Rafael Rocha-Lima Bentes

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EDUCATION

Cornell University, Ithaca, NY (Sep 2025 - Present)
PhD - Applied Economics

University of Chicago, Chicago, IL (Sep 2023 – July 2024)
MA - Economics (MAPSS)
Courses: *Economics of Education (PhD)* **A**, *Causal Inference* **A**, *Introduction to Empirical Analysis II* **A**
Honors: Masters Thesis under Prof. Christina Brown **A**
Thesis Title: *The Labor Market Toll of Air Pollution*
Field: Applied Microeconomics
GPA: 3.86

New York University, College of Arts and Science, New York, NY (Sep 2018 – May 2021)
Cum Laude BA - High Honors in Economics
Courses: Economic Development **A**, *Experimental Economics* **A**, *Microeconomic Analysis* **A**
Honors: Bachelor's Thesis under Prof. William Easterly **A**
Thesis Title: *Maximizing the Gains from Christianity*
Field: Applied Microeconomics
GPA: 3.81

HONORS, RESEARCH AND EXAMS

- **Novakovic & Meng Zhou PhD Scholars Award**
  - Top incoming Cornell Applied Economics PhD student
- **GRE Scores: 169 Quantitative Reasoning, 166 Verbal Reasoning**
  - 93 percentile quantitative, 96 percentile verbal reasoning
- **High Honors in Economics at NYU**
  - A in the Undergraduate Thesis
  - A in all honors classes
  - Overall GPA above 3.65
- **DURF Grant Recipient 2019**
  - 1000 dollar research grant
  - Required IRB Approval and grant application
- **Dean's List at NYU Every Semester**
  - GPA above 3.65 every semester
- **Founder's Day Award Recipient**
  - Top 15% of graduating class (Award required top 30%)

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

***Pre-Doctoral Fellow,* Cornell University,** New York, USA (Jun 2021 – Aug 2023)
Working under Prof. Daniela Scur

- **Economics of Education Project**
  - *Understanding school management with public data: A new measurement approach and applications*
  - Authors Clare Leaver, Renata Lemos, and Daniela Scur
  - Creating plots and tables for publication
  - Finalizing analysis and formatting

- **Labor Market Project**
  - Authors Daniela Scur, and Ian Schmutte
  - Creating a unique mass displacement dataset from 540 million observations
  - Using High-Performance Computer Cluster at UGA
  - Creating plots and Charts for Publication
- **World Management Survey**
  - Producing weekly reports on the statistics of the data collection efforts
  - Producing plots and writing for the managerial report
  - Training analysts for data collection

TEACHING AND RESEARCH MENTORSHIP

Economics Research Mentor, **Ivy Scholars,** Texas, USA (Aug 2024 – Present)

- Guiding students to publish economics papers
- Teaching statistics, econometrics, and economics

Head Economics Tutor, **University Learning Center,** New York, USA (Jan 2020 – May 2021)

- Tutored 15 undergraduate courses in economics, mathematics, and statistics
- Giving 2-hour exam preparation lectures

WRITINGS AND PUBLICATIONS

The Labor Market Toll of Air Pollution by Rafael Bentes
Master's Thesis with advisor Prof. Christina Brown

"This paper follows an instrumental variable strategy using wind currents and meteorological data to evaluate the impact of air pollution on several Brazilian labor market outcomes. I find that a monthly change in one standard deviation of small particulate matter (PM 2.5) leads to a statistically significant fall in the overall labor market size of 7.6%, a reduction in hiring of 3%, a fall in quitting rates of 0.05 percentage points, and a rise in wages of 1.4%. There is no statistically significant change in firing rates. The wage and firing rate results are less reliable since they vary based on specification. Older workers, women, and low-skill employees are more heavily impacted than others.

I confirm this effect by exploiting a 2009 pollution control policy. With a synthetic difference in difference strategy, I find that the policy resulted in statistically significant improvements in air pollution and employment outcomes roughly 3 times the size of my IV estimation over 7 years."

The Heterogeneous Effects of Religiosity by Rafael Bentes, Jamie Marttini-Tibbs, and Joseph Spada
Working Paper

"We employ a Causal Forest as informed by Athey and Wager (2019) to re-examine the results of a large-scale experiment by Bryan et al. (2021) which estimates the impact of protestant preaching on economic outcomes. We find a significant disparity in the Conditional Average Treatment Effect (CATT), with over 25% of participants experiencing negative effects from the experiment. We then conducted a series of heterogeneity analyses and identified significant indicators of intervention success. Female heads of household experienced an increase in income of 1,005.7 Philippine pesos, while those with a male head of household saw an increase of only 226 pesos. Similarly, married heads of households had a CATT of 414.2, several times larger than the 16.1 estimate for non-married heads of households. Interestingly, we also found significant geographical differences in the results. Two of the four cities where the experiment was conducted had negative CATTs, with the overall positive results driven exclusively by Koronadal and Dumaguete."

COMPUTER SKILLS: STATA, R, Python, LaTeX, and Excel

LANGUAGE SKILLS: Portuguese (Native), English (University), Spanish (Proficient), German (Proficient)

INTERESTS: Education, Applied Microeconomics, Environmental Economics, Labor