

Flávio Cunha

Ervin K. Zingler Chair of Economics

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EDUCATION

2007	Ph.D. (Economics), University of Chicago, Chicago, USA.
2000	M.Sc. (Economics), Fundação Getúlio Vargas, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil.
1994	B.A. (Economics), Universidade Federal de Minas Gerais, Belo Horizonte, Brazil.

EMPLOYMENT

July 2019 – present	Ervin K. Zingler Chair of Economics, Rice University.
July 2017 – June 2019	Professor, Rice University.
July 2014 – June 2017	Associate Professor, Rice University.
July 2008 – June 2014	Assistant Professor, University of Pennsylvania.
July 2007 – June 2008	Lecturer, University of Pennsylvania.

ADMINISTRATIVE POSITIONS

July 2024 – present	Director, Center for Economic Mobility at the Kinder Institute.
July 2022 – present	Department Chair, Rice University.
July 2021 – June 2026	Magister, Wiess College.

OTHER POSITIONS

July 2019 – June 2023	Visiting Professor, briq Institute on Behavior and Inequality.
July 2014 – present	HCEO Network Leader (Early Childhood Interventions and Family Inequality).
July 2008 – present	Research Associate, National Bureau of Economic Research.
July 2007 – present	Research Associate, Population Studies Center at the University of Pennsylvania.

EDITORIAL POSITIONS

May 2026 – present	Editor, Econometrics Journal.
July 2021 – present	Associate Editor, Journal of Human Capital.

PUBLISHED AND FORTHCOMING PAPERS

1. Wang, F., Puentes, E., Behrman, J., Cunha, F. (2024). You are What Your Parents Think: Height and Local Reference Points, *Journal of Econometrics*, 243(1-2), 571-590.
2. Ma, Y., Zhang, X., Pappas, L., Rule, A., Gao, Y., Dill, S.-E., Feng, T., Zhang, Y., Wang, H., Cunha, F., and Rozelle, S. (2024). Associations between Urbanization and the Home Language Environment: Evidence from a LENA Study in Rural and Peri-Urban China, *Child Development*, Vol. 95(2), e74-e92.
3. Cunha, F., Gerdes, M., Hu, Q., Nihtianova, S. (2024). Language Environment and Maternal Expectations: An Evaluation of the LENA Start Program, *Journal of Human Capital*, Vol. 18(1), 105-139.
4. Cunha, F., Elo, I., Culhane, J. (2022). Maternal Subjective Expectations about the Technology of Skill Formation Predict Investments in Children One Year Later, *Journal of Econometrics*, Vol. 231, 3-32.
5. Cunha, F., Nielsen, E., Williams, B. (2021). The Econometrics of Early Childhood Human Capital and Investments, *Annual Review of Economics*, Vol. 13, pp. 487-513.

