Intergenerational Persistence in Welfare Program Participation

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Motivation

- Fact 1. Incomplete take-up in US' welfare programs: TANF 34%, SNAP 83% (Ribar, 2014).

  Spain's IMV: 43% (AIReF, 2022); Germany 44%, France 66%, UK 73% (Marc et al, 2022)

  $\rightarrow$ Why? Lack of information, transaction costs, social stigma, ...

- Fact 2. Strong intergenerational correlation on welfare participation.

  A. Persistence in income, education, skills.

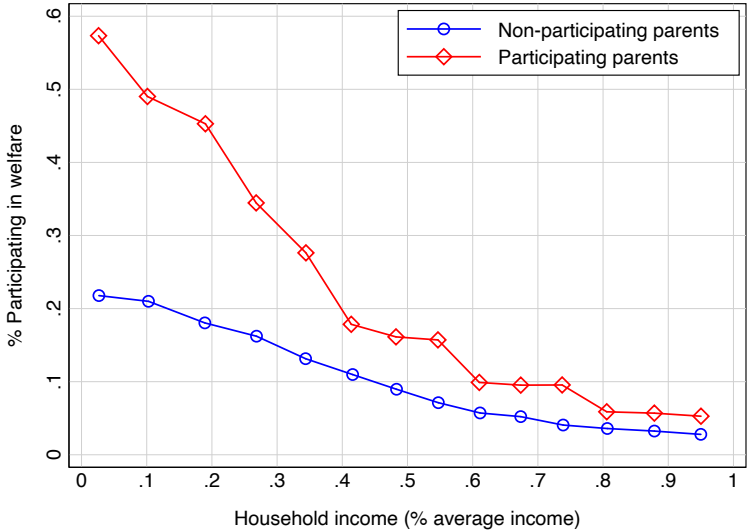
  B. Welfare culture: persistence in the underlying factors behind incomplete take-up.

  Available empirical evidence suggests that (B) plays an important role.

  Dahl, Kostol and Mogstad (2014; QJE); Dahl and Gielen (2021, AEJ); Hartley, et al (2021, JPE)

- Fact 3. For a given level of income, those who participate in welfare programs invest less time and money on their children's human capital... lowering their children's test scores.

Motivation


Non-participating parents
Participating parents
% Participating in welfare
0
.1
.2
.3
.4
.5
.6
0
.1
.2
.3
.4
.5
.6
.7
.8
.9
1
Household income (% average income)

Motivation

- Persistence in income is important, but cannot explain everything.

Dep. var: Participation$_t = \{0, 1\}$	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Participating parents (ever)	0.205***	0.112***	0.072***	0.067***
	(0.003)	(0.003)	(0.005)	(0.005)
(Log) Income		-0.098***	-0.077***	-0.077***
		(0.002)	(0.003)	(0.003)
HH characterstics				✓
Wealth			✓	✓
Observations	40,762	33,681	13,470	13,470
R-squared	0.094	0.181	0.155	0.183
Mean dep. variable	0.139	0.104	0.073	0.073

Motivation

	Parental investments		
	Money	Time	Test scores
(Log) Income	0.765***	0.0622	0.0463***
	(0.0744)	(0.225)	(0.00791)
Participating parents	-0.975***	-1.663***	-0.160***
	(0.159)	(0.473)	(0.0170)
Observations	5,889	4,485	4,142
R-squared	0.109	0.197	0.618
Mean dep. variable	2.093	19.367	-0.571

Notes: all regressions include FE for years, child's age, number of children, and marital status.

IGC graph

This paper

What we do and what we find

- Research questions:

  (A) How does welfare culture affect persistence in welfare participation?

  $\rightarrow$ Welfare culture explains around 35% of the differential participation rate.

  (B) How does welfare culture affect persistence in skills?

  $\rightarrow$ Welfare culture accounts for around 10% of the persistence in skills.

- Welfare culture is unobserved $\rightarrow$ OG model with heterogeneus agentes and:
  - Endogenous persistence in income (child's skill formation).
  - Persistence in preferences for welfare participation (welfare culture)
  - Paternalistic preferences: value children's choices acccording to their own preferences.

