

ANTONIA VAZQUEZ

The University of Texas at Austin
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Education

Ph.D. Candidate in Public Policy, LBJ School of Public Affairs, University of Texas at Austin
2020 to present

M.A. in Economics, Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina
December 2016

B.A. in Business UNICEN, Argentina
July 2015

References

Prof. Mary Evans
LBJ School of Public Affairs, UT Austin
mary.evans@austin.utexas.edu

Prof. Raissa Fabregas
LBJ School of Public Affairs, UT Austin
rfabregas@utexas.edu

Prof. Manuela Angelucci
Department of Economics, UT Austin
mangeluc@utexas.edu

Prof. Eric Chyn
Department of Economics, UT Austin
eric.chyn@austin.utexas.edu

Research Experience

The University of Texas at Austin, LBJ School of Public Affairs. Research Assistant for:

Prof. Eric Chyn, Jan 2024 to May 2025

Prof. Mary Evans, Spring 2023

Prof. Raissa Fabregas, Jun 2021 to Aug 2022

Yale University, MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies
[2019-20 Fox International Fellow](#)

Universidad de San Andrés, Department of Economics, Argentina
Research Assistant for Prof. Rossi, 2017 - 2019
Full-time Research and Teaching Assistant, 2017 - 2019

Publications

[“The Long-Term Effect of Military Conscription on Personality and Beliefs”](#) with G. Ertola Navajas, P. A. Lopez Villalba, M. A. Rossi. *The Review of Economics and Statistics*, 104(1), 2022

Working Papers and Selected Work in Progress

[“Can We Save Failing Schools? Evidence From Los Angeles”](#) (*Job Market Paper*)

Can investing in failing schools help them improve? This paper studies this question using a natural experiment based on a 2017 lawsuit settlement that allocated substantial resources to the

lowest-performing schools in the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD). Using a difference-in-differences design, I compare 50 secondary schools that received an increase of 13.5% on average in their annual budgets for three years, to nearby public, noncharter schools that received no settlement funding. The intervention mandated hiring of additional staff members and allocating of funds for professional development, but allowed discretionary spending on initiatives for high-need students. I find that, in line with the intent of the settlement, schools hired more personnel, including instructional staff such as teachers and counselors and support personnel such as paraprofessionals and school service staff, all effects statistically significant. Settlement schools achieved a 0.75 percentage points reduction in suspension rate relative to unfunded schools, reflecting a marked improvement in performance outcomes. These reductions were particularly notable given that the settlement triggered demographic sorting, with the treated schools losing students overall and shifting toward higher concentrations of economically disadvantaged students and lower Black enrollment. A simple bounding exercise that accounts for demographic sorting indicates that the settlement had meaningful effects on suspension rates, suggesting real improvements on noncognitive dimensions of schooling. Survey evidence suggests that two key mechanisms for lower suspensions were improvements to school climate as reported by staff and students, and enhancements to educators' capacity and disciplinary approaches.

“Who Chooses and Who Benefits? The Design of Public School Choice Systems” with J. Bruhn, C. Campos, and E. Chyn, 2025 (*under review*)

Public school choice has evolved rapidly in the past two decades, as districts roll out new magnet, dual-language, and themed programs to broaden educational opportunity. We use newly collected national data to document that opt-in (voluntary) systems: (i) are the modal design; (ii) are harder to navigate; and (iii) have participation that is concentrated among more advantaged students. These facts suggest a striking inconsistency: districts have largely adopted centralized assignment algorithms to broaden access, but most rely on optional participation that fragments public education. We study the implications of this design choice in the Los Angeles Unified School District, the largest opt-in system in the country, combining two decades of administrative data, randomized lotteries, and quasi-experimental expansions in access. Participation is highly selective, consistent with national evidence, and lottery estimates suggest that the students with the lowest demand for choice schools are the ones who gain the most from attending. Opt-in participation therefore embeds a selection mechanism that screens out high-return students and leaves many effective programs with unused capacity. To evaluate system-level implications, we estimate a structural model linking applications, enrollment, and achievement. Choice schools are vertically differentiated and generate meaningful gains, but the opt-in participation rule—through high application costs and negative selection on gains—prevents these benefits from reaching the students who need them most. Counterfactual simulations make the design stakes clear: information and travel-cost reductions have limited effects, whereas reforms that change the participation architecture eliminate core inefficiencies and deliver the largest district-wide achievement gains. These results underscore that system design—not school effectiveness alone—shapes who benefits from public school choice and to what extent.

