CASE GARZA, MS

Doctoral Student
The University of Texas at Austin
Department of Kinesiology and Health Education
Center for Research to Community Impact | People, Health, and Place Lab
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Updated: May 2026

EDUCATION

Expected May 2029	**Doctor of Philosophy in Prevention Science** Faculty Advisor: Deborah Salvo, PhD The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education Austin, Texas, USA
May 2025	**Master of Science in Health Behavior and Health Education** Faculty Advisor: Deborah Salvo, PhD Thesis: Playgrounds for Health Equity: A Pilot and Feasibility Study in Low-Income Minoritized Neighborhoods of Austin, Texas The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education Austin, Texas, USA
May 2021	**Bachelor of Science in Kinesiology and Health Education**, Health Promotion and Behavioral Science **Bachelor of Science in Applied Learning and Development**, Youth and Community Studies with a Concentration in Sports Coaching **Minor in Business** The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, McCombs School of Business Austin, Texas, USA

RESEARCH INTEREST

My research focuses on understanding how built, social, and policy environments shape physical activity and active living opportunities in historically under-resourced communities, with an emphasis on advancing health equity among youth. Broadly, I am interested in the implementation and contextual adaptation of place-based interventions that promote active living through parks, playgrounds, public open spaces, and active transportation infrastructure. My work integrates community-engaged and mixed-methods approaches, including GIS and spatial analysis, direct observation methods, and implementation science frameworks to examine how place-based interventions and built environments influence equitable physical activity participation and wellbeing.

RESEARCH AND PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Spring 2024 – Present	**Graduate Research Assistant** The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education, People, Health, and Place Lab and the Center for Research to Community Impact (CRCI) Austin, Texas, USA - Conduct GIS and spatial analyses examining neighborhood environments, playground access, active transportation feasibility, and built environment correlates of physical activity. - Support implementation and evaluation of place-based physical activity interventions through stakeholder-engaged and contextually responsive research approaches.

- Coordinate and conduct mixed-methods data collection activities, including direct observation, intercept surveys, environmental audits, and Public Participatory GIS (PPGIS) approaches.
- Assist with research dissemination through manuscript development, conference presentations, scientific communication materials, and interdisciplinary collaboration.
- Support IRB protocol preparation, research operations, and multisite fieldwork coordination across intervention and observational studies.
- Contribute to community-engaged active living and implementation research projects focused on parks, playgrounds, public open spaces, and active transportation in underserved communities across Texas and Mexico.

Selected Research Projects:

- A Comprehensive Mixed Methods Examination of the Impact of Playground Surfaces on Playability and Child and Community Wellbeing [Field Coordinator]
- Contextually Responsive Implementation of Place-Activation Interventions for Promoting Physical Activity in Marginalized Urban Peripheries in Mexico (Comunidades y Espacios Activos)
- Co-Creating and Implementing Contextually Responsive Physical Activity Interventions with Low-Income Adolescents (Active Middle School Communities)
- Playgrounds for Health Equity: Pilot and Feasibility Study of Playground Use and Access in Austin, Texas (P4HE) [Project Manager]
- Global Observatory for Health and Sustainable Cities: 1000 Cities Challenge

Fall 2024 – Spring 2025

Graduate Assistant: Scholars Program and Communications
The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Center for Research to Community Impact (CRCI)
Austin, Texas, USA

Summer 2024

CDC DNPAO Nutrition and Physical Activity Trainee Fellow
Boston Public Health Commission, Division of Chronic Disease Prevention
Boston, Massachusetts, USA
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), Division of Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity (DNPAO)
Atlanta, Georgia, USA
Association of State Public Health Nutritionists (ASPHN)
Tucson, Arizona, USA

Fall 2023

Graduate Teaching Assistant
The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education
Austin, Texas, USA

Summer 2021 – Summer 2023

Secondary Science Teacher, Grade Level Chair, District Blended Learning Innovator, and Head Cross Country Coach
YES Prep Public Schools, Hobby Secondary
Houston, Texas, USA

Summer 2018 – Summer 2023

Site Director, Senior Director, Assistant Director, Business Operations and Admin Intern, Counselor, and Campus Recruiter
Camp Gladiator Victory (CG Victory)
Austin, Texas, USA

