

The Regularity of Noncustodial Parent Child Support and the Wellbeing of Custodial Families with Young Children

Robert Paul Hartley
Columbia University

Marybeth J. Mattingly
Carsey School of Public Policy, University of New Hampshire

ASPE-IRP Conference, Washington, DC
September 18, 2019



SCHOOL OF SOCIAL WORK
Make waves. Move mountains. Change lives.

Research Question

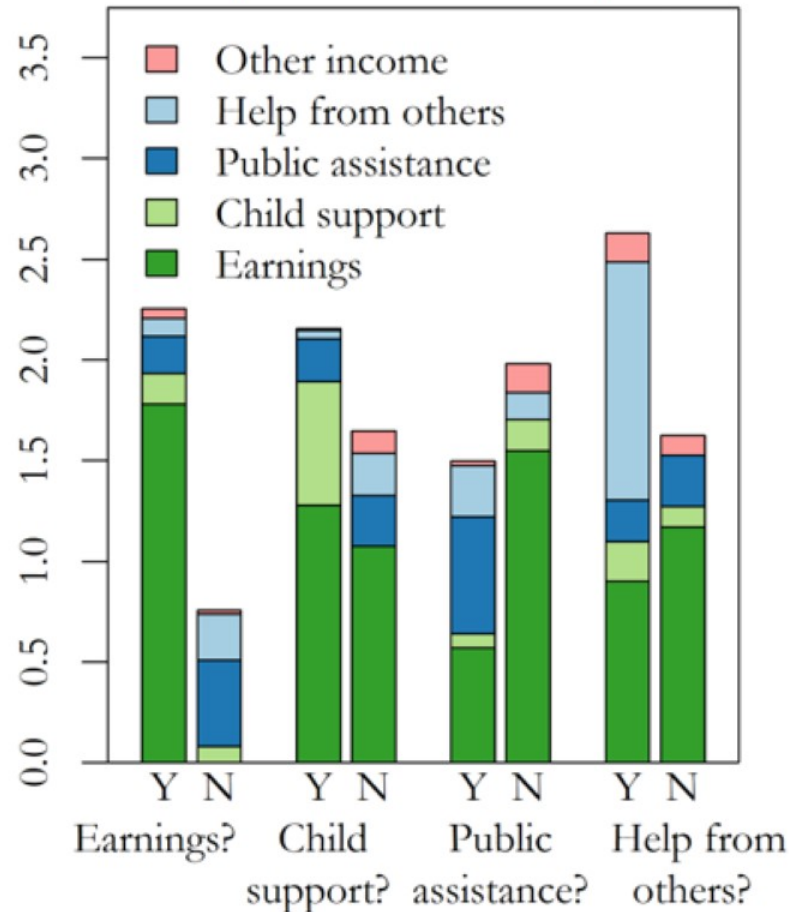
- Interest in family economic stability and child wellbeing
- Evidence: Impact on maternal labor supply, income volatility, role of noncash support, response to policy, selection effects
- Contribution: Role of child support, defined broadly, in the regularity of custodial labor supply, family income, and child care for families with children under age 5

Summary of Methods

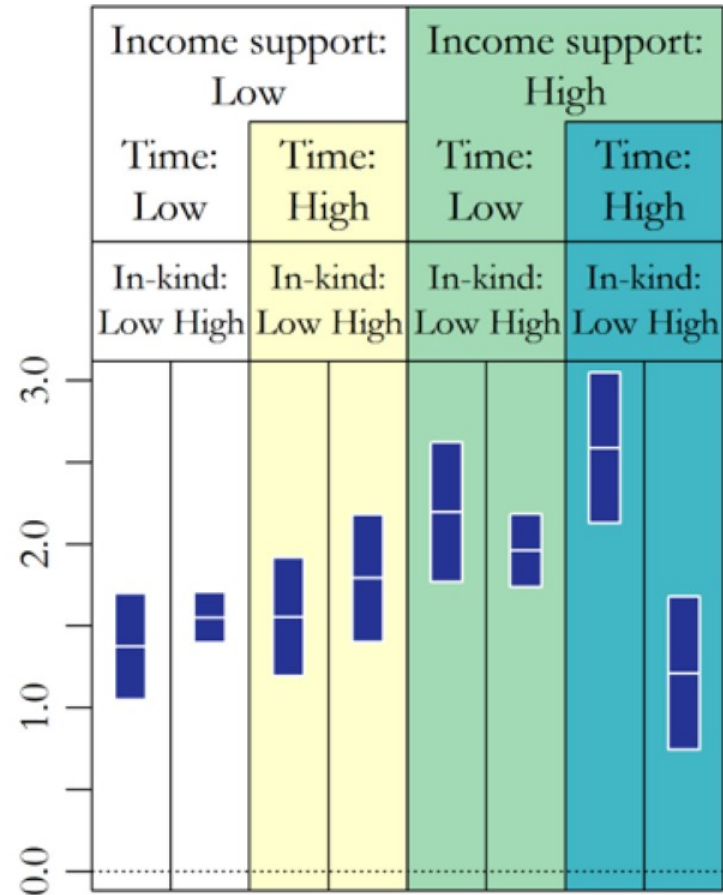
- Panel Study of Income Dynamics, Child Development Supplements, 1997, 2014
 - Measures of financial support, contact frequency, and in-kind support as well as family characteristics over time
- Descriptive analyses
- Correlations in timing of monthly income and sources of income support
- Regression-based models of earnings and child care conditional on noncustodial support and family characteristics/history

Results

Monthly Income (in thousands)



Number of Child Care Arrangements



Policy Implications

- Noncustodial support may fill a gap when there are fewer income sources in a given month, yet income support is also more likely in months when a custodial single parent has earnings.
- Months with no earnings are particularly hard for the custodial family as there are insufficient levels of income smoothing on average.
- Child support generally implies lower earnings volatility, lower public assistance participation, and higher spending on [formal] child care for a larger number of child care arrangements.