



Understanding the Role of Family Mechanisms in Non-Resident Father Families on Child Food Insecurity

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Childhood Hunger & Mother-Headed Families

- ❧ 16.7 mill. children lived in a food insecure household in 2011.
- ❧ 8.6 million children lived in a household in which the children were food insecure.
- ❧ 845,000 children lived in a household with very low food security among children in the household.
- ❧ Food insecurity rates for households with children:
 - Female-headed families: 36.8%
 - Married-couple families: 13.9%

Childhood Hunger & Mother-Headed Families

- More than one-quarter of all children currently live with only one parent (most often their mother) (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012).
- More than half of all U.S. children will spend time growing up outside of a two-parent family (Kennedy and Bumpass, 2008).
- Previous research has identified factors related to food insecurity:
 - Lower household income and asset levels
 - Lower parental education
 - Being in a household headed by a single parent
- Research has also found that female-headed homes may be at particularly high risk for food insecurity, even after controlling for some of these factors (Ribar & Hamrick, 2003; Rose, 1999; Winship & Jencks, 2002).

Nonresident Fathers' Involvement

- Social policy over the last several decades has focused on increasing nonresident fathers' financial involvement in their children's lives.
- Three main types of father involvement (Argys et al., 2006; Garasky et al., 2006)
 - Cash support via the formal child support system or provided informally
 - Non-cash (in-kind) contributions of items like food, clothes, or other items directly to the mother or child
 - Social involvement, reflecting the frequency and duration of time spent with children.

Nonresident Fathers' Involvement

- ❧ Patterns and packages of involvement and contributions vary substantially across families.
 - Garasky et al. (2010) found that the domains of father involvement were positively related and highly intertwined. Relationships were strongest between in-kind support and visitation (social contact).
 - Many fathers maintain consistently high (~40%) or consistently low (~30%) levels of contact as their children age. A substantial minority (~25%) decrease contact over time (Cheadle et al., 2010).

Research Questions

This study:

- ❧ Does nonresident father involvement have a direct impact on child food security?
- ❧ Do these effects differ in magnitude and possibly direction by type of father involvement?
- ❧ Does the presence of a stepfather have an effect on child food security?

Data

- Panel Study of Income Dynamics-Child Development Supplement (PSID-CDS)
 - Nationally representative sample
 - CDS children ages 0-12 in 1997; 3 waves ('97, '02-'03, '07-'08)
 - USDA's Food Security Module and component Child Food Security Scale, an established measure of food insecurity.
 - Income, family structure and household composition data from contemporaneous PSID interview waves.
 - Together, the data provide detailed information on child characteristics, family structure, and relevant covariates

Current Study Sample

PSID-CDS, N=573

- Children age 0-12 years who participated in CDS-I
- live with their biological mother
- have a living nonresident father
- 86 children with re-married mothers and a step-father present

Children's Food Security Scale

8 child-referenced questions from the USDA/FNS Food Security Module:

1. "We relied on only a few kinds of low-cost food to feed our children because we were running out of money to buy food." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?

2. "We couldn't feed our children a balanced meal, because we couldn't afford that." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?

3. "The children were not eating enough because we just couldn't afford enough food." Was that often, sometimes, or never true for you in the last 12 months?

4. In the last 12 months, did you ever cut the size of any of the children's meals because there wasn't enough money for food? (Yes/No)

5. In the last 12 months, were the children ever hungry but you just couldn't afford more food? (Yes/No)

6. In the last 12 months, did any of the children ever skip a meal because there wasn't enough money for food? (Yes/No)

7. (If yes to Question 6) How often did this happen— almost every month, some months but not every month, or in only 1 or 2 months?