The model

Main features

- Life-cycle OG model with heterogeneous agents and uninsurable income risk: More
  - Wage heterogeneity: age profile + skills (fe) + persistent shock. More
  - Endogenous skill formation during childhood, as in Lee and Seshadri (2019, JPE) More
- Welfare programs: heterogeneous utility cost from participation (ν).

  Fact 1. Incomplete take-up of welfare programs.
- Welfare culture: utility cost from participation is correlated across generations.

  Fact 2. For a given income, children of participating parents are more likely to participate.
- Paternalistic preferences: parents' value their children utility with their own preferentes.

  Fact 3. For a given income, non-participating parents invest more in their children's skills.

The model

Welfare programs

- Participation choice subjet to no undertainty: transfer income $\mathbb{P} \cdot TR(y, n)$, with $\mathbb{P} = \{0, 1\}$.

  Estimate $TR(y, n)$ with realized welfare income using data from SIPP, 2001-2012.

- Households suffer utility cost in case of welfare participation, $\nu \in \{\nu_L, \nu_H\}$, with $\nu_L > \nu_H$.
  - Value of ν_H such that participating is never optimal.

    Fact 1. Incomplete take-up of welfare programs.

- Welafare culture. Participation cost drawn when moving out depending on parents' cost (ν_p):

$$P(\nu = \nu_L | \nu_p = \nu_L) = p_{L|L} > p_{L|H} = P(\nu = \nu_L | \nu_p = \nu_H)$$

  - Children of low-cost parents are more likely to draw a low participation cost.

    Fact 2. For given income, children of participating parents are more like to participate.

The model

Value function

- Households with kids solve:

$$V_j(z,\tilde{\theta};\theta,\nu) = \max_{c,\ell,\mathbb{P},m,t} u(c,\ell) - \mathbb{P}\nu - \phi t + \beta\mathbb{E}_j\left[V_{j+1}(z',\tilde{\theta}';\theta,\nu)\right]$$

$$\text{s.t.} \quad c + m = y - T(y,n=0) + \mathbb{P}\cdot TR(y,n=0) \qquad \text{Taxes} \quad \text{Transfers}$$

$$y = (1-\tau_{ss})w(j,\theta,z)\ell \qquad \text{Income process}$$

$$\tilde{\theta}' = f_j(\tilde{\theta},m,t)$$

$$V_j(z,\tilde{\theta};\theta,\nu) = \max_{c,\ell,\mathbb{P},m,t} u(c,\ell) - \mathbb{P}\nu - \phi t + \beta\mathbb{E}_j\left[V_{j+1}(z'\tilde{\theta}';\theta,\nu)\right]$$

$$\text{s.t.} \quad c + m = y - T(y,n=1) + \mathbb{P}\cdot TR(y,n=1) \qquad \text{Taxes} \quad \text{Transfers}$$

$$y = (1-\tau_{ss})w(j,\theta,z)\ell \qquad \text{Income process}$$

The model

Paternalistic preferences

- Paternalistic preferences: children's choices evaluated according to parents' preferences.

  The utility that a ν_p-parent derives from children is $W(\theta, \nu_p)$ which is given by:

$$W(\theta, \nu_p) = P(\nu_L|\nu_p) \cdot \underbrace{E_z\left[\widetilde{V}(z, \theta, \nu_L|\nu_p)\right]}_{\text{Value of low } \nu \text{ child}} + P(\nu_H|\nu_p) \cdot \underbrace{E_z\left[\widetilde{V}(z, \theta, \nu_H|\nu_p)\right]}_{\text{Value high } \nu \text{ child}}$$

  where...

$$\widetilde{V}(z, \theta, \nu|\nu_p) = V_{20}(z, \theta, \nu_p) \quad \text{with} \quad x = x(z, \theta, \nu), \quad x \in \{\mathbb{P}, \ell, m, t\}$$

  - High-ν parents suffer a welfare loss if their low-ν child participates. More
  - Low-ν parents suffer a welfare loss if their high-ν child refuses to participate. More

Calibration

Data sources

- We calibrate the model to the US in the 2000's for households aged 20-80.
- Exagenous parameters: $\sigma = 1$ (log utility), $\gamma = 0.5$ (Frish elasticity), $\beta = 0.97$.
- Data sources:
  - PSID: age, labor, income, welfare participation.
  - PSID's CDS: parental investments investments.
  - Estimate tax function using CPS, 2000-2010.
  - Estimate transfers function using SIPP, 2001-2012.

