The Harvard University Lemann Brazil Research Fund

The Harvard University Lemann Brazil Research Fund is made possible by a generous gift from the Lemann Foundation. The Office of the Vice Provost for Research administers the Fund together with the Office of the Vice Provost for International Affairs, in collaboration with the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies and the Brazil Studies Program.

Funding Priorities

The Fund supports research projects relating to Brazil. Proposals are sought for projects that address education management and administration; social science and its applications; public administration and policy; technological advances in education; and evidence-based research. Consideration is also given to projects that propose collaboration between Harvard faculty and Brazilian academics in the life sciences, physical sciences and engineering, and basic and applied sciences.

Applications are invited from researchers across disciplines proposing research projects relating to Brazil. Proposed projects must meet at least one of the following three criteria:

1. Include collaboration with Brazilian academics
2. Be undertaken in Brazil in whole or in part
3. Focus on Brazil

Proposals are evaluated on the basis of academic merit, feasibility, and their anticipated advancement of the objectives of the Fund.

Eligibility

Applications are invited from individuals who hold a faculty appointment at a Harvard school and who have principal investigator rights at that school. Harvard Medical School faculty must hold a faculty appointment with PI rights in one of HMS’s basic or social science departments. Faculty may request support for postdoctoral scholars and graduate students from Brazil; and for Harvard postdocs, graduate students, and undergraduates.

Available Funding

Applicants may request up to $150,000 payable over one or two years, as specified by the applicant in his or her proposal. Grants are non-renewable, but there are no limits on the number of times an individual may apply for funding. It is anticipated that 5-10 grants will be awarded each year.

About Jorge Paulo Lemann AB’61 and the Lemann Foundation

Global entrepreneur and financier Jorge Paulo Lemann regards education as Brazil’s most important challenge. He received a Bachelor’s degree in Economics from Harvard College in 1961. He is the Founder and Chair of the Lemann Foundation, a not-for-profit organization that focuses on improving public education in Brazil. The Lemann Foundation, a non-profit family organization founded in 2002 by Jorge Paulo Lemann, works to ensure that all Brazilian children have high quality public education and to create a network of talented people dedicated to solving the main Brazilian social problems. www.fundacaolemann.org.br
LAURA ALFARO, Warren Alpert Professor of Business Administration, Harvard Business School
“Globalization and Organizational Change: Evidence from Brazil”
Co-Investigators: Maggie X. Chen (George Washington University); Andrea Lucchesi (University of Sao Paulo); Naercio A. Menezes Filho (University of Sao Paulo & INSPER); Monika Schnitzer (University of Munich)
Collaborators: Alison Oliveira (University of Sao Paulo & INSPER); Leandro Justino Pereira Veloso (Universidade Federal do Rio de Janeiro)

The globalization process has far-reaching consequences for firm productivity through increased competition and by affecting firms’ incentives to invest in upgrading their technologies and products through better foreign inputs, which leads to improvements in management practices. Here we investigate the roles played by imports and changes in management practices on productivity growth. We use firm-level panel data from 1998-2011 on management practices, R&D, innovations, trade and source of capital from the Brazilian innovation surveys matched with the industrial surveys and trade data. In the exposure of the Brazilian economy to foreign direct investment and trade, we expect to find interesting interactions between firms’ international exposure and innovation activities.

MARCIA CASTRO, Associate Professor of Demography, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
“Estimation of the Social and Economic Burdens of Dengue and Zika Virus in Brazil: A Public Policy Tool”
Co-Investigators: Mary E. Wilson (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health); Monica Viegas Andrade (Federal University of Minas Gerais); Cláudio José Struchiner (State University of Rio de Janeiro; Oswaldo Cruz Foundation)
Collaborators: Sarah F. McGough (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health); Benjamin MacCormack-Gelles (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health); Lucas Resende de Carvalho (Federal University of Minas Gerais); Julia Almeida Calazans (Federal University of Minas Gerais)

This study will contribute substantially to understanding the burden of dengue and Zika virus in Brazil. Utilizing a comprehensive framework of types of cost, we will estimate the social and economic burdens of dengue and Zika virus, detailed by state level, for a 5-year period (at minimum). Results will provide crucial evidence to support policy makers in selecting control interventions, to promote engagement of other sectors of society, and to highlight the immediate need for additional routine data collection that can further improve future analysis and policy making.
EMMERICH DAVIES, Assistant Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
“Teacher Incentives and Socialization”
Co-Investigators: Fernando Luiz Abrucio (Fundacao Getulio Vargas); Leslie Finger (Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences)

On March 5, 2010, thousands of public school teachers descended on Sao Paulo’s Praca da Republica demanding repeal of a performance pay scheme that allowed teachers to earn raises for high scores on a content-area test (the “prova”). In contrast, when the Secretary of Education of Rio de Janeiro announced the implementation of a performance pay scheme, the teachers’ union was practically silent. What determined these different union reactions? This project seeks to answer whether: 1) the values teachers hold are determined by their professional and institutional context; 2) teachers hold the same values as other similar professionals.

