Taxation and Labor Force Participation: The EITC Reconsidered

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The Extensive Margin of Labor Supply

- A consensus view that extensive margin responses are larger than intensive margin responses
- Where does this consensus originate from?
 - Early labor supply literature (Heckman 1993)
 - Macro business cycle literature (Hansen 1985; Rogerson 1988)
 - Labor supply literature studying EITC reform (Eissa & Liebman 1996; Meyer & Rosenbaum 2001)
- A meta study by Chetty et al. (2013) puts the extensive margin elasticity at around 0.3

The Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC)

- A means-tested transfer that is conditional on positive earnings and children
- A large literature studies the labor supply effects of the EITC, particularly on single mothers
 - Most of this work exploits federal EITC expansions enacted in 1986, 1990, and 1993
- Nichols & Rothstein (2015) summarize the consensus view: There is remarkable consensus around a few key results (...) essentially all authors agree that the EITC expansion led to sizeable increases in single mothers' employment rates

Literature

Labor market impacts of the EITC:

Dickert, Houser & Scholz (1995), Eissa & Liebman (1996), Ellwood (2000), Meyer & Rosenbaum (2001), Neumark & Wascher (2001), Hotz & Scholz (2003), Grogger (2003), Eissa & Hoynes (2004, 2006, 2011), Cancian & Levinson (2005), Hotz, Mullin & Scholz (2006), Hoynes (2009), Rothstein (2010), Gelber & Mitchell (2012), Chetty, Friedman & Saez (2013), Looney & Manoli (2013), Bastian (2018)

Labor market impacts of the FC/WFTC/WTC:

Blundell et al. (2000), Blundell & Hoynes (2004), Blundell, Brewer & Shepard (2005), Brewer et al. (2006), Leigh (2007), Francesconi & Klauw (2007), Francesconi, Rainer & Klaauw (2009), Gregg, Harkness & Smith (2009), Blundell et al. (2016)

Why Revisit This Question?

Have I found a new source of identifying variation? (NO)

- I study EITC reforms in the US (federal and state)
- I study WFTC/WTC reforms in the UK
- Have I gained access to better data? (NO)
 - ► I use CPS data for the US and LFS/BHPS data for the UK
- So I study the same data and reforms, but viewed through a different lens
 - The consensus view is based on work from about 20 years ago

In-Work Transfers in the US and UK

EITC Schedule in 2017



EITC Maximum Credit Over Time



EITC vs WTC Schedules in 2017

Single Women with 1 Child



WTC Maximum Credit Over Time



EITC Effects on the Extensive Margin?

Data

- Current Population Survey (CPS), March files
 - 50-year period (1968-2018)
 - From around 150,000 to 200,000 individuals per year
- Measures of extensive margin labor supply:
 - 1. Employed last week
 - 2. Participated last week
 - Employed or unemployed last week
 - 3. Employed last year
 - Positive earnings last year
 - 4. Participated last year
 - Employed or unemployed for 1+ weeks last year

























Labor Force Participation of Married Women

With and Without Children (Spousal Earnings Below First Kink)



Labor Force Participation of Married Women

Spousal Earnings Below and Above First Kink (Conditional on Children)



Red Flags

The participation increase for single mothers in 1994-99 is massive and follows the 1993 EITC reform, but...

- How do we separate EITC effects from the key confounders?
- Why do those with 3+ kids increase participation so much more than those with 2 kids after 1993 (but not elsewhere)?
- Why are there no visible effects for married women?
- Why are there no visible effects of the 1975, 1986, 1990, and 2009 reforms?
- It is difficult to reconcile the patterns with optimization friction



Effect of the 1975 Reform







Labor Force Participation of Single Women

DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children



1975 Reform: Conclusions

- ► No extensive margin effects for single women
 - Business cycle variation that coincides with the reform
 - \blacktriangleright This mainly affects the earnings-based measure of participation \rightarrow illusory short-term effect of the EITC
- No extensive margin effects for married women either Married Women
- Reconciling these conclusions with Bastian (2018)
 - Confounding effects of business cycles (single women) and secular trends (married women) that vary by children



Effect of the 1993 Reform



Empirical Specification

DiD specification:

$$P_{ist} = \sum_{j} \alpha_{j} \cdot Year_{j=t} + \beta \cdot Kids_{i} + \sum_{j} \gamma_{j} \cdot Year_{j=t} \cdot Kids_{i} + \sum_{j} \sum_{k} \delta_{j}^{k} \cdot Year_{j=t} \cdot W_{sj}^{k} + \sum_{j} \sum_{k} \zeta_{j}^{k} \cdot Year_{j=t} \cdot Kids_{i} \cdot W_{sj}^{k} + \eta \cdot U_{st} + \theta \cdot U_{st} \cdot Kids_{i} + \nu_{ist}$$

where W_{st}^k is an indicator for state *s* having waiver type *k* in year *t* and U_{st} is the unemployment rate in state *s* in year *t*

 Six welfare waivers: termination time limits, work-requirement time limits, family caps, JOBS exemptions, JOBS sanctions, and earnings disregards

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Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Controlling for State Unemployment)



Weekly Employment

DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Controlling for State Unemployment and Welfare Waivers)



1993 Reform: Conclusions

- The participation increase for single mothers is correlated with unemployment changes and welfare waivers across states
- Controlling for state-level variation in unemployment and welfare waivers eliminates any significant effect of the EITC between 1994-96 (prior to PRWORA)
 - A weak test as it absorbs only cross-state effects, not any national effects
- The drivers of the 1990s participation boom are unidentified, but the patterns are consistent with no effect of the EITC



State EITC Supplements



State EITC Supplements

- Between 1984-2018, many states instituted EITC supplements
 - 28 states currently have EITC supplements
 - Many supplements are small or were increased only gradually
- Some states implemented larger reforms
 - Define "large reform" as an increase in the state EITC of at least 20% (refundable) of the federal credit within 3 years
 - 8 states had such reforms











Synthetic Control Approach

- For each state with an EITC supplement, a synthetic control state is created from those without a supplement
- I focus on state reforms:
 - Introduction of any state EITC supplement
 - Large reforms, as defined earlier
- I match on pre-reform variables:
 - Labor force participation (level and trend), unemployment rate (level and change), and welfare participation rate



Specification

DiD specification:

$$\begin{array}{lll} P_{st} & = & \displaystyle \sum_{j} \alpha_{j} \cdot Event_{j=t} + \beta \cdot Treat_{s} + \displaystyle \sum_{j} \gamma_{j} \cdot Event_{j=t} \cdot Treat_{s} \\ & & + \lambda_{s} + \nu_{st} \end{array}$$

where $Event_{j=t}$ are event time indicators, $Treat_s$ is an indicator for being a treatment state, and λ_s is a state fixed effect

The specification is run on an unbalanced panel of states over an event window from -10 to +10

Large State EITC Reforms: Event Study

Treatment and Synthetic Control States



Large State EITC Reforms: Event Study

DiD: Difference Between Treatment and Synthetic Control States



(All Reforms) (Annual Participation) (Weekly Employment) (Annual Employmen

Placebos

State EITC Supplements: Conclusions

State EITCs create variation that does not rely on children

- This avoids confounders that vary by children
- ► But introduces confounders that vary by state → synthetic control approach
- Most state EITC reforms have been too small for a credible DiD, but 8 reforms were sizeable
- Evidence from large state EITC reforms:
 - No clear evidence of any extensive margin effects

WFTC Effects on the Extensive Margin?

Data

Main data: Labour Force Survey (LFS):

- Repeated cross-section
- ▶ 1992-2017
- Around 400,000 individuals per year
- Alternate data: British Household Panel Survey (BHPS):
 - Panel
 - 1991-2008
 - Started with 10,000 individuals in 1991

Empirical Specification

DiD specification:

$$\begin{array}{lll} P_{irt} & = & \displaystyle \sum_{j} \alpha_{j} \cdot Year_{j=t} + \beta \cdot Kids_{i} + \displaystyle \sum_{j} \gamma_{j} \cdot Year_{j=t} \cdot Kids_{i} \\ & & + \delta \cdot U_{rt} + \zeta \cdot U_{rt} \cdot Kids_{i} + X_{i} \cdot \phi + X_{i} \cdot Kids_{i} \cdot \psi + \nu_{irt} \end{array}$$

where U_{rt} is the unemployment rate in region r in year t, and X_i includes dummies for age, age of youngest child, and education

► Allow for linear, group-specific pre-trend, i.e. residualize *P*_{irt} using linear trend estimated on pre-data

Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Normalized)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Adding Linear Pre-Trends)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Controlling for Unemployment and Demographics)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Adding Pre-Trend Controls)



1999 WFTC Reform: Findings and Issues

- The real size of the 1999 WFTC expansion:
 - The WFTC expansion was massive in itself, but there were offsetting changes from the welfare system
 - Still, a sizeable net incentive for the typical single mother (e.g., Blundell & Hoynes 2004)
- The effects on the extensive margin of labor supply:
 - No effects on labor force participation
 - This holds in both LFS and BHPS BHPS
 - Suggestive effects on employment
 - ► DiD effect driven by break in the control group → parallel trend assumption is tenuous

Conclusions

Where Does This Leave Us?

- A consensus view that participation responses can be sizeable
 - This view is partly grounded in EITC studies
 - But no study identifies these responses to a modern bar
 - Cross-country puzzle (Kleven 2014)
- Revisiting historical EITC and WFTC reforms, I find no clear evidence of participation responses
- What happened with single mothers in the US in the 1990s?
 - Maybe a unique combination of EITC reform, welfare reform, economic upturn, and changing social norms?
 - Economic history rather than anything externally valid

Appendix

WTC Maximum Credit Over Time

Single Women with 2 Children



WTC Maximum Credit Over Time

Including the Child Tax Credit





Extensive Margin Measures

All Women, 20-50



Extensive Margin Measures

Single Women, 20-50



Extensive Margin Measures

Single Mothers, 20-50



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Annual Employment)
























Labor Force Participation of Married Women With and Without Children (Spousal Earnings Below First Kink) (Annual Employment)



Labor Force Participation of Married Women Spousal Earnings Below and Above First Kink (Conditional on Children) (Annual Employment)











All Educations



All Educations















Labor Force Participation of Married Women With and Without Children (Spousal Earnings Below First Kink) (Low Education)



Labor Force Participation of Married Women Spousal Earnings Below and Above First Kink (Conditional on Children) (Low Education)





Labor Force Participation of Married Women

With and Without Children (Spousal Earnings Above First Kink)









Labor Force Participation of Single Women DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children

(Annual Employment)







Labor Force Participation of Single Women DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children

(Low Education)



Labor Force Participation of Married Women

With and Without Children (Spousal Earnings Below First Kink)



Back

Labor Force Participation of Married Women

With and Without Children (Spousal Earnings Above First Kink)



Back
Labor Force Participation of Married Women

Triple-Diff: With and Without Children, Below and Above Kink





Bastian Replication

Single Women and Married Women with Spousal Earnings Below EITC Exhaustion



Refining the Specification

Single Women and Married Women with Spousal Earnings Below First EITC Kink



Adding the Unemployment Series

Single Women and Married Women with Spousal Earnings Below First EITC Kink





Splitting the Sample

Single Women

Married Women

(Spousal Earnings Below First Kink)



Married Women Placebo Test



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Annual Participation)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children

(Annual Participation)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Annual Participation, Unemployment Controls)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Annual Participation, Unemployment and Welfare Waiver Controls)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Weekly Employment)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Weekly Employment)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Weekly Employment, Unemployment Controls)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Weekly Employment, Unemployment and Welfare Waiver Controls)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Annual Employment)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children

(Annual Employment)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Annual Employment, Unemployment Controls)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Annual Employment, Unemployment and Welfare Waiver Controls)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Low Education)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Low Education)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Low Education, Unemployment Controls)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Low Education, Unemployment and Welfare Waiver Controls)



All Educations

Labor Force Participation of Single Women With 1 and 2+ Children



DiD: Difference Between Those With 1 and 2+ Children



DiD: Difference Between Those With 1 and 2+ Children (Unemployment Controls)



DiD: Difference Between Those With 1 and 2+ Children (Unemployment and Welfare Waiver Controls)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Any Waiver Approved, Unemployment and Welfare Waiver Controls)



All Waivers

DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Any Waiver Implemented, Unemployment and Welfare Waiver Controls)



All Waivers

Synthetic States

- California: 40% Alabama, 29% Arizona, 27% Nevada, 3% Montana, 2% Washington
- Connecticut: 26% Missouri, 14% South Dakota, 9% Texas, 9% Tennessee, 7% Alaska, 35% other states
- DC: 54% Alaska, 46% Kentucky
- Minnesota: 61% Pennsylvania, 39% Tennessee
- New Jersey: 25% Kentucky, 21% Alaska, 18% New Hampshire, 13% Arizona, 11% Montana, 12% other states
- ▶ New York: 51% Pennsylvania, 49% West Virginia
- Vermont: 61% Washington, 31% Arkansas, 8% Pennsylvania
- ▶ Wisconsin: 53% Washington, 27% Pennsylvania, 20% Missouri



All State EITC Introductions: Event Study

Treatment and Synthetic Control States



Large Reforms

All State EITC Introductions: Event Study

DiD: Difference Between Treatment and Synthetic Control States



Large Reforms

Treatment and Synthetic Control States (Annual Participation)



DiD: Difference Between Treatment and Synthetic Control States (Annual Participation)



Treatment and Synthetic Control States (Weekly Employment)



Weekly Participation

DiD: Difference Between Treatment and Synthetic Control States (Weekly Employment)



Weekly Participation

Treatment and Synthetic Control States (Annual Employment)



Weekly Participation
Large State EITC Reforms: Event Study

DiD: Difference Between Treatment and Synthetic Control States (Annual Employment)



Weekly Participation

Large State EITC Reforms: Event Study

Actual DiD Estimates vs Placebo DiD Estimates



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Low Education)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Low Education, Normalized)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Low Education)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Low Education, Adding Linear Pre-Trends)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Low Education, Controlling for Unemployment and Demographics)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Low Education, Adding Pre-Trend Controls)



Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Employment, All Edu)



With and Without Children (Employment, All Educations, Normalized)



LFP

DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, All Educations)





DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, All Educations, Adding Linear Pre-Trends)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, All Educations, Controlling for Unemployment and Demographics)



DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, All Educations, Adding Pre-Trend Controls)



LFP

Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (Employment, Low Education)





Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children

(Employment, Low Education, Normalized)





DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, Low Education)





DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, Low Education, Adding Linear Pre-Trends)





DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, Low Education, Controlling for Unemployment and Demographics)





DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (Employment, Low Education, Adding Pre-Trend Controls)





Labor Force Participation of Single Women With and Without Children (BHPS, Normalized)





Labor Force Participation of Single Women DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (BHPS)





DiD: Difference Between Those With and Without Children (BHPS, Controlling for Demographics)