8. In the last 12 months did any of the children ever not eat for a whole day because there wasn't enough money for food? (Yes/No)

Measures: Food Insecurity

Based on the Children's Food Security Scale:

- Binary indicator– affirmative response to 2 or more questions – coded to “food insecure”
- Continuous measure– number of affirmative responses
 - Range 0-8

Food Insecurity	
Binary Indicator	0.11
Continuous Measure	0.40 (0.92)

Measures: Father Involvement

- Total amount of cash support received from nonresident father in past year (\$)
- Contact – Father saw child at least once per month in the past year
- Whether father provided any in-kind (non-cash support) in past year (yes/no)
 - PSID-CDS – presents, paid for camp, vacation, medical costs, medical insurance, or other items?

Father Involvement	
Total Child Support (\$)	2504.90 (8115.11)
Any In-Kind Support	57 %
Frequency of Contact	47%

Study Sample Characteristics

Means or Proportions (SD)		
Household Characteristics		
HH income net of Child Support	3177.56	(3310.36)
Total Adults in Family Unit	1.30	(0.52)
Father's Characteristics		
Re-Married	0.22	
Has other children	0.29	
Mother's Characteristics		
Re-Married	0.11	
Age 17-24	0.13	
Age 24-29	0.23	
Age over 30	0.64	
White	0.28	
Black	0.65	
Hispanic	0.04	
Other Race	0.03	
Less than High School	0.30	
High School/GED	0.36	
More than High School	0.34	
Total number of children born to mother	4.15	(11.37)
Child's Characteristics		
White	0.25	
Black	0.65	
Hispanic	0.04	
Other Race	0.06	
Age	6.9	(3.43)
Child is Male	0.52	

Statistical Methods

Empirical approach includes:

- ❖ Logistic regressions for binary measure of child food insecurity
- ❖ Zero-inflated Poisson (ZIP) regressions for continuous measure of child food insecurity
 - Model (1) – Base Model (logistic and ZIP) with father involvement measures and income
 - Model (2) – Base Model + demographic characteristics of mother and child + household characteristics
 - Model (3) – Restricts (2) to children whose mothers are not re-married

Results: Zero-Inflated Models

	(1)	(2)	(3)
Child Support \$	-0.0229**	-0.0254**	-0.0284*
	(0.0103)	(0.0120)	(0.0163)
In-Kind Support	-0.0735	-0.154	-0.152
	(0.0849)	(0.111)	(0.112)
Child Visit Frequency	-0.0665	-0.0149	-0.0504
	(0.0880)	(0.0972)	(0.116)
Total Income net of Child Supprt \$	-0.00429***	-0.00442**	-0.00455
	(0.00142)	(0.00197)	(0.00299)
Mother is Re-marrried		-0.457*	
		(0.235)	
Number of Observations	573	573	487

Marginal effects; Standard errors in parentheses

** p<.05, *** p<.01

Results: Logit Models

	(1)	(2)	(3)
ChildSupport \$	-0.00756* (0.00386)	-0.00628* (0.00334)	-0.00736* (0.00404)
In-Kind Support	-0.00587 (0.0333)	-0.0128 (0.0323)	-0.0111 (0.0355)
Child Visit Frequency	-0.0357 (0.0348)	-0.0326 (0.0341)	-0.0414 (0.0367)
Total Income net of Child Supprt \$	-0.00116** (0.000471)	-0.00111** (0.000473)	-0.00122* (0.000658)
Mother is Re-marrried		-0.0479 (0.0496)	
Number of Observations	573	573	487

Marginal effects; Standard errors in parentheses

** p<.05, *** p<.01

Conclusions

- ❖ We consider the results preliminary.
- ❖ These preliminary findings suggest that efforts to include nonresident fathers in the lives of their children may have a positive impact on efforts to reduce childhood hunger.
- ❖ Income not a significant predictor of childhood food insecurity among the sample of mothers that are not re-married.

Conclusions

- ❖ Analyses suggest that nonresident father involvement is associated with increased child food security.
- ❖ Child-Support dollars provided by non-resident fathers are effective in reducing childhood hunger.
- ❖ In-kind support and child visit frequency not significantly associated with food insecurity.
- ❖ Re-married mother's have a positive impact on reducing child food insecurity.