“The Psychological Toll of Heat: The Effects of Temperature on Mental Health in Mexico” with Y. Hong. SSRN, 2025.

- First Place Award at 2025 CHEER Research Retreat Poster Session
- Best Student Poster Award at the 2024 Development Economics Workshop

High temperatures have been found to worsen mental health, but evidence from low- and middle-

income countries remains scarce, where adaptive capacity is limited. Using nationwide weekly administrative data covering the entire population and a survey representative of urban Mexico, we estimate heat effects on self-reported well-being, emergency-department visits for mental illness, and suicide using a unified empirical design. Comparing hotter and cooler weeks within the same locations and calendar week, we find that one extra day above 30°C (86°F) increases suicides by 3.2% and emergency department visits for mental illness by 2.4%, and lowers reported mental well-being. The effect sizes exceed comparable U.S. estimates but are attenuated in municipalities served by psychiatrists, suggesting protection through access to care. Gender patterns differ from U.S. studies: women experience larger emergency department visit increases, while suicide effects are concentrated among men. Our results indicate that heat imposes mental health burdens from reduced well-being to clinical demand and mortality, highlighting mental health as a key component of climate damages and a priority for adaptation investments in health systems.

“Immigration Enforcement and Children Maltreatment” with K. Cordova, M. Evans, and K. Rittenhouse, 2024

We study the effects of a major immigration reform on alleged and substantiated maltreatment of Hispanic children using administrative data from child protective services agencies. Secure Communities ties federal immigration enforcement to local law enforcement, effectively increasing the likelihood of deportation for undocumented immigrants who are arrested for a crime. We exploit the staggered rollout of Secure Communities across counties to estimate a dynamic treatment effect model. We find that Secure Communities implementation increased the number of Hispanic children per 1000 found to be victims of child maltreatment as well as the likelihood that maltreatment allegations for Hispanic children are substantiated, consistent with increased average severity of investigated cases.

“The Well-Being Effects of Digital Mental Health Care” with M. Angelucci and R. Fabregas (field analysis in progress)

The rise of AI-powered tools for mental health support has generated enthusiasm about their potential to expand access to mental health support at low cost. Yet important questions remain about effectiveness, user engagement, and whether such tools might exacerbate feelings of isolation or crowd out traditional forms of care. We evaluate the effects of an AI-powered digital mental health app in a randomized controlled trial among women experiencing at least some mild psychological distress in Mexico. Access to the app significantly improved mental health outcomes during the 8-week study period: it reduced symptoms of anxiety, depression, and stress; improved subjective well-being, feelings of isolation, and sleep quality; and increased the prevalence of healthful behaviors. In addition, treated respondents were more likely to seek traditional psychotherapy. Engagement with the app was initially high, though use declined over time. However, effects persisted, potentially consistent with "as-needed" use. Our findings suggest that scalable digital tools can improve mental health outcomes, benefiting both individuals with limited sources of support and those who already have access to other forms of care.

