

SARA BENETTI

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University of British Columbia ◇ Vancouver School of Economics

6000 Iona Drive, Vancouver, BC V6T 1L4, Canada

EDUCATION

Vancouver School of Economics, University of British Columbia
Ph.D. in Economics

Vancouver BC, Canada
2020–2026 (expected)

Bocconi University
M.Sc. in Management (*summa cum laude*)
B.Sc. in Economics and Social Sciences

Milan, Italy
2012–2015
2007–2010

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Economic History, Political Economy, Comparative Development

REFERENCES

Nathan Nunn (Chair)
University of British Columbia
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Mauricio Drelichman
University of British Columbia
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Patrick Francois
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PLACEMENT DIRECTOR

Raffaele Saggio
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JOB MARKET PAPER

[The Social Consequences of Technological Change: Evidence from U.S. Electrification and Immigrant Labor](#)

This paper examines how technological change in production affects social cohesion in ethnically diverse societies. I study the early expansion of the electric grid in the United States between 1900 and 1940, when electrification transformed manufacturing and large-scale immigration reshaped the labor force. Using newly digitized maps of the U.S. high-voltage transmission network linked to full-count census data, I exploit the staggered rollout of electrification across counties to estimate its causal effects on the integration of immigrant and native workers. I find that electrification increased the share of immigrant workers in manufacturing and reduced ethnic segregation across occupations within industries. Electrified industries became more diverse and more integrated, especially among groups culturally distant from the native-born population. These effects extend beyond the workplace. Electrification is associated with lower residential segregation among manufacturing workers and a partial attenuation of the negative relationship between immigrant presence and local public service provision. Together, these results suggest that electrification fostered greater social cohesion in communities where manufacturing played a central role. Finally, I find weak evidence of effects on cultural assimilation. Intermarriage between immigrants and natives rose modestly in electrified counties, but naming patterns among immigrant families did not change systematically. Overall, I find that, in this context, technological change reshaped the social fabric by promoting integration both at work and within local communities.

[\[Link to PAPER\]](#)

WORK IN PROGRESS

[Our Crowd? Intragroup Friction and Assimilation in Jewish Migration to the U.S.](#)

(with Elijah Locke and Ross Mattheis)

This paper studies how frictions within ethnic groups shape immigrant assimilation, focusing on historical Jewish migration to the United States, between 1880 and 1920. We examine the interaction between earlier German Jews and later Russian Jewish arrivals, who differed sharply in culture, education, and social status. To conduct this analysis, we develop a new surname-based method to identify Jewish individuals in the full-count U.S. censuses, which do not record religion. Our approach combines surnames of Yiddish speakers in the 1920 and 1930 censuses with over 850,000 Jewish burial records and digitized estimates of the Jewish population from historical sources to define distinctively Jewish surnames across states and decades. This new method allows us to identify in the census approximately one in four American Jews between 1900 and 1920. We also digitize and geolocate more than 7,000 Jewish institutions across the United States from the American Jewish Yearbooks. Linking these data to two Jewish-led relocation programs that resettled Eastern European Jews from

New York to smaller towns, we estimate their effects on incumbent Jews and local institutions. Treated locations saw out-migration of incumbent Jews but an expansion of mutual aid and cultural organizations. The results show that assimilation is shaped not only by native-immigrant relations but also by internal divisions within ethnic groups.

Immigrant Workers' Mobility in Response to Negative Shocks: Evidence from the Great Depression

This study examines how immigrant workers respond to negative economic shocks, focusing on geographic and occupational mobility during the Great Depression. Using individual-level data that links foreign-born individuals across the 1920 and 1930 U.S. censuses, I analyze differences by cohorts, defined by the years of residence in the United States. Immigrants who had lived in the country for more than 25 years by 1920 serve as the reference group, as they are likely more assimilated and thus closer to natives in their labor market behavior. Preliminary results show that recent immigrants were highly mobile in response to the crisis. All immigrant groups responded to the Depression with geographic mobility, though the effect was strongest among those with shorter residence in the United States. Immigrants who had been in the country for fewer years were more likely to move to a different state or county and to shift from rural to urban areas between 1920 and 1930. Among those with less than ten years in the U.S. in 1920, employment responses went further: conditional on being employed, these recent immigrants were more likely to change industry, sector, or occupation compared to the previous decade. Across all immigrant groups, however, employment after the Depression was more often in lower-scoring occupations. This downward occupational mobility affected immigrants regardless of their time in the U.S., though the effect was strongest among the most recent arrivals.

