Tara P. Buss, Ph.D.

510.788.0790 | tarabuss@gmail.com

PROFILE

Dedicated social science researcher with 8+ years of experience using innovative surveys to understand voting and civic participation. Adept at leading projects successfully from conceptualization to data collection, analysis, and dissemination. Expert in political behavior, public security, and cognitive biases.

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Political Science
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY | BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA | 2020

Master of Arts, Political Science
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY | BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA | 2010

Bachelor of Arts, Political Science; Latin American Studies
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO | LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA | 2008

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Doctoral Researcher
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY | BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA | 2013 - 2020

Dissertation: "The Specter of Violence: Perceptions of Violence and Political Behavior in Mexico"

- Combined multiple methodologies to understand perceptions of violence and the effects on democratic engagement, generating a novel finding that overestimation of violence led to suppressed voter turnout, increased indecision, and support for unorthodox policies.
- Executed and analyzed an original survey of 17,500 Mexican voters which combined traditional questions with 7 different experimental designs to reveal underlying cognitive biases and perceptions.
- Conducted 15+ qualitative, in-depth interviews with politicians, NGO leaders, and policy makers.
- Developed a theoretical framework for understanding relevant patterns of cognitive biases and misperceptions grounded in sociology, evolutionary psychology, and behavioral economics.
- Presented key findings in engaging and accessible ways to academics via conference papers and research workshops and to non-technical audiences via public talks, guest lectures, and blog posts.

Research Director
INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT | MEXICO CITY, MEXICO | FEBRUARY - JUNE 2018

- Designed, executed, and analyzed a 40,000 person national survey combining quantitative, experimental, and qualitative methodologies to evaluate messaging strategies and assess political preferences and motivations.
- Ran national daily tracking polls which totaled 30,000+ respondents across three months.
- Trained and supervised a diverse six person team, multiple subcontractors, and 200+ field organizers. Developed the team performance indicators and oversaw a 1 million USD budget.
- Translated complex findings into user friendly material and provided data-driven strategy recommendations via detailed written reports, compelling slide presentations, and vivid data visualizations.

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Lecturer, Political Science
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY | BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA | SUMMER 2016 AND 2017

- Wrote and delivered 100+ hours of engaging lectures and PowerPoint presentations.
- Supervised teaching assistants, guiding their interaction with students and overseeing discussions.
- Revised and taught Introduction to Comparative Politics with a focus on varieties of democracies. Designed and taught the university's first ever course on Mexican Politics.

Research Assistant
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, BERKELEY | BERKELEY, CALIFORNIA | 2009 - 2012

- Collected data on consumer subsidies and health, and education expenditures globally for a paper on the entrenchment of utility subsidies in Argentina.
- Edited books, texts, and peer reviewed articles on qualitative and multi-method research tools.

VOLUNTEER SERVICE

Chair of Voter Outreach
DEMOCRATS ABROAD MEXICO CITY | MEXICO CITY, MEXICO | 2020 - PRESENT

- Planned and executed a multi-faceted non-partisan plan to boost voter registration for the 2020 election which resulted in a 130% increase in registration from 2016.
- Built and maintained a comprehensive database of policies for voting from abroad for each state and territory, including deadlines and accepted modes of submission for registration and ballot returns, forms of ID accepted, rules governing third party ballot handling, and reported issues with local election offices.
- Lead outreach to voters who face institutional and structural obstacles to participation including those who are not English-dominant, the children of deportees, and those with limited economic resources.

Voting Assistance Officer
FEDERAL VOTING ASSISTANCE PROGRAM | MEXICO CITY, MEXICO | 2020 - PRESENT

Adviser, Board of Advisers
WIZDEM CIVIC-TECH COMPANY | MEXICO CITY, MEXICO | 2019 - 2020

Alumni Mentor to Advanced Political Science Undergraduates
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO | LA JOLLA, CALIFORNIA | 2018 - 2020

RELEVANT SKILLS

- Quantitative research, including advanced statistical analysis and traditional and experimental survey instrument design
- Qualitative and multi-method research, including conceptualization, in-depth interviewing, and process tracing

- Stata (Statistical Software)
- Qualtrics (Survey Software)
- Canva (Graphic Design Platform)
- Microsoft Office
- Google Workspace (G-Suite)
- Proficient Spanish