

# Tabitha Bonilla

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Email:  
tabitha.bonilla@northwestern.edu

Phone: 650-924-1252  
Web: tabithabonilla.com

## **Academic Appointments**

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**Northwestern University** 2016-Present  
Institute for Policy Research  
Research Assistant Professor

**University of Southern California** 2014-2016  
Political Science Department  
Post-Doctoral Scholar and Teaching Fellow

## **Education**

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**Stanford University** 2007-2015  
Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science  
Dissertation "The Impact of Campaign Promises on Voter Behavior"  
Committee: Mike Tomz, Justin Grimmer, Paul Sniderman

Master of Arts in Political Science  
Fields: American Politics, Institutions, Comparative Politics

**Massachusetts Institute of Technology** 2003-2007  
Bachelor of Science in Biology  
Bachelor of Science in Political Science, Best Undergraduate Thesis  
Thesis Title: "The Global Acquisition of Women's Suffrage And the Influence of Development in Social Policy"  
Advisors: Chappell Lawson, Charles Stewart

## **Research**

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### *Book Project*

The Effect of Campaign Promises on Voter Behavior  
Campaign promises are a hallmark of campaign theory in politics: candidates make promises to signal to voters their intentions in office. However, theory nor empirics effectively defines campaign promises nor considers the diversity of commitments candidates take when issuing position statements. Through a corpus of American presidential debates, I demonstrate that position statements range from those with no commitment to future action to promises, strong commitments of future action. Using original survey experiments, I demonstrate that this

conceptual distinction in position-taking has an important effect on vote choice: it polarizes opinions of candidates by altering expectations of candidate action and assessments of character.

### *Publications*

"Elevated Threat-Levels and Decreased Expectations: How Democracy Handles Terrorist Threats" with Justin Grimmer. *Poetics*, 2013. 41, 650-669.

### *Under Review*

"Bridging the Partisan Divide on Immigration Policy Attitudes through a Bipartisan Issue Area: The Case of Human Trafficking." With Cecilia Mo. Last presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Association of Political Science 2016.

"The Evolution of Human Trafficking Messages and the Effects on Public Opinion." With Cecilia Mo. (Under review). Last presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Association of Political Science 2016.

"Campaign Promises as Strategic Signals of Candidate Commitment." (Under review) Last presented at the University of Colorado Boulder 2016.

### *Working Papers*

"Vying for Votes: How Appeals to Ethnic Voters Change Opinion". Last presented at the Political Psychology Preconference at the Annual Meeting for the American Association of Political Scientists 2016.

"Using Network Analysis to Explore the Role of Status and Reciprocity in Politicians' Voting Behavior" with Marcelo Worsley. Last presented at the Annual Meeting for the American Association of Political Scientists 2014.

"Extending Suffrage to Bolster Political Support: An Explanation for Women's Suffrage." Last presented at Stanford University 2012.

"Predicting Biased Behavior with Implicit Attitudes: Results from an Internet Experiment." With Cecilia Mo and Wendy Gross. Last presented at the American Association for Public Opinion Research 2011.

### *Work in Progress*

"The Use of Promise-making in Issue Ownership" to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Association of Political Science 2017.

"How Candidate Occupations Signal Different Qualifications by Gender" to be presented at the Annual Meeting of the Mid-Western Association of Political Science 2017.

“How Racial Composition of Districts Affects Campaign Stops and Messages”

### **Teaching and Research Assistantships**

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University of Southern California, *Instructor*, Spring 2016  
Class: Political Attitudes and Behavior

University of Southern California, *Instructor*, Fall 2015  
Class: Political Analysis

University of Southern California, *Instructor*, Spring 2015  
Class: Political Behavior

Stanford University, *Research Assistant*, Fall 2011  
Constructing, scraping and cleaning data from the Internet, and supervising coding procedures  
Professor Mike Tomz

Stanford University, *Teaching Assistant*, Spring 2011, Spring 2012  
Class: Islam, Iran and the West  
Professor Abbas Milani

Stanford University, *Research Assistant*, September 2010 – March 2011  
Coding and pretesting surveys  
Professor Mike Tomz

Stanford University, *Teaching Assistant*, Spring 2010  
Class: Islam and the West  
Professor Abbas Milani

MIT MITES, *Teaching Assistant*, Summer 2004, 2007  
Class: Humanities  
Professor Louise Harrison

MIT MITES, *Teaching Assistant*, Summer 2005  
Class: Biochemistry  
Professor Hector Hernandez

### **University Service Positions**

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*Stanford Graduate Diversity Steering Committee*, November 2011 – June 2012  
Contribute to discussions on how advance graduate student diversity at Stanford

*Stanford EDGE-SBE Mentor*, August 2011 – June 2012  
Mentor two younger students in the social sciences

*Stanford Political Science Graduate Student Association Secretary*, January 2011 – January 2012  
Organize professionalization events for other graduate students

*Excel Program* September 2008-June 2009

Tutored high-schoolers and facilitated the direction of an intervention program for high-schoolers who were failing. The goal of the program was to help minorities students who were also economically disadvantaged graduate become college bound.

*MIT Graduate Student Office*, 2005-2007

Aided the Assistant Dean of Graduate Students in administrating the MIT Summer Research Program, other recruitment efforts and programming for minority graduate students on campus, and facilitated needs between other student helpers, the web design team, and the Dean.

*MIT Office of Engineering Special Programs*, 2004-2006

Helped the administrative assistant with programmatic needs; served on the selection committee for Minority Introduction to Engineering and Science (MITES)

*MIT Science Technology Engineering and Math (STEM)*, 2004-2006

Mentored three middle school students; the program involved monthly seminars on current technological innovations

*Society of Hispanic Professional Engineers*, 2004–2006

Served as President, Vice President, Activities Liaison

*MIT Diversity Initiative* 2005

Cofounded a group that created university-wide forums to provoke thoughtful discussion to discuss ways to bridge the gap in diversity communication

## **Skills**

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**Statistical Software:** STATA, R, Atlas.ti

**Survey platforms:** Mechanical Turk, Qualtrics

**Other programming:** LaTeX, Python, Javascript

**Languages:** Portuguese (conversational)

## **Awards & Grants**

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Post-doctoral Travel Grant, University of Southern California, 2014

Stanford Laboratory for American Democratic Values, Member 2013-2014

Enhancing Diversity in Graduate Student Education (EDGE-SBE) Grant, 2010 and 2014

Graduate Research Opportunity Grant, Stanford School of Humanities and Sciences, 2011

Diversifying Academia, Recruiting Excellence (DARE) Doctoral Fellow Alternate, 2011

EDGE-SBE Fellow, 2007-2014

MIT Political Science Best Thesis Award, 2007

Albert G. Hill Prize, MIT, 2006

Burchard Scholar, MIT, 2006