6. Bailey, D., Duncan, G., Cunha, F., Foorman, B., and Yeager, D. (2021). Persistence and Fade-Out of Educational-Intervention Effects: Mechanisms and Potential Solutions, *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, Vol. 21(2), pp. 55-97.
7. Puentes, E., Cunha, F., Adair, L., Borja, J., Hoddinott, J., Malluccio, J., Martorell, R., Stein, A., and Behrman, J. (2016). Early Life Height and Weight Production Functions with Endogenous Energy and Protein Inputs, *Economics & Human Biology*, Vol. 22(2), pp. 65-81.
8. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2016). Decomposing Trends in Inequality in Earnings into Forecastable and Uncertain Components. *Journal of Labor Economics*, Vol. 34(S2), pp. 31-65.
9. Cunha, F. (2014). Subjective Rationality, Parenting Styles, and Investments in Children. In P. Amato, A. Booth, S. McHale, & J. Van Hook (Eds.), *Diverging destinies: Families in an era of increasing inequality*, Chapter 2, pp. 45-55, New York: Springer.
10. Cunha, F., Karahan, F., and Soares, I. (2011). Returns to Skills and the College Premium, *Journal of Money, Credit, and Banking*, Vol. 43(IS1), pp. 39-86.
11. Cunha, F. (2011). Recent Developments in the Estimation of Production Functions of Skills, *Fiscal Studies*, Vol. 32(2), pp. 297-316.
12. Cunha, F., Heckman, J. J., and Schennach, S. M. (2010). Estimating the Technology of Cognitive and Non-Cognitive Skill Formation, *Econometrica*, Vol. 78(3), pp. 883-931.
13. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2010). Investing in our Young People, in A. Reynolds, ed., *Cost-Effective Early Childhood Programs in the First Decade: A Human Capital Integration*, Chapter 18, pp. 381-414, New York: Cambridge University Press.
14. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2009). Human Capital Formation in Childhood and Adolescence, *CESifo Journal for Institutional Comparisons*, Vol. 7(4), pp. 22-28.
15. Cunha, F. (2009). Crossing the Finish Line: A Review Article, *Journal of Human Capital*, Vol. 3(4), pp. 354-378.
16. Araujo A., Cunha, F., Heckman, J. J., Moura, R. (2009). Early Childhood Education and its Importance in Reducing Violence, in F. Giambiagi, R. Henriques, S. Pessoa, and F. Velloso, eds., *Educação Básica no Brasil: Construindo um Futuro Melhor*, Chapter 5, pp. 95-116, Rio de Janeiro: Elsevier, (in Portuguese).
17. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2009). The Economics and Psychology of Inequality and Human Development, *Journal of the European Economic Association*, Vol. 7(2-3), pp. 1-48.
18. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2008). Formulating, Identifying, and Estimating the Technology for the Formation of Skills, *Journal of Human Resources*, Vol. 43(4), pp. 738-782.
19. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2008). A Framework for the Analysis of Inequality, *Macroeconomic Dynamics*, Vol. 12(S2), pp. 315-354.
20. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2007). Identifying and Estimating the Distributions of Ex Post and Ex Ante Returns to Schooling: A Survey of Recent Developments, *Labour Economics*, Vol. 14(6), pp. 870-893.
21. Cunha, F., Heckman, J. J., and Navarro, S. (2007). The Identification and Economic Content of Ordered Choice Models with Stochastic Cutoffs, *International Economic Review*, Vol. 48(4), pp. 1273-1309.
22. Cunha, F., and Heckman, J. J. (2007). The Technology of Skill Formation, *American Economic Review P&P*, Vol. 97(2), pp. 31-47.
23. Cunha, F., Heckman, J. J., Lochner, L., and Masterov, D. (2006). Interpreting the Evidence on Life Cycle Skill Formation, in E. Hanushek and F. Welch, eds., *The Handbook of Economics of Education*, Chapter 12, pp. 697-812; Amsterdam: North Holland.
24. Cunha, F., Heckman, J. J., and Navarro, S. (2006). Counterfactual Analysis of Inequality and Social Mobility, in G. Fields, D. Grusky and S. Morgan eds., *Mobility and Inequality: Frontiers of Research from Sociology and Economics*, Chapter 4, pp. 290-346, Palo Alto: Stanford University Press.
25. Cunha, F., Heckman, J. J., and Navarro, S. (2005). Separating Uncertainty from Heterogeneity in Life Cycle Earnings, *Oxford Economic Papers*, Vol. 57(2), pp. 191-261.

WORKING PAPERS

1. Cunha, F., Lee, J-H, and Nihtianova, S. (2026). Access to Early Intervention: Evidence from the Texas ECI Program.

2. Cunha, F., van der Merwe, A-L., Nihtianova, S., Rood, J. (2026). Exploring the Mechanisms of a Language-Based Parenting Intervention: An Evaluation of a Parent-Directed Language Development Program.
3. Cunha, F., Nihtianova, S., Lee, J-H., Granillo, T. (2026). The Impact of the Parent-Child Education Program (PCEP) on Parental Engagement and School Readiness.
4. Bao, K., Cunha, F., and Selsberg, B. (2026). Dissecting Eligibility Disparities: Misclassification and Heterogeneity in Social Programs.
5. Cunha, F., Hu, Q., Salvati, A., Wolpin, K., and Zeng, R. (2025). An Evaluation of the Alief Independent School District Jump Start Program: Using a Model to Recover Mechanisms from an RCT, (revise and resubmit, second round, Journal of Political Economy).
6. Attanasio, O., Cunha, F., and Jervis, P. (2025). Subjective Parental Beliefs: Their Measurement and Role, NBER Working Paper 26516 (revise and resubmit, American Economic Review).
7. Cunha, F., Hu, Q., Xia, Y., and Zha, N. (2023). Reducing Bullying: Evidence from a Parental Involvement Program on Empathy Education. NBER Working Paper 30827.
8. Cunha, F. and Lee, M. (2023). One Says Goodbye, Another Says Hello: Recruitment and Retention in the ECE Workforce, NBER Working Paper 31869.

