



I'm Not Supporting His Kids: Noncustodial Fathers' Contributions When Mothers Have Children with New Partners

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Background

- Most of our work for BCS has focused on formal child support. But many NCPs provide *informal* child support
- Informal support is the voluntary provision of either cash or in-kind goods
 - For some, instead of formal support
 - For some, in addition to formal support
- Little is known about informal support
- Why might we care?
 - Informal support may be particularly useful for CPs receiving W-2, in that they do not receive all the formal support paid
 - However, informal arrangements may break down over time, especially as parents have new relationships

Research Questions and Approach

- What is associated with a father providing informal support? Specifically, is there a relationship between mother's new-partner fertility (NPF) and father's informal support?
 - Any informal support vs. “Shared” support
 - Contrast child-specific (clothes or gifts) with shared (groceries, money for rent)
 - Simple model and a model that tries to control for unobserved characteristics
 - Expect strongest effect on shared support (“I’m not supporting his kids”)

Prior Research on Informal Child Support

- Both cash and in-kind informal support fairly common early; decline over time/with age of child
 - Cash. Data from Fragile Families: 51% receive informal cash in the child's first year, declines to 24% in the third year (Nepomnyaschy, 2007; Nepomnyaschy & Garfinkel, 2009). In both years, averages about \$1500 when present (Nepomnyaschy, 2007)
 - In-kind. Data from the CPS-CSS: 61% of mothers report receiving something (59% birthday/holiday/other gifts; 37% clothes, diapers, shoes, etc.; 26% food or groceries) (Grall, 2009).

Prior Research on Multiple-Partner Fertility

- Prevalence: relatively common (though rates depend on measures, unit of analysis, and time period):
 - In 59% of nonmarital births, either the mother or father (or both) had had children with other partners (Carlson & Furstenburg, 2006)
 - 60% of nonmarital children who were their mother's first child will have at least 1 half-sibling by age 10 (Cancian, Meyer & Cook, forthcoming)
- Correlates: those more likely to have MPF include nonmarital couples, African Americans, low income/education, urban
- Consequences: fewer investments in children, greater conflict, and lower probability of marriage/continued cohabitation. However, also some evidence that multiple partners may provide a type of insurance
 - But selection is a difficult problem – the types of parents who have children with multiple partners may be different in unmeasured ways that are correlated with outcomes

Our Focus

- In a sample of low-income single mothers:
 - Are nonresident fathers less likely to provide informal support to their child when the mother has a new child with another partner?
 - Are they especially less likely to provide “shared” support?

Data

- Survey of Wisconsin Works Families (CSDE, first cohort of TANF participants)
 - Telephone & in-person, 1999, 2000, 2004
 - Mother and (legal) father of randomly-selected focal child
 - Response rates for mothers: >80%
 - Provides information on fertility, informal support, demographic characteristics, etc.
- Administrative records
 - Father's formal child support payments and formal earnings

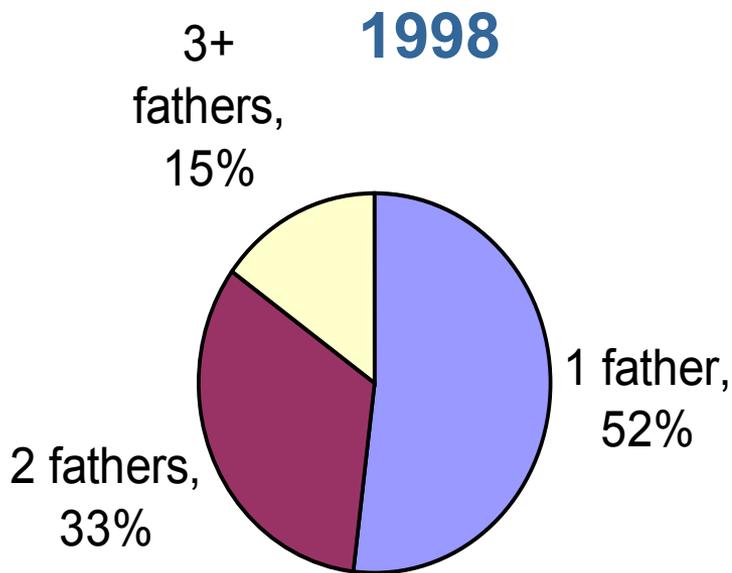
Sample

- 427 custodial mothers where there is a noncustodial father. Interviewed in 1999 and 2004; father not in prison (eliminates 77 fathers); responded to questions about informal support in the prior calendar year.
- Characteristics
 - Mothers generally young: in 1999, about 2/3 were less than age 30
 - Primarily women of color: less than 1/3 White
 - Focal children often young: 57% < age 6 in 1999

Informal Support from Focal Child's Father

- 1998
 - Received any informal support: 60%
 - Child-specific: 47% Clothes/shoes; 23% Allowance; 52% Gifts. Any child-specific: 60%
 - Shared: 20% Food; 7% Money for rent; 24% Other cash for the household. Any shared: 30%