

RESEARCH STATEMENT

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I study how deeper integration into the world economy changes the decisions people make in countries more vulnerable to globalization. Low- and middle-income countries have leaned on foreign capital and market access to raise growth and productivity, and the aggregate returns to that strategy are well documented. Far less studied, at least in low- and middle-income settings, is how integration reshapes individual choices: what students choose to specialize in, how voters respond, or immigration decisions. My work studies those channels. Costa Rica is my primary setting because it supplies the variation these questions require: free trade zone policy that concentrated foreign direct investments in particular industries, a national referendum on CAFTA-DR that made trade agreements a political process, and administrative records detailed enough to observe individual college major choices. Familiarity with the institutional context and the language is what lets me use them well.

GLOBAL FIRMS, LOCAL STUDENTS: MULTINATIONAL PRESENCE SHAPES COLLEGE MAJOR (*Job Market Paper*)

Students respond to the industrial composition of foreign investment around them when choosing what to study. Using administrative application records from a large public university in Costa Rica covering 2010 to 2019 and 230,162 applicants, I estimate how multinational presence in an industry shifts the probability that a prospective student selects the field of study serving it. Identification comes from spatial and temporal variation in exposure to multinational firm entry across districts and years. This generates cohorts and regions that are plausibly unrelated to student preferences for fields. I estimate the choice problem as a multinomial logit and report average marginal effects, with bounds that account for distance and exposure to multinational firms. A one standard deviation increase in multinational presence in the manufacturing industry raises the probability of choosing a major within STEM and Applied Sciences by 52.9 p.p., while seeing a proportionate decrease in the probability of choosing a major within Arts (25.1 p.p.) and Social Sciences (27.9 p.p.). This pattern is consistent with a selective response into increased labor demand by multinationals in those fields rather than a general shift in student preferences.

Status: Working Paper. The most recent available draft can be found on my [website](#).

DOES THE GLOBAL SOUTH IMPORT IDEOLOGY SHIFTS? EVIDENCE FROM COSTA RICA

Rising trade volume between Costa Rica and the United States is associated with a relative rightward shift in political ideology. I combine political party manifesto data with legislative election returns to construct a measure of ideology at the canton level, then use a shift-share design with instrumented bilateral trade volume to estimate canton-level import exposure. More exposed cantons shift conservative, by 1.83 standard deviations in the political lean index. I additionally use canton-level voting on the CAFTA-DR referendum to proxy for attitudes toward free trade, and find that a favorable prior attitude attenuates the conservative shift. This suggests the response is mediated by how trade is understood locally, not only by exposure itself.

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MULTINATIONAL ENTRY AND SKILL COMPOSITION - A THEORETICAL MODEL

The empirical chapter establishes that multinational entry changes what students choose to study. It however cannot say what happens to aggregate skill composition of the economy once those individual responses feed back into wages and into multinational firms own location and hiring decisions. This chapter builds a general equilibrium model in which multinational and domestic firms compete for workers while students choose skill acquisition anticipating the returns those firms offer, so that entry and specialization are jointly determined rather than sequential.

ONGOING AND FUTURE WORK

ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY AND FDI TYPE w/ ANCA CRISTEA AND BRUCE BLONIGEN

Environmental regulation may not deter foreign investment so much as redirect the form it takes. Greenfield projects and cross-border acquisitions face asymmetric regulatory exposure: a new plant must satisfy current standards in full, while an acquired plant is often grandfathered in, with compliance costs capitalized into the purchase price instead. If that asymmetry binds, stringency should reallocate FDI across modes even where it leaves the total unchanged. I test this using the OECD Environmental Policy Stringency Index, which rose sharply across member countries between 1990 and 2020, together with the growth in environmental provisions written directly into preferential trade agreements. The setting offers substantial cross-country variation in how aggressively host nations regulate while competing for the same foreign capital. Distinguishing deterrence from reallocation matters both for the theory of multinational firm organization and for policymakers who assume stringency and investment trade off one for one.

MEXICO-US MIGRATION AS A DIFFUSION PROCESS

I model migration from Mexico to the United States as a single continuous process spanning emigration, border crossing, and settlement, rather than as three separately estimated stages. Adapting a convection-diffusion equation, I treat migrant flows as a density field evolving over space and time: where flows spread, drift toward opportunity, attrit under enforcement, and accumulate in established ethnic enclaves. The framework joins two spatial regimes: a corridor capturing pre-border dynamics within Mexico and a two-dimensional diffusion system capturing settlement across the United States. These are both linked at the border by an enforcement-dependent permeability condition. I estimate the parameter vector, including the wage-gap elasticity, the enforcement elasticity of crossing probability, and a network elasticity governing interior diffusivity, by using simulated method of moments against county-year density moments from the American Community Survey.

UPWARD LANGUAGE MOBILITY: IMMIGRANT CHILDREN ENGLISH ACQUISITION

Language acquisition in immigrant households may run upward as well as downward. This project tests whether first-generation children's English acquisition raises proficiency and engagement among their non-English-speaking parents, with children acting as translators and interpreters for institutional, health, and labor market interactions. I propose to use the No Child Left Behind Act of 2001, which mandated English learner instruction and accountability across all public schools and generates pre- and post-reform variation in exposure. Because no single longitudinal survey offers both adequate parental language measurement and coverage on either side of the reform, I pair two: American Community Survey data, with its language-spoken-at-home and English proficiency items, and the New Immigrant Survey and the Children of Immigrants Longitudinal Study. Establishing this channel would recast children's language acquisition as a household-level investment rather than an individual one.

RESEARCH AND TEACHING FIT

This agenda is designed to run on the time a teaching-focused position allows. The Costa Rican data underlying my first two chapters, university application records, canton-level election returns, and political party manifesto coding, are already assembled, cleaned, and documented. Additionally, my future work aims to use publicly available datasets such as the OECD Environmental Policy Stringency Index for the environmental policy project and the American Community Survey for the language acquisition project. At this current stage, none of this work requires overwhelming external funding, restricted-access agreements, laboratory infrastructure, or fieldwork. This sets up all of my future projects to involve any student at any stage of research skills to join and learn from the process.

I am happy to involve students in this work and equally glad to advise projects of their own. What I most want to offer to students is exposure to the part of research that coursework rarely reaches: obtaining the data, cleaning it, and deciding how to turn a concept into something measurable. Students are faced with regression outputs long before they encounter the judgment calls that produce it. Working through those decisions on a live project, whether mine or theirs, is where a student stops applying methods and starts doing economic research.