

MEGAN LANG

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Doctoral Studies University of California, Berkeley
PhD, Agricultural and Resource Economics, Expected completion May 2021

PRIMARY FIELDS: Development Economics
SECONDARY FIELDS: Energy Economics, Psychology and Economics

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Prior Education	UC Berkeley	M.S. Agricultural and Resource Economics	2017
	Occidental College	B.A. Economics and Diplomacy and World Affairs	2013

Teaching	UC Berkeley	Department of ARE, <i>Introduction to Econometrics</i> , Jeremy Magruder	2020
	UC Berkeley	Department of ARE, <i>Health and Environmental Economics</i> . Michael Anderson	2016

Grants, Fellowships, and Awards	2020	Winner of USAEE Best Student Paper Competition, G2LMILIC (\$140,000), ARE Summer Grant (\$3,500), CEGA Development Economics Challenge (\$4,490)
	2019	Graduate Division Travel Grant (\$900), ARE Travel Grant (\$600)
	2018	Innovation Growth Lab (\$90,000), Weiss Fund for International Development (\$75,000), International Growth Centre (\$25,000)
	2017	NSF Graduate Research Fellowship, ARE Outstanding Graduate Student Instructor, ARE Travel Grant (\$1,600)
	2016	UC Human Rights Fellowship (\$5,000)

Research Papers

“Consuming Perishable Goods in the Presence of Transaction Costs and Liquidity Constraints” (JOB MARKET PAPER)

Consumers face a trade-off when buying a perishable good with transaction costs. Buying in bulk minimizes transaction costs but creates waste. Eliminating waste by making small purchases raises costs, a problem compounded by liquidity constraints. I explore this trade-off using prepaid access time for solar electricity in rural Rwanda, a strictly non-storable good with transaction costs. I randomly offer 2,000 current solar customers a line of credit for solar access time, which alleviates liquidity constraints and lowers transaction costs. Consumers who previously bought in bulk respond by eliminating wasteful consumption, reducing demand by up to 6.4%. Those who are the most likely to be liquidity constrained increase demand by 88%. My results illustrate that transaction costs for perishable goods distort willingness to pay in opposite directions for different subsets of consumers. I show that reducing this distortion leads to a substantially higher estimate of consumer surplus from electricity than others in the literature have found. However, marginal households’ willingness to pay still falls below current cost-covering levels.

“Understanding Demand for Electricity along the Intensive Margin in Rwanda and Kenya”

Electricity is widely considered to be critical for economic growth, but recent literature provides mixed evidence on the welfare implications of electrification in developing countries. I employ a unique product to address current limitations in the literature: pay as you go (PAYGo) solar. I partner with a PAYGo solar company to study consumer responses to randomly offered bulk discounts and monthly rewards in Rwanda and Kenya. Both types of incentives potentially alter the average and marginal price that consumers pay for solar. I find that most consumers do not respond to either type of incentive. While this could suggest that demand for electricity is inelastic on the intensive margin, I provide suggestive evidence that uncertainty over the future marginal utility of solar as well as liquidity constraints may also play important roles in explaining consumer non-responsiveness.

Research in Progress

“The Economics of Women Entrepreneurs” with Jeremy Magruder and Julia Seither

Pre-analysis plan filed with the AEA RCT Registry (#AEARCTR-0003214Z).

Female-owned enterprises have the potential to spur inclusive growth and contribute to economic empowerment in settings where women have been traditionally marginalized, but current evidence finds puzzlingly low returns to both financial and human capital interventions. This project aims at understanding whether a holistic entrepreneurship program that tackles multiple growth constraints simultaneously can promote business growth and its consequences for household dynamics.

“Price Inelastic or Price Inattentive? Demand for Electricity in Low-Income Countries” How much does adoption of electricity depend on the expected price of electricity on the intensive margin? I use the phased roll-out of an intensive-margin subsidy for solar electricity in Togo to measure consumer responses on the extensive margin. The intensive margin subsidy, which reduces the price of electricity on the intensive margin by 18-40%, increases adoption by over 70%, indicating that adoption is highly elastic with respect to intensive margin prices.

“SMS Surveys of Selected Expenditures” with Ethan Ligon

Household consumption expenditures are generally the preferred measure of household welfare in low income countries, but surveying households about expenditures is costly. Can short message service (SMS) surveys enable researchers and policymakers to measure household welfare at a high frequency in low income countries? We detail the implementation of a SMS survey on household composition and consumption expenditures in Rwanda and evaluate the efficacy of such surveys for gathering high-frequency data. We successfully calculate a measure of household welfare for households that respond to the SMS survey, and we find that SMS surveys are substantially less costly than equivalent in-person surveys; however, nonresponse is a significant problem. For this reason, our proposed use of high-frequency SMS surveys is to combine them with in-person baseline surveys and leverage the panel nature of the data to compute weights that correct for nonresponse bias.

Prior Employment		UC Berkeley, Graduate Student Researcher (Ethan Ligon)	2017
		World Bank, Short-Term Contractor	2018
		Navigant Economics, Consultant	2013-2015
Talks	2020	Virtual AFE, USAEE Virtual Best Student Paper Competition, AERE Virtual Conference, AAEA Virtual Conference	
	2019	IPWSD at Columbia University, AERE at Lake Tahoe, AFE at University of Chicago	
Refereeing		<i>Journal of Development Economics</i>	
		<i>Journal of Behavioral and Experimental Economics</i>	
Activities	2016 - 2020	Leadership Board, Women in Economics at Berkeley/Berkeley Economists for Equity	
	2018-2019	President, Women in Economics at Berkeley	
	2018	Co-organizer, Graduate Student Summit for Diversity in Economics	
	2018-2019	Co-founder, UC Berkeley Development and Environment Working Group	