

Parth Chawla

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RESEARCH AREAS

Development Economics, Firm Productivity, Trade, Migration

ACADEMIC EXPERIENCE

2021 – 2026 Ph.D. in Agricultural and Resource Economics, University of California, Davis
2018 – 2019 M.Sc. in Economics, Trinity College Dublin
2014 – 2017 B.Sc. in Physics, Royal Holloway, University of London

DISSERTATION COMMITTEE

Prof. Travis Lybbert (Chair)	Prof. J. Edward Taylor	Prof. Arman Rezaee
Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics	Department of Agricultural and Resource Economics	Department of Economics
University of California, Davis	University of California, Davis	University of California, Davis
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WORKING PAPERS

Chawla, P. 2025. “Can Human Capital Improve Firm Resilience in Financial Crises? Evidence from the 1997 Indonesian Crisis.” Working paper. Available at SSRN. (Job Market Paper)

Summary: Do returns to human capital rise during crises? This paper examines whether Indonesia’s INPRES school construction program in the 1970s improved firm resilience during the 1997 Asian Financial Crisis. I combine a difference-in-differences strategy with a shift-share instrument, exploiting variation in district INPRES intensity and the national share of treated working-age cohorts. I find that each additional school per 1,000 children raised post-crisis real labor productivity and output by 2.8 and 3.5 percent, respectively. These effects are not explained by pre-crisis differences in basic educational attainment. Instead, INPRES contributed to a pre-crisis shift of workers toward skill-intensive production work. Using reduced-form evidence and a simple model, I show that the resulting local abundance of skilled production workers helped keep their wages lower in high-INPRES districts, enabling plants to retain more skilled workers during the crisis.

Barriga-Cabanillas, O., **Chawla, P.**, Redaelli, S. and Yoshida, N. 2023. “Updating Poverty in Afghanistan Using the SWIFT-Plus Methodology.” Policy Research Working Papers, 10616. World Bank, Washington, D.C. (Accepted at *Journal of Development Studies*)

Summary: This paper uses a machine learning-based survey-to-survey imputation method (SWIFT-plus) to estimate poverty in Afghanistan following the Taliban’s return to power in August 2021. A model trained on the 2019/20 Expenditure and Labor Force Survey is used to predict household consumption in the 2023 Afghanistan Welfare Monitoring Survey, a phone survey drawn from the same sampling frame. The results show that 48.3 percent of the population was poor as of April-June 2023, a 4 percentage point decline since the same months in 2020. This decline was driven by falling rural poverty, while urban poverty remained unchanged.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

“Predicting Mexico-to-US Migration with Machine Learning for Counterfactual Analysis,” with J. Edward Taylor

Summary: Reliable tools to predict migration are increasingly important amid rising climate and economic risks, and demographic shifts. Tree-based machine learning models can uncover complex, nonlinear relationships that conventional models often miss and can be used to simulate responses to shocks. Migration data are costly to collect, so models must perform well with readily available data. We first train a LightGBM model on an ideal dataset, a panel tracking the employment locations of 10,739 individuals from 1980 to 2007, and achieve high predictive accuracy. Using this as a benchmark, we then train a model on just four years of data without migration histories. By adding public weather data, this restricted model approaches benchmark performance (within 0.1 F1 score). Counterfactual shocks show that a 10% rise in temperature reduces migration by 13% the following year, a 10% increase in age lowers it by 17%, and a 10% drop in income by 18%.

“Firm Networks, Risk Sharing and Resilience to Shocks Among Small Firms in Tanzania,” with Daniel Putman and Jess Rudder

Summary: We examine the role of formal and informal networks among small firms in helping them cope with shocks. Using novel survey data that we collected in rural Tanzania, we estimate complete firm networks and analyze how network characteristics, such as centrality and clustering, shape firms’ exposure to shocks and their responses, including access to credit, performance, productivity, and entry and exit.

“Is Technology Inappropriate for Developing East Asia?,” with Francesca de Nicola, Aaditya Mattoo and Jonathan Timmis (World Bank East Asia Pacific)

Summary: We test the “inappropriate technology” hypothesis in Vietnam by examining whether the productivity premium from imported technologies adopted by manufacturing firms is lower when those technologies are not well suited to local conditions, exploiting tariff variation as an instrument for technology adoption.

“Financial Literacy and Small Firm Performance in Uganda,” with Ester Agasha, Andrew Hobbs, Travis Lybbert, Nathalie Nyanga, and Bruce Wydick

“Local Economic Impacts of Cash Transfers to Refugees and Asylum Seekers in Mexico, Mauritania, and Moldova,” with Justin Kagin and J. Edward Taylor

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

2023 – Present Consultant, The World Bank, Washington, D.C.

2023 – 2024 Graduate Student Researcher for Prof. J. Edward Taylor, UC Davis

2022 Research Intern, United Nations Development Programme, New York, NY

2022 RA to Prof. Yusuf Neggers, Ford School of Public Policy, Univ. of Michigan

2019 – 2021 Research Associate, Evidence for Policy Design, Harvard Kennedy School
(based in Delhi, India)

GRANTS, FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2025 UC Davis ARE Grad Travel Award

2024 Giannini Dissertation Fellowship (\$21,500 stipend)

2024 Giannini Foundation Mini-Grant, \$20,000 (with J. Edward Taylor)

2024 Henry A. Jastro Graduate Research Award, \$3,000

2024 UC Davis ARE Summer Research Fellowship

2021 – 2024	UC Davis Nonresident Supplemental Tuition Fellowship
2021 – 2022	UC Davis Provost’s Fellowship (\$25,000 stipend)
2017	Royal Holloway Passport Award
2014	Royal Holloway International Excellence Scholarship (tuition waiver)

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Main Instructor: Economic Development (UC Davis, 2024)

Teaching Assistant: Operations Research & Management Science, Economic Development, Econometric Methods, Agricultural Labor, Intermediate Microeconomics, Math & Statistics for Economics (Average evaluation score of 4/5 from 119 responses)

Teaching Fellow: Math Foundations Course (Ashoka University, 2018)

PRESENTATIONS

AAEA & WAEA Joint Annual Meeting 2025 (Best Poster Award Recipient), Japan Economic Policy Association 2025, World Bank-LSMS Conference “Better Data for Better Jobs and Lives” (2025), UC Davis Development Workshop, Giannini Student Research Conference

SKILLS AND METHODS

Programming: Python (pandas, scikit-learn), R, Stata, SQL/MySQL

Tools and Platforms: Git, Unix, Markdown, R Shiny, AWS (EC2, RDS), SurveyCTO

Statistical Methods: Machine Learning (Linear/Logistic Regression, Random Forests, Gradient Boosting, LightGBM), Causal Inference (DiD, RDD, IV, PSM, SC), Panel Data Econometrics

BLOG ARTICLES

“Government Intervention in India and Taiwan Affects Global Rice Markets” (with Tzu-Hui Chen), Ag Data News (2022)

SERVICE

Referee: Journal of Agriculture and Food Research

Other: Grad School Application Mentor

LANGUAGES

English (Native/Bilingual), Hindi (Native/Bilingual), Korean (Beginner)