

**Title of Presentation: “Wage Deserts’: An Exploration of Geographically Concentrated Working Poverty in Philadelphia, PA Using Census LEHD Data”**

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Question your work tried to answer	Does working poverty have a distinct geography? What are the implications of this for policy?
Local Employment Dynamics data sources used	<input type="checkbox"/> OnTheMap <input type="checkbox"/> QWI <input type="checkbox"/> Industry Focus <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Raw data files from CD or VRDC <input type="checkbox"/> Other: _____
Other data sources used	American Community Survey 2007-2011
Software/ data processing tools used	ArcGIS, R statistical package
Brief description of methodology (if someone wanted to do a similar analysis, how should they approach it?)	<p>Download LEHD Resident Area Characteristics (RAC) files for the state(s) of interest. Aggregate LODES data from the block group to the Census Tract level. Trim RAC data to select out all Tracts within the geographic area of interest (county, e.g.). RAC data enable the researcher to tabulate and interpret descriptive statistics for census tracts where more than 80% of the working population is earning wages that place them below a self-sufficiency level. County-level self-sufficiency standards have been estimated for 37 states and the District of Columbia by the Center for Women’s Welfare at the University of Washington School of Social Work.</p> <p>Using LEHD Origin-Destination data, it is possible to find out where earners from “Wage Desert” tracts are working, to draw inferences about their commutes. Using Work Area Characteristics (WAC) data, it is also possible to consider the characteristics of the census tracts in which wage desert originators work.</p> <p>Other relevant information about the tracts (overall poverty rates, unemployment, labor force participation, housing information) can be derived from ACS data, but comparisons will not be of the same universes (see below).</p>
Benefits of methodology/ data	1. Ability to distinguish areas where low earning workers are concentrated from poor areas generally, and explore the characteristics of these areas and of the work destinations of those who originate in them, and to formulate spatial policy responses to the concentration of low wage workers in specific neighborhoods (for example, the wage desert criterion might be used to identify tracts with high proportions of low-earning workers as priorities for interventions targeting skills upgrading, childcare availability,

	<p>and benefits access).</p> <p>2. This investigation is inspired both by sustained concern among policy makers about the persistence of barriers to economic mobility among low-paid workers (Holzer 2005, Theodos and Bednarzik 2006), and by the success with which public health planners and practitioners have used the concept of a <i>food desert</i> to place hunger and food security at the center of policy debates on obesity and nutrition. While the identification of “wage deserts” may stimulate policy intervention, it might be equally or more useful as a new way of problematizing the insufficiency of work as a path out of poverty for many Americans.</p>
Drawbacks/problems with methodology/data	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• LEHD provides only earnings data (no information about other sources of household income)</li> <li>• LEHD reports earnings on a job basis, not a household basis (incomplete information about households in which there is more than one earner or in which an earner holds more than one job)</li> <li>• Because one is based on employers’ administrative records and the other on a household sample survey, it is not accurate to draw direct comparisons between the tract-level populations of wage earners characterized in LEHD data with the tract-level populations of working individuals characterized in ACS data. However, we find ACS 5-year estimates and LEHD estimates to be similar at both the tract and the citywide level. According to LEHD there is a total of 22,220 workers in the 23 “wage desert” census tracts in the City of Philadelphia, while ACS estimates 22,676. LEHD estimates total employment in the city of Philadelphia at 542,854, ACS estimates it at 516,937. In both cases the estimates are within 5 percentage points of one another.</li> </ul>
Anything else?	
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References:

Holzer, H. 2005. *Moving Up or Moving On: Who Advances in the Low-Wage Labor Market* New York: Russell Sage.

Theodos, B. and R. Bednarzik. 2006. Earnings Mobility and Low Wage Workers in the United States. *Monthly Labor Review*. July.

