Leveraging the Census Bureau’s Data Linkage Infrastructure for Evidence Building

APDU 2019 Annual Conference

July 9, 2019
Roundtable Participants

• Paul Bailey, American Institutes for Research
  – “Labor Market Outcomes of VA Program Beneficiaries”

• Drew Anderson, RAND Corporation
  – “Using Multiple Discontinuities to Estimate Broad Effects of Public Need-based Aid for College”

• Nick Mader, Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
  – “Does Eviction Cause Poverty? Quasi-experimental Evidence from Cook County, IL”

• Moderator: Scott Boggess, Census Bureau
Census Timeline

• May 2015: Census Bureau Launches CLIP
• March 2016: Evidence-Based Policymaking Commission Established
• July 2016: First Commission Meeting
• January 2017: Chapin Hall Pilots Agreement
• January 2017: 5-Year Agreement to Host HUD MTO & FOS Data
• September 2017: Commission Recommendations Released
• October 2017: Evidence Building Staff Created
Evidence Building Staff

• Expand the Census Bureau’s Data Linkage Infrastructure
  – Acquire new data for evidence building
  – Improve metadata quality and access

• Facilitate Evidence Building/Program Evaluation Research
  – Develop and document policies and processes for evidence building research at Census
  – Manage internal evidence building projects
  – Provide research support

• Streamline Project Approvals
POST 9/11 GI BILL

Paul Bailey, Senior Economist
Question

• Post 9/11 GI Bill has spent $94B since program inception and served 2M veterans*

• What are the outcomes associated with various majors or specialties

Preliminary results cleared for disclosure:

• Focus on Army enlisted

• Government benefits uptake among GI Bill users

• Enormous opportunity to look at human capital production because military personnel all have pre-enrollment AFQT scores

*Source: GAO-19-553T
Issues

• Data sharing agreements have been difficult to setup
• Census resources have been readily available and have good documentation
• File merging is (mostly) taken care of by Census
• The disclosure review process is not immediate and requires patience
Financial aid: big $, mixed results

• About $30B federal, $10B states, primarily need-based
• Complicated application, uncertain funds
• Does it help?
  • College enrollment and completion
  • Household finances: debt, employment, earnings, children, marriage, homeownership
FAFSA data are everywhere

• Free Application for Federal Student Aid filed by >17M/yr
• Data flows to states, colleges that provide aid
• Detailed finances, household info, age, gender, location, school
Wisconsin study: degrees → tax revenue?

- First-come first-served funding with unpredictable cutoff
- Technical college students benefit, especially the poorest
- Linking to Census...
  - Needs to inform aid programs for data owner (Wisconsin)
  - Earnings data most important, but IRS, LEHD tough
  - ACS household data, only a few percent match
Does Eviction Cause Poverty?
Quasi-Experimental Evidence from Cook County, IL

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Nick Mader  Chapin Hall at the University of Chicago
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Winnie van Dijk  University of Chicago

Association for Public Data Users
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Motivation and Background

Recent ethnographic work argues that eviction is not merely a consequence, but is a cause, of poverty (Desmond 2012, 2016).

Our work is a large scale, quasi-experimental evaluation

• Evictions cases are randomly assigned to judges
• Judges vary in leniency for cases on the bubble
• Compare trajectories of households assigned to more vs less lenient judges

Key features/opportunities for administrative data

• Longitudinal – track household trajectories
• Large-scale – statistical power
• Many domains – breadth of mechanisms related to poverty
Overview of Status and Results

Preliminary results

• Small causal effects on financial strain
• Negative and persistent effect on durable goods consumption (proxied by having an auto loan)
• Small impact on children’s absenteeism
• In run-up: significant increase in financial strain and children’s absenteeism for both evicted and non-evicted

On-going/future work

• Earnings and employment
• Receipt of public assistance programs
• Homelessness
• School outcomes
Challenges and Discussion

• Administrative records only capture part of the overall phenomenon of eviction
• Limited identifying information in court data
• Statistical power is still a concern
• Challenges with data sharing agreements, both through Census and other outlets