

Matthew D. Blanton

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Education

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| 2027 | PhD, Sociology, The University of Texas at Austin
Certificate in Demography
Dissertation: <i>Forced Migration from and Within Central America</i> |
| 2013 | MA, Intercultural Studies, Fuller Graduate School
Concentration in International Development and Urban Studies
<i>Summa Cum Laude</i> |
| 2010 | BA, Intercultural Studies, North Greenville University
<i>Summa Cum Laude</i> |

Peer-Reviewed Publications

* Denotes student or postdoctoral co-author

1. **Blanton, Matthew**, Abigail Weitzman, and Gilbert Brenes Camacho. “[Respondent Driven Sampling as a Tool for Studying Hard-to-Reach Migrants in Need of International Protection: New Evidence from Costa Rica.](#)” Early View in *Population and Development Review*.
2. **Blanton, Matthew**. Forthcoming. “[Are Customs and Border Protection \(CBP\) Apprehensions a Reliable Proxy for Undocumented Migration? A Brief Report with New Evidence on Migration from Guatemala.](#)” *Population Research and Policy Review* 45(29).
3. **Blanton, Matthew**. 2025. “[Post-Migration Stressors and Mental and Physical Health Among Refugees and Migrants in Need of Protection: A Mixed-Methods Analysis with Weekly Panel Data.](#)” *Society and Mental Health*. Online First.
 - 2026 Graduate Student Paper Award, American Sociological Association’s Sociology of Mental Health Section
 - Featured in *Population Research Center Research Brief* 10(09), August 2025
4. **Blanton, Matthew**. 2025. “[Institutional Decline and Resilient Belief: Understanding Secularization in Latin America.](#)” *Socius*, 11. [Replication package](#).
 - 2025 McNamara Outstanding Student Paper Award, Association for the Sociology of Religion
 - 2023 W. Parker Frisbie Outstanding Graduate Student Publication Award, Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin.
 - 2023 Ralph A. Gallagher Travel Grant Competition Winner, Association for the Sociology of Religion.
 - Featured in *Religion Watch* (Vol. 39, No. 10, August 2024), a publication of the Baylor University Institute for Studies of Religion

- In top 5% of research outputs tracked by Altmetric (99th percentile for outputs of similar age)
5. Weitzman, Abigail, **Matthew Blanton**, and Gilbert Brenes Camacho. 2025. "[Family Separation Among Migrants in Need of International Protection: Anticipation, Duration, and Agency.](#)" *International Migration Review*. Online First.
 6. Weitzman, Abigail, **Matthew Blanton**, Sophie Morse*, Gilbert Brenes Camacho, and María José Chaves Groh. 2024. "[Design and Implementation of an Intensive Panel Survey with Refugees and Other Migrants in Need of Protection in Costa Rica.](#)" *PLOS One* 19(3): e0301135.
 7. **Blanton, Matthew**. 2024. "[Border Ballads: The Poetry and Politics of Los Tigres del Norte.](#)" *Migration Studies* 12 (1):114-120.
 8. Weitzman, Abigail, Katarina Huss*, **Matthew Blanton**, Jeffrey Swindle*, Gilbert Camacho, and Arodys Robles. 2024. "[International Displacement and Family Stress in Latin America.](#)" *Journal of Family Issues* 45 (3):531-554.
 9. **Blanton, Matthew**, and Daniel Krasniki*. 2023. "[Value Conditioned Interest: Secularity, Institutional Support, and the Sociology of Religion in Graduate Departments.](#)" *The Sociological Quarterly* 65 (3):401-423.
 - One of the journal's "most cited" articles from the past three years
 10. Weitzman, Abigail, **Matthew Blanton**, and Gilbert Brenes Camacho. 2023. "[Variability in Mental Health Reporting Among Refugees and Migrants in Need of Protection: New Evidence from a Weekly Panel Survey.](#)" *BMC Public Health* 23, 832.
 11. **Blanton, Matthew**. 2022. "[Threat or Godsend? Evangelicals and Democracy in Latin America.](#)" *Journal of Religion and Demography* 9 (1-2):138-164. <https://doi.org/10.1163/2589742x-bja10015>.
 12. Weitzman, Abigail, Gilbert Brenes Camacho, Arodys Robles, **Matthew Blanton**, Jeffrey Swindle*, and Katarina Huss*. 2022. "[Costa Rica as a Destination for Migrants in Need of International Protection: IMR Country Report.](#)" *International Migration Review* 57(1): 436-448.

