Brandon Hawkins (she/her)

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CONTACT INFORMATION

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FIELDS OF CONCENTRATION

Applied Microeconomics: Health Economics, Public Finance, Labor Economics

EDUCATION

University of California, Davis — Davis, CA
Ph.D., Economics — September 2023 – Present

- Primary Advisor: Marianne Page
- 1st Year Coursework: Microeconomic Theory (3 quarters), Econometric Foundations, Econometric Methods (2 quarters), Macroeconomic Theory (3 quarters)
- 2nd Year Coursework: Public Economics (3 quarters), Labor Economics (2 quarters), Industrial Economics, Topics in International Trade and Economic Geography, Behavioral Economics, US Economic History, Teaching of Economics

Wake Forest University — Winston-Salem, NC
B.A., with honors in Economics and Philosophy, *magna cum laude* — May 2018

PUBLISHED PAPERS

Granular Income Inequality and Mobility using IDDA: Exploring Patterns across Race and Ethnicity
(with Illenin O. Kondo, Kevin Rinz, Natalie Gubbay, John L. Voorheis, and Abigail K. Wozniak)
In Race, Ethnicity, and Economic Statistics for the 21st Century. Randall Akee, Lawrence Katz, and Mark A. Loewenstein, eds. University of Chicago Press. 2026.

- We explore the evolution of income inequality and mobility in the U.S. for a large number of subnational groups defined by race and ethnicity, using granular statistics describing income distributions, income mobility, and conditional income growth derived from the universe of tax filers and W-2 recipients that we observe over a two-decade period (1998–2019). We find that income inequality and income growth patterns identified from administrative tax records differ in important ways from those that one might identify in public survey sources. The full set of statistics that we construct is available publicly alongside this paper as the Income Distributions and Dynamics in America, or IDDA, dataset. Using two applications, we illustrate IDDA's relevance for understanding income inequality trends. First, we extend Bayer and Charles (2018) beyond earnings gaps between Black and White men and document that, unlike those for other groups, earnings for both Black men and Black women fell behind earnings for White men following the Great Recession. This trend lasted through 2019, the end of the data period. Second, we document a significant reversal in the convergence of earnings for Native earners in Native areas.

POLICY BRIEFS

The Prosperity of High-Earning Foreign-Born Workers
For All: The Magazine of the Opportunity & Inclusive Growth Institute, Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis. Spring 2024.
Featured in The Wall Street Journal Pro.

- I use the IDDA dataset to document the rising inequality between high-earning foreign-born and US-born workers from 2005 to 2019. I illustrate that the incomes of high-earning foreign-born workers have grown faster than those of US-born workers. I also find that the share of high-earning workers who are foreign-born increased substantially during this time period. To unpack potential mechanisms underlying these trends, I show that high-earning foreign-born workers are more likely to stay at the top of the income distribution over time than high-earning US-born workers.

Expanding Opportunities & Reducing Barriers to Work: Georgia Final Report
Expanding Opportunities & Reducing Barriers to Work: Virginia Final Report
Expanding Opportunities & Reducing Barriers to Work: Illinois Final Report
Expanding Opportunities & Reducing Barriers to Work: Kansas Final Report
(with Jonathan Bigelow, James Mabli, Cynthia Miller, Stephen Freedman, Kelsey Schaberg, Gretchen Rowe, and Julie Hartnack)
Contract No. AG 3198-B-15- 0002. Alexandria, VA: U.S. Department of Agriculture, Food and Nutrition Service, Office of Policy Support. 2022.

- As part of the Agricultural Act of 2014, Georgia, Virginia, Illinois, and Kansas were selected to implement pilot programs that employed innovative strategies to connect Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) participants with jobs. We conduct four randomized controlled trials to test whether these programs achieve their mandate from Congress to increase participant incomes and reduce their need for public assistance. Although the pilot programs increase employment in Illinois and Kansas and earnings in Virginia, the effects of the programs are minimal.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis, Opportunity & Inclusive Growth Institute (OIGI) — Minneapolis, MN
Research Associate — January 2023 – June 2023
Research Assistant — July 2021 – January 2023

- Collaborated with Ph.D. economists at the Federal Reserve Bank of Minneapolis and the Census Bureau to generate the Income Distributions and Dynamics in America (IDDA) public use datasets
- Managed and led programming efforts on the IDDA project to transform IRS tax data and Census demographic data into informative summary statistics
- Provided support to OIGI economists by performing timely data analysis, fact-checking articles, and staffing conferences
- Cultivated economic research ideas and interests by attending and engaging in brown bag lunch seminars

