Lecture 19: Practical Issues in Running Regressions

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14.310x

Practical issues with regression

- Dummy Variables
- Other Functional Form issues
- On example of Putting things together : Regression discontinuity Design

Dummy Variables

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + \epsilon_i$$

D_i is a dummy variable , or an indicator variable, if it takes the value 1 if the observation is in group A, and 0 if in group B.
Example:

- RCT: 1 if in treatment group , 0 otherwise
- 1 if male, 0 if female
- 1 before great depression, 0 after
- 1 before generic substitution act passed, 0 otherwise,
- 1 if the house has a deck in the backyard, 0 otherwise,

Interpretation

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + \epsilon_i$$

Without any control variables, it is easy to verify that $\widehat{\beta} = \overline{Y_A} - \overline{Y_B}$.

So you can always estimate the difference between the treatment and control group for an RCT using an OLS regression framework. The standard errors will be slightly different from the Neyman standard errors we computed before (because the Neyman standard errors adjust for sample size of EACH group, whereas the OLS standard errors adjust for the size of the overall sample), but it won't matter that much if the samples are large enough, and similar in treatment and control groups.

From a categorical variable to dummy variables

- What if you don't have two groups, but, say, 50 (e.g. 50 states): Your original variable is takes discrete values 1 to 50.
- It usually does not make much sense to include it directly as a regressor
- Transform it into 50 dummy variables: for each state, the dummy $= 1$ if the observation is from that state, and 0 otherwise.
- Careful, what happens if you introduce all of them and the constant?

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- So what do we do?
- We typically omit ONE group (if we don't do it, R may do it for us), and then what is the interpretation of each coefficient?
- It is the difference between the value of this group and the value for the omitted (reference) group.

with other variables in the regression

With other variables in the regression

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + X_i \gamma + \epsilon_i$$

In that case β is the difference in intercept between group A and group B. This is the most frequent way that RCT are analyzed: the matrix X are "control" variables: things that did not affect the assignment but may have been different at baseline.

Dummy variables and Interactions

Now imagine you have two sets of dummy variables, say, Treatment and control, and Male and Female.
You can run:

$$Y_i = \alpha + \beta D_i + \gamma M_i + \delta M_i * D_i + \epsilon_i$$

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How do you obtain an estimate of the treatment effect for males?

Difference-in-Differences

- This is the basic "difference in differences" model which is often used by empirical researchers in a situation where there was a change in the law (or an event) affecting one group but not the other, and you are willing to assume that in the absence of the law, the difference between the two group would have remained stable over time
- In this case you have $D_i = 1$ if post law, 0 otherwise, and $G_i = 1$ if pre law, 0 otherwise.
- Famous examples: Mariel Boatlift experiment (David Card) ; New Jersey -Pennsylvania experiment (Card and Krueger)

Example : INPRES school construction program in Indonesia

Second five year plan (1974-79)-Oil shock.

- A large program:
  - 61,807 primary schools constructed from to 1973/74 to 1978/79.
    Number of schools multiplied by 2. 1 school for every 500 children.
  - A *change* in policy: Before 1973, no construction, ban on recruiting for public service positions.
- A program meant to favor low-enrollment regions.
  Allocation rule: number of schools constructed in a district was proportional to the number of children (ages 7 to 12) *not enrolled in primary school*.

Data Available

SUPAS 95: A survey done in 1995: after the children educated in these schools have completed their schooling, and have started working.

- 150,000 men born 1950-1972

- Variables: education, year and region of birth, wages.

Sources of variation

Two factors affect the intensity of the program.

- *Year of birth* :
- *Region of birth* The government was targeting low enrollment regions $\Rightarrow$ substantial variation in program intensity across districts.

Difference in difference

	Years of education			Log(wages)		
	Level of program in Region of birth			Level of program in Region of birth		
	High	Low	Difference	High	Low	Difference
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Panel A: Experiment of Interest						
Aged 2 to 6 in 1974	8.49	9.76	-1.27	6.61	6.73	-0.12
	(0.043)	(0.037)	(0.057)	(0.0078)	(0.0064)	(0.010)
Aged 12 to 17 in 1974	8.02	9.40	-1.39	6.87	7.02	-0.15
	(0.053)	(0.042)	(0.067)	(0.0085)	(0.0069)	(0.011)
Difference	0.47	0.36	0.12	-0.26	-0.29	0.026
	(0.070)	(0.038)	(0.089)	(0.011)	(0.0096)	(0.015)
Panel B: Control Experiment						
	8.00	9.41	-1.41	6.87	7.02	-0.15
Aged 12 to 17 in 1974	(0.054)	(0.042)	(0.078)	(0.0085)	(0.0069)	(0.011)
	7.70	9.12	-1.42	6.92	7.08	-0.16
Aged 18 to 24 in 1974	(0.059)	(0.044)	(0.072)	(0.0097)	(0.0076)	(0.012)
	0.30	0.29	0.013	0.056	0.063	0.0070
Difference	(0.080)	(0.061)	(0.098)	(0.013)	(0.010)	(0.016)

Note: The sample is made of the individuals who earn a wage. Standard errors are in parentheses

source: Duflo, 2001 "Schooling and Labor market consequence of school constructions in Indonesia: Evidence from an Unusual Experiment" American economic review.

