Samantha Cervantes

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EDUCATION

Ph.D., Public Administration 2022 – 2027 (expected)
Maxwell School, Syracuse University
Fields: Urban Economics and Education Policy
Advisors: Amy Ellen Schwartz and Michah W. Rothbart

M.S., Applied Economics with Honors 2022
Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Mexico City, Mexico

Certificate in Applied Statistics 2019
Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Mexico City, Mexico

B.A., Business Administration, minor in Political Science 2018
Instituto Tecnológico Autónomo de México (ITAM), Mexico City, Mexico

RESEARCH INTERESTS

Urban Policy, Education Policy, Neighborhood Effects, Economics of Crime

RESEARCH

Job Market Paper

The Intended and Unintended Impacts of a Crime-Deterrence Experiment on Academic Outcomes: Evidence from High-Intensity Streetlights
with Amy Ellen Schwartz

Place-based public-safety interventions are typically evaluated by whether they reduce crime, while their broader effects on residents, including children, remain understudied. We study this question using a randomized crime-deterrence experiment that installed 600,000-lumen light towers in public housing developments. The intervention reduced neighborhood crime (Chalfin et al., 2022; Mitre-Becerril et al., 2022) but may also have imposed costs on students through light intruding into their homes. To assess these competing effects, we construct a novel dataset linking the experiment to administrative records of public school students, incident-level crime and arrest data, and detailed building and development characteristics. We leverage randomized variation in lighting assignment and dosage together with building height, a proxy for students' average vertical proximity to the street-level light towers. While there are no average effects of treatment assignment on either crime exposure or academic outcomes, students experience large reductions in crime exposure at higher lighting dosage that are not accompanied by average academic gains. These null average academic effects mask substantial heterogeneity by building height: within higher-dose developments, students in taller buildings gain in achievement and attendance, while students in shorter buildings lose 0.22 standard deviations in math, roughly twice the magnitude of the gains among students in taller buildings. The math loss and height contrast are not explained by differential crime reductions or schooling and are absent among students living just outside the developments. Consistent with sleep disruption, effects emerge earlier for girls than for boys, are accompanied by large increases in overweight risk among girls,

and are modestly larger on noisier streets. These findings suggest that building height shaped whether students benefited from reductions in crime exposure or instead experienced costs from residential light intrusion.

WORKING PAPERS

Hold Harmless for Whom? The Impact of COVID Era Policies for School Funding, Teachers, and Students. (R&R at *Education Finance and Policy*)
with Michah W. Rothbart and Amy Ellen Schwartz

How a Good School in the Neighborhood Affects Academic Outcomes, with Sarah Cordes, Jeehee Han, and Amy Ellen Schwartz

WORKS IN PROGRESS

The Impact of a Crime Deterrence Intervention on Political Behavior, with Ying Shi

Housing Market Responses to Salient Police Interventions: Experimental Evidence from High-Intensity Streetlights, with Alexander Cardazzi

The Long-Term Impacts of Neighborhood Violence on Youth Outcomes

PRE-DOCTORAL RESEARCH

The Effect of Public Transit Expansions on Crime: Evidence from Mexico City

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Graduate Research Associate, Center for Policy Research 2022 –
Professors Michah W. Rothbart and Amy Ellen Schwartz, Syracuse University

Research Assistant, Center for Competitiveness Studies 2019 – 2022
Professor Guillermo Abdel Musik, ITAM

Investment Consultant, Profuturo Pensiones 2018 – 2019
Mexico City, Mexico

TEACHING

Syracuse University, MPA Program

Fall 2026 Economics for Public Decisions

Spr 2025 Education Policy, Quantitative Analysis (Guest Lecturer)

Spr 2024, 2025 Quantitative Analysis

2023, 2024 Public Budgeting (Intensive Summer Courses)

Fall 2022 Public Budgeting

PRESENTATIONS

Scheduled Southern Economics Association (SEA); ViCE seminar

2026 NYU Furman Center Speaker Series; Urban Economics Association (UEA); American Real Estate and Urban Economics Association (AREUEA); FLX Economics of Education Work-

shop; Capital District Applied Microeconomics Workshop; Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP)

2025 Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM)

2024 Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM); Association for Education Finance and Policy (AEFP); Public Finance and Budgeting Northeastern Workshop

2023 Association for Public Policy Analysis and Management (APPAM)

GRANTS & AWARDS

First Place, Graduate Student Poster-Session 2026
Center for Policy Research, Syracuse University

Summer Dissertation Fellowship
Syracuse University

Ph.D. Department Research Grant 2025
Syracuse University

Financial Inclusion Essay Award 2021
National Banking and Securities Commission, Mexico City, Mexico

SERVICE

Graduate Student Representative, Center for Policy Research 2026 – 2027
Maxwell School, Syracuse University
Referee: *Educational Researcher, Journal of Behavioral Public Administration*

SKILLS

Software: Stata, R, QGIS, Python

Languages: English (fluent), Spanish (native)

REFERENCES

Amy Ellen Schwartz, Professor, Professor Emerita
University of Delaware
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Michah W. Rothbart, Associate Professor
Syracuse University
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Ying Shi, Associate Professor
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Robert Bifulco, Professor
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