

Cornell FSRDC Newsletter

A report of activities of the Cornell Federal Statistical Research Data Center

Eye on Researchers: Benson and Stanchi

Graduating RDC Researchers



Cassandra Benson recently received her Ph.D. in economics. She analyzes the effect of receiving special education services on Supplemental Security Income (SSI) receipt in her job market paper, “Is Special Education a Pathway to Supplemental Security Income for Children?” Her work uses the National Health Interview Survey linked to Social Security Administration records, accessed at the Cornell RDC

through a partnership with the National Center for Health Statistics. She finds that children born just before the kindergarten eligibility cutoff are more likely to receive special education services and consequently more likely to apply for and receive SSI benefits. This fall, she joins the Air Force Academy as an assistant professor.

Flavio Stanchi also earned his Ph.D. in economics. His job market paper, “Creative Destruction? The Effects of E-Commerce on Demand and Productivity for Department Stores,” studies the effects of e-commerce. His work links private e-commerce data from Forrester Research to confidential establishment microdata from the Census of Retail Trade. By estimating a model of the supply and demand for retail goods, he shows that e-commerce reduces department store markups and revenues, though productivity increases. Beginning this summer, he will be a data scientist at Airbnb.

The Opportunity Project

Beyond research in the FSRDC, the Census Bureau offers researchers another opportunity to use their skills to address important questions. The Opportunity Project coordinates 12-week sprints in which technology companies, universities, and non-profits create digital tools using open data to solve problems. For example, UC Santa Cruz and Motivf worked together to create a game designed to help young people prepare for disasters, using federal disaster declaration and protective actions data. To learn more, please visit <https://opportunity.census.gov/index.html>



New Active Projects

“SNAP and the Human Capital Investments of Young Adults” Sarah Hamersma and Warren Brown

The Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) is one of the most broadly-targeted anti-poverty programs in the U.S. While SNAP is available throughout the life course, it may play a distinct role in labor market decisions in early adulthood. In this research project, we model the relationship between SNAP participation and educational attainment for young adults, and examine whether differences in SNAP work requirements affect that relationship. In early adulthood, SNAP may play a role in improving the feasibility of time-intensive educational investments by helping meet basic needs. This role may be limited, however, by the restrictions on SNAP access placed on young adults without children, many of whom face work requirements for eligibility unless their state or county successfully applies for a federal waiver of the requirement. We will use the Survey of Income and Program Participation, combined with administrative data on SNAP from seven states and policy data on work-requirement waivers by county, to determine whether work requirements create a meaningful barrier to SNAP for young adults, and whether SNAP access plays an important role in educational attainment. Using a variety of quasi-experimental methods including regression analyses and instrumental variables models, we expect to see reduced SNAP take-up in areas with work requirements, and potentially less educational investment by young adults with such barriers to SNAP participation. This research will help policy makers better understand whether potential students emerging from disadvantaged households may lack access to food assistance that could otherwise help make college attendance feasible.

“Does Access to Health Care Affect Teen Birth Rates and School Dropout Rates? Evidence from School-based Health Centers” Michael Lovenheim, Randall Reback (Barnard), and Leigh Wedenoja (Brown)

We examine whether expanding teenagers' access to health care via SBHCs influences their fertility rates and their high school graduation rates. We have obtained data from surveys of SBHCs conducted by the National Alliance on School-Based Health Care in 1998, 2001, 2004, 2007 and 2011. Centers are followed longitudinally, and in addition to being able to link them to the districts they serve, we have information on when each center opened, its size in terms of students served, hours open, staffing hours, and the specific health services it provides to students. We focus on centers that serve high school students (grades 9-12); overall, we observe 2,586 centers during our analysis period. We completed a large initial part of this project using public-use birth data from vital statistics, educational attainment data from the Census/ACS and high school diploma data from the Common Core of Data (Lovenheim, Reback and Wedenoja 2016). We combine these data at the county (for the birth analysis) and school district (for the high school completion analysis) with the school-based health center data.