Spring 2023 **Secondary STEM Academic Consultant**
Academic Independence
Houston, Texas, USA

PROFESSIONAL LEADERSHIP AND SERVICE

Leadership Appointments

2026 – Present **Board Member, Communications Committee Co-Lead (Congress and Campaigns)**
International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH)

Committee Service

Spring 2025 **Dean 6-Year Reappointment Review Consultative Committee Master Student Representative**
The University of Texas at Austin, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost
Austin, TX, USA

Ad Hoc Peer Reviewer

- International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) Congress
- Journal of Urban Health
- Journal of Healthy Eating and Active Living (JHEAL)

Affiliations

- People, Health, and Place Lab (PI: Deborah Salvo): Member (2024 – Present)
- International Society for Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH): Member (2024 – Present)
- Center for Research to Community Impact (CRCI): Doctoral Student Affiliate (2024 – Present)
- Texas Physical Activity Research Collaborative (TX PARC): Member (2024 – Present)
- Physical Activity Policy Research and Evaluation Network (PAPREN): Urban Hub Member (2025 – Present)
- The Global Observatory for Healthy and Sustainable Cities (GOHSC): Working Group Collaborator (2024 – Present)
- The Honor Society of Phi Kappa Phi at The University of Texas at Austin: Member (2023 – Present)
- Phi Theta Kappa: Alumni Member (2017 – Present)

Outreach Activities

Spring 2024
Spring 2025 **Kinesiology and Health Education New Student Day Department Student Representative**
The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education
Austin, TX, USA

Spring 2024
Spring 2026 **Beyond Undergrad: Graduate Student Panelist**
The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Texas Education Scholars (TES)
Austin, TX, USA

JOURNAL PUBLICATIONS

1. **Garza, C.,** Resendiz, E., Le, S., Corral, C., Mai, H., Steed, C., Messineo, A., Hunt, E., & Salvo, D. (2026). Playgrounds for Health Equity: A Mixed Methods Study in Urban Central Texas. *Journal of Healthy Eating and Active Living*, *6*(1), 1–23. https://doi.org/10.51250/jheal.v6i1.112

2. Turner, R., Higgs, C., Heikinheimo, V., Hunter, R., Vargas, J. C. B., Liu, S., Resendiz, E., Boeing, G., Adlakha, D., Schifanella, R., Rosa, G. L., Pugacheva, D., Chen, R., Poor, M. B., Molina-García, J., Queralt, A., Puig-Ribera, A., del Pozo, P. S., **Garza, C.,** Valson, J., Salvo, D., Cerin, E., Hinckson, E., & Lowe, M. (2025). Internationally Validated Open Access Indicators of Large Public Urban Green Space for Healthy and Sustainable Cities. *Geographical Analysis*. https://doi.org/10.1111/gean.70023

BOOK CHAPTERS

1. Messineo, A., Le, S., **Garza, C.,** & Salvo, D. (2027). Co-benefits of physical activity for societal and planetary health (Chapter 50). In M. E. G. Armstrong, R. Macniven, M. J. Western, K. Gebel, & A. E. Bauman (Eds.), *Routledge handbook of physical activity and health* (1st ed.). Routledge. [In Press]

CONFERENCE SYMPOSIA AND WORKSHOPS

1. Salvo, D., Swinney, K., Le, S., **Garza, C.,** & Hoelscher, D. (2026). *Public Participatory GIS for Active Living Research and Action: Integrating Spatial and Qualitative Methods to Amplify Local Community Priorities.* 2026 Active Living + Outdoor Health Summit Conference, Minneapolis/Twin Cities Region, MN, USA. [Workshop]
2. Salvo, D., **Garza, C.,** & Resendiz, E. (2024). Identifying priorities for improving playground access equity in Austin, Texas, USA: a mixed-methods, community-engaged study. *The Importance of Playgrounds for Children's Active Outdoor Play (Schipperijn, J)*. The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 10th Congress, Paris, France. [Invited Symposium Presentation]