Measurement | Income process | Taxes | Transfers

Calibration

Calibrated parameters

Parameter		Value	Moment	Model	Data
φ	Level disutility work	41.1	Average hours	31.7	31.7
$p_{L\|L}$	$P(\nu = \nu_L \| \nu_p = \nu_L)$	0.34	Participation rate	9.5	12.6
$p_{L\|H}$	$P(\nu = \nu_L \| \nu_p = \nu_H)$	0.20	Differential participation rate	18	20
ν_L	Low part. cost	0.05	Participation elasticity, income	-0.09	-0.10
ν_H	High parti. rate	3.85	DIff. income P vs NP parents	-0.33	-0.44
μ_0	Share invest. in $\tilde{\theta}'$, scale	0.39	IGC of skills	0.39	0.37
μ_j	Share invest. in $\tilde{\theta}'$, shape	0.32	Age elasticity of skills	0.05	0.15
γ_0	Share time in Λ_j, scale	0.97	Ave. money invest.	4.70	3.96
γ_j	Share time in Λ_j, shape	0.01	Ave. time investment, mid-age child	18.1	21.0
ϕ	Disutility time invest	3.01	Ave. time investment	24.1	20.1
ξ	Anchor of skills	-2.80	Ave. skills	1.00	1.00
σ_k	Std of shocks to child's skills	0.07	Std of skills	0.40	0.68

Results

How does welfare culture affect...

1. ...intergenerational persistence in welfare participation?
2. ...intergenerational persistence in skills?

To answer these questions we compare the bechmark economy with one in which everyone has the same probaiblity of drawing a low participation cost ($p_{L|L} = p_{L|H} = \bar{p} = 0.23$)

We set the value of $\bar{p}$ such that the aggregate participation rate does not change

- Any remaining persistence in welfare participation only due to persistence in income.
- Paternalistic preferences still play a role: parents with high participation costs continue to have more incentives to invest on their children to prevent them from participating.

Results

How does welfare culture affect intergenerational persistence in welfare participation?

	Benchmark	Counterfactual	Diff.
Participation rate, P parent	24.7 pp	19.4 pp	-5 pp
Difference, P *vs* NP	18.0 pp	11.8 pp	-6.2 pp
Difference if $y < 0.5$	16 pp	7 pp	-9 pp

- Children of participating parents are now 11 pp more likely to participate, 7 pp lower differential, with a larger reduction among lower income households.
- Welfare culture acounts for 35% of the persistence in participation.

  It explains more than 50% of the differential participation among low(er)-income households

Results

How does welfare culture affect intergenerational persistence in skills?

	Benchmark	Counterfactual	Diff.
IGC skills	0.39	0.35	-0.04
Time investment, NP parent	25	26	1 h/week
Money investment, NP parent	5.1	5.3	0.2% $\bar{y}$
$\mathbb{E}(\theta\|\nu=\nu_H)-\mathbb{E}(\theta\|\nu=\nu_L)$	7.1%	0%	-7.1 pp
$\mathbb{E}(y\|\nu=\nu_H)-\mathbb{E}(y\|\nu=\nu_L)$	7.5%	1.2%	-6.3 pp

- High-ν parents face even more incentives to invest (higher probability of children's participation)... but they are no longer richer (baseline: 7% higher level of skills).
- Welfare culture accounts for around 10% of the persistence in skills.

Conclusions

We build a quantitative macroeconomic model featuring both income persistence and welfare culture (persistence in preferences towards welfare programs) and find:

- Welfare culture explains around 35% of the differential participation rate.

