

# Brett A. 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

### **Immigrants, Legal Status, and Illegal Trade** (job market paper)

Nearly \$2 trillion worth of illegal goods are trafficked across international borders every year, generating violence and other social costs along the way. Some have controversially linked illegal trafficking to immigrants, yet an appropriate immigration policy response is unclear. In this paper, I use novel data on nearly 10,000 confiscations of illegal drugs in Spain to study how immigrants and immigration policy affect the pattern and scale of illegal drug trafficking. To identify the causal effect of immigrants on trafficking, I construct an instrumental variable that interacts variation in total immigrant inflows into Spain by origin country with the fraction of immigrants inflowing into a province. I find that a 10% increase in the population of immigrants from a given origin country relative to the mean raises the value of drugs trafficked from the origin country confiscated in a given province by 12%. Moreover, this relationship is driven entirely by immigrants without legal status. To better understand the role of legal status, I exploit an extraordinary regularization of nearly half a million immigrants in 2005. Event study estimates suggest that granting immigrants legal status results in a long-run decline in drug trafficking, corresponding to the acquisition of citizenship by the immigrants.

### **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 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 control villages 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 following the Great Recession, lingering slack persisted for many years in the labor market. We show that the Bureau of Labor Statistics' Part-Time for Economic Reasons (PTER) measure substantially underestimates underemployment, as the PTER does not take into account full-time workers who want to work more hours but are not able to due to their employer. We document this underestimation using two widely used household surveys—the Panel Study of Income Dynamics and the Health and Retirement Survey. We argue that a more inclusive measure of labor market slack would include both part-time (as in the PTER) as well as full-time workers facing work hours constraints.

## 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

Consumer Finance section, 2013-2015

## Honors and Awards

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

Dissertation Year Fellowship, UCLA, 2020-2021

European Studies Fellowship, UCLA, 2020-2021

Best Paper Award, International Economics Proseminar, 2019-2020

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

APPAM Fall Research Conference (scheduled), November 2020

Economic Graduate Student Conference, WUSTL (scheduled), November 2020

Empirical Investigations in International Trade conference (scheduled), October 2020

CLEAN Seminar, Bocconi University, September 2020

DemSemX Virtual Conference, June 2020

International Economics Proseminar, UCLA, multiple

Applied Microeconomics Proseminar, UCLA, multiple

## Service

International Economics Student Proseminar organizer, 2018-2020

Graduate Students Association Forum member, 2017-2019

Graduate Economics Association, Co-President, 2017-2018

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

UCLA Economics PhD Student Mentor, 2016-2018

Citizenship: U.S.

## 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

*Teaching Reference:*

Olivia Osei-Twumasi  
Assistant Adjunct Professor of Economics  
and Director of Undergraduate Initiatives  
Dept. of Economics  
UCLA  
o.oseit@ucla.edu