

Can We Trust Parental Reports of Child Care Subsidy Receipt?

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Survey-Based Parental Reports of Child Care Subsidy Receipt

- Early Childhood Longitudinal Study-Kindergarten Cohort
 - "Did any of the following people or organizations help to pay for...this provider to care for [CHILD]...?"
 - "a social service agency or welfare office"
- Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study
 - "Does any person or agency give you money, a voucher, or a scholarship to help pay for child care?"
 - "a government agency"

Previous Research Using Parental Reports of Subsidy Receipt

- Subsidies on the left-hand-side (predictors studies)
- Subsidies on the right-hand-side (impact studies)
 - Maternal employment (e.g., Blau & Tekin, xxxx)
 - Child care choices (e.g., Tekin, 2005)
 - Child care quality (e.g., Johnson et al., xxxx)
 - Child development (e.g., Herbst & Tekin, 2010)
 - Maternal health (e.g., Herbst & Tekin, 2011)

Concerns Regarding Measurement Error

- Recall or memory lapses
- Stigma tied to receipt of public assistance
- Confusion with other forms of subsidized care
- Lack of awareness that child receives a "subsidy"
 - Copayment is made, thus not receiving a subsidy
 - Full cost of care is paid by the state (i.e., "free" care)

When is Measurement Error Problematic in Ordinary Least Squares Regressions?

- Subsidies on the left-hand-side (predictors studies)
 - Measurement error is unobserved (i.e., in the error term)
 - No bias, unless it is correlated with the covariates
 - More noise means inflated standard errors
- Subsidies on the right-hand-side (impact studies)
 - Measurement error is unobserved (i.e., in the error term)
 - Classical errors-in-variables
 - Downward bias (i.e., biased against finding a subsidy effect)

Are Parental Reports Reliable?

Analysis Plan

- Fragile Families and Child Well-Being Study
 - Longitudinal birth cohort study of children born between 1998-2000
 - Subsidy utilization data collected from parents AND providers
 - Providers: "Is any part of [focal child's name] care paid for by government support?" and those that responded affirmatively were then asked "what local, state, or federal programs provide these funds?"
 - Focal child is coded as receiving a subsidy if the provider explicitly said that the CCDF directly (or indirectly through another agency) pays for child care
 - Mother: "Does any person or agency give you money, a voucher, or a scholarship to help pay for child care?" and those who responded affirmatively were then asked "who or what agency gives you money or the voucher or scholarship?"
 - Focal child is coded as receiving a subsidy if mother responded "a government agency" or "child care center"
- Analysis plan:

Analysis 1: Overlap of Provider and Parental Reports of Subsidy Receipt

		Parent Report	
		Subsidy	No Subsidy
Provider Report	Subsidy	N=104	N=70
	No Subsidy	N=62	N=368

Agreement Rate:
78.1%

Analysis #2: Compare the Demographic Predictors of Subsidy Receipt

- Estimate logit regressions of the parent- and provider-based measures of subsidy receipt on a common set of family characteristics
- Test the null hypothesis of the equality of the logit coefficients across both models
- Key finding: the demographic determinants of subsidy receipt do not depend on the subsidy measure used
 - Of the 20 variables in the model, coefficients on only three differed across the subsidy measures
 - Of the three that differed (maternal education dummies), the signs on the coefficients were the same

Analysis #3: How Similar are the "Agreers" and "Disagreers"?

- Estimate logit a regression of disagreement between the parent and provider measures of subsidy receipt on the set of family characteristics
- Assumption is that disagreement is a potential source of measurement error, or noise in the data
- Test whether such error is systematically related to a number of observable family characteristics
- Key finding: measurement error is largely random with respect to family characteristics
 - Of the 20 variables in the model, coefficients on only two are related to the likelihood of parent-provider disagreement
 - The two that are related: number of children and another adult is present

Conclusions and Cautions

- Results from our simple tests consistently suggest that there is more signal than noise in parental reports of subsidy receipt
- Cautions are in order: can we trust provider reports of subsidy receipt?; time differences in the data collection on parents and providers; generalizability to other datasets
- Linked survey-admin data would be beneficial
- Recommendation: use multiple measures