

# Briana Ballis

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**EMPLOYMENT** Assistant Professor of Economics, University of California, Merced, 2020-present

**EDUCATION** Ph.D. Economics, University of California, Davis, 2020.  
M.A. Economics, Boston University, 2011.  
B.A. Economics, Boston University, 2011.

**RESEARCH INTERESTS** Labor Economics, Public Finance, Economics of Education.

**PUBLICATIONS** **The Long-Run Impacts of Special Education**, *American Economic Journal: Economic Policy* Volume 13 (4), 2021, pages 72-111. (with Katelyn Heath)

**WORKING PAPERS** **Does Peer Motivation Influence Schooling Investments? Evidence from DACA Revisions Requested**, *Journal of Human Resources*

Despite the significant influence that peer motivation is likely to have on educational investments during high school, it is difficult to test empirically since exogenous changes in peer motivation are rarely observed. In this paper, I focus on the 2012 introduction of Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) to study a setting in which peer motivation changed sharply for a subset of high school students. DACA significantly increased the returns to schooling for undocumented youth, while leaving the returns for their peers unchanged. I find that DACA induced undocumented youth to invest more in their education, which also had positive spillover effects on ineligible students (those born in the US) who attended high school with high concentrations of DACA-eligible youth.

**Direct and Spillover Effects of Limiting Minority Student Access to Special Education** (with Katelyn Heath)

Black students are about one and a half times more likely to be receiving special education (SpEd) services relative to white students. While there is significant concern that this implies some black students are inappropriately placed in SpEd, the long-run impacts of the disproportionate representation of minority students in SpEd remains unclear. This paper uses administrative data from Texas to examine the long-run effects of policies aimed at reducing SpEd classification gaps across racial groups (i.e. disproportionality remediation). Our research design exploits variation in SpEd placement for minority students driven by a state policy that capped district-level minority disproportionality. We find that capping black disproportionality led to small gains in high school completion and college attainment for black students in special and general education. Overall, our results suggest that reductions in SpEd misclassification among black students may serve to reduce gaps in later-life success across race.

**Loss and Risk Preferences and Exam Performance Revisions Requested** *Economics of Education Review* (with Lester Lusher and Paco Martorell)

We investigate how the framing of the point structure on an exam can influence test-taking effort and performance. Under traditional choice theory, students may choose to skip more questions if the framing induces loss averse preferences. We conduct a large-scale online experiment and a classroom experiment to instead find that loss-framed exams lead to less skipping. Further evidence finds that

students induced greater effort, as measured through several proxies, under loss frames, and this greater effort led them to answer more questions. Consequently, student performance was improved under loss frames. We find little evidence of a gender differential response to frames.

## WORKS IN PROGRESS

**How Does Infant Health Impact Educational Outcomes? Evidence from Texas Medicaid**  
**How do Students and Schools Respond to Early Signals of College Readiness** (with Minahil Asim, Scott Carrell, Michal Kurlaender, and Paco Martorell)  
**Do the Health Effects of WIC transmit to Children's Academic Achievement?** (with Marianne Page)  
**The Effects of Special Education on Crime** (with Katlyn Heath)  
**Diversity in Schools: Immigrants and the Short-Run Academic and Long-Run Outcomes of US-Born Students** (with Derek Rury and Che Sun)

## OTHER PUBLICATIONS

**College Readiness in the Era of Common Core** (with Michal Kurlaender, Sherrie Reed, Kramer Cohen), *The Getting Down to Facts II Project Technical Report*, 2018.  
**Geographic Adjustment of Medicare Payments for the Work of Physicians and Other Health Professionals** (with Kathleen Dalton, Gregory Pope and Walter Adamache), *Report for the Medicare Payment Advisory Commission*, 2013.

## POLICY WRITINGS

**Special education: Beneficial to many, harmful to others** (with Katelyn Heath), *Brookings Institution Brown Center Chalkboard*, 2021.

## TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Instructor, Undergraduate Econometrics (UC Merced) Spring 2022  
Instructor, Graduate Econometrics II (UC Merced) Spring 2021, Spring 2022  
Teaching Assistant, Public Economics (UC Davis) Spring 2016  
Teaching Assistant, Labor Economics (UC Davis) Winter 2016  
Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Microeconomics (UC Davis) Winter 2015, Spring 2015, Fall 2015  
Teaching Assistant, Introduction to Macroeconomics (UC Davis) Fall 2014

## RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Research Assistant to S. Carrell, M. Kurlaender, & P. Martorell (UC Davis) March 2016 -June 2018  
Research Assistant to P. Martorell (UC Davis) July 2015 -March 2016  
Economist 1 (RTI International) October 2011 -July 2014  
Research Assistant to C. Olivetti (Boston University) 2011

## EXTERNAL AWARDS

American Educational Research Association (AERA) Dissertation Award, \$11,500 (2019-2020)  
National Science Foundation Doctoral Dissertation Research Improvement Grant, \$19,625 (2018-2019)  
Disability Research Consortium Dissertation Fellowship (SSA via Mathematica), \$28,000 (2018-2019)  
Roe L. Johns Travel Grant, (AEFP), \$250 (2018)

## INTERNAL AWARDS - UC DAVIS

Russell J. and Dorothy Bilinski Dissertation Fellowship, \$30,000 (2019-2020)  
Institute for Social Sciences Summer Research Support Award, \$750 (2019)  
Graduate Student Travel Award, \$1,000 (2019)  
Institute for Social Sciences Summer Research Support Award, \$500 (2018)  
Institute for Social Sciences Summer Research Support Award, \$800 (2017)  
Non-Resident Tuition Remission, (2014-2015)

## PRESENTATIONS (including upcoming)

**2022:** Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) 43rd Annual Conference, Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) 47th annual conference

**2021:** American Economics Association (AEA) Annual Meeting; San Diego State University; Washington & Lee University; Northeast Labor Symposium for Early Career Economists (NLS-E Princeton); Western Economic Association International (WEAI) 96th annual conference; 14th Annual All-California Labor Economics Conference; National Tax Association 114th Annual Conference

**2020:** Florida State University; Louisiana State University; Tulane University; University of California, Merced; University of Delaware; University of Zurich; 5th IZA Workshop: The Economics of Education; Southern Economic Association (SEA) 90th annual conference; University of South Carolina

**2019:** Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) 44th annual conference; Western Economic Association International (WEAI) 94th annual conference; Claremont McKenna - Southern California Conference in Applied Microeconomics (SoCCAM); UC Davis Alumni conference (poster), Social Security Administration Research Consortium Meeting 21st annual conference (poster); University of Hawaii at Manoa; All California Labor Economics Conference (poster); Southern Methodist University; Center for Poverty Research Fall Graduate Student Retreat (UC Davis); Empirics and Methods in Economics Conference (EMCON); UC Davis Microeconomic Theory Brownbag; University of Nevada, Reno; Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) 41st Annual Conference; Fall Migration Research Cluster Workshop (UC Davis); Southern Economic Association (SEA) 89th annual conference

**2018:** Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP) 43rd annual conference, UC Davis Alumni Conference (poster), Western Economic Association International (WEAI) 93rd annual conference; Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management (APPAM) 40th Annual Conference

**2017:** UC Davis Microeconomic Theory Brownbag

### **Affiliations**

California Education Lab

UC Davis Center for Poverty Research

Human Capital and Economic Opportunity Global Working Group (HCEO): Inequality: Measurement, Interpretation & Policy

### **Professional Activities**

**Referee:** Journal of Human Resources, Economics of Education Review, Education Finance and Policy, Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis; Regional Science and Urban Economics; Economic Analysis and Policy; Demography; Economics and Human Biology

Updated: April, 2022