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Review Paper – What controls / educational outcomes to include?

Currie and Thomas, “Does Head Start Make a Difference”

* Data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth (NLSY) and National Longitudinal Survey’s Child-Mother file (NSLCM)
* *Not* randomized, but they do take some novel steps to remove bias of nonrandom selection:
  + Contrast children enrolled in Head Start w/siblings who have not
  + Difference-in-difference
    - Impact of Head Start relative to “no pre-school”
    - Impact of other preschool programs relative to “no pre-school”
* Head Start is said to be associated with reductions in:
  + Grade repetitions
  + High-school dropout rates
  + Teen pregnancies
* Examine impact of Head Start on child well-being conditional on an array of *observable* mother and child characteristics
* To control for unobserved characteristics correlated with selection, they estimate models w/household fixed-effects
* Problems with household fixed effects:
  + In the presence of measurement error, differencing can result in “throwing the baby out with the bath water”
  + We don’t know the spillover effects from attending Head Start on the other child
* They get around this with difference-in-difference:
  + They take the difference between the effect of attending Head Start and the effect of attending another pre-school program – thus, the within-household measurement error/bias should be equally apparent in *both*, taking the difference removes that entirely
* Ways to check for ‘favoritism’:
  + Taken to doctor in first three months of life?
  + “recognition of body parts” test (????)

Measurements

* Child outcomes:
  + Pair of indicators of academic performance: Picture Peabody Vocabulary Test (PPVT) and whether child has progressed through school without repeating a grade
  + Child health: whether child has been immunized for measles, and height standardized by age and gender using national norms

Possible child-specific controls:

* Child age
* Gender
* Was child the first-born (dummy)
* Household permanent income
* The mother’s education
* Mother’s cognitive (?) test score
* Mother’s height
* Number of siblings in mother’s household when she was age 14
* Education of maternal grandmother

Interactions (?)

Garces, Thomas, and Currie. “Longer Term Effects of Head Start”

* Use data from a supplement to the Panel Survey of Income Dynamics
* Three big advantages of the data:
  + In 1995, questions about participation about Head Start / other preschools were included in interviews…asked to all adults
  + PSID is a panel stretching back over a quarter century, able to control for family background and environment in which each respondent grew up in great detail
  + PSID provides nationally representative sample of children who participated in actual Head Start Programs, NOT experimental stuff
* Four indicators of economic and social success in adulthood:
  + Completing high school
    - Attending college
  + Elevated earnings in one’s early twenties
  + Booked or charged with a crime?
  + Evidence of positive spillovers from older children who attended Head Start to younger siblings, particularly with regard to being booked or charged with a crime
* Methodology follows Currie and Thomas (1995)
* Quality of recall data on Head Start
* Control variables:
  + Maternal and paternal education of respondent
  + A “spline” in family income when child was of preschool age
  + Whether respondent lived with both parents at age 4
  + Indicator for whether respondent was oldest child
  + Birthweight
* Experimented with:
  + Whether mother worked or was on welfare when child was age 4
* Flaws with fixed effects approach:
  + Effective sample includes only those respondents with at least one sibling in the sample (not as large a sample size as we would like)
  + Effects of random measurement errors may be exacerbated in fixed effects
  + Within-household unobserved characteristics
  + Time-variant
    - Average family income over years that respondent was age 3, 4, 5, 6