BRENDA SCIEPURA

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Education

University of California Berkeley
PhD in Public Policy, 2020 to 2026 (expected)
Master of Public Affairs, 2019

Catholic University of Argentina
Bachelor's Degree in International Relations, 2011
Bachelor's Degree in Political Science, 2007

Relevant Employment

The People Lab, Harvard Kennedy School
Research Fellow, 8/2020 to Present

The People Lab, University of California, Berkeley
Research Associate, 6/2019 to 5/2020

Government of Buenos Aires City
Senior Manager of Entrepreneurship and Social Innovation, 1/2016 to 4/2018
Manager of Family Development, 5/2014 to 12/2015
Culture Transformation Program Lead, 11/2011 to 4/2014

Publications

Sciepura, B., Wall, A. & Linos, E. (2025). Getting your foot in the door: The impact of public sector fellowships on career trajectories. *Public Administration Review*. Advance online publication. https://doi.org/10.1111/puar.13958. [Job market paper]

We examine the impact of public sector fellowship programs as alternative pathways into government roles for early-career professionals. Leveraging data from 17 cohorts of applicants across four US fellowship programs over 19 years (n = 2141; 31,153 individual-year observations), we employ a staggered difference-in-differences approach to compare the career trajectories of fellows and similarly motivated finalists. We find that fellowship participants are 30 percentage points more likely to pursue government careers, with a significant employment effect persisting up to 8 years after the launch of the fellowship. These findings suggest that scholarship can look beyond motivation-based theories of who enters and stays in government to better understand how to bring new and different people into the public sector.

Sciepura, B., & Linos, E. (2022). When Perceptions of Public Service Harm the Public Servant: Predictors of Burnout and Compassion Fatigue in Government. *Review of Public Personnel Administration*, 44(1), 116-138. https://doi.org/10.1177/0734371X221081508

Public servants' mental health can impact how, how well, and to whom services are delivered. In this article, we extend the Job Demands-Resources (JD-R) framework to consider whether employees' perceptions of themselves, their co-workers, and beneficiaries predict higher psychological distress during the COVID-19 pandemic. Through a survey of state and local public servants (n = 3,341), we report alarming rates of psychological distress: one in three employees are burned out and one in five are experiencing compassion fatigue. Those who view government as the place to make a difference, and those who perceive co-workers as competent, are less likely to report distress. Those who attribute poverty to systemic factors, and not to individual flaws of beneficiaries, experience higher distress. These findings suggest an urgent need to prioritize public servant mental health, and show that individual perceptions of self and others can predict variation in psychological distress.

In-progress Manuscripts	Keppeler, F., Linos, E., Sciepura, B., Lacey, K., Jacobsen, C. B. Recruiting Nurses on the International Market: A Megastudy https://osf.io/6pwxe

Building a strong healthcare workforce has become a pressing global policy priority, as high vacancy rates threaten public health. In collaboration with Danish healthcare service providers, we conduct a large-scale megastudy (n=110,000) testing recruitment messages to attract healthcare workers from across Europe to Denmark. Participants were randomly assigned to one of ten messages, each highlighting a different employer value proposition, or to a control group that received no message. Currently under analysis, this study aims to inform strategies for addressing healthcare workforce shortages and advancing research on effective recruitment and international workforce mobility.

Sciepura, B. & Linos, E. The New Faces of Public Service: How Do We Attract Talent to Government Jobs?

We partnered with a public sector fellowship program that connects early-career professionals with jobs in U.S. state governments to understand what drives young people to join the government, and how these motivations relate to perceptions of public service. We implemented a randomized controlled trial (n=13,278), in which we tested three recruitment messages, each highlighting a different motivation: competency, belonging, and the capacity to effect systemic change as an adaptation to more traditional messages on public service. Framing government as a place for systemic change was most effective, increasing applications by 43%, but it attracted candidates with more negative views of public servants. We are currently supplementing our findings with a survey experiment among a larger sample. We are also using a discrete choice experiment to gauge early-career job preferences.

Sciepura, B. The Role of Planning Prompts in Education and Careers.

A major recruitment challenge is not just attracting candidates but ensuring they complete training and onboarding, as high dropout rates remain a persistent barrier. I conducted a field experiment testing whether a low-cost behavioral intervention—a planning prompt—could help Latin American refugees and migrants sustain participation in technology skills training and engage in job search. While planning prompts are widely shown to improve goal attainment, evidence is scarce for low-income populations in Latin America. In this study, I found no effect on training engagement or job search, suggesting that interventions effective in the U.S. may not generalize to this context.

Teaching	**UC Berkeley, Goldman School**

    Decision Analysis, Modeling and Quantitative Methods, Fall 2024 and Spring 2025
    The Eightfold Path for Policy Analysis, Summer 2024
    Research Methods for Policy Leaders, Summer 2023
    Behavioral Science in Public Policy, Spring and Summer 2019
    Applied Inferential Statistics, Summer 2019

General San Martin University of Argentina, Sustainable Economy Program
    Financial Inclusion, 2010

Catholic University of Argentina, BA in Political Science
    Social Entrepreneurship, 2008

Fellowships & Awards	Graduate Student Research Award, IRLE, UC Berkeley, 2025

Doctoral Completion Fellowship, UC Berkeley, 2024

GSPP Departmental PhD Fellowship, UC Berkeley, 2020

Fulbright Scholarship, 2018

Bunge & Born Foundation Scholarship, 2011

Seminars & Conferences

Public Management Research Conference, 2022

American Society for Public Administration, 2024

UC Berkeley Public Policy Seminar *Accepted 2025

APPAM *Accepted 2025