  Takeaway 1. Misallocation of welfare income? Potentially large welfare consequences.

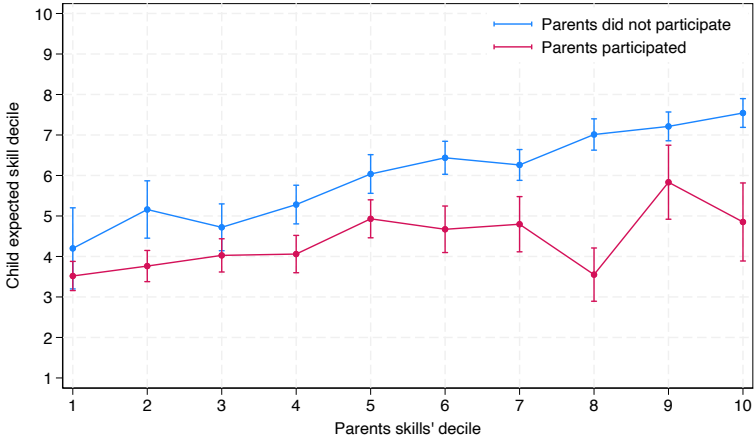
- Welfare culture accounts for around 10% of the persistence in skills.

  Takeaway 2. Persistence in factors behind incomplete take-up may distort parental incentives to invest in children's human capital.

  $\rightarrow$ Parents with high-participation cost have extra incentives to invest in their kids' human capital to prevent them from participating in welfare programs: higher IGC of skills.

Thanks for your attention

Motivation



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Measurement

- Sample selection: households aged 20 to 80, both married and singles.
- Household income (PSID): both labor income and labor supply are measured as averages across spouses.
- Welfare participation (PSID): $\mathbb{P}_t = 1$ if any of the spouses receives either TANF or Food Stamps during period t.
- Parental investmentes (PSID-CDS):
  - Time: total weekly hours that either the father, the mother or both have been actively involve in child's activity (time diary data).
  - Money: sum of the following expenses: private schools fees, tutoring programs, other lessons, sports-related activities, community groups or programs.

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Income process

- Wage rate of a household with age j and state (z, θ) given by:

$$\log(w) = \omega_j + \theta + z, \quad \text{with} \quad z' = \rho\, z + \epsilon$$

- Using wages $w_{i,j}$ from PSID, estimate the following regression:

$$\log(w_{i,j}) \;=\; \underbrace{a_0 + a_1 j + a_2 j^2}_{\omega_j} \;+\; \alpha_i \;+ \alpha_t \;+\; z_{ij}, \qquad \text{with} \quad \underbrace{\theta_i = \exp(\alpha_i)}_{\text{Skills}}$$

where i stands for the hoisehold, j for the houshold age, and t for the year. Then, fit an AR(1) process to z using $z_{i,j-1}$ to instrument for $z_{i,j}$ (measurement error).

$$z_{i,j} = \rho\, z_{i,j-1} + \epsilon, \quad \text{with} \quad (\rho_z, \sigma_z) = (0.953, 0.249)$$

Main features | Value function | Calibration

Children's skill formation

- Skills formation technology as in Lee and Seshadri (JPE, 2019).

$$\log \tilde{\theta}_{j+1} \;=\; \mu_j \underbrace{\log \Lambda_j(t,m)}_{\text{Investments}} \;+\; (1-\mu_j)\; \underbrace{\log \tilde{\theta}_j}_{\text{Past skills}} \;+\; \epsilon_k, \quad \epsilon_k \sim N(0,\sigma_k^2),$$

- Parents invest money (m) and time (t) in their children's skills:

$$\log \Lambda_j(t,m) = \gamma_j \log\left(t + \frac{\gamma_j x_j}{\bar{w}}\right) + (1-\gamma_j)\log\left(m + (1-\gamma_j)x_j\right)$$

  where x_j is the amount of public investment in children at age j.