SCOTT V. EDWARDS, Professor of Organismic and Evolutionary Biology, Faculty of Arts & Sciences
“Prioritizing Biodiversity of Birds and Butterflies in Cerrado Habitats of Brazil Using Geographic and Phylogenetic Information Systems”
Co-Investigators: Naomi Pierce (Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences); Cristina Miyaki (University of Sao Paulo)

Brazil’s Cerrado habitat comprises a vast area of dry, often flat scrubland and savannah that stretches from central to northeast Brazil. The biodiversity of the Cerrado is impressive, yet little is known of its origins and how this diversity evolved, and the area is being converted to agricultural land and commercial forest, at a faster rate than the Amazon or Atlantic Forest in Brazil. In this project, we propose to prioritize and map the biodiversity of the Cerrado using geographic information systems and evolutionary history. The resulting high-resolution map will show variation in biodiversity of birds and butterflies across the Cerrado, indicating areas of high, medium and low conservation concern, using quantitative indices combining information on the geographic range of individual species, with a measure of its evolutionary uniqueness.

ICHIRO KAWACHI, John L. Loeb and Frances Lehman Loeb Professor of Social Epidemiology, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
“Machine Learning to Estimate Life Expectancy by Race in Brazil: Challenges for A Multi-racial Future”
Co-Investigators: Alexander Chiavegatto (University of Sao Paulo)

Life expectancy by race in Brazil is hard to measure. Because it is a multiracial country with fluid racial boundaries, previous studies suggest that racial classifications as declared by physicians on death certificates do not correspond well with self-reported race, the gold standard to analyze racial inequalities in health. This project aims to use machine learning, a promising new approach in health statistics and epidemiology, to estimate life expectancy by race in Brazil. The project will be the first to correct and quantify racial disparities in life expectancy in Brazil, which can bring new insights to a growing multiracial world.
GIGI LUK, Associate Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
“Early Literacy Prediction and Reading Intervention for Preschoolers from Low-Income Families in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte, Brazil”

Co-Investigators: Cíntia Alves Salgado Azoni (Federal University of Rio Grande do Norte); Nadine Gaab (Boston Children’s Hospital); Charles Haynes (Massachusetts General Hospital)

Early childhood marks the key developmental stage to promote literacy acquisition. Low literacy rates in low-income communities may be related to limited support and resources at school. In particular, teachers’ understanding on child development and pedagogical strategies are essential to promote literacy acquisition. To examine the potential to facilitate young children’s literacy acquisition through classroom pedagogies, this project aims to (1) identify early predictors of literacy development in young children from low-income families in Natal, Rio Grande do Norte; and (2) examine the effects of classroom and technology-based interventions on literacy development longitudinally for children from preschool to second grade.

DANA CHARLES McCoy, Assistant Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
“Assessing the Impact of Socio-Emotional Learning Programming in Brazil”

Co-Investigators: Vladimir Ponczek (Fundacao Getulio Vargas); Cristine Campos de Xavier Pinto (Fundacao Getulio Vargas)

Collaborator: Ana Luiza Raggio Colagrossi (Instituto Vila Educação)

In this two-year research study, a socio-emotional learning (SEL) program, Programa Compasso, is evaluated in 94 primary schools in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. The first goal of the study is to test Programa Compasso’s effectiveness in improving (1) teachers’ wellbeing and (2) children’s socio-emotional and academic outcomes, both immediately after the intervention, as well as one year after initial implementation. In addition to answering questions about whether the program works, the second goal of the study is to explore why, how, and for whom Programa Compasso is effective. In particular, we explore whether the program may provide additional benefits for children from households and neighborhoods facing particularly high levels of adversity. The project is one of the largest SEL studies to date, and is also one of the first to formally examine a comprehensive SEL program outside of the United States. This project, therefore, will inform both the science of child development and educational policy in low-resourced settings.
NICOLAS MENZIES, Assistant Professor of Global Health and Population, Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health
“Identifying Approaches to Reduce Disparities in TB Diagnosis and Care in Brazil”
Co-Investigators: Daniele Maria Pelissari (University of Sao Paulo); Patricia Bartholomay Oliveira (Ministerio da Saude); Ethel Maciel (Universidade Federal do Espirito Santo); Carolina Maia Martins Sales (Universidade Federal do Espirito Santo); Theodore Cohen (Yale University); Marcia Castro (Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health)
Collaborators: Adelmo Bertolde (Universidade Federal de Espirito Santo); Denise Arakaki (Ministerio da Saude); Mauro Sanchez (Federal University of Brasilia)
In 2015 over 80,000 individuals in Brazil were diagnosed with Tuberculosis (TB). In the absence of prompt treatment, these individuals will experience increased risks of mortality and of transmitting the disease to their close contacts. This study will undertake three linked analyses of programmatic data to improve TB control in Brazil, by describing disparities in treatment uptake and quality, and how they are associated with features of TB treatment providers and recipients. The study has been designed to fill evidence gaps identified by the National TB Control Program (NTP), and findings from these analyses will be used directly to propose improvements in TB diagnosis and care.