CONFERENCE ORAL PRESENTATIONS

1. **Garza, C.,** Montero-Zamora, P., Le, S., Hernandez, C., Kepper, M., Brownson, R., Martínez, A. M., Martinez, M., Gonzalez, O., Lopez-Soto, A., Orozco-Lapray, D., Brown, S., Jáuregui, A., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Identifying Contextually-Relevant Place-Activation Strategies for Promoting Active Leisure in Mexico: An AI-Assisted Mixed Methods Study.* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
2. Orozco-Lapray, D., Hernández, C., Martínez, A. M., Martínez, M., González, O., López-Soto, A., Montero-Zamora, P., **Garza, C.,** Le, S., Kepper, M., Brownson, R., Brown, S., Jáuregui, A., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Valued but vulnerable: Can place-activation strategies promoting active leisure in communities support older adult participation?* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
3. Le, S., **Garza, C.,** Morrison, B., Hunt, E., Jowers, E., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Do parental perceptions of public playgrounds influence children's levels of active and social play?* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
4. Hunt, E., **Garza, C.,** Morrison, B., Le, S., Jowers, E., & Salvo, D. (2026). *A mixed-methods study assessing playground playability and the role of surfacing*. 2026 US Play Coalition National Conference on the Value of Play, Bloomington, IN, USA.
5. **Garza, C.**, Montero-Zamora, P., Orozco-Lapray, D., Hernandez, C., Santos Capulin, O., Kepper, M., Brownson, R., Brown, S., Jáuregui, A., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Optimizing the impact of public open space renovations for physical activity promotion in low-income urban neighborhoods across Mexico through a contextually sensitive approach for place-activation*. Active Living + Outdoor Health Summit, Minneapolis/Twin Cities Region, MN, USA.
6. Le, S., Swinney, K., **Garza, C.,** Karner, A., Ganzar, L.A., Bentley, S., Badillo, D.J., Hoelscher, D., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Student, Parent, and Community Resident Geospatial Insights on Walkability and Bikeability Near Middle Schools: A Public Participatory GIS Study in Central Texas.* 2026 Active Living + Outdoor Health Summit Conference, Minneapolis/Twin Cities Region, MN, USA.
7. Swinney, K., Le, S., **Garza, C.,** Karner, A., Ganzar, L.A., Bentley, S., Badillo, D.J., Hoelscher, D., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Using Public Participatory GIS to gain insights into community perceptions of walkability and bikeability near middle schools: qualitative findings from the Active Middle School Communities project.* 2026 Active Living + Outdoor Health Summit Conference, Minneapolis/Twin Cities Region, MN, USA.
8. **Garza, C.,** Resendiz, E., Steed, C., & Salvo, D. (2025). *Investigating Socioeconomic and Racial Disparities in Playground Access in Austin, Texas: The Playgrounds for Health Equity Study*. 21st Annual Active Living Conference (ALC 2025), Manhattan, KS, USA.
9. Lowe, M., Turner, R., Higgs, C., Resendiz, E., Pugacheva, D., Chen, R., Heikinheimo, V., Liu, S., Adlakha, D., Soleimani Roudi, A., **Garza, C.,** Schifanella, R., Hunter, R., Valson, J., Longo Rosa, G., Molina-García, J., Queralt, A., Serra Del Pozo, P., & Baghaiepoor, M. (2024). *Global Healthy and Sustainable City-Indicators Collaboration. Developing and testing open-access urban green space policy and spatial indicators for cities internationally*. Urban Transitions 2024, Sitges, Spain.

10. **Garza, C.,** Resendiz, E., Steed, C., & Salvo, D. (2024). *Characterizing playground access equity in Austin, Texas, USA: an equity approach for active childhoods.* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 10th Congress, Paris, France.
11. Messineo, A., Le, S., **Garza, C.,** Resendiz, E., & Salvo, D. (2024). *Access to Free and Safe Spaces for Physical Activity: An Equity-driven Physical Activity Security Approach*. The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 10th Congress, Paris, France.
12. Messineo, A., **Garza, C.,** Resendiz, E., & Salvo, D. (2024). *Assessing the influence of crime on physical activity in urban and rural communities in Texas, USA*. The International Society of Behavioral Nutrition and Physical Activity (ISBNPA) 23rd Annual Meeting, Omaha, NE, USA.