Manuscripts Under Review

1. **Blanton, Matthew**. "A Legacy of Displacement: Latent Historical Pathways of Guatemalan Migration." Revise and Resubmit at *American Journal of Sociology*.
 - 2026 Distinguished Student Paper Award, American Sociological Association's Crime, Law, and Deviance Section
 - 2025 Best Graduate Student Paper Award, American Sociological Association's Sociology of Development Section
 - 2025 Elise Boulding Student Paper Award, Honorable Mention, American Sociological Association's Section on Peace, War and Social Conflict

2. **Blanton, Matthew.** “An Enduring Interruption: How ‘Zero Tolerance’ Reshaped Prosecutorial Discretion at the U.S.-Mexico Border.” Revise and Resubmit at *Journal of Criminal Justice*.
3. Swindle, Jeffrey, and **Matthew Blanton.** “Violence and International Migration in Illiberal Times: The Case of El Salvador’s Illiberal Transformation.” *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*. Special Issue on “Migration Across the Americas: Governance of Borders, Mobilities, and People.” Accepted for inclusion; peer review forthcoming.
4. **Blanton, Matthew,** and Jeffrey Swindle. “Who are the New Asylum Seekers? Evidence from Border Encounters.” *RSF: The Russell Sage Foundation of the Social Sciences*. Invited submission following competitive call.

Manuscripts in Progress

1. Weitzman, Abigail, Sarah Brayne, and **Matthew Blanton.** “Nowhere to Hide: Surveillance, Perceived Threat Escalation, and International Migration.” In progress.
2. **Blanton, Matthew.** “Canary in the Coalmine: Political Alienation and Religious Disaffiliation in Latin America.” In progress.

Public Scholarship

1. **Blanton, Matthew.** “[‘Yes’ to God, but ‘no’ to church – what religious change looks like for many Latin Americans.](#)” *The Conversation*. December 4, 2025.
 - 200,000+ reads; republished in Spain and Global editions; cited or reprinted by 16 news outlets, with coverage in Mexico, Chile, Brazil, and Argentina
2. **Blanton, Matthew.** “[Post-Migration Stressors Take a Toll on Refugee Health.](#)” *Population Research Center Research Brief* 10(09). August 2025. <https://doi.org/10.26153/tsw/61104>.
3. **Blanton, Matthew.** “[Trump is Sabotaging America’s Greatest Demographic Advantage.](#)” *The Fulcrum*. May 16, 2025.
 - Reprinted in *Latino News Network*, *The Daily Gazette*, and *Gulf Today*
4. **Blanton, Matthew.** “[The Public Imperative of Migration Scholarship in Anti-Immigrant Times.](#)” *World on the Move: Newsletter for the American Sociological Association’s International Migration Section*. Fall 2024.
5. **Blanton, Matthew.** “[Democrats Must Make the Economic Case for Immigration.](#)” *The Hill*. August 30, 2024.
 - Reprinted in *Real Clear Markets*
6. Swindle, Jeffrey and **Matthew Blanton.** “[El Salvador’s Migration Success Story Doesn’t Add Up.](#)” *The Boston Globe*. August 1, 2024.

- Appeared in print on the front page of the Sunday *Ideas* section
 - Featured by *The Dial*, *Reporte Confidencial*, and the InterReligious Task Force on Central America
7. Swindle, Jeffrey and **Matthew Blanton**. “[La Narrativa Migratoria de Bukele no Está Respaldada por los Datos](#).” *El Diario de Hoy*, August 5, 2024.
 8. **Blanton, Matthew**. “[Oral History Archive Explores Relationship between Faith and Forced Migration](#).” *Baptist News Global*. March 30, 2023.
 9. **Blanton, Matthew**. “[Seguridad Privada: Ethnographic Poetry from Guatemala](#).” *Ethnographic Marginalia*. March 29, 2021.

Fellowships

2025-2027	Harvey Fellowship, 28twelve Foundation (\$32,000)
2025	Graduate Dean’s Prestigious Fellowship Supplement Award, University of Texas at Austin (\$1,000)
2024-2025	University Graduate Continuing Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin (\$52,000)
2023-2024	Brumley Graduate Fellowship, Strauss Center for International Security and Law, Central America and Mexico Policy Initiative, University of Texas at Austin (\$4,000)
2022	Graduate Fellowship, Religion and Forced Migration Initiative, Princeton University (\$1,000)
2022	Graduate Dean’s Prestigious Fellowship Supplement Award, University of Texas at Austin (\$1,000)
2022-2023	NICHD Ruth L. Kirschstein National Research Service Award—Pre-Doctoral Fellowship in Population Studies (\$48,000)
2023	Dr. George Joseph Shia Memorial Endowed Presidential Fellowship in Liberal Arts, University of Texas at Austin (\$3,500)
2022	Urban Ethnography Lab Summer Research Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, Department of Sociology (\$1,500)
2020-2021	Summer Fellowship, University of Texas at Austin, Department of Sociology (\$10,000)

