

## **Child Development and Human Capital Among the Poor**

**Faculty Member:** [Costas Meghir](#)

### **Proposal Description:**

Evidence shows that growing up in the adverse conditions emanating from poverty leads to permanent developmental deficits because of the lack of stimulation and appropriate nutrition. This in turn is partly responsible for long term deficits in human capital and the implied earnings potential as well as for the intergenerational transmission of poverty. To address this problem interdisciplinary work combining, child development psychologists, medical doctors and economists have been designing policies to improve cognitive and socio-emotional development by appropriate parenting programs that promote stimulation and nutrition at a very early age. From an economic point of view such interventions are designed to improve the human capital of children from poor backgrounds and thus improve their life outcomes, including employment, earnings and health, as well as reduce the intergenerational transmission of poverty. We have been designing and testing appropriate interventions in various countries, including Colombia and India with the aim of understanding their effectiveness and examining their scalability as viable and sustainable policies. These projects have been funded by the NIH, the World Bank and Interamerican Development bank as well as a number of private charitable foundations.

The Research assistant will work with us on two tasks.

We now have a wealth of data from four different experiments and this data needs to be well organized so that it can be used to its full potential. The RA will help organize the data from up to four different experimental studies to make sure it can easily be accessed and used by researchers making it easy to extract data sets for analysis. The data consists of longitudinal household surveys over covering 2 - 4 years depending on the experiment. They contain a wealth of information on the household demographics and on their economic activity as well as detailed measures of child development from a very early age (6 months to 4 year olds)

The second task will relate to assisting with the writing up of a review of the results from the four experiments and how this relates to the existing literature. The review article will touch upon the broader issue of the role of child development policies for economic growth and for equality of opportunity and of outcome. The research assistant will help with the literature review, will make summaries of results and will discuss with the researchers conclusions from this literature. She/he will also work with existing data to produce new results and tabulate information that might be required for the article. Finally they will communicate with other researchers involved in the project to help coordinate the work.

The balance of time between the task will be determined by the need of the researchers and the interests of the RA.

During the time of the project the RA will have the opportunity to learn about this important and growing literature and how these issues are incorporated into the economics of human capital and skill acquisition.

### **Requisite Skills and Qualifications:**

Econ 117 or Econ 131 or equivalent statistics course; Ability to use or learn a Statistical Package (Stata/R), knowledge or ability to learn a Database language

**Award:** Lauren Harris  
Ryan Haygood

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**Tobin Application Link:** [Tobin Application](#)

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