

# Brett McCully

UCLA  
Department of Economics  
Bunche Hall  
Los Angeles, CA 90095

Phone: (571) 331-9660  
Email: [bmccully@ucla.edu](mailto:bmccully@ucla.edu)  
Homepage: [brettmccully.com](http://brettmccully.com)

## Education

Ph.D. Economics, UCLA, Expected 2021.

M.A. Economics, UCLA, 2016.

B.A. Mathematics and Economics, University of Virginia, 2013.

## Research

### **Migrants and Drug Trafficking** (job market paper)

Does globalization also integrate illegal markets? Illicit smuggling across international borders generates nearly \$2 trillion per year, yet little is known about what forces shape this trade. In this paper, I use novel data on nearly 10,000 seizures of illegal drugs in Spain to study how migrants affect the flow of illegal drugs. I first validate that seizures are a useful proxy for actual drug imports using measures of drug availability by province. I estimate a gravity model of drug trafficking on the import and export of illegal drugs. I find that 10% more migrants raises the value of imported drugs seized by 12% and the value of drugs intended for re-export by 7% on a bilateral link. I show that providing migrants a path to citizenship can significantly diminish this relationship.

### **Health, Fertility, and Productivity: Long-term Effects of a Health and Family Planning Program** (with Tania Barham, Randall Kuhn, and Patrick Turner)

While health improvements are thought to be a necessary precondition for economic growth, few contemporary studies have estimated the effects of population health interventions on subsequent economic growth. We explore long-run effects of the quasi-randomized Matlab Maternal and Child Health and Family Planning (MCH-FP) program introduced in a rural area of Bangladesh from 1977-1989 on agricultural productivity 35 years later. Using a rich data set including two follow-up surveys with unusually low rates of attrition, we find only modest effects on productivity as of 1996, but large effects emerge in 2012, including a 27% increase in productivity per acre in treatment versus area and a 34% relative increase in the adoption of high-yield seeds. We account for a wide range of baseline controls dating back to 1974, explore heterogeneity, and propose testing mechanisms of impact relating to human capital, household competition and migration.

### **How Much Are Car Purchases Driven by Home Equity Withdrawal? Evidence from Household Surveys** (with Daniel Vine and Karen Pence), 2019, Vol. 51, No. 5, *Journal of Money, Credit, and Banking*.

Previous research indicates that changes in housing wealth affect consumer spending on cars. We find that home equity extraction plays only a small role in this relationship. Consumers rarely use funds from equity extraction to purchase a car directly, even during the mid-2000s' housing boom; this finding holds across three nationally representative household surveys. We find in credit bureau data that equity extraction does lead to a statistically significant increase in auto loan originations, consistent with equity extraction easing borrowing constraints in the auto loan market. This channel, though, accounts for only a tiny share of overall car purchases.

**Is Underemployment Underestimated? Evidence from Panel Data** (with Geng Li), May 2016, FEDS Notes.

Despite a broad recovery of the U.S. economy from the depths of the Great Recession, lingering slack remains in the labor market. In this note, we show that PTER substantially underestimates underemployment along the dimension of hours people are actually working—relative to the numbers they would prefer to work at current wages. We show this using two panel surveys—the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the Health and Retirement Survey—which contain information on worker underemployment and, in the case of the HRS, the number of desired hours for workers.

## Employment

UCLA, Research Assistant

California Policy Lab, 2017

Professor Randall Kuhn, 2019

UCLA, Teaching Assistant, 2016–2017

Introductory Macroeconomics, Fall 2016

Introduction to Econometrics, Winter 2017

UCLA, Guest Lecturer

Introduction to Econometrics Lab, Winter 2017 (x1)

Undergraduate Labor Economics, Spring 2019 (x2)

UCLA, Grader

Macroeconomic Theory, Summer 2016

Labor Economics, Fall 2018

Federal Reserve Board of Governors, Research Assistant, 2013–2015

## Honors and Awards

Institute on Global Conflict and Cooperation Dissertation Fellowship, 2020–2021

Best Paper Award, International Proseminar, 2019–2020

Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA, 2020–2021

NICHD Traineeship, California Center for Population Research, 2017–2018 and 2019–2020

Graduate Summer Research Mentorship, UCLA, 2017

Pauley Fellowship, UCLA, 2015–2016 and 2018–2019

## Presentations

DemSemX, Virtual Conference, June 2020

International Economics Proseminar, UCLA, multiple

Applied Microeconomics Proseminar, UCLA, multiple

## Service

Graduate Economics Association, Co-President, 2017-2018

Social Science Council, Vice President of External Affairs, 2017-2018

Graduate Students Association Forum member, 2017-2019

International Economics Student Proseminar organizer, 2018-2020

## References

Jonathan Vogel (main advisor)  
Professor  
Dept. of Economics  
UCLA  
jonathan.e.vogel@gmail.com

Adriana Lleras-Muney  
Professor  
Dept. of Economics  
UCLA  
alleras@econ.ucla.edu

Pablo Fajgelbaum  
Professor  
Dept. of Economics  
Princeton University  
pfajgelbaum@gmail.com

Felipe Goncalves  
Assistant Professor  
Dept. of Economics  
UCLA  
fgoncalves@econ.ucla.edu

Randall Kuhn  
Associate Professor  
Dept. of Community Health Sciences  
UCLA  
kuhn@ucla.edu

Emily Weisburst  
Assistant Professor  
Luskin School of Public Affairs  
UCLA  
weisburst@ucla.edu