- Technology is age-dependent:

$$\mu_j = \mu_0 \exp(-\mu_1 j), \quad \gamma_j = \gamma_0 \exp(-\gamma_1 j)$$

Main features Value function

Tax function

	λ	τ
No children	0.865	0.070
2 children	0.924	0.112

- We consider a standard tax function:

$$T(y,n) = (1 - t(y,n))y \quad \longrightarrow \quad t(y,n) = 1 - \lambda(n)y^{\tau(n)}$$

- Estimate the parameters by presence of children using CPS 2000-2010 data

Model Calibration

Transfers function

	γ	α	β_0	β_1
No children	0.026	-3.313	-0.380	0.053
2 children	0.065	-2.921	-0.351	-0.034

- Transfers function:

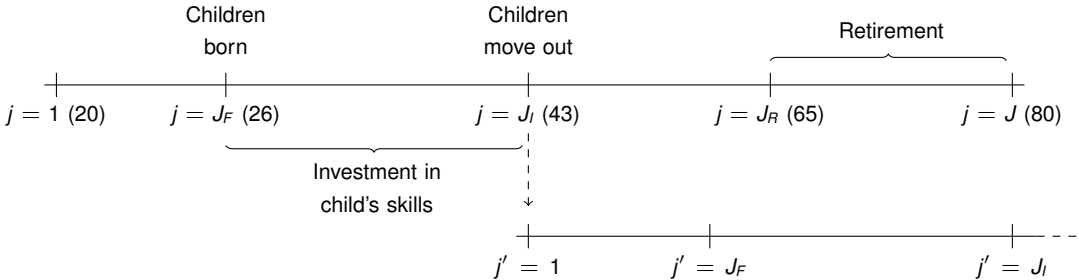
$$TR(y,n) = \begin{cases} \gamma(n) & \text{if } y = 0 \\ \exp\left(\alpha(n) + \beta_0(n)y + \beta_1(n)\log y\right) & \text{if } y > 0 \end{cases}$$

- Estimate by presence of children using SIPP data, 2001-2012

  Use data on Temporary Assistance for Needy Families and Food Stamps

Model Calibration

Life-cycle structure



- Households ork until age J_R and can participate in welfare at any time.
- Every household has a kid at age J_F and invest in her skill until age J_I.
- Retirees receive pension income and cannot participate in welfare (simplification).

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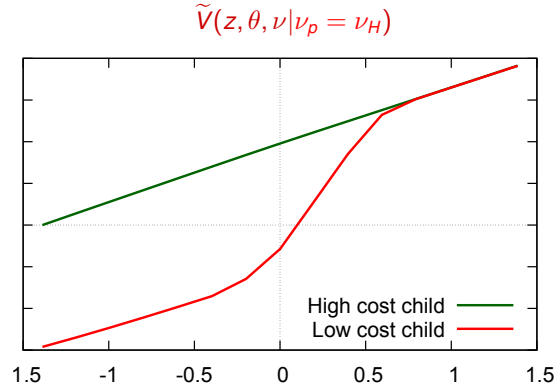
Paternalistic preferences



- High-ν parents, suffer a large utility loss if children are low-ν and low-θ.

  If the child has low-ν and low skills, large welfare costs from children's participation.

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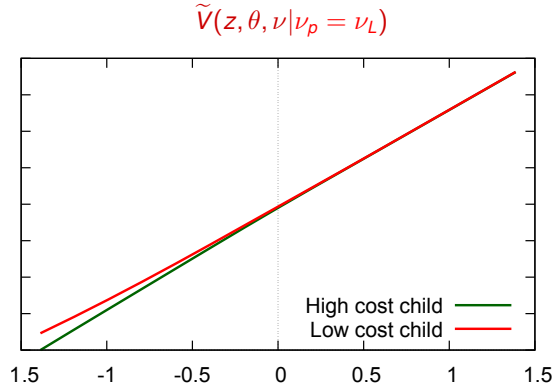
Paternalistic preferences



- Low-ν parents, instead, suffer a (small) utility loss if children are high-ν and low-θ.

  They don't suffer distuility from their children's participation but they do from lack of insurance.

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