

Discussion: Persistence and Concentration of Poverty

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Farrigan

*Sub-county Analysis of Persistent
Concentrated Poverty*

Peters

*Persistent Poverty Revisited: New
Measure, New Methods, and the
Rural-Urban Divide*

Summary: Persistent Poverty May Be More Widespread and Urban Than You Think

- Standard: USDA persistent poverty counties based on 1960s measure of absolute poverty
- But this measure is flawed, so try new relative measures
 - Compare to peer counties, within urban influence typologies
 - OECD relative poverty measure (inequality from median down)
- And use cluster analysis for more informative groupings
- Peer measure tweaks the PP picture
 - Somewhat less rural, more people affected, stable or falling
 - But spatial pattern fairly familiar
- OECD measure recasts the picture
 - More counties and people (rural and urban), stable or rising
 - Far West, Midwest, and Northeast more prominent
- Detailed SES comparisons of rural PP counties and others

Data and Methods

- The slides do not tell all
 - Need specifics of how measures are defined and implemented and how cluster method is used
 - In short, we need a paper, not just slides
- Census data on income and poverty
 - Peer: County pov. rate vs. UIC peer rate
 - Rel: % HHs w. income < 50% of county median HHI
- Compare new and standard PP measures with maps, histograms, and tables of summary statistics

Main Comment: Promising, but Needs To Be Fleshed This Out

- Many details, but we need a framework
 - What are PP measures for? What do we want?
 - Use relative measures or improve absolute measures?
 - Are we interested in inequality, material hardship, both?
- What implications stem from relative measures?
 - How should practitioners change their practices?
 - How should policies change?

Lesser Comments (1)

- Say more on how/why the new measures are different
 - Would spatial agglomeration theory shed light on why new measures show more urban PP? Other income dist. theories?
 - Link differences to demographics and industrial patterns?
 - Histograms of counties by UIC? By regions?
 - Show maps of counties added or subtracted?
- Compare the 2 measures here to other alternatives
 - Rel pov vs. other measures of inequality in lower half
 - Despite limitations, compare Supplemental Pov Measure
- Are counties the right spatial units?
- Why don't people just move to richer counties?
- How are ACS “margins of error” handled?
- Disagree on a few characterizations of differences

Slack and Myers

*The Great Recession and the
Changing Geography of Food
Stamp Receipt*

Summary: Produces measurements useful to practitioners

- Q1: How did county SNAP use change 2007-09?
- Q2: What local factors are associated with it?
- A1: Big variation btw counties but with regional clusters
 - High in AZ, FL, South East, parts of TX, WI, MI
 - Low in KS, CO, SD, ND, Lower Delta, Central Appalachia
- A2: Great Recession factors drove increase
 - Increases in poverty, unemp., foreclosures boosted use
 - So did micropolitan location
 - But demographic factors and persistent poverty didn't
- Suggests
 - Mid-range spatial analysis useful in targeting programs
 - SNAP usage responds quickly to changes in need

Data and Methods

- Food stamp, unemp, foreclosure data 2007-09
- Poverty, demography, human capital, and geography data 2000 and (usually) 2005-09
- Create PP Δ measures for counties
- LISA maps of PP Δ in food stamp use 2007-09
- WLS regression of county PP Δ in food stamp use on PP Δ of recession/demographic variables and baseline place/poverty measures, with state effects and a spatial lag variable
- Interpret the regression coefficients

Main Comment: Separate Eligibility and Take-Up; Impose More Structure

- Definition of “Take-up”
 - Authors: (SNAP users/total population)
 - Me: (SNAP users/eligible population)
- $(\text{users/total}) = (\text{users/eligible}) * (\text{eligible/total})$
 - PP Δ (eligible/total) stresses recession effects on income
 - PP Δ (users/eligible) stresses persistent effects on take up
- Can use eligibility criteria to guide choice of variables and specification of first regression
- Might be more informative for planning, outreach
- Might allow direct use of state program differences

Lesser Comments

- Discuss why spatial correlation is so high
- Extend analysis to further years (2011?)
- Replace poverty variable with one on income?
- Use subset of counties with 1- or 3-year data? (Are 2005-2009 effects heavily pre-recession?)
- How is county-level migration dealt with?
- Try foreclosures per housing unit too (and clarify if mortgage measure is total outstanding)
- Try county house price data (where available)
- Might be useful to map/analyze state effects
- Cut some background material? (Recession summary?)