CONFERENCE POSTERS

1. **Garza, C.,** Karner, A., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Beyond distance: Uncovering the unrealized potential of bicycling infrastructure to optimize urban cycling for transportation*. The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
2. López-Soto, A., Montero-Zamora, P., Hernández, C., **Garza, C.,** Le, S., Kepper, M., Brownson, R., Martínez, A. M., Martínez, M., González, O., Orozco-Lapray, D., Brown, S., Jáuregui, A., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Barriers and Facilitators for Implementing Evidence-Based Place-Activation Strategies for Physical Activity in Mexico.* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
3. Montero-Zamora, P., Lopez-Soto, A., Hernández, C., **Garza, C.,** Le, S., Kepper, M., Brownson, R., Martínez, A. M., Martínez, M., González, O., Orozco-Lapray, D., Brown, S., Jáuregui, A., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Optimizing Physical Activity in Public Open Spaces: Assessing the Adaptability of Place-Activation Strategies for Mexico.* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
4. Reininger, K., **Garza, C.,** Le, S., Morrison, B., Miao, F., Hunt, E., Jowers, E., & Salvo, D.(2026). *Who knows best? Essential Playground Features to Maximize Active Play according to Stakeholders versus Parents.* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
5. Miao, F., Le, S., **Garza, C.,** Morrison, B., Reininger, K., Pellerin, B., Hunt, E., Jowers, E., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Playground Design Features and Children's Active Play: An Exploratory Study Across Neighborhood Income Levels.* The International Society of Physical Activity and Health (ISPAH) 11th Congress, Merida, MX.
6. Morrison, B., **Garza, C.***, Hunt, E., Jowers, E., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Understanding Playground Playability: A Rapid Scoping Review*. 2026 American Academy of Health Behavior Annual Meeting, Austin, TX, USA. (*Presenting Author)
7. Le, S., **Garza, C.**, Morrison, B., Beaty, C., Estrada, M., Pellerin, B., Schweninger, A., Tran, J., Jowers, E., & Salvo, D. (2026). *Assessing Social and Macro-Environmental Features to Playgrounds Surfaces in Low- and High-Income neighborhoods in Central Texas*. 2026 American Academy of Health Behavior Annual Meeting, Austin, TX, USA.
8. Zhang, Y., Swinney, K., Ganzar, L.A., **Garza, C.*,** Salvo, D., & Hoelscher, D. (2026). *Change in Parental Perceptions of Active Living for Elementary School Students: Safe Travel Environment Evaluation in Texas Schools (STREETS)*. 2026 American Academy of Health Behavior Annual Meeting, Austin, TX, USA. (*Presenting Author)
9. Le, S., **Garza, C.,** Springer, A., Zhang, Y., Bentley, S., Hoelscher, D., & Salvo, D. (2025). *Public Participatory GIS on Built Environment Features Influencing Physical Activity in Middle School Communities*. UT GIS Day 2025, Austin, Texas, USA.
10. **Garza, C.,** Resendiz, E., Steed, C., & Salvo, D. (2024). *Playgrounds for Health Equity: Is playground access in Austin equitable, and why does it matter for public health?* 6th Annual Interprofessional Health Showcase, Austin, TX, USA.
11. **Garza, C.*,** Messineo, A.*, Hernandez, L., Kumar, S., Mai, H., Salvo, D., & Resendiz, E. (2023). *Examining the Influence of Street Crime on Active Lifestyles in Texas*. UT GIS Day, Austin, TX, USA. (*Dual First Authorship)

12. Resendiz, E., Kumar, S., Hernandez, L., **Garza, C.,** Mai, H., Messineo, A., & Salvo, D. (2023). *Cities in Data: The Development of Open-Source Spatial Indicators and Software for Urban Health and Sustainability*. UT GIS Day, Austin, TX, USA.
13. Mai, H., Hernandez, L., Resendiz, E., **Garza, C.,** Kumar, S., Messineo, A., & Salvo, D. (2023). *Do Historical Discriminatory Policies Influence Today's Healthy Living Opportunities in Neighborhoods? Examining the Associations of Redlining with Physical Inactivity in Austin, Texas*. UT GIS Day, Austin, TX, USA.

