Sebastian Cifuentes

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Education

University of California, San Diego — 2022–2028 (expected)
Ph.D. Candidate in Finance, Rady School of Management

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile — 2019
M.Sc. in Industrial Engineering, *summa cum laude*, with concentration in Finance

Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile — 2019
Industrial Engineer Degree, Major in Mining Engineering, *summa cum laude*

Research Fields

Entrepreneurship, Housing and Mortgage Markets, Economic Inequality. *Agenda:* I study how neighborhoods, through local social networks, housing markets, and nearby capital, shape who starts firms, when households enter homeownership, and how opportunity and wealth accumulate.

References

Carlos F. Avenancio-León
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Working Papers

1. "When Entrepreneurs Move In: Evidence from North Carolina" [PDF]
Abstract: This paper provides the first causal evidence that entrepreneurial activity diffuses through immediate neighborhood ties. I exploit residential moves in North Carolina to study whether the arrival of an entrepreneurial next-door neighbor increases business formation among incumbent residents. Merging statewide business registrations, voter files, and property transaction data, I construct a panel linking individuals to their closest neighbors and entrepreneurial outcomes over nearly two decades. Using a nearest-neighbor design with highly granular fixed effects, I find that exposure to an entrepreneurial neighbor raises the probability of business entry by 4–9 percent within five years. Effects are concentrated among immediate neighbors, attenuate sharply with distance, and are driven by arrivals who actually reside nearby. Most entry occurs in unincorporated, lower-cost businesses, while exposure to high-quality entrepreneurs increases the likelihood of starting incorporated firms. These findings show that face-to-face residential interactions are a powerful and highly localized channel through which entrepreneurship spreads.

Work in Progress

1. "Financialization and the Age of Homeownership"
Abstract: Has the financialization of single-family housing shifted the age at which households enter homeownership? I study this question using deed records linked to voter-file age data, covering more than one million individual home purchases. I measure local financialization using the tract-level penetration of institutional long-term rental owners and distinguish first-time buyers from repeat buyers using the universe of prior individual deeds. Descriptively, institutional penetration is not associated with a large decline in the share of first-time buyers, but it is associated with changes in the composition of repeat purchasers and with purchases of institutional-style starter homes. To address endogenous investor location choice, I construct a shift-share instrument that interacts 2000 tract housing suitability for institutional rental operation with the national rise of online property-management technology and leave-one-out property-management market size (following Gorback, Qian, and Zhu, 2025). The instrument strongly predicts institutional rental growth in the cross-section and delivers quasi-experimental variation in local financialization. Preliminary purchase-level IV estimates suggest that a one-standard-deviation increase in institutional rental ownership raises the age of first-time buyers by roughly 0.7–1 year, while leaving the probability that a purchase is by a first-time buyer and the age of repeat buyers largely unchanged. These results suggest that financialization may not primarily exclude first-time buyers from ownership, but instead delays when marginal households enter the housing wealth ladder. In that sense, institutional ownership can reshape life-cycle

wealth accumulation not by eliminating homeownership, but by postponing the start of leveraged housing equity formation.

2. "Policy Politicization and the Misallocation of Public Attention" (with Carlos F. Avenancio-León)
Abstract: Why do some policy issues become partisan flashpoints while other, equally consequential problems remain politically quiet? This paper develops a theory and measurement framework for the political selection of public attention. We argue that uncertainty creates room for competing narratives, but that uncertain issues become politicized only when their consequences can be mapped onto partisan or group cleavages and when emphasizing them is electorally useful. We combine large-scale newspaper text, C-SPAN political speech, public-opinion data, and measures of group-level policy exposure to construct topic-by-time measures of pre-politicization uncertainty, wedge potential, electoral fit, realized politicization, and media attention. The empirical analysis tests whether the interaction of these forces predicts which policy topics politicians transform into partisan conflict and whether politicized speech subsequently redirects scarce news attention across issues. By separating attention from politicization, the paper opens the black box of political divisiveness and offers a framework for studying how electoral competition may distort the public agenda, directing attention toward issues that are narratively exploitable rather than those with the greatest social stakes.

Publications

1. "Expected prices, futures prices and time-varying risk premiums: The case of copper" with Gonzalo Cortazar, Héctor Ortega and Eduardo S. Schwartz. *Resources Policy*, Vol. 69, Article 101825, December 2020. [Link]

Research Experience

2026	Selected Participant, *NBER Entrepreneurship Research Boot Camp*
Summer 2024	Graduate Student Researcher for Profs. Allan Timmermann and Samuel Bazzi, *UC San Diego*
Summer 2023	Graduate Student Researcher for Profs. W. Mullins and C. Avenancio-León, *UC San Diego*
2024–2025	Presented research at Rady Finance Brown Bag (2025) and Finance PhD Reading Group (2024, 2025)
March 2023	Assistant Coordinator, Finance Research Symposium in Honor of Bruce N. Lehmann, JOIM Conference, *UCSD*–Rady

Fellowships and Awards

2024	Richard Libby Graduate Research Award ($10,000), *UC San Diego*
2022–Present	Rady Academic Year Fellowship, *UC San Diego*
2019	Best Mining Engineering Student, *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*
2012–2019	Scholarships for Academic Excellence, *Chilean Government* and *Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*

Teaching Experience

2022–Current	*UC San Diego*: TA for New Venture Finance; Collecting and Analyzing Financial Data; Investments; International Finance; Behavioral Finance; Financial Investments; Corporate Finance; Derivatives and Structured Finance; Investment Analysis (MBA, MFin, and UG)
2015–2018	*Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile*: Graduate and Undergraduate TA in Finance, Financial Management, Advanced Topics in Finance, Organizational Behavior, Mineral Economics, and Accounting

Professional Experience

2020–2022	Senior Financial Engineer, *RiskAmerica*, Chile
2019–2020	Investment Analyst, *DVA Capital*, Chile

Service

2024	Mentee, AFA Committee on Racial Diversity (CORD). Mentor: Prof. Philip Bond (University of Washington)
2017–2018	Volunteer Math Teacher, Preuniversitario Social de Ingeniería UC and La Protectora de la Infancia

Additional Information

Languages: Spanish (native), English (fluent). *Computing:* Python, R, Stata, MATLAB, SQL, MySQL, PHP, LaTeX. *Citizenship:* Chilean. Married.