

Diversity and Inclusion Statement

Jacob Orchard: University of California, San Diego

The 2000s and 2010s were challenging financially for my family. We struggled before the 2008 financial crisis and then lost what little savings we had during the recession. Our family of seven moved from a small home to an even smaller section-8 (low-income) apartment. It was during this time that I decided I wanted to be an economist. I could see firsthand how the macroeconomic forces of the day were affecting my family, and I wanted to understand them. Why were my parents unable to find work? Why were the prices of everything we bought going up, but the Federal Reserve was still unconcerned about inflation?¹

Pell grants and academic scholarships allowed me to go to college. I started in the California community college system before transferring to BYU. During my Junior year, I applied for an internship at the *Federal Reserve Bank of New York*. Before even introducing themselves, the Research Assistants conducting the interview asked, "So your academic history is really strange [referring to my community college experience]. Can you explain that?" This was my first experience with elitism in the economics profession. Sadly, it has not been the last.

Economics is a potent tool and has been used historically to help markets become more efficient. However, historically, economics as a discipline has focused too little on income and racial inequality. The profession has been unwelcome to women and people of color. The lack of these diverse voices has divested economics of great ideas in the past. I hope that we can do better in the future. As an economist, I can help the profession become more inclusive by engaging in mentoring and volunteer efforts with those from diverse backgrounds and focusing research on topics such as racial and income inequality.

Volunteer Efforts:

During my Ph.D., I have been able to volunteer for several programs serving historically-marginalized groups. My favorite was the Student Training Academy for Research Success (STARS). This program is run by the Graduate Division at UCSD and is designed for undergraduate students from diverse backgrounds considering graduate school. During Summer 2020, I served as the graduate student adviser for a group of four students. I provided support and guidance for their projects. Their research included a study on the contemporary effects of historical discriminatory zoning laws (red-lining), a qualitative project on the social views of U.S. Supreme Court justices, and a project investigating mental health outcomes for San Diego elementary students. I hope to volunteer at programs similar to STARS in the future.

¹My Job Market Paper answers this question.

Research Efforts:

As a researcher, one of the best ways to help with diversity efforts is to study the sources and consequences of inequality. My undergraduate thesis, co-authored with Joseph Price, studies the consequences of racial prejudice on the black-white infant health gap. My Job Market Paper examines how low-income households' relative cost-of-living changes due to recessionary shocks. I briefly describe each of these projects below.

In the United States, Black mothers are twice as likely to have pre-term or low birth-weight births than White mothers; these outcomes can have significant consequences for later labor-market and health outcomes. In my published paper, **County-level racial prejudice and the black-white gap in infant health outcomes** (with Joseph Price), we study the relationship between racial prejudice and the black-white infant health gap. First, we build a county-level measure of racial prejudice using data from Harvard's Project Implicit. Then, we combine our prejudice measure with restricted-use micro natality files. We find a large relationship between our county-level measure of racial prejudice and the black-white infant health gap in the county. For example, a black mother living in a county with a prejudice rating one-standard deviation higher than the mean is as likely to give birth pre-term as a mother that smokes. We speculate that increased stress due to racial prejudice may cause this correlation.

The Great Recession was hard on many families and individuals. In my Job Market Paper, **Cyclical Demand Shifts and Cost of Living Inequality**, I show that recessions have an additional negative effect for low-income households. Recessions systematically lead to higher inflation rates for low-income households since aggregate demand shifts towards necessity products, which make up a larger portion of low-income households' budgets.