INVITED PRESENTATIONS

1. **Garza, C.** (2026). How Playground Grass Impacts Play. ForeverLawn Annual Company-Wide Conference, Anaheim, California, USA.
2. **Garza, C.,** & Le, S. (2025). An overview of the Active Middle School Communities project. Center for Research to Community Impact (CRCI), The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA.

GUEST LECTURES

1. **Garza, C.** (2026). Is Health Really a Choice? How Environments Shape Behavior. Introduction to Health Promotion Undergraduate Course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA.
2. **Garza, C.** (2025). Is Your Zip Code More Important than Your Genetic Code? Introduction to Health Promotion Undergraduate Course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA.
3. **Garza, C.** (2023). Social Determinants of Health and Health Disparities. Theories of Health Promotion and Behavioral Science Undergraduate Course at The University of Texas at Austin, Austin, Texas, USA.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

Teaching experience spans undergraduate instruction, graduate mentorship, and secondary STEM education in high-need school settings.

Graduate Teaching Assistantships

Fall 2024	Center for Research to Community Impact (CRCI) Undergraduate Scholars Workshop 6-week course 20 Students The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education Austin, Texas, USA
Fall 2023	Theories of Health Promotion and Behavioral Science Health Education: HED 350 (Lara Latimer, PhD) 48 Students The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education Austin, Texas, USA

Secondary Teaching

Fall 2022 – Spring 2023	8th Grade Science 117 Students YES Prep Public Schools, Hobby Secondary Houston, Texas, USA
Fall 2021 – Spring 2022	8th Grade Science 152 Students YES Prep Public Schools, Hobby Secondary Houston, Texas, USA

Undergraduate Teaching Assistantships

Fall 2020	Beginning, Intermediate, and Advanced Running Physical Education: PED 106C (Nicole McLagan, PhD) 41 Students The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Division of Physical Education Austin, Texas, USA
Fall 2020	Aerobic Walking Physical Education: PED 106C (Nicole McLagan, PhD) 39 Students The University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Division of Physical Education Austin, Texas, USA

HONORS AND AWARDS

2025 – 2029	**College of Education Texas New Scholar PhD Recruitment Fellowship** University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education
2024 – 2025	**College of Education Texas New Scholar** University of Texas at Austin, College of Education, Department of Kinesiology and Health Education
2022 – 2023	**Teacher of the Year** YES Prep Public Schools, Hobby Secondary
2022	**State Distinction Designation for Academic Achievement in Science** Student Academic Performance in the Top Quartile YES Prep Public Schools, Hobby Secondary Texas Education Agency
Spring 2021	**University Honors** The University of Texas at Austin
Fall 2019	**University Honors** The University of Texas at Austin

CERTIFICATES AND ADDITIONAL TRAINING

Certificates and Professional Development

2026	**Advanced Teaching Preparation Certificate** Center for Teaching and Learning, The University of Texas at Austin - Completed advanced training in evidence-based pedagogy, student-centered instructional design, and teaching statement development
2026	**Teaching Preparation Certificate** Center for Teaching and Learning, The University of Texas at Austin - Completed foundational training in teaching practices, student engagement, and assessment
Expires February 2027	**Human Research: Social/ Behavioral Researchers** CITI Program The University of Texas at Austin
Expires February 2028	**Core Subjects with Science of Teaching Reading (Grades 4-8) and English as a Second Language Supplemental (Grades 4-8)** Texas Education Agency

Additional Training

2026	**System for Observing Travel-Related Activity in Urban Roads (SOTRAVEL)**
2024	**System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC)**

RESEARCH METHODS AND TECHNICAL SKILLS

Research Methods	- Interdisciplinary active living research - Mixed-methods research - Community-engaged research - Implementation science frameworks (e.g., CFIR, RE-AIM) - Stakeholder-engaged intervention adaptation - Direct observation methods (SOPARC, SOTRAVEL) - Public participatory GIS (PPGIS) - Environmental audit methods - Survey development and field data collection - Qualitative coding and thematic analysis - AI-assisted qualitative analysis - Open-source urban health indicators
Quantitative and Spatial Analysis	- R/RStudio - GIS (ArcGIS Pro, QGIS) - Spatial analysis - Data visualization
Research Operations	- Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol preparation and coordination - REDCap database management - Scientific communication and research dissemination - Multisite fieldwork coordination - Research protocol development