Learning from Non-Compliance: The Case of Moving to Opportunity
Sponsored by the Irvine Network on Interventions in Development (INID)

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Monday, May 16, 2016
12:00 – 1:15 pm, Education 2010

Abstract: The Moving to Opportunity (MTO) is a housing experiment that randomly assigned rent-subsidizing vouchers that incentivize families to move from high-poverty housing projects to low-poverty neighborhoods. Nearly half of the families assigned to the vouchers did not use the vouchers to relocate. Although the MTO randomization is well-suited to evaluate the causal effects of offering vouchers to families, it is less clear how randomized vouchers might be used to assess the causal effects of neighborhood relocation on the outcomes. I combine revealed preference analysis with the incentives generated by the MTO design to nonparametrically identify the causal effects of neighborhood relocation on labor market outcomes. Voucher noncompliance is a key ingredient for model identification and specification tests. I find statistically significant causal effects on labor market outcomes. I also decompose the treatment-on-the-treated parameter - the voucher's effect divided by the compliance rate for the voucher - into components that are unambiguously interpreted in terms of neighborhood effects.

Bio: Rodrigo R.A. Pinto, who received his Ph.D. in 2015 from the University of Chicago, was a Fulbright Scholar from 2004-2009. While working with Professor Heckman, he published a series of papers on the economics of human capital accumulation of early childhood interventions, policy evaluation, and causality. His research examined a range of questions regarding social experiments: inference under compromised randomization, cost-benefit analysis, external validity, and impact evaluation. He also has worked on causal inference and identification of treatment effects. Pinto is a frequent speaker on human capital accumulation during early childhood. He holds an M.S. in Economics from the Fundacao Getulio Vargas (EPGE), Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, and a B.A. in Engineering from the State University of Campinas (UNICAMP), Sao Paulo, Brazil. Among the experiments he has analyzed are the Perry Preschool Intervention, HighScope Curriculum Comparison Study, Abecedarian Project, Nurse-Family Partnership, Moving to Opportunity, Fast Track, Head Start, Jamaican Project, and Primeira Infancia Melhor (Brazil). In the past, he has served as a researcher for the National Bureau of Economic Research (NBER).