

ALYSSA BROWN
ECONOMICS DEPARTMENT
UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA, SAN DIEGO

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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EDUCATION

University of California, San Diego, California	Ph.D. in Economics, 2022 (expected)
	Committee:
	Katherine Meckel (chair)
	Julie Cullen
	Gordon Dahl
	Jeffrey Clemens
	Todd Gilmer
University of California, San Diego, California	M.A. in Economics, 2018
College of William and Mary, Virginia	B.A. Economics and Mathematics, 2016 (magna cum laude with honors)

REFERENCES

Katherine Meckel	UC San Diego	kmeckel@ucsd.edu	(401) 529-0761
Julie Cullen	UC San Diego	jbcullen@ucsd.edu	(858) 822-2056
Gordon Dahl	UC San Diego	gdahl@ucsd.edu	(858) 822-0644
Prashant Bharadwaj	UC San Diego	prbharadwaj@ucsd.edu	(858) 822-6760

FIELDS OF INTERESTS

Public Finance, Labor, Health

RELEVANT POSITIONS HELD

Research Assistant	UCSD (Prof. James Rauch & Prof. Marc Muendler)	2018-2021
Research Assistant	UCSD (Prof. Katherine Meckel)	2019
Research Assistant	AidData Research Lab (Prof. Ariel BenYishay)	2014-2016

GRANTS

Graduate Summer Research Scholarship. 2017, 2018. University of California, San Diego.
Regents Fellowship. 2016. University of California, San Diego.
Honors Fellowship. 2015. College of William and Mary.
Student-Faculty Research Grant. 2015. College of William and Mary.
Terry Glen Memorial Fellowship. 2015. College of William and Mary.
James Monroe Scholarship. 2014. College of William and Mary.

HONORS AND AWARDS

Associate-in Teaching Award. 2021. University of California, San Diego.

Walter Heller Memorial Prize for Outstanding Third Year Paper. 2019. University of California, San Diego.

Graduate Student Research Seminar Best Presentation. 2019. University of California, San Diego.

Outstanding and Courageous Data Educator. 2018. University of California, San Diego.

Phi Beta Kappa. 2016. College of William and Mary.

WORKING PAPERS

“Who takes up a free lunch? Food spending and the Summer Food Service Program.” (Job Market Paper)

Abstract: Individual means testing can impose burdens on the targeted group that reduce take-up, while community means testing may lead to reduced efficiency in service delivery. I study the effect of a community means-tested program, the Summer Food Service Program (SFSP), on food purchasing behavior. The SFSP provides free meals to children in low-income neighborhoods as a summertime replacement for the National School Lunch Program. I construct a novel dataset linking SFSP administrative records from several states and transaction-level records on household grocery expenditures. I use variation in the timing and intensity of SFSP meal provision to show that households with children reduce weekly grocery spending by 2.7% for each additional meal received. These spending reductions are driven by households who are ineligible for subsidized meals during the academic year, providing evidence for targeting inefficiencies in the SFSP.

“The Distributional Impacts of Taxes on Health Products: Evidence from Diaper Sales Tax Exemptions” (joint with Chelsea Swete and Kye Lippold)

Abstract: Sales taxes that are uniform across products are traditionally seen as more efficient than good-specific taxes, but broad-based taxes can be regressive for low income households. We examine taxation of diapers, an inelastic health product, and find substantial income variation in responsiveness to taxes using retail scanner data. Exploiting changes to sales tax exemptions for diapers in New York State and Connecticut, we find that sales of diapers rise by 5.4% in low income areas when taxes are removed, accompanied by a 6.2% fall in spending on children’s pain medications. These results imply that sales tax exemptions for diapers can have positive spillover effects on health and well-being.

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

“The Effect of Food Pantries on Household Grocery Purchases”

Abstract: Food pantries provided food at no cost to 40 million individuals in 2020. This charitable in-kind provision of food rivals SNAP’s participation rates, and yet little is known about the effects of food pantries on household grocery expenditures. I use monthly data on food pantry 501(c)(3) approval from the Internal Revenue Service to proxy for food pantries’ effective opening dates. I connect opening pantries with household purchases in the Nielsen Consumer Panel and find that household grocery expenditures fall by 2.3% after a food pantry opens in their ZIP code. Effects are concentrated among low- and middle-income households. Work in progress investigates if these effects are driven by changes in prices or consumption bundles.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

As instructor at UC San Diego

Economics of Discrimination

Winter 2021, Spring 2021, Fall 2021

Data Analytics for the Social Sciences

Spring 2018

As teaching assistant at UC San Diego

Economics of Discrimination	Fall 2019, Spring 2020, Summer 2020, Fall 2020, Summer 2021 (Prof. Prashant Bharadwaj)
Principles of Microeconomics	Summer 2021 (Instr. Katherine Rittenhouse)
Macroeconomics A	Winter 2020, Spring 2020 (Instr. Maria Candido)
Principles of Macroeconomics	Winter 2018 (Prof. Valerie Ramey)
Market Imperfections and Policy	Fall 2017 (Instr. Dirk Mateer)

As teaching assistant at the College of William and Mary

Undergraduate courses	Principles of Microeconomics, Principles of Macroeconomics, Empirical Microeconomics
Master's courses	Cross-Section Econometrics, Time-Series Econometrics

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Conference Presentations

2021	National Tax Association 114th Annual Conference on Taxation
2020	Association for Public Policy Analysis & Management California Regional Student Conference (canceled)
2019	Economics Graduate Student Conference at Washington University, St. Louis

Service

Co-organizer of UCSD's Graduate Women in Economics Program	2017-present
Member of the AEA Committee on the Status of LGBTQ+ Individuals in the Economics Profession, Social Networking & Activities Committee	2021-present

Referee Service

Journal of Human Resources

OTHER INFORMATION

Citizenship: United States
Programming: STATA, SAS, R