

Leonel Borja Plaza

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Citizenship: Ecuadorian

Research interests

Development, Labor Economics, Applied Econometrics

Education

Cornell University

PhD Applied Economics and Management

Committee: John Hoddinott (Chair).

Christopher B. Barrett, Brian Dillon.

Ithaca, NY

May 2024 (Expected)

Northeastern University

MA in Economics

Boston, MA

August 2016 – December 2017

Universidad San Francisco de Quito

Economista

Magna Cum Laude

Quito, Ecuador

September 2009 – June 2014

Maastricht University

Semester Abroad

Maastricht, the Netherlands

September 2012- December 2012

Honors and scholarships

Dean's Scholarship (Northeastern University)

2016-2017

Fulbright Scholarship (for Master Studies in the US)

2019

Adam Smith Scholarship (Universidad San Francisco de Quito)

2009 - 2014

2nd Place *Colegio de Administracion para el Desarrollo Honors Award*

(Universidad San Francisco de Quito)

2014

Working papers

Are Teen Childbearing Effects Heterogeneous? Evidence from Ecuador

Abstract: I use deviations from the expected age at menarche to estimate the marginal treatment effects of teen childbearing on schooling and labor outcomes for Ecuadorian mothers and schooling and health outcomes for their firstborn children. Findings suggest that women with unobservable characteristics that make them less likely to become teen mothers are less likely to participate in the labor force, have fewer years of schooling, and are less likely to finish high school if they become teen mothers. Women with values of unobservables that make them more likely to become teen mothers do not have their schooling attainment negatively impacted and increase their labor force participation. I do not find evidence of effects on firstborn children. These findings help reconcile seemingly conflicting evidence from past studies and imply that there is potential to improve women's outcomes by reducing teen childbearing rates when opportunity costs are sufficiently high. However, these findings counter the belief that teen childbearing has been a significant source of intergenerational transmission of low socioeconomic status.

Early Life Nutritional Improvements and Intergenerational Impacts on Education: Evidence from the INCAP longitudinal Study

with Jere Behrman, John Maluccio, Reynaldo Martorell, Manuel Ramírez-Zea, Aryeh Stein and John Hoddinott

Abstract: Whether any policy-induced benefits on human capital endure over the long term in resource-constrained environments is a concern because human capital may require sustained investment not to fade away. However, there is evidence that improvements in early-life nutrition increase schooling attainment and income in adulthood. Can these impacts also benefit the next generation? In this paper, we study the intergenerational effects on children's education of having a parent receive protein supplementation in early childhood in a low-income, rural setting. Using unique data that links two generations in a difference-in-difference framework, we show that children of early-treated male but not female participants of the INCAP longitudinal study—a nutritional intervention that occurred in Eastern Guatemala in the 1970s—have higher enrollment rates and schooling attainment than children of late- or non-treated fathers. We also find positive effects on boys' non-verbal cognitive ability, but these estimates are imprecise. We find no impact on vocabulary tests.

Work in Progress

Talent (Miss)Allocation and the Cost of Inequality of Opportunity

Abstract: Malnutrition and access to pre-primary education rates worldwide, especially in LMIC, suggest that the extent of unequal opportunity is worrisome. Many people do not have optimal investments at critical periods in their early life, irreversibly limiting their ability to realize their full human capital potential by no fault of their own. As long as the occupation type and human capital are complements, the optimal allocation of talent occurs when the individuals with the highest human capital match with the most productive jobs. Thus, barriers to early-life human capital formation represent a source of inequality of opportunity that produces an inefficient allocation of talent across occupations. Through counterfactual analysis, this paper quantifies the aggregate implications that stem from talent reallocation across occupations when barriers to human capital formation in early life are reduced.

The Effects of Compulsory Schooling on the Marriage Market: Evidence from Ecuador

Abstract: In 1977, Ecuador extended compulsory schooling from 6 to 9 years. Using a regression discontinuity design on recent household survey data, I find that the reform did not affect women's educational attainment, while it led to an average increase of 0.8 years of schooling for men. These heterogeneous effects had implications in the marriage market. Men married younger, more educated, and taller women. Women, on the other hand, were more likely to remain single, while those who got married did so to older, less educated, but also taller men. For couples that had children, where women should have benefited from the reform, the educational attainment gap between husbands and wives was significantly reduced.

Presentations

PacDev 2023: Early Life Nutritional Improvements and Intergenerational Impacts on Education: Evidence from the INCAP longitudinal Study

Research experience

Graduate Assistant for the America Economic Association (AEA) Data Editor
Summer 2021– Summer 2022

Supported the AEA Data Editor in the review of replication packages (code, data and output) of articles to be published in AEA affiliated journals. Tasks involved running code on different software including Python, Stata, R, Fortran, Matlab, and Julia, helping undergraduate students run code and produce review reports, as well as checking those reports as they are sent to authors to improve their replication packages.

Research assistant, “Reducing the Cost of Remoteness: Community-Based Health Interventions and Fertility Choices”

PIs: Catalina Herrera Almanza

October 2016 – December 2017

Maria Rosales Rueda

Link to published article [here](#).

Teaching experience

Teaching assistant, Charles H. Dyson School of Applied Economics and Management

	<i>Corporate Finance</i> Prof. Johnny Tang	Fall 2023
	<i>Intro to Development Economics</i> Prof. Steven Kyle Prof. Joanna Upton	Fall 2020 Summer 2023
	<i>International Trade and Finance</i> Prof. David R. Lee Prof. David R. Lee	Spring 2021 Spring 2020
	<i>Managerial Economics</i> Prof. Terence Alexander	Fall 2020
Professional experience	Ministerio de Inclusion Economica y Social , Investigacion y Analisis Ecuador Research Analyst	Quito, February 2018 - July 2018
	Fundacion Crisfe , Gestion del Conocimiento Specialist	Quito, Ecuador August 2014 - August 2016
	Instituto Nacional de Estadisticas y Censos Estandares y Metodologias Ecuador Assistant 1	Quito, February 2014 - August 2014
Skills	Programming Proficient in: R, STATA, LATEX. Familiar with: Python, MATLAB, Docker, Spss, GIS, QGIS, JULIA. Languages Spanish (Native), English (fluent), Italian (Basic), French (Basic)	
Service to profession	Referee for Economics and Human Biology	
Other interests	Acoustic guitar, Brazilian Jiu-Jitsu	