“Enhancing Parental Mental Health and Children’s Outcomes Through a Low-Cost Scalable Program: Evidence from Mexico” with M. Angelucci, D. Bennett, and R. Fabregas (field activities in progress)

Research Grants

External

2025 Arnold Ventures, Strengthening Evidence, with J. Bruhn, C. Campos, and E. Chyn (\$280,116)
2024 GEM Incubation Fund, with M. Angelucci, D. Bennett, and R. Fabregas (\$20,000)
2024 Spencer Foundation, Small Education Grant, with M. Angelucci, D. Bennett, and R. Fabregas (\$49,600)
2024 The Agency Fund, with M. Angelucci and R. Fabregas (\$160,000)
2024 Humane Studies Fellowship. Institute for Human Studies (\$5,000)
2023 J-PAL North America, with M. Angelucci and R. Fabregas (\$29,811)
2023 Expense Support Award. Institute for Human Studies. (\$5,000)

Internal

2025 Moritz Center for Societal Impact, UT Austin with M. Angelucci, D. Bennett, and R. Fabregas (\$50,000)
2024 Moritz Center for Societal Impact, UT Austin with M. Angelucci, D. Bennett, and R. Fabregas (\$25,000)
2023 Interdisciplinary Research in Latin American Studies Seed Grant, LLILAS, the University of Texas at Austin, with M. Angelucci, D. Bennett, and R. Fabregas (\$9,910)
2023 OVPR Research & Creative Grant. The University of Texas at Austin, with M. Angelucci, D. Bennett, and R. Fabregas (\$9,875)
2023 PRC Primary Seed Grant. Population Research Center, The University of Texas at Austin, with R. Fabregas (\$19,700)

Fellowships and Awards

2025-26 University Graduate Continuing Fellowship. The University of Texas at Austin
2024 Institute for Humane Studies Junior Fellowship
2023 “Summer School in Economics of Migration” organized by the Global Migration Center at UC Davis and Alianza CDMX
2023 Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) Summer Fellowship. The University of Texas at Austin
2021 Office of Graduate Studies (OGS) Recruitment Fellowship. The University of Texas at Austin
2020-2022 LBJ School Fellowship. The University of Texas at Austin
2019-20 Fox International Fellowship. Yale University, MacMillan Center for International and Area Studies

Conferences and Presentations

2025: AI & the Future of Human Capital in the Global South Symposium, LLILAS Seed Grants Initiative, IHS Winter Graduate Conference
2024: IHS Junior Fellowship Convening; IHS Summer Graduate Conference; Texas Development Workshop (poster)
2023: Institute for Human Studies- Downstream Effects of Covid-19 Restrictions on Immigration
2022: APPAM Fall Conference
2021: The University of Texas at Austin- LBJ Public Affairs Colloquium
2020: 11th Bolivian Conference on Development Economics; LV Annual Meeting “Asociación Argentina de Economía Política”

2019: Yale University Labor/Public Economics Prospectus Workshop; Fox International Fellowship Seminar

Referee for

Applied Economics, APPAM Conference, Journal of Comparative Economics, Journal of Transport Geography, Asociación Argentina de Economía Política

Teaching Experience

University of Texas at Austin, LBJ School of Public Affairs

Teaching Assistant, graduate level

Impact Evaluation Methods in Development, Spring 2022, Spring 2023

Applied Microeconomics for Policy Analysis, Fall 2022, Fall 2023

Summer Quantitative Preparation, Summer 2022

Universidad de San Andrés, Argentina

Teaching Assistant, undergraduate level

Economic History: Spring 2019, Spring 2018

Microeconomics: Spring 2019, Spring 2018, Fall 2018, Spring 2017

Economics 1: Spring 2017, Fall 2017, Fall 2018

Academic Service

Student representative on [APPAM Policy Council](#), 2025-2026

Member of [APPAM Student Activities Committee](#), 2023 (member), 2024 (chair), 2025 (member)

Co-organizer and reviewer for LBJ Policy Research Workshop, 2023

PhD Advisory Board cohort representative, LBJ School of Public Affairs, mid 2021 to mid 2025

Language

Spanish (Native); English (Fluent); Italian (A2)

Professional Memberships

APPAM Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management

Affiliations

Fellow, Teresa Lozano Long Institute of Latin American Studies

Citizenship

Argentinian and Italian

Last update: December, 2025