KATHERINE K. MERSETH, Senior Lecturer on Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
“Teaching Teachers to Teach: Investigating Pedagogies and Practices to Improve Teacher Education in Brazil”
Co-Investigator: Gabriela Miranda Moriconi (Carlos Chagas Foundation)
This project aims to determine high-leverage pedagogies and effective practices and provide information to enhance their adoption by teacher education programs in Brazil. The work begins with a literature review on high-leverage pedagogies and practices adopted in successful teacher education programs around the world. In the second stage, we will conduct case studies of 10 teacher educators in Brazil who use high-leverage pedagogies and practices to train teachers. We seek to understand the practice of these different pedagogies in Brazil and to begin to design programs enabling the spread of these pedagogies across the country. This information will inform subsequent work to implement these practices in teacher education programs across Brazil.

GAUTAM RAO, Assistant Professor of Economics, Faculty of Arts & Sciences
“From Research to Policy: Improving Municipal Policymaking in Brazil”
Co-Investigators: Jonas Hjort (Columbia University); Diana Moreira (Harvard Faculty of Arts and Sciences)
This study will estimate the extent to which effective policymaking in local government in Brazil is constrained by a lack of access to policy research. Leveraging collaboration with a national confederation of Brazilian municipalities, we will provide relevant findings from existing policy research to municipal government officials. Using randomization at the municipality level, we will estimate the effect of this information on policymakers’ beliefs, and on their actual behavior --from low-stakes expressions of support to actual implemented policies. We will relate heterogeneity in responses to government capacity and electoral incentives. We hope to learn how the policy impact of research can be enhanced, and understand barriers to effective policymaking in Brazil.
PAOLA UCCELLI, Professor of Education, Harvard Graduate School of Education
“The Learning for All Project”
Co-Investigators: Felipe Barrera-Osorio (Harvard Graduate School of Education); Sarah Dryden-Peterson (Harvard Graduate School of Education)
Collaborator: Beatriz Cardoso (Laboratório de Educação, Brazil)

The Language for All project is a comparative, multi-disciplinary, and multi-method investigation that seeks to understand: (a) why does so little learning take place systematically in urban public schools serving vulnerable populations around the globe?; and (b) what are promising local and global levers to improve learning for all students in these schools? By contrasting more and less successful—but otherwise comparable—schools within and across developing countries, this project collects data to investigate relevant factors associated with student achievement. Student achievement outcomes are measured in two areas critical for today’s societies: literacy and civic engagement. The focus is on grades 4, 6 and 8, a crucial yet understudied learning period in international comparative studies. The ultimate goal is to provide actionable steps to inform comparative experimental interventions designed for optimal and equitable learning.

GARY URTON, Dumbarton Oaks Professor of Pre-Columbian Studies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences
“The Black Earth and Radial Villages of Acre, Brazil: Explorations of a Continent-Wide Landscape Paradigm”
Co-Investigator: Eduardo Goes Neves (University of Sao Paulo)

This proposal seeks funds for the support of archaeological research, reconnaissance and excavations in the Acre region, western Brazil. The work will be carried out by the co-principal investigators in initial reconnaissance in Acre followed by an archaeological field school, composed of students from Harvard University and Brazilian universities, in 2018-19. The research will address critical issues in ecological studies in Brazil as well as examine cultural practices that unite cultures and societies from the Amazon lowlands to the Andes mountains and coastal desert of western South America.
Faculty Review Committee Members

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**FRANCES HAGOPIAN**
Jorge Paulo Lemann Senior Lecturer on Government and Faculty Co-chair of the Brazil Studies Program at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Faculty of Arts and Sciences

**SCOTT MAINWARING**
Jorge Paulo Lemann Professor of Brazil Studies and the Faculty Co-chair of the Brazil Studies Program at the David Rockefeller Center for Latin American Studies, Harvard Kennedy School of Government

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