Awards

2026	Distinguished Student Paper Award, American Sociological Association’s Crime, Law, and Deviance Section
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2026	Graduate Student Paper Award, American Sociological Association's Sociology of Mental Health Section
2025	Best Graduate Student Paper Award, American Sociological Association's Sociology of Development Section
2025	McNamara Outstanding Student Paper Award, Association for the Sociology of Religion (\$500)
2025	Elise Boulding Student Paper Award, Honorable Mention, American Sociological Association's Peace, War and Social Conflict Section
2025	Graduate Student Assembly Travel Award, University of Texas at Austin (\$500)
2024	Forbes Dissertation Research Award, Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (\$500)
2023	W. Parker Frisbie Outstanding Graduate Student Publication Award, Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin (\$500)
2023	Ralph A. Gallagher Travel Grant Competition Winner, Association for the Sociology of Religion (\$500)

Conference Presentations

Blanton, Matthew, and Jeffrey Swindle. "Violence and International Migration in Illiberal Times: The Case of El Salvador's Illiberal Transformation."

- Conference on "Migration across the Americas: Governance of Borders, Mobilities and People." UCLA Center for the Study of International Migration. April 2026.

Blanton, Matthew. "A Legacy of Displacement: Latent Historical Pathways of Guatemalan Migration."

- American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Chicago, Illinois. August 2025.
- University of Texas at Austin Population Research Center TEXPOP Conference. May 2025.
- Population Association of America. Washington, DC. April 2025.

Blanton, Matthew. "Canary in the Coalmine: Political Alienation and Religious Disaffiliation in Latin America."

- Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting. Chicago, Illinois. August 2025.

Blanton, Matthew. "Are Customs and Border Protection (CBP) Apprehensions a Reliable Proxy for Undocumented Migration? New Evidence on Migration from Guatemala."

- American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Montreal, Canada. August 2024.
- Population Association of America Applied Demography Conference. Virtual. February 2024.

Blanton, Matthew. “Institutional Decline and Resilient Belief: Understanding Secularization in Latin America.”

- Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting. Montreal, Canada. August 2024.
- Population Association of America Annual Meeting. Columbus, OH. April 2024
- Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting. Philadelphia, PA. August 2023.

Blanton, Matthew, Abigail Weitzman, and Gilbert Brenes Camacho. “Family Separation Among Migrants in Need of International Protection: Anticipation, Duration, and Agency.”

- American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Montreal, Canada. August 2024.
- University of Texas at Austin Population Research Center TEXPOP Conference. May 2024.

Blanton, Matthew. “Post-Migration Stressors and Mental and Physical Health Among Refugees and Migrants in Need of Protection: A Mixed-Methods Analysis with Weekly Panel Data.”

- Population Association of America Annual Meeting. Columbus, OH. April 2024.
- *Poster.* UT Austin Population Research Center TEXPOP Conference. May 2023.

Blanton, Matthew, Abigail Weitzman, Gilbert Brenes, and Ana Lucia Fernandez Fernandez. “Respondent-Driven Sampling as a Tool for Studying Hard-to-Reach Migrants in Need of International Protection: New Evidence From Costa Rica.”

- Population Association of America Annual Meeting. Columbus, OH. April 2024.

Weitzman, Abigail, **Matthew Blanton,** Sophie Morse, Gilbert Brenes, and Maria Jose Chaves Groh. “Design and Implementation of an Intensive Panel Survey with Refugees and Other Migrants in Need of Protection in Costa Rica.”

- Population Association of America Annual Meeting. Columbus, OH. April 2024.

Blanton, Matthew. “State of the (Student) Subfield: Sociology of Religion and the Scholars of Tomorrow.”

- Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting. Philadelphia, PA. August 2023.

Blanton, Matthew. “Variability in Mental Health Reporting Among Refugees and Migrants in Need of Protection: New Evidence from a Weekly Panel.”

- Population Association of America Annual Meeting. New Orleans, LA. 2023.

Blanton, Matthew, and Katarina Huss. “The Taste of *La Tierra*: Food and Multigenerational Immigrant Identity.”

- American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Los Angeles, CA. August 2022.

Huss, Katarina, and **Matthew Blanton.** “A Legal Lens: Explorations of the Role of Citizenship and Law in Immigrant Identity.”

- American Sociological Association Annual Meeting. Los Angeles, CA. August 2022

Blanton, Matthew, and Katarina Huss. “Picturing Identity: Generational Variation in Immigrant Images of Identity in El Nuevo South.”

- Chicago Ethnography Conference. May 2022.

Blanton, Matthew. “The Religious Nones of Latin America: Voting Behaviors and Institutional Trust.”

- Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting. Virtual. October 2021.

Blanton, Matthew, and Daniel Krasniki. “How Graduate Students Perceive the Sociology of Religion: Survey Evidence from Top Departments.”

