

## Timothy Hersey

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**Citizenship:** Australian, F-1 Visa

**Fields of Concentration:**

Primary: Development Economics  
Secondary: Economic History

**Comprehensive Examinations Completed:**

2020 (Oral): Development Economics, International Trade  
2019 (Written): Microeconomics, Macroeconomics

**Dissertation Title:** *Religious Institutions, Economic Networks and Service Provision*

**Committee:**

Professor Mushfiq Mobarak (Chair)  
Professor Mark Rosenzweig  
Professor Jose-Antonio Espin-Sanchez  
Professor Benjamin Polak

**Education:**

Ph.D., Economics, Yale University, 2025 (expected)  
M.Phil., Economics, Yale University, 2020  
M.A., Economics, Yale University, 2019  
M.Phil., Economics, University of Adelaide, 2018  
B.A., Mathematical Sciences, University of Adelaide, 2018  
B.A., Economics (Honors), University of Adelaide, 2017

**Fellowships, Honors and Awards:**

Raymond Powell Teaching Prize, Yale University 2023  
MacMillan International Dissertation Research Fellowship, Yale University 2022  
Evenson Fund Travel Research Award, Yale University 2021  
University Research Medal, Dean's Commendation for Master's Research, University of Adelaide 2018  
Research Training Program Scholarship for Master's Research, University of Adelaide 2017-2018

University Medal, University of Adelaide 2016

The John Lorenzo Young Prize for Best Honour's Thesis, University of Adelaide 2016

The School of Economics Prize for Best Honour's Achievement, University of Adelaide 2016

### **Teaching Experience:**

#### *Yale University*

Head Teaching Assistant to Prof. Benjamin Polak, Introduction to Game Theory (UG), Spring 2021, Fall 2021-2023

Head Teaching Assistant to Prof. Benjamin Polak, Applications of Game Theory (UG), Spring 2022, 2023

Teaching Assistant to Prof. Ilse Lindenlaub, Intermediate Macroeconomics (UG), Spring 2023

Teaching Assistant to Visiting Prof. Maggie Jones, American Economic History (UG), Spring 2022

Teaching Assistant to Prof. Steven Berry and Prof. Benjamin Polak, Introductory Microeconomics (UG), Fall 2020

#### *University of Adelaide, Teaching Assistant, 2016-2018*

Business and Economic Statistics (UG)

Introduction to Mathematical Economics (UG, Advanced)

Principles of Economics (UG)

Economics Honour's Math Preparation Course (UG, Honours)

### **Working Papers**

“Migration, Risk Sharing Networks and Religious Choice” [Job Market Paper]

“Identifying marginal returns to treatment through social networks” with Firmin Doko-Tchatoka, Virginie Masson (2019).

### **Work in Progress**

“Rural-urban migration, household decisions, and structural transformation” with Alvaro Cox, Matthew Schwartzman, Tomas Budi-Ors.

“Competition and Selection in Religious Networks”.

Dissertation Abstract**“Migration, Risk Sharing Networks and Religious Choice” [Job Market Paper]**

Social and economic networks are especially important in the rapidly expanding urban environments in many developing economies. Networks facilitate entry into the urban economy, increase the returns to migration, and insure against risk. Religious networks, compared to ethnic or village networks which have been studied in the migration literature, are unique in allowing, and often encouraging, the entry of outside members. I posit the following hypothesis: as economic forces induce migration from rural to urban areas, migrants leave behind their village network at origin. On arrival in the city they join the optimal available network which, given their openness and institutional coordination, is found in religious communities. As a result, patterns of migration will be correlated with patterns of religious change, which may partially explain the rapid religious transition from ethnic religions towards Pentecostalism observed in many African nations.

Additionally, while it is understood that outmigration from a community can weaken risk sharing networks, I consider the response of rural households to these weakened networks. I posit that rural religious institutions expand as households look to alternative sources for the benefits previously provided by the village network.

Up until recently, there has been limited data available to study the role of religious institutions in migration. I present two new datasets from Ghana to address this scarcity. I firstly collect institutional data from a small sample of Pentecostal churches in Accra. I secondly use the Yale-Northwestern ISSER Ghana Panel survey, adding a unit to the fourth wave of the panel to elicit information on the religious participation and denominational history of households.

Identification of the effect of migration on the religious choices of migrants and out-migrant households are complicated by endogeneity concerns. To address this, I construct instruments for migration using a measure of household exposure to price shocks in both the gold mining industry and the construction industry. Using these instruments, I demonstrate that migration does influence the propensity to convert towards Pentecostalism, and further, induces conversion of households with outmigrants.

To test for the mechanism, I use information on service provision, transfers, consumption smoothing, religious giving, and religious consumption to establish that religious institutions act as economic networks. I find that Pentecostal churches provide strong networks – Pentecostal churches provide more services and allow greater consumption smoothing, at the cost of greater religious involvement and religious contributions, consistent with the classic club goods model. I then examine changes in network benefits after migration and find that migrants who convert receive more benefits and are more successful at entering the job market. Origin households who convert are no better off than non-convert households.

**\*\*(some of these results still forthcoming)\*\***

**References:**

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