



Child Support Regularity and its Contribution to Family Self-Sufficiency

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Income through Child Support: Lessons from Recent Research**”

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Prior Research and Contributions of this Study

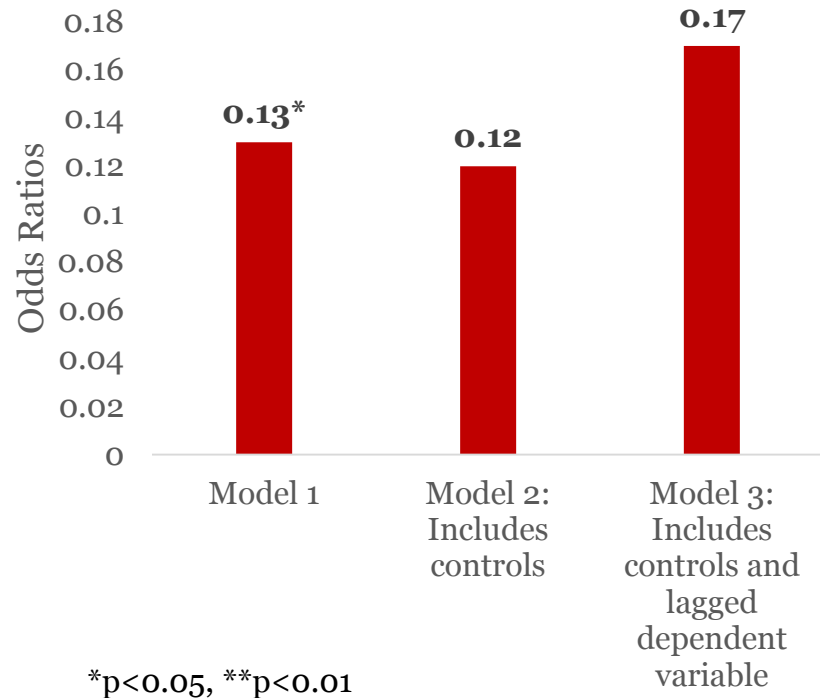
- The vast majority of extant CS research is focused on the role of amount received
- Understanding the role of regularity is important for several reasons:
 - A significant proportion of NCPs have unstable employment and earnings—this may limit CS’s ability to improve family self-sufficiency
 - The associations of CS with child and family well-being may vary by whether child support is consistently received (e.g., effects on poverty or food insecurity)
 - Regularity may matter for some outcomes (e.g., food expenditures) and not others
- Only 3 studies have examined the role of regularity in child and family well-being:
 - Increases the regularity of custodial mother’s income (Ha, Cancian & Meyer, 2011)
 - Reduces child food insecurity (Nepomnyaschy et al., 2014) and housing instability (Curtis & Warren, 2016)
- **How is the regularity of child support receipt associated with welfare dependence and household food insecurity?**

Data and Methods

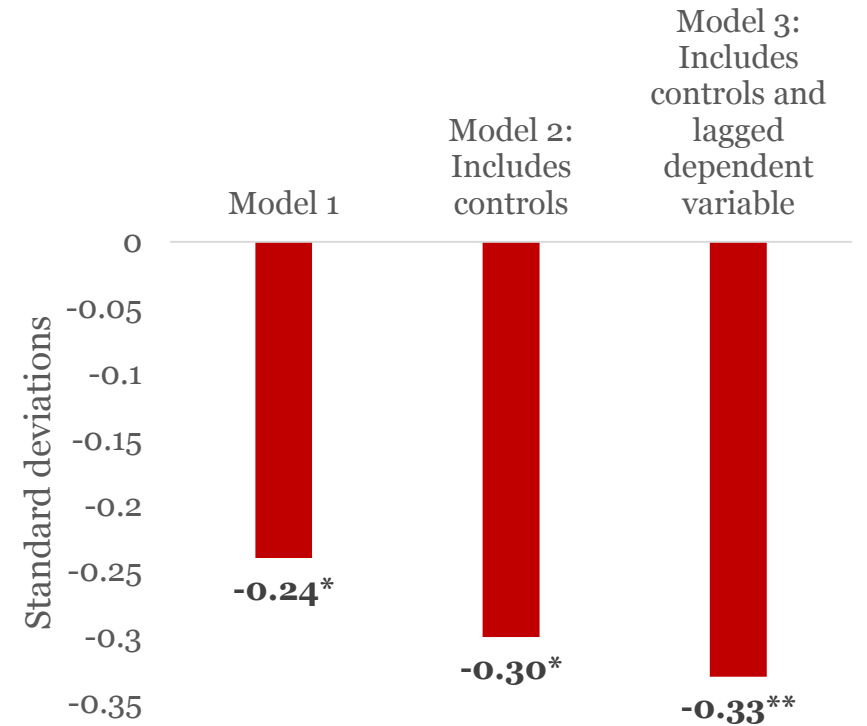
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID) core study (1984-2003) and the 1997 and 2002 Child Development Supplements
- 577 custodial-mother families of children born between 1984 and 1997
- Family self-sufficiency
 - Welfare dependence: 1) >50% income from SNAP, TANF, SSI; 2) >\$1000 from SNAP, TANF, SSI
 - Food insecurity: using USDA's 18-item scale created continuous (level) and dichotomous (status) measures
- Child support
 - Regularity: whether the household received regular child support (at least 10 months in a calendar year) when focal child was 4 or 10 years old (time 0).
 - Any receipt and amount: head, wife, and other family members' reports of child support (formal and informal); whether the family received any child support and the amount received at time 0.
- Controls during pregnancy or at birth of focal child
 - Household income, TANF, SNAP, WIC receipt, mother's age, marital status, race, education, health status
 - Focal child's gender, birth weight, and year of birth

Results

How is the regularity of child support associated with welfare dependence?



How is the regularity of child support associated with household food insecurity?



Policy Implications

- Using alternative measures of family self-sufficiency is important to get a complete and nuanced picture of the role of social welfare policies in improving this outcome
- Regularity of child support *receipt* alone may not be helping families to avoid reliance on public benefits such as TANF, SNAP, and SSI
 - Perhaps *amounts* received are not consistent throughout the year? Future research should examine this conjecture
- Findings from this study add evidence to the importance of re-examining the debate over a public guarantee of a minimum amount of support per child
 - The proportion of families categorized as welfare dependent is relatively low: 2.4% (federal government definition) to 7.8% (alternative definition)
 - A recent proposal suggested \$150 per month per child (Cancian & Meyer, 2018)