Results indicate that school-based health centers lead to large reductions in teen births but have at most a small effect on high school completion. However, there are a number of limitations to the public access aggregate data or PUMS sample. A core concern raised by peer reviewers and colleagues is that aggregating to the county for the birth analysis and focusing only on large counties available in public data results in incorrect estimation of the true effect of SBHCs. The vital statistics data also do not permit an examination of heterogeneous effects beyond the sparse set of demographic information contained on birth certificates.

“Government Welfare and Private Provision of Public Goods: Evidence from SNAP”

Nicolas Bottan

The primary goal of this project is to examine the interplay between SNAP and demand for services provided by the nonprofit sector. I am interested in examining two questions. The first will study the extent to which changes in the work requirement for SNAP eligibility affects the demand for services provided by non-government providers. In other words, does access to SNAP crowd-out the private provision of public goods? The work requirement affects the population of able-bodied adults without dependents (ABAWD), who must work at least 20 hours a week or participate in state-sponsored job training in order to receive benefits. If these requirements are not met, they are only eligible to receive benefits for 3 months in a 36-month period. Additionally, I am interested in exploring how this relation varies across an individual’s access to supermarkets and local food pantries.

Second, I will explore whether a negative shock to charitable giving affected the local use of public assistance (ie. SNAP) and food insecurity. This second question builds on results found in Bottan and Perez-Truglia (2015) who find that a negative shock to religious participation decreased charitable giving and in turn reduced their provision of public goods (measured by employment in service providers). Using data from the CPS, I will be able to go a step further in this analysis and quantify whether the negative shock affected demand for SNAP and food insecurity.

“Productivity and Wage Dispersion in the Great Recession and Beyond” (Boston) **Holden Diethorn, Erling Barth (Institute for Social Research), Wang Jin (MIT), Sari Kerr (Wellesley), Kristina Steffenson McElheran (MIT), Namrata Narain (Harvard), Andrew Wang (Harvard), Xiupeng Wang (MIT)**

The project will investigate the extent of labor hoarding versus productivity change by establishments and firms during the Great Recession, and differences in responses compared to prior recessions and across sectors. The first part analyses the response of firms and establishments to the changes in total industry demand during the Great Recession and subsequent recovery. We will also contrast job loss and closure between firms that invest



heavily in intangible capital, such as R&D, and those that invest less. Our analysis of the Census data prior to the GR showed a huge widening of the distribution of average wages of firms and of establishments in the same firm. We will assess whether there is greater heterogeneity in employment responses among firms and establishments within firms than in the past, and the characteristics of the observed heterogeneity. A novel feature is that we will add measures of occupational status and human capital to the establishments. Using measures of sales, capital input, employment, material inputs and wages we plan to look more carefully into the productivity dispersion, employment and wage dispersion across establishments in general. First we want to establish and analyze the rent sharing behavior of firms. We will develop this literature further, providing estimates of rent sharing for different types of employees, both in terms of occupation, gender and in terms of educational level

The existence of a wide distribution of wages across establishments, even for the same worker, raises questions of the performance of the labor market, and why market forces do not work to eliminate these wage differentials. The behavior of employers thus seems to indicate that there are large frictions in labor markets. One way of studying such frictions is to study job-to-job transitions. We plan to study the relationship between the wage distribution across establishments and job-to-job transitions over time and between different types of workers. Furthermore, worker flows across firms and establishments create direct connections between various organizational units. These connections provide possible avenues for information flows and spillovers between firms. We will study the interconnectedness between firms and establishments as means of both knowledge transfer and as instruments for measuring the competitiveness of the economy.

