

During summer 2020, the Bravo Center supported 5 graduate students to further develop their own dissertation research and/or work with faculty on joint research projects. The students and their projects are listed below.

### **Santiago Hermo**



Project: Does the Expansion of Primary School affect the Development of Local Economies?  
(joint with Diego Gentile Passaro)

What effect does the expansion of primary schooling have on transitioning economies? We seek to answer this question in the context of Argentina during the period 1880-1947. During this time, two important laws were enacted (1884 and 1905) that significantly and immediately increased the number of primary schools across the country. Using these laws, Santiago and Diego will investigate empirically how the shift in availability of schooling affected economic outcomes in the short and long run. This summer, Santiago digitized data from historical censuses of Argentina.

## **Ruchi Mahadeshwar**



Project: The Impact of HIV self-testing on sexual decision-making (joint with Nicholas Wilson, Kawango Agot, Harsha Thirumurthy)

Ruchi is working with three co-authors on a randomized controlled trial (RCT) that would allow them to study the impact of making HIV self-testing available on the sexual decision-making of sex workers in Western Kenya.

Project: Assessing the Impact of Chinese Investment in Africa (joint with Alex Zhou)

Ruchi and Alex are to assess the impact of Chinese vs. local managers on worker productivity and financial behavior. They have already collected data on the location and types of Chinese investment activities in Africa and are piloting a survey of managers and workers at a Chinese construction company in Zambia.

Project: How do past actions affect future beliefs? (Research Assistant to Professors Bryce Steinberg and Neil Thakral)

Ruchi is working as a Research Assistant to Professors Steinberg and Thakral who are interested in measuring the impact of past actions on information appetite/beliefs about future actions and the future actions themselves. They are interested in measuring this within the following two contexts: media consumption between election cycles and childhood vaccination decisions. For the former, they are using publicly available elections data and Nielsen ad intel data. For the latter, they are piloting data collection via MTurk surveys.

## **Geetika Nagpal**



Project: The Impact of Public Transportation on Informal Transit Networks (Research Assistant to Professor Dan Bjorkegren)

What is the impact of providing high-quality public bus services on informal transit networks? While a growing body of evidence is beginning to cast light on the impact of mass rapid transit in developing world cities, little rigorous empirical work exists to understand the behavior of the informal transit industry and policy options towards improving service. This presents a policy-relevant knowledge gap since the vast majority of motorized trips in African cities are taken by informal minibuses. Leveraging the randomized roll-out of public bus services in Lagos, Nigeria, this project examines how informal minibuses respond by changing fares, service frequency, and the routes they choose to ply in response to the launch of these public buses. Geetika worked on formalizing the research question, developing the survey and theory, and mapping the routes on which the government bus system will be rolled out. The fieldwork for the survey will launch in October 2020, and Geetika will continue to work on the project as a co-author.

## Marcela Mello Silva



Project: The Effect of Media on Religion: Evidence from the Rise of Pentecostals in Brazil (joint with Giulia Buccione)

Marcela and Giulia are examining how exposure to a church-affiliated TV channel affects religiosity and compliance with modes of economic and social behavior prescribed by the church. To estimate this effect, they plan to exploit the expansion of RecordTV, a Brazilian TV channel that started broadcasting religious content over the 1990s. Their results show that an increase of one standard deviation in RecordTV signal strength leads to an increase of 1.2 p.p. in the share of Pentecostals, an increase of 0.44 p.p in fertility rate, a decrease of 0.88 p.p. in female labor force participation and a reduction of 1.8% in risky behaviors. They also find an increase of 0.93 p.p. in the share of votes for Pentecostal candidates and an increase in the number of Pentecostal churches per capita. To address the possibility that these estimated effects reflect the fact that these areas were already trending in this direction (and RecordTV was simply reflecting existing underlying demand), the authors exploit the placement of transmitters prior to RecordTV being religiously affiliated in an instrumental variable framework.

## Patrick Vu



### Project: Gender Inequality in Academia

Patrick is examining the dynamics of gender inequality in academia. To do so, he has collected information on publications and citations by gender for faculty in economics and psychology. He finds that publications and citations for men and women are identical in the early part of academics' careers, before diverging and expanding over time, in favor of men. Moreover, this is driven entirely by academics who earned their PhDs before 2000. For younger generations of academics, publications and citations are essentially identical. Finally, publication quality - as measured by citations per paper - is the same over the career life cycle for men and women regardless of when they earned their PhDs.

These findings are suggestive of child penalties that disproportionately affect women who earned their PhDs prior to 2000, but not for those who earned it after. To investigate this possibility, Patrick is considering collecting survey data and collaborating with other investigators who are engaged in complementary research projects.