited contract enforcement, suppliers often ration credit to unfamiliar buyers, limiting firm growth and creating barriers to entry. We study whether firms can use increasingly available mobile payments records to signal creditworthiness to potential suppliers or lenders---an open finance model---and how this affects relationship development and firm- and market-level outcomes. We collaborate with a large mobile money provider in Cote d'Ivoire to build and evaluate a tool for firms to provide verified disclosures, as well as a fintech specializing in trade credit to study how specialized intermediaries use such records. We run an RCT with 2,000 retailers in the packaged drinks sector, where we randomize whether firms can access the new disclosure tool and whether we connect them with the specialized trade credit lender. Pilot results show that the ability to do verified disclosures increases supplier willingness to extend credit by 20 percentage points. The full RCT is active, with outcomes of interest including credit access, supplier relationships, product varieties, prices, stockouts, and profits and sales.