MDRC — New York City, NY
Technical Research Assistant II — December 2019 – July 2021
Technical Research Assistant I — June 2018 – December 2019

- Simultaneously supported three research studies within MDRC's Economic Mobility, Housing, and Communities policy area
- Advanced every stage of data analysis by evaluating data quality, executing data-cleaning operations, restructuring and merging data files, creating outcome measures, and running various statistical models in SAS and R
- Communicated quantitative findings to non-technical audiences through memos, tables, infographics, and other data visuals
- Appointed to serve on MDRC's Equity Work Group (EWG) and advance the EWG's initiative to deliberately and systematically include community and participant voices in all stages of MDRC's research projects

FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS

National Science Foundation Graduate Research Fellowship Program — September 2023 – Present
Institute for Humane Studies (IHS) at George Mason University Expense Support Grant — July 2025
UC Davis Department of Economics Research Award — May 2025
The Gregory D. Pritchard Scholarship in Philosophy — May 2018

CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS AND INVITED SEMINARS

IHS Innovations and Regulatory Reforms in Healthcare: A Graduate Papers Workshop — January 2026

PUBLIC SERVICE

Court Appointed Special Advocate (CASA) — Sacramento County, CA
Volunteer — January 2025 – Present

AFFILIATIONS

Special Sworn Status, US Census Bureau — January 2021 – Present

OTHER INFORMATION

United States Citizen

Enclosed is my application to attend the NBER Mentoring Program on Aging and Health Economics Research. I am a third-year student in the Economics Ph.D. program at UC Davis. My primary research project studies how pharmacy access affects public health outcomes. The mentoring program would allow me to gain valuable feedback on this project from Health Economists and continue to explore other research ideas related to health and aging.

Over the past year, I have been working on a project studying how pharmacy access affects fertility. In theory, reduced pharmacy access could decrease the probability that women and girls take prescription and non-prescription birth control drugs, increasing fertility. To estimate the causal effect of pharmacy access on fertility, I use a Bartik-style exposure design that leverages variation in county-level pharmacy access that is exogenous to reproductive outcomes. My exposure measure is the share of total 2012 county prescription drug spending paid for by Medicare Part D (Part D). This measure should predict changes in pharmacy access because pharmacies in counties that derived more of their revenue from Part D should have paid more Direct and Indirect Remuneration (DIR) pharmacy fees, which acted as a negative cost shock to pharmacies. These fees became prevalent after 2012 and grew from an average of $1,100 per pharmacy in 2012 to $99,500 per pharmacy in 2018 (NCPDP 2013; 2019, CMS & HHS 2022). Using a difference-in-differences design, I find that after the rise of DIR pharmacy fees, counties with a higher share of their prescription drug spending paid for by Part D in 2012 experienced a 4.6 percent decline in total number of pharmacies relative to counties with lower shares of Part D drug spending. This decline in pharmacy access appears to be driven by pharmacy closings.

I also run my difference-in-differences specification with total (15-44) and teen (15-19) births as my outcome and find a null relationship between county-level exposure to DIR pharmacy fees and total and teen births. Given my clean first-stage results, I interpret this finding as the causal effect of a small decline in pharmacy access on fertility. In response to this null, but noisy, second-stage outcome, I have decided to pivot and study how pharmacy access affects other health outcomes. I plan to test whether declines in pharmacy access have increased deaths among the near elderly (50-64) from causes such as Heart Disease and Diabetes Mellitus, both of which can be managed with prescription drugs. I am currently in the process of signing a data use agreement with the CDC to access county-level mortality data that will enable this analysis.

After giving a Brown Bag presentation on this research project, my professor, Marianne Bitler, suggested that I speak with an Economist outside of UC Davis who has more expertise at the intersection of Industrial Organization and Health Economics. This is because although UC Davis has many strong Applied Microeconomists, none are Health Economists. This mentoring program would provide me with the perfect opportunity to receive guidance from Economists who are more specialized in the topics I study. I believe that I would benefit the most from the following support: (1) finding and accessing additional data to study mechanisms or other outcomes that could be affected by pharmacy access, (2) thinking through analyses I can run to show that concurrent changes to the healthcare landscape are not driving my second-stage results, (3) identifying other threats to my identification strategy, and (4) brainstorming other research ideas that could serve as an appropriate companion paper on my CV.

My CV is attached above. I believe that my research interests and lack of Health Economics mentors make me an ideal candidate for this program. Thank you for your consideration.