More generally: Interactions

More generally, the coefficient on the interaction between dummy variable and some variable X tells us the extent to which the dummy variable changes the regression function for that regressor.

$$Y_i = \beta_0 + \beta_0^* D_i + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta^* D_i X_{1i} + \cdots + \epsilon_i$$

INPRES example: use variation across cohorts

$$S_{ijk} = c_1 + \alpha_{1j} + \beta_{1k} + (P_j * T_i)\gamma_1 + \epsilon_{ijk} \ , \tag{1}$$

where

- S_{ijk} is the education of individual i born in region j in year k,
- T_i is a dummy indicating whether the individual belongs to the "young" cohort in the subsample,
- P_j denotes the intensity of the program in the region of birth (number of school built)
- c_1 is a constant,
- β_{1k} is a set of cohort-of-birth fixed effects [in practice, a series of dummies=1 for each year of birth, omit 1]
- α_{1j} is a set of district-of-birth fixed effects [in practice, a series of dummies=1 for each district of birth, omit 1]

Table

	Observations	Years of education (1)	(2)	(3)	Log(hourly wage) (4)	(5)	(6)
PANEL A: Experiment of Interest: Individuals Aged 2 to 6 or 12 to 17 in 1974 (Youngest Cohort: Individuals Ages 2 to 6 in 1974)							
Whole sample	78,470	0.124	0.15	0.188			
		(0.0250)	(0.0260)	(0.0289)			
Sample of wage earners	31,061	0.196	0.199	0.259	0.0147	0.0172	0.0270
		(0.0424)	(0.0429)	(0.0499)	(0.00729)	(0.00737)	(0.00850)
PANEL B: Control Experiment : Individuals Aged 12 to 24 in 1974 (Youngest Cohort: Individuals Ages 12 to 17 in 1974)							
Whole sample	78,488	0.0093	0.0176	0.0075			
		(0.0260)	(0.0271)	(0.0297)			
Sample of wage earners	30,225	0.012	0.024	0.079	0.0031	0.00399	0.0144
		(0.0474)	(0.0481)	(0.0555)	(0.00798)	(0.00809)	(0.00915)
Control variables:							
Year of birth*enrollment rate in 1971		No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	Yes
Year of birth* water and sanitation program		No	No	Yes	No	No	Yes

Dependent variable: Years of education (1)–(3); Log(hourly wage) (4)–(6).

The coefficient γ tells us that the difference in education between the young cohort and the old cohort is 0.124 year larger for each school built per 1000 kids.

Figure

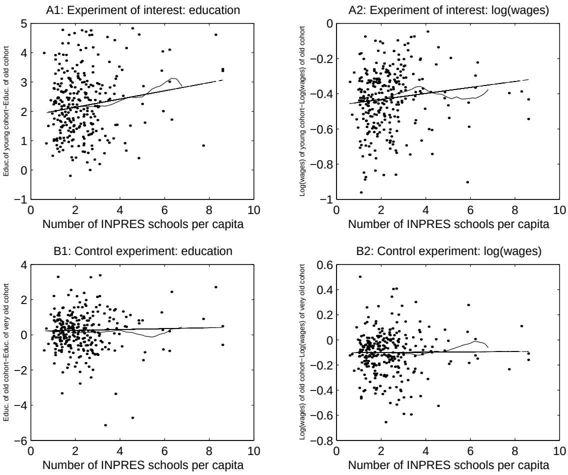

FIGURE 1: Regional growth in education and log wages accross cohort and program intensity

(Per capita denotes per 1000 children)

Practical issues with regression

- Dummy Variables
- Other Functional Form issues
- One example of putting things together: Regression discontinuity design

Other functional form issues

- Transforming the dependent variable
- Non linear transformations of the independent variables

Transformations of the dependent variable

- Suppose $Y_i = AX_{1i}^{\beta_1} X_{2i}^{\beta_2} e^{\epsilon_i}$ then run linear regression

  $$log(Y_i) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 logX_{1i} + \beta_2 logX_{12} + \epsilon_i$$

  to estimate β_1 and β_2. Note that β_1 and β_2 are *elasticities*: when X_1 changes by 1%, Y changes by β_1%.
- Returns to education formulation

  $$logY_i = \beta_0 + \beta_1 S_i + \epsilon_i$$

  When education increases by 1 year, wages increase by $\beta_1 \times 100\%$.

Transformations of the dependent variable

- Box Cox Transformation
  Suppose $Y_i = \frac{1}{\beta_0+\beta_1 X_{1i}+\beta_2 X_{2i}+\epsilon_i}$
  then run regression
  $$\frac{1}{Y_i} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \epsilon_i$$
- Discrete choice model
  Suppose
  $$P_i = \frac{e^{\beta_0+\beta_1 X_{1i}+\beta_2 X_{2i}+\epsilon_i}}{1 + e^{\beta_0+\beta_1 X_{1i}+\beta_2 X_{2i}+\epsilon_i}}$$
  P_i is the percentage of individuals choosing a particular option (e.g. buying a particular car)
  then run regression:
  $$Y_i = log(\frac{Pi}{1-P_i}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X_{1i} + \beta_2 X_{2i} + \epsilon_i$$