PARTNERSHIP RESEARCH PRODUCTS

1. Bouek, J., Rood, J., Nihtianova, S., Cunha, F. (2024). Early Education Registered Apprentice Program, Final Report for the Texas Workforce Commission.
2. Bouek, J., Lee, J., Rood, J., Nithianova, S., Cunha, F. (2024). Shared Services Alliances Program, Final Report for the Texas Workforce Commission.
3. Bouek, J., Cunha, F., Nihtianova, S. (2024). Pre-K Partnership Expansion Initiative, Final Report for the Texas Workforce Commission.

AWARDS

2025	Rice University Faculty Award for Excellence in Research, Teaching, and Service.
2023	Aigner Award for “Maternal subjective expectations about the technology of skill formation predict investments in children one year later,” Journal of Econometrics, 231(1), 3-32, jointly authored with Irma Elo and Jennifer Culhane.
2014	Frisch Medal Award for “Estimating the Technology of Cognitive and Noncognitive Skill Formation,” Econometrica, 78(3), 883-931, jointly authored with James Heckman and Susanne Schennach.

SPONSORED RESEARCH

2025	W. T. Grant Foundation: Evaluation of Houston reVision Program. \$35,000.
2024	Samuels Family Foundation: Evaluation of the AVANCE’s PCEP in the Rio Grande Valley. \$134,000. Episcopal Health Foundation: Serve and Return: Implementation and Evaluation of a Scalable Parenting Program. \$184,625.
2023	Brown Foundation: Interventions to Increase the Language Environment in Home-Based Programs. \$120,000. Powell Foundation: “Early Childhood Interventions in Texas.” \$300,000. Texas Workforce Commission: “Evaluation of the Childcare Business Coaching Program, Year 3.” Direct costs: \$240,000.
2022	Powell Foundation: “Assessing Childcare Programs.” \$200,000. Texas Workforce Commission: “Evaluation of the Child Care Initiatives.” \$1,084,000. Samuels Family Foundation: “Capacity Building to Deliver Parenting Programs in Harris County, TX.” \$100,000.

	Texas Workforce Commission: "Evaluation of the Childcare Business Coaching Program, Year 2." \$600,000.
	Brown Foundation: "Capacity Building to Deliver Parenting Programs in Harris County, TX." \$120,000.
2021	First3Years: "An Assessment of the Early Childhood Landscape in Houston, TX." \$45,000. Texas Workforce Commission: "Evaluation of the Childcare Business Coaching Program." \$483,000.
2020	Samuels Family Foundation: "Can a Scalable Parenting Program Improve Children's Readiness for School? An Evaluation of the LENA Start Program." \$100,000.
2019	Houston Endowment: "Early Childhood Projects in Harris County." \$464,197. Powell Foundation: Program implementation funds for "Can a Scalable Parenting Program Improve Children's Readiness for School? An Evaluation of the LENA Start Program." \$106,600. Smith Richardson Foundation: Program evaluation funds for "Can a Scalable Parenting Program Improve Children's Readiness for School? An Evaluation of the LENA Start Program." Direct costs: \$233,717.
2016	Evaluation of the Alief Independent School District Jumpstart Program, Arnold Foundation, \$499,029, Co-PI with Kenneth I. Wolpin. Evaluation of the Food Scholarship Program at Lone Star College and San Jacinto College, Arnold Foundation, \$476,632, Co-PI with Kenneth I. Wolpin.
2013	Institute for Research on Poverty Grant for "What Job Characteristics do Mothers of Very Young Children Value the Most?" \$17,000.
2012	NIH R01 Grant for the "Philadelphia Human Development Study," Waves 1 to 3. Total direct costs \$2,332,803.
2011	INET Project Grant for "Eliciting Maternal Beliefs about the Technology of Skill Formation." Total direct costs: \$164,745. NICHD-PARC Project Grant. \$20,000.
2008	NICHD-PSC Project Grant. \$20,000.

OTHER ACTIVITIES

2020 – 2024	Member, U.S. National Assessment of Educational Progress Questionnaire Standing Committee.
2016 – 2020	Member, NIH Social Sciences and Population Studies Study Section B.