

Valentina Duque

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Department of Public Administration and Policy

School of Public Affairs

American University

Dear search committee members,

I am writing to apply for the position of Assistant Professor in the School of Public Affairs at the Department of Public Administration and Policy advertised at *AEA's JOE*. I currently work as an Assistant Professor at the School of Economics at the University of Sydney. I received my PhD in Social Policy from Columbia University in May 2015 and was later a Postdoctoral Fellow at the University of Michigan from 2015 to 2018.

I am an applied microeconomist with a particular focus on social welfare policy. My research analyzes the causes and consequences of disparities in children's human capital that induce inequality in health and socioeconomic outcomes later in life, preventing inter-generational mobility. My work has examined the relationships of inequities in multiple dimensions—health, education, labor markets, and environments—at various stages of the life cycle and across rich and poor countries. I use a variety of data sources and empirical methods to provide causal evidence that help guide anti-poverty policies aimed at improving the health and well-being of children and vulnerable populations.

My work is organized around three broad areas. The first examines the role of social policies on long-run socioeconomic outcomes. In separate studies, I investigate how key anti-poverty policies that

have shown promising short-run impacts on children's well-being, can lead to sustained gains on their future socioeconomic outcomes and on the outcomes of subsequent generations. Three examples include: i) early-childhood education, ii) conditional cash transfers, and iii), community health centers. Across different contexts and historical periods, and relying on different data sources and methodological approaches, I show that these policies can largely reduce early-life disparities and help break the intergenerational transmission of disadvantage, providing additional justification for programs aimed at improving children's conditions.

A second research area focuses on studying the effects of pervasive societal factors that affect millions of children and families across the world: economic instability, pollution, and community violence – on children's physical and mental health, educational outcomes, and parental investments. The findings of my work show that: early-stages constitute critical periods of human development; that adversities in these stages have long-lasting effects which can be traced up to old age; and that the gaps between adversely affected and unaffected children widen over time.

My third and most recent line of work examines the role of neighborhoods where children live in shaping their socioeconomic trajectories. Using a unique and unprecedented public housing experiment in a developing country, in which over 20,000 housing units were randomized and given to recipients for free (i.e., families became the actual owners of the property), I examine the effects of the program on children's outcomes. I show that receiving free public housing increases children's high school graduation and years of schooling, and that these effects can be attributed to the better schools attended by lottery winners. These results provide justification for housing assistance to low-income households with young children.

My teaching experience includes courses on Program Evaluation and Applied Microeconometrics, taught at the graduate and undergraduate level at the University of Sydney. I have also mentored and supervised a wide range of students across Honours, masters, and PhD programs. At American

University, I would be thrilled to teach any course related to social welfare policy (domestic or international) at any level, however, I'm also open to teach other courses based on the School's needs.

Lastly, I would like to add that I am extremely interested in applying to the position at American University for two reasons. First, the School of Public Affairs is composed of leading scholars across the interdisciplinary fields that my research relates to. For instance, in the areas of early childhood and education, I would be very excited in interacting with Associate Prof. Taryn Morrissey and Seth Gershenson and with Prof. Dave Marcott; in the area of inequality, health, and access to health services with Prof. Erdal Tekin and Assistant Prof. Aparna Soni; and in the topic of environmental exposures and human capital outcomes, with Assistant Prof. Claudia Persico. Being in such an active environment would be highly beneficial for my research and I am sure would also lead to potential collaborations. Second, I am particularly interested in the DC area because of personal preferences. DC is not only the world's epicenter of policy debate, providing great advantages for my career, but it also helps me solve the issue of joint location problem with my husband.

I have included in my application my CV and three research papers. My three letters of recommendation from Prof. Janet Currie, Doug Almond, and Deborah Cobb-Clark will arrive shortly via *Interfolio*. I thank you for your consideration and look forward to hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Valentina Duque