- Association for the Sociology of Religion Annual Meeting. Virtual. August 2021.

Research Experience

2020-Present **Research Assistant**

Dr. Abigail Weitzman, Population Research Center, University of Texas at Austin

- Conducted in-depth interviews and coded for qualitative themes using data analysis software
- Fielded a longitudinal survey, administering 70+ interviews and managing communication, logistics, and payment for the length of the project
- Helped design and manage a respondent-driven sampling (RDS) survey with 400 respondents

2021-2021 **Graduate Assistant**

Hispanic Faculty and Staff Association, University of Texas at Austin

- Designed and fielded a survey with 100+ members of the HFSA
- Conducted quantitative data analysis on university-wide compensation inequality
- Authored the “Hispanic Staff Equity Report,” summarizing findings

2013 **Research Consultant**

The California Endowment, Los Angeles, California

- Analyzed and synthesized interview data to chart progress and metrics for Northern California non-profit, community engagement programs

2012 **Research Consultant**

Urban Strategies, Arlington, Virginia

- Contracted to research faith-based health programs in minority communities, including interviews with Hispanic faith leaders on local church engagement

Teaching Experience

2023-2026 **Instructor:** Introduction to Data Computing

University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School Health Transformation Institute

2024-2026 **Instructor:** Introduction to Biostatistics

University of Texas at Austin Dell Medical School Health Transformation Institute

2026 **Teaching Assistant:** Introduction to Social Research

University of Texas at Austin Department of Sociology (Instructor: Jordan Conwell)

2026	Guest Lecturer: Social Networks “Introduction to Respondent-Driven Sampling.” University of Texas at Austin Department of Sociology (Instructor: Casey Breen)
2024	Guest Lecturer: American Families Past and Present “The Effect of Immigration Enforcement on American Families.” University of Texas at Austin Department of Sociology (Instructor: Kerry Waldrep)
2023	Teaching Assistant: Fertility and Reproduction University of Texas at Austin Department of Sociology (Instructor: Jennifer Glass)
2022	Mentor: U.S. National Science Foundation Research Experiences for Undergraduates (REU), University of Texas at Austin Population Research Center
2021	Teaching Assistant: Introduction to Social Research University of Texas at Austin Department of Sociology (Instructor: Mark Regnerus)
2020	Teaching Assistant: Introduction to the Study of Society University of Texas at Austin Department of Sociology (Instructor: Robert Reece)
2017	Instructor: Culture, Ethnicity, and Diversity Martin Luther University, Meghalaya, India
2015	Instructor: Culture, Ethnicity, and Diversity Sam Higginbottom Institute of Technology and Sciences, Allahabad, India

Professional Service

Ad hoc reviewer: *American Journal of Sociology*, *Social Forces*, *Demography*, *Population Research and Policy Review*, *Journal of Refugee Studies*, *Sociological Quarterly*, *Sociology of Religion*, *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, *Sociological Perspectives*, *Sociology Compass*, *Armed Forces and Society*, *Annals of Medicine*, *Global Health Action*

2026-2029	Membership Committee, Association for the Sociology of Religion
2026	Student Paper Award Committee Member, ASA Sociology of Development Section
2025	Annual Meeting Guide, American Sociological Association Annual Meeting
2024	Table Presider, Immigration and the Global South. ASA Annual Meeting
2023-2024	Poster Discussant, Session: Migration, Immigration, Geographic Mobility. Population Association of America Annual Meeting
2020-2023	Student Coordinator, Race and Ethnicity Working Group, Department of Sociology, University of Texas at Austin

Other Experience

- 2015-2020 **Program Director:** Agua es Poder, Quetzaltenango, Guatemala
- Designed and led community-based development programs, focused on health education, clean water access, and financial literacy
 - Facilitated leadership workshops for local community organizations
 - Raised individual and institutional funds to support multi-year project sustainability and staff operations
- 2013-2015 **Southeast Regional Mobilizer:** National Immigration Forum, Washington DC
- Led strategic campaign for immigration reform across religious, law enforcement, and business coalitions
 - Coordinated media outreach, educational events, and advocacy efforts
 - Coverage of campaign efforts featured in major outlets including *The New York Times* and *The Atlantic*
- 2013 **Program Assistant:** Department of State, Bureau of Diplomatic Security, Los Angeles, California
- Supported research and documentation in cases involving immigration-related fraud and exploitation
 - Translated immigration materials, reviewed case documentation, and edited official reports

Technical Skills and Languages

STATA, R, NVivo, RDS Analyst, Gephi
Spanish: Native Fluency

Professional Affiliations

American Sociological Association
Population Association of America
Association for the Sociology of Religion
Scholar's Strategy Network