

*The Center for Demographic & Social Analysis and
The Economic Self-Sufficiency Policy Research Institute welcomes*

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INEQUALITY OF EDUCATIONAL OPPORTUNITY? SCHOOLS AS MEDIATORS OF THE INTERGENERATIONAL TRANSMISSION OF INCOME

Chetty et al. (2014) document wide geographic variation in intergenerational income mobility, with children from low-income families achieving much better outcomes, relative to their neighbors from higher-income families, in Salt Lake City and Los Angeles than in Cincinnati. A plausible mechanism is school quality. I use data from several national surveys to investigate whether commuting zones (CZs) where parents' incomes are strongly related to children's incomes also exhibit strong relationships of parental income to measures of children's human capital accumulation, such as educational attainment, test scores, and non-cognitive skills. CZs with more income mobility indeed tend to have somewhat higher mobility as measured by children's educational attainment. They also tend to have lower returns to education. By contrast, CZ income mobility does not appear correlated with non-cognitive returns to parental income, and the correlation with children's achievement is small and roughly the same when achievement is measured in Kindergarten as when it is measured in high school. There is thus little evidence that differences in the quality of K-12 schooling are a key mechanism driving variation in intergenerational mobility. Access to college may play a larger role, but is also not a dominant factor. The largest part of the variation derives from direct impacts of parental income on children's income controlling for human capital. This points to job networks or the structure of the local labor market as plausible mechanisms.

Tuesday, April 25, 2017

3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m.

SSPB-Room 1208

(Behind Soc. Sci. Plaza Bldg. B-Elevator)

Light Lunch for Early Arrivals