

KATHERINE RITTENHOUSE

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EDUCATION

University of California, San Diego
University of California, San Diego
University of Chicago

Ph.D in Economics, 2023 (Expected)
M.A. in Economics, 2019
B.A. Environmental Studies; Law, Letters & Society, 2014

REFERENCES

Katherine Meckel (chair)	UC San Diego	kmeckel@ucsd.edu
Julie Cullen	UC San Diego	jbcullen@ucsd.edu
Gordon Dahl	UC San Diego	gdahl@ucsd.edu
Prashant Bharadwaj	UC San Diego	prbharadwaj@ucsd.edu

FIELDS OF INTERESTS

Public and Labor Economics, Economics of Child Welfare

RELEVANT POSITIONS HELD

Lead Research Assistant	California Department of Child Support Services (Profs. Prashant Bharadwaj and David Arnold)	2022 –
Research Assistant	Prof. Katherine Meckel	2019 - 2020
Economic Analyst	Environmental Defense Fund	2014 - 2017

PUBLICATIONS

“Anticipation and Environmental Regulation” (with Matt Zaragoza-Watkins), *Journal of Environmental Economics and Management* 89 (2018): 255-277.

Abstract: *When agents expect a change in regulation to change the relative price of new durable goods they may shift purchases forward to avoid compliance costs. In the context of new-vehicle emission standards, prior analyses have not considered this adjustment margin. We model the effects of anticipation on sales and retirements of durable goods, and test our theory’s predictions empirically using the 2007 implementation of heavy-duty emission standards. We find evidence that anticipation caused a sales spike just before the policy took effect and a symmetric sales slump after implementation, which resulted in 31,164 more freight-truck sales ahead of the new standard and as much as \$118 million in environmental damages over the lifetimes of those vehicles.*

WORKING PAPERS

“Income and Child Maltreatment: Evidence from a Discontinuity of Tax Benefits (Job Market Paper)”

Abstract: *Poverty is one of the leading predictors of child maltreatment, yet the causal relationship is not well-understood. In this paper I provide new evidence of the causal effects of income on child protection system (CPS) referrals, investigations and foster care placements. I exploit a discontinuity in child-related tax benefits around a January 1 birthdate, which results in otherwise-similar families receiving considerably different refunds during the first year of a child’s life. I use 20 years of linked administrative data from California to determine the effects of this additional income on CPS involvement. A one-time \$1,000 transfer to low-income households decreases the number of referrals to CPS in the first three years of a child’s life by approximately 3%. These effects persist throughout the system, decreasing investigations (3%) and days spent in foster care (8%). Effects also persist throughout childhood, decreasing CPS involvement through at least age 8. Heterogeneity analyses by allegation and reporter category as well as child race and gender suggest that these effects indicate true reductions in maltreatment, as opposed to changes in reporting behavior. These findings suggest that providing low-income families with additional resources during the first year of a child’s life may be a fruitful strategy for reducing child maltreatment.*

“Algorithms, Humans, and Racial Disparities in Child Protective Services: Evidence from the Allegheny Family Screening Tool” (with Emily Putnam-Hornstein and Rhema Vaithianathan)

Abstract: *We ask whether providing decision-makers with a machine learning tool can reduce racial disparities. Our context is the implementation of the Allegheny Family Screening Tool (AFST), a predictive risk model that aims to help child protection workers decide which allegations of abuse or neglect to investigate. While the AFST does not dictate investigation decisions, referrals with the highest risk scores are “defaulted” to be screened in. Among this group of referrals, we find that the AFST reduced disparities in investigation rates. Using a triple difference strategy, we also find that the introduction of the AFST significantly reduced disparities in case opening and home removal rates for investigated referrals involving Black vs. White children.*

“Immigration Enforcement and Crime Reporting: Evidence from Child Protective Services”

Abstract: *I study the effects of a major immigration reform on the incidence and reporting rate of child maltreatment in Hispanic households. Secure Communities ties federal immigration enforcement to local law enforcement, effectively increasing the likelihood of deportation for undocumented immigrants who are arrested for a crime. I find that the implementation of Secure Communities decreased the rate of investigated child maltreatment cases involving Hispanic children, and increased the average severity of investigated cases. There was no effect on the rate of investigated cases involving non-Hispanic children. The effects are concentrated among allegations of neglect, deprivation, and physical abuse referred by non-mandated reporters, including family members, friends, and neighbors.*

“The Effect of Smoking on Mental Health: Evidence from a Randomized Trial” (with Katherine Meckel)

Abstract: *This paper estimates the causal effects of a smoking cessation intervention on mental health using data from the Lung Health Study, a randomized trial with five years of follow-up interviews. In the short-run, cessation worsens mental health, likely reflecting the effects of nicotine withdrawal. Long-run effects on mental health are small overall, but mask heterogeneity by gender. For women, cessation leads to improved mental health, driven by decreases in insomnia and nervousness. Men do not experience these improvements, due in part to a small increase in severe disturbances.*

RESEARCH IN PROGRESS

“Causal Effects of Child Protective Services: Evidence from the Allegheny Family Screening Tool” (with Lindsey Lacey and David Simon)

***Research Question:** What are the causal effects of child protection service investigations on children and their families?*

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

As instructor of record at UC San Diego

Economics of Discrimination Fall 2021, Spring 2022
Principles of Microeconomics Summer 2021

As teaching assistant at UC San Diego

Market Failures (MA level)	WI 2021, WI 2022 (Prof. Julie Cullen)
Public Economics I: Expenditures	WI 2020, SP 2020, FA 2021 (Prof. Katherine Meckel)
Economics of Discrimination	SP 2019, SU 2020 (Prof. Prashant Bharadwaj)
Economics of the Environment (MA level)	FA 2019 (Prof. Mark Jacobsen)
Microeconomics C	WI 2019 (Instr. Maxim Sinitsyn)
Economics of the Environment	FA 2018 (Prof. Mark Jacobsen)

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

2021-2022 UCSD Economics Clive Granger Research Fellowship Award
2021-2022 UCSD Economics Associate-Instructor Teaching Award
2021-2022 UCSD Institute for Practical Ethics Data Analytic Fellowship

PROFESSIONAL ACTIVITIES

Invited Presentations

2022 California Department of Health and Human Services
2022 Children’s Data Network, University of Southern California
2022 Allegheny County Department of Human Services
2021 Children’s Data Network, University of Southern California

Conference Presentations

2022 National Tax Association 115th Annual Conference on Taxation (accepted talk)
2022 NBER Health Care Summer Institute (non-presenting author)
2020 Southern Economics Association 92nd Annual Meeting

OTHER INFORMATION

Citizenship: USA, UK
Languages: English