The Opportunity Atlas
Mapping the Childhood Roots of Social Mobility

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Disclaimer: Any opinions and conclusions expressed herein are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the U.S. Census Bureau. All results have been reviewed to ensure that no confidential information is disclosed. The statistical summaries reported in these slides have been cleared by the Census Bureau’s Disclosure Review Board release authorization number CBDRB-FY18-319. All values in the tables and figures that appear in this presentation have been rounded to four significant digits as part of the disclosure avoidance protocol. Unless otherwise noted, source for all tables and figures: authors calculations based on Census 2000 and 2010, tax returns, and American Community Surveys 2005-2015.
Opportunity Atlas

• Comprehensive census tract-level atlas of children’s outcomes in adulthood

• Children’s earnings distributions, incarcerations rates, and other outcomes in adulthood by parental income, race, and gender

• Users can view data for every census tract in America, overlay their own data, export into a data set for their own analysis
Data Sources and Sample Definitions


• Link children to parents based on dependent claiming on tax returns

• Target sample: Children in 1978-83 birth cohorts who were born in the U.S. or are authorized immigrants who came to the U.S. in childhood

• Analysis sample: 20.5 million children, 96% coverage rate of target sample
Variable Definitions

• Parents’ pre-tax household incomes: mean Adjusted Gross Income from 1994-2000, assigning non-filers zeros

• Children’s pre-tax incomes measured in 2014-15 (ages 31-37)
  • Non-filers assigned incomes based on W-2’s (available since 2005)

• To mitigate lifecycle bias, focus on percentile ranks: rank children relative to others in their birth cohort and parents relative to other parents

• Also examine other outcomes: marriage, teenage birth, incarceration, ...
Estimating Mean Outcomes by Tract

- In each tract $c$, for each race $r$ and gender $g$, regress children’s outcomes on a smooth function of parent rank:

$$y_{icprg} = \alpha_{crg} + \beta_{crg} \times f_{rg}(p_{icrg}) + \varepsilon_{icprg}$$

- In practice, many children move across tracts in childhood
  - Weight children in each tract-level regression by fraction of childhood (up to age 23) spent in that tract

*For additional technical details see Chetty, Hendren, Jones, Porter 2018.*
GET STARTED IN THREE EASY STEPS

Start with a question. For example: how much do kids who grew up where I did earn on average?

1. **Where**
   Search for a city or address to zoom to a region of interest. e.g. your hometown

2. **What**
   Select the outcome you would like to map. e.g. earnings

3. **Who**
   Choose a demographic group to focus on. e.g. black women

Or click these icons for stories illustrating insights from the data.
Tract 06037242600, South Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

**Household Income**: $24k

**Incarceration Rate**: 6.3%

**Neighborhood Characteristics**
- **Median Rent 2000-10**: $565
- **Job Growth Rate from 2004 to 2013**: 17%

The Opportunity Atlas
Tract 06037242600, South Los Angeles, Los Angeles, CA

**HOUSEHOLD INCOME**
- Lowest: $19k
- Median: $54k
- Highest: $73k

**INCARCERATION RATE**
- N/A
- 27%
Is Upward Mobility Higher in Cities or Rural Areas?
The Geography of Upward Mobility in the United States
Average Household Income for Children with Parents Earning $27,000 (25th percentile)

Note: Blue = More Upward Mobility, Red = Less Upward Mobility
Source: Chetty, Hendren, Jones, Porter 2018
Incarceration Rates for Black Men in Los Angeles with Parents Earning < $2,200 (1st percentile)

WATTS, Black Men: Share Incarcerated on April 1, 2010 = 44.1% (9.3%)
Incarceration Rates for Black Men in Los Angeles with Parents Earning < $2,200 (1st percentile)

WATTS, Black Men:
Share Incarcerated on April 1, 2010 = 44.1% (9.3%)

COMPTON, Black Men:
Share Incarcerated on April 1, 2010 = 6.2% (5.0%)
Incarceration Rates for Hispanic Men in Los Angeles with Parents Earning < $2,200 (1st percentile)

WATTS, Hispanic Men:
Share Incarcerated on April 1, 2010
= 4.5% (2.8%)

COMPTON, Hispanic Men:
Share Incarcerated on April 1, 2010
= 1.4% (0.8%)
Mean Household Income for Black Men in Los Angeles with Parents Earning $27,000 (25th percentile)

**WATTS, Black Men:**
Mean Household Income = $7,286 ($2,576)

**COMPTON, Black Men:**
Mean Household Income = $19,141 ($2,149)
Mean Individual Income for Black Women in Los Angeles with Parents Earning $27,000 (25th percentile)

WATTS, Black Women: Mean Household Income = $19,489 ($1,985)

COMPTON, Black Women: Mean Household Income = $21,509 ($1,850)
Income Gain from Moving to a Better Neighborhood, by Child’s Age at Move

Average Income at Age

Shoreline

Seattle

Central District

Income Gain from Moving to a Better Neighborhood, by Child’s Age at Move

Average Income at Age

Age of Child When Parents Move

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Upward Mobility vs. Job Growth in the 30 Largest Metro Areas

Average Income at Age 35 of Children who Grew up in Low-Income Families

Job Growth Rate (%) from 1990-2010

- High mobility, low growth
- Low mobility, low growth
- High mobility, high growth
- Low mobility, high growth
Conclusions and Future Work

• Children’s outcomes vary sharply across neighborhoods, and we can now measure and potentially address these differences with greater precision

• Determine feasibility of adding earlier cohorts starting in 1969

• Add cohorts after 1983 as the data are available

• Assess value of additional data sources

• Continued research on the determinants of intergenerational mobility