Continuing Active Projects

Cornell University:

“Experimental Estimates of the Long-Run Impacts of Welfare Reform” (Internal)

Amanda Eng, Pauline Leung, Zhuan Pei, Katherine Wen, et al

“Multigenerational Exposure to Neighborhood Disadvantage and its Effects on Well Being”

Steven Alvarado and Alexandra Cooperstock

“Income Analysis Using Surveys” (Internal)

Laura Tach et al

“Demonstration of Administrative Records Improving Surveys (DARIS): Assessing Program Participation with ACS, WIC, SNAP, and TANF Data” (Internal)

Amanda Eng, Zhuan Pei (adviser), and Kevin Rinz (Census)

“Human Capital and Corporate Financing, Restructuring, and Governance”

Hyunseob Kim, Warren Bailey, Dawoon Kim, Saheon Kim, Antonio Falato (Fed), Song Ma (Yale), Edith Liu (Fed), and Till von Wachter (UCLA)

“The Role of Educators on Reporting Child Maltreatment”



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- Maria Fitzpatrick, Cassandra Benson, Samuel Bondurant (Census), and Christopher Wildeman
- “How Housing and Labor Market Conditions Influence the Progression of Romantic Relationships”
Laura Tach, Sharon Sassler, Mariana Amorim, and Emily Parker
- “The Impact of Online Retail on the Market Structure of Retail and Service Industries” (Triangle)
Panle Barwick, Flavio Stanchi, Emek Basker (Census), Allan Collard-Wexler (Duke), Xiaohua Wu (Indiana)
- “The Political Economy of Medicaid: Ideology, Eligibility, and the Consequences of Cost-saving Measures”
Jee-Hun Choi and Claire S.H. Lim
- “Child SSI Caseloads, Take-Up, and Age-for-Grade Effects on Disability”
Cassandra Benson
- “The LBD Initiative - Collaboration with RDC Researchers” (Internal)
Lars Vilhuber, Chih-Chung Lin, et al
- “Effects of Education on Health and Other Outcomes Using Variation in Social Security Benefits for Children”
Barton Willage (Louisiana State University; former Ph.D. student)
- “Estimating the Determinants of Private School Enrollment: The Role of School Attendance Zone Racial and Ethnic Composition”
Arnab Basu, Chia-Hua Lin, Salvatore Saporito (William & Mary), and Anna Choi (Pepperdine; former Ph.D. student)
- “Effects of DI on Health and Well-being”
Sarah Prenovitz (Abt Associates; former Ph.D. student)
- “SIPP 2014 Internal Research and Collaboration Project” (Internal)
Lars Vilhuber, Bill Block, Warren Brown et al
- “Vietnam Veterans and Obesity”
Daniel Grossman (West Virginia University; former Ph.D. student) and John Cawley (adviser)
- “Unemployment and Unintended Fertility”
Jessica Houston Su (SUNY Buffalo; former Ph.D. student)
- “Research Program to Determine the Possibilities from Linking ACS & LEHD Data” (Internal)
Lars Vilhuber et al
- “LEHD Data Infrastructure Project” (Internal)
Lars Vilhuber, Sylvie Herbert et al
- “Demographic Survey Improvement Project” (Internal)
Lars Vilhuber et al



Syracuse University:

“The New York State Homestead Tax Option: Tax Incidence and Equity”

David Schwegman and John Yinger (adviser)

“Disparities in Healthcare Access and Utilization among Children with and without Special Healthcare Needs, and their Caregivers” (Missouri)

Colleen Heflin, Nancy Cheak-Zamora (Missouri), and Chinedum Ojinnaka (Arizona State)

“Knowledge of Health Status and the Timing of Retirement and Disability Claims”

Perry Singleton

“Education, Geography, and U.S. Adult Mortality Risk”

Jennifer Montez, Blakelee Kemp, and Julene Cooney

“The Effects of Pregnancy-Related Medicaid Expansions on Maternal, Infant, and Child Health”

Sarah Hamersma and Melanie Guldi (University of Central Florida)

“A Second Look at the Health Effects of Military Service Using the Vietnam-Era Draft Lottery as a Potentially Invalid Instrumental Variable”

Alfonso Flores-Lagunes and Xintong Wang (Louisiana State University)

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