Historical Conflict and Social Preferences: Evidence from Europe

(with Felipe Valencia Caicedo)

This project studies the long-run impact of historical conflict on social preferences in Europe. We geolocate nearly 2,800 battles between 1 and 1900 CE and manually classify them by actors involved, prevailing party, type of violence, motives, and intensity. Combining this information with individual-level measures from the Global Preference Survey, we investigate how variation in historical conflict exposure across regions is related to patience, risk-taking, prosociality, and trust today. We find that regions historically more exposed to conflict exhibit greater patience but lower prosociality and risk-taking, with the effects being strongest for intense conflicts, such as sieges, retaliatory battles, and territorial conquests. These results suggest that repeated exposure to conflict becomes embedded in local collective memory and continues to shape cultural traits and individual behavior over the long run, contributing to broader discussions on the cultural and psychological legacy of conflict.

Religious Violence in Africa

(with Siwan Anderson and Daniel Jaramillo Calderon)

Conflict remains a persistent feature of Africa's recent history. While often linked to ethnic divisions and resource disputes, anecdotal evidence suggests that religion also plays an important role. Yet, formally identifying the role of religion is difficult, as religious divisions frequently overlap with ethnic cleavages, historical rivalries, and socioeconomic inequalities. To better understand the religious component of violence, this project uses the ACLED database, which records about 350,000 geolocated violent events across 58 African countries between 1997 and 2023. We identify religiously related events in two ways: (i) by manually classifying the more than 18,000 actors listed in ACLED, defining as "religious" those whose names or secondary sources indicate a religious affiliation; and (ii) by analyzing event descriptions, which often provide additional clues about religious dimensions beyond actor labels. To capture this, we manually label a random sample of 5,300 event descriptions and construct a list of religious keywords. We then apply this keyword list to the full database, classifying an event as religious if its description contains at least one of these terms. Combining both approaches, we find that 24.1% of violent events reported in Africa between 1997 and 2023 have a religious dimension. Of these, 69.35% involve at least one actor related to Jihad, while only 3.11% involve a political actor with a religious dimension. Only a small share, 3.70%, involves two religious actors; within this, in just over half of these cases (52.11%), both actors belong to the same religion (intra-faith violence).

Assimilation Policy and Indigenous Political Institutions: Evidence from American Indian Constitutions

(with Christian Maruthiah and Carla Srebot)

This project studies how assimilation policies targeting American Indians in the late 19th and early 20th centuries affected individualism, ethnic identity, and attitudes towards the U.S. government, as measured through the clauses and language used in over 350 newly digitised tribal constitutions and charters. We first demonstrate that there is meaningful variation in the types of clauses (e.g., blood quantum or residence restrictions on membership) and language (e.g., emphasising the "tribe" or the "individual") across constitutions. We then examine how tribal characteristics and historical exposure to government policies – such as Indian schools and land allotment – affected constitutional features. Finally, we employ natural language processing techniques to measure the extent to which these characteristics affected trust and cooperation with the U.S. government during the Indian New Deal, as measured by semantic similarity between constitutions written

in the 1930s and a ‘model’ constitution distributed by the Indian Office at the time. This project contributes to our understanding of how assimilation policies influenced Indigenous institutional development and political culture, highlighting the long-term effects of government intervention on tribal sovereignty, collective identity, and intergovernmental relations in American Indian Nations.

PRE-DOCTORAL WORK

Bank Concentration, Urban Development and Firm Access to Credit in Latin America

(with Mahsa Memarian, Sofia Rodriguez Chaves, and Alberto Trejos)

Finance Research Letters, June 2023, 103713 [Link to PAPER]

International Negotiation Prototypes: The Impact of Culture

(with Enrique Ogliastri and Carlos Quintanilla)

Journal of Business Research, Volume 159, April 2023, 113712 [Link to PAPER]

Distributive/Integrative Negotiation Strategies in Cross-Cultural Contexts: A Comparative Study of the USA and Italy

(with Andrea Caputo and Enrique Ogliastri)

Journal of Management & Organization, Volume 27, Issue 4, July 2021 [Link to PAPER]

The Effect of Urban Density on Stock Returns: Evidence from Satellite Imagery and Firms in the United States

(with Mahsa Memarian and Carles Vergara)

Revise & Resubmit, Journal of Economics and Finance

Extreme Weather Shocks, Global Value Chain Participation, and Resilience of MNE Suppliers

(with Luciano Cirivegna and Stephanie Wang)

Submitted

PRESENTATIONS

Conferences and Invited Presentations [* scheduled]

