

# Yale Jackson Institute for Global Affairs

November 25, 2015

Dear Colleague,

I am writing on behalf of Ms. Julia Garlick. Julia is finishing her Ph.D. in Economics at Yale and I am on her dissertation committee. I'll describe her work in some detail below but let me start with the punchlines. Julia is a brilliant young economist. Her two main papers are clearly in the realm of Development Economics but her skills and interests place her more broadly in the field of applied and empirical microeconomics. Julia brings sophisticated econometric skills and tremendous attention to detail to bear on important questions. In her job market paper, she uses Thai data to document and then understand the mechanisms underlying an unintended consequence of microcredit schemes—adverse education outcomes for adolescents in households that start a small business. In another paper (co-authored with me), she uses the first nationally-representative panel data in Africa measure the returns to internal migration in South Africa. She highlights the impact of migration on not just the migrants but also on the households that send and receive them.

I am recommending Julia to *any* department looking to hire in Development Economics. I believe she holds her own intellectually with recent hires at the very best economics departments in the world.

In her job market paper, "Occupation Choices and Education Investments: Unintended Effects of Microcredit," Julia uses Thai data from the Million Bhat Village Fund (MBVF) program. It's hip these days to run an RCT in development economics and that's a fine approach to answering some questions. It's a less well-suited approach to answer some questions on a national level. The MBVF program provided a fixed amount of a credit infusion into every village in Thailand and since village size varies dramatically, this program in effect provided very different per-capita credit infusions across the country. Julia exploits this exogenous variation to investigate the impact of microcredit on occupation choice and household decisions about education. She first convincingly demonstrates that more microcredit causally impacts childrens' education and she then builds and estimates a structural model to better understand the mechanisms through which this occurs. The paper highlights several of the qualities that make Julia a top job candidate. First, she asks big picture questions. Understanding the disincentives for investing in kids' education that accompany the occupation choice is a broad and important issue. Second, she knows what econometric tools to use and when and how to use them. She is a very, very good consumer of sophisticated micro-econometric methods. Third, Julia cares about the

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economics of the issues she investigates. That might seem superfluous but it's not. She is not just focused on measuring a plausibly exogenous shift in this or that. She delves into the "why" and uses microeconomic theory to inform her work.

In her paper with Murray Leibbrandt (University of Cape Town) and me, "Individual Migration and Household Incomes," Julia brings an entirely different set of econometric tools to bear on another big picture question. In South Africa, household composition is quite fluid. Using the first nationally representative panel on the continent, we estimate the impact of migration on the incomes of the migrant, members of the sending household, and members of the receiving household. Econometrically, accounting for selection is Job One, and Julia has been instrumental in developing and implementing the methods used in this paper. I've seen first-hand just how incredibly meticulous Julia is in her empirical work. Julia has done the heavy lifting in terms of the econometric (and data) work on this paper and deserves more than her share of the credit for this paper.

Julia has also worked as a teaching assistant for me in my intermediate Micro course. She was great—caring, careful, and insightful. Her teaching evaluations will reflect the appreciation her students have expressed.

Julia's main advisor is Costas Meghir. This makes a lot of sense to me. Costas is not squarely in Development Economics (and neither am I.) Julia's work is more broad than just Development. Also, Costas holds his students to very, very high standards when it comes to their empirical work and Julia has embraced this.

When Julia presents her work, she tends to be modest. Don't be fooled. She's wicked smart and can hold her own with anyone in the room. In the three years I've worked with Julia, I have trouble remembering a single time that she was wrong. She's soft-spoken but stunningly articulate. I know she'll be a fantastic colleague as her interests are broad and that breadth is matched by her equally broad skill set.

So far, Taryn Dinkelman is probably the strongest student I've had in Development in the past 25 years. (Taryn went to Princeton from Michigan.) I think Julia is on par with Taryn. Coincidentally, both are South Africans who were stars at the University of Cape Town. Both are just the nicest people you'll ever meet, and both are superb microeconomists.

Please let me know if you have any questions or if I can provide any more information.

Sincerely



Jim Levinsohn