

Research Statement

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I am an applied economist specializing in international trade and development economics. I use microeconomic tools to analyze the socioeconomic impact of increased international trade on developing nations. Lower-Middle Income Countries have increasingly relied on foreign capital and on increasing participation in international markets to bolster economic growth and productivity. Although FDI can stimulate economic growth, it may also produce unintended effects that warrant attention. My research looks to identify the possible ways in which increased international participation may impact local markets in developing nations.

My job market paper, "FDI and College Major Choice" examines the socioeconomic effects of foreign direct investment on human capital accumulation decisions by students entering university. I look at how the presence of multinational corporations influences the choice of academic majors of university applicants. Using administrative-level data from a large public university in Costa Rica, I show that the influx of foreign capital on particular industries has an effect on the probability of prospective students to choosing a given field-of-study. These effects vary in significance and magnitude across industries and field-of-study pairings. This study indicates an important link between the presence of multinational corporations and human capital specialization decisions.

My research agenda extends to topics that examine the impact of increased trade on electoral outcomes in the context of developing countries. In my working paper: "Does the Global South Import Ideology Shifts?" I show that an increase in international trade volume between Costa Rica and the US is associated with a relative righthward political ideology shift in Costa Rica. I combine political party manifesto data and voting results from legislative elections to create a measure of political ideology at the canton level (micro-regions in Costa Rica). I then use a shift-share approach using instrumented trade volume between Costa Rica and the US to estimate import-exposure at a canton level to estimate the effects of increased trade participation on political ideology. Results show that relatively more import-exposed cantons shift their votes shift toward a more conservative ideology. Additionally, by using voting returns on CAFTA-DR, a free trade agreement between central american countries and the US, I estimate attitudes toward free trade. When incorporating these measures, the results indicate that a positive opinion toward free trade is associated with an attenuation effect on this conservative political shift.

In on-going work, I am expanding my skillset by developing a structural model based off of my job market paper that would estimate the opportunity cost of choosing a university major. This model allows leverage spatial variation as a counterfactual to understand how local labor markets affect human capital specialization decisions. In future work, I plan to expand my research agenda to other socioeconomic impacts of global economic integration to other topics.