ASSA Annual Meeting (Philadelphia)*	2026
ASREC Conference (George Mason University); ASREC Europe Conference (University of Copenhagen); CAE Annual Meetings (UQAM); CESifo Venice Summer Institute – Poverty, Persistence and Policy; CNEH Conference (Université de Montréal); EHA Annual Meeting (Philadelphia) [poster]; NBER – Linking Historical Data Sources for Small Populations; NBER Summer Institute – Development of the American Economy [poster]; UEA North American Meeting (UQAM); University of Maryland, Baltimore County; Virtual Economic History Workshop	2025
Max Planck Summer School – Political Economy of Conflict and Redistribution (Berlin)	2024
IACM Conference (Dublin)	2019

Lunch/Brownbag Seminars, University of British Columbia

Development/Political Economy	2023–2025
Spatial/Urban/Trade	2023
TRIOS (Trade/Regional/IO/Spatial)	2025
Econometrics	2025

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Vancouver School of Economics, University of British Columbia	Vancouver BC, Canada
<i>Teaching Assistant, Undergraduate</i>	
Introduction to International Trade (3 rd year)	Spring 2022, 2025; Summer 2023, 2024, 2025
Principles of Microeconomics (1 st year)	Fall 2021
School of Public Policy and Global Affairs, University of British Columbia	Vancouver BC, Canada
<i>Teaching Assistant, Master of Public Policy and Administration (MPPA)</i>	
Economics for Public Policy (Micro and Macro, Reduced to one course)	Fall 2024
Economics for Public Policy (Micro and Macro, Two-course sequence)	2022–2023, 2023–2024

INCAE Business School

Alajuela, Costa Rica

*Instructor*Economic Analysis: Microeconomics (*Master in Management; Spanish*) 2020Quantitative Methods (*Pre-MBA Bootcamp; English*) 2018*Teaching Assistant*Macroeconomics and Global Perspective (*Specialization in Finance; Spanish; Online*) 2021–2025Global Economy (*Global MBA; English*) 2018–2020Economic Analysis: Macroeconomics (*MBA, EMBA; English and Spanish*) 2018–2020Sustainability Management (*MBA; Spanish*) 2018**RELEVANT EXPERIENCE****Research Assistant** for Donn. Feir, Maggie Jones, and Angela Redish 2023–2025*Indigenous Wealth in the Early 20th Century in the United States***Senior Researcher**, INCAE Business School (Alajuela, Costa Rica) 2017–2020*Supervisor: Alberto Trejos***Research Intern**, Cattolica Insurance Group (Verona, Italy) 2012*Compliance and Economic Analysis, Risk Management Department***Research Intern**, Government of South Australia (Adelaide SA, Australia) 2011*Research Unit, Department of the Premier and Cabinet; Supervisor: Nicola Sasanelli***HONORS AND AWARDS***Cambridge University Press Dissertation Fellowship*, Economic History Association 2025–2026*Stone Ph.D. Fellowship*, Stone Centre on Wealth and Income Inequality 2025–2026*President's Academic Excellence Initiative Ph.D. Award*, University of British Columbia 2020–2026*Faculty of Arts Graduate Award*, University of British Columbia 2020–2025*International Tuition Award*, University of British Columbia 2020–2025*Faculty Contribution Fellowship*, University of British Columbia 2022–2023*Special UBC Graduate Scholarship – CIDER Award*, University of British Columbia 2020–2021*George Logan Young Faculty Development Fund*, INCAE Business School 2019–2020**RESEARCH GRANTS***Small Grants in Innovative Data*, Centre for Innovative Data in Economics Research (CAD 22,500) 2023**ACADEMIC SERVICE****Referee**

Quarterly Journal of Economics

Discussant

Canadian Economic Association Annual Meetings (2025); Urban Economics Association North American Meeting (2025)

OrganizerDevelopment/Political Economy Lunch Seminar, University of British Columbia *Spring 2023–Fall 2024*

Economic History Ph.D. Lunch with Seminar Speakers, University of British Columbia 2023, 2025

Member

VSE Women in Economics, University of British Columbia 2022–2026

Accreditation Task Force, INCAE Business School 2018–2020

Graduate Mentor

Women in Economics and Policy, University of British Columbia 2020–2021

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Visiting Student

MBA, INCAE Business School (Alajuela, Costa Rica)

2013–2014

Languages

English (proficient); Italian (native); Spanish (proficient); German (basic); French (basic)

Nationality

Italian

Canadian Permanent Residency