Long Term Neighborhood Latent Poverty Trajectories and Obesity*

Running Title: Neighborhoods and Obesity

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Abstract

Most neighborhood effects research relies on cross-sectional research designs and measures of neighborhood characteristics, limiting the ability to make causal inferences. However, neighborhoods (and people) are not static, instead shaped by dynamic long-term processes of change (and mobility). Using the Geographic Research on Wellbeing survey, which consists of a population-based sample of 2,339 Californian mothers, we investigate how long-term neighborhood poverty trajectories predict the likelihood of being obese, taking into account individual residential mobility. First, using Latent Class Growth Modeling we distinguish three unique longitudinal census tract poverty trajectories. Next, we fit logistic models predicting obesity based on these classes. We find that net of numerous individual level controls, living in or moving to wealthier tracts decreases the odds of being obese relative to living in the long term poverty tracts. Finally, we use regression-adjusted inverse-probability weighted models which show that living in the poorest class may cause obesity.

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