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# PEER EFFECTS IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF CAPABILITIES IN ADOLESCENCE

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### ABSTRACT

We estimate peer effects in cognitive, non-cognitive and health-related outcomes in a sample of Uruguayan high-school students. Our identification strategy is based on two features of the data: (i) parents are not able to choose their child's class within the school of their choice, and (ii) we observe outcomes over two points in time. We use school and grade fixed effects to avoid confounding peer influence with selection and exploit the longitudinal nature of the data to address Manski's (1993) reflection problem. We find small but statistically significant peer effects in academic grades (cognitive ability), in having shoplifted, being involved in a fight, and self-satisfaction (proxies for non-cognitive abilities) and in symptoms of depression. The size of the peer effects in non-cognitive and cognitive skills are of similar magnitude. We also find that popular students are less likely to be influenced by peers in terms of cognitive outcomes and that peer effects in non-normative behavior (shoplifting) and depression are milder for students with higher levels of household education.

JEL classification: I1; I2; J24.

Keywords: cognitive and non-cognitive ability; peer effects.

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## EFECTOS DE LOS PARES EN EL DESARROLLO DE CAPACIDADES EN LOS ADOLECENTES.

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### RESUMEN

Usando una muestra de adolescentes uruguayos estimamos el impacto de los pares en el desarrollo de comportamientos y percepciones vinculadas a las capacidades cognitivas, no cognitivas y a la salud. Nuestra estrategia de identificación se basa en dos características de los datos: (i) los padres no pueden elegir la clase en la que estará su hijo dentro de la escuela de su elección y (ii) tenemos observaciones sobre comportamientos en dos momentos del tiempo. Con el fin de distinguir la influencia de los pares de efectos de selección, usamos efectos fijos a nivel de escuela y grado. Asimismo, usamos datos longitudinales para atacar el llamado problema de reflexión de Manski (1993). Nuestros resultados indican la presencia de efectos de pares pequeños pero estadísticamente significativos en notas académicas (habilidad cognitiva), la probabilidad de haber hurtado de alguna tienda, la probabilidad de verse envuelto en una pelea y la autosatisfacción (como aproximaciones de habilidad no cognitiva) y síntomas de depresión. Los impactos de los pares en habilidades cognitivas y no cognitivas son de similar magnitud. Encontramos también que los estudiantes más populares son menos influenciados por sus pares en términos de resultados cognitivos y que los efectos de pares en comportamientos no-normativo son más leves para estudiantes con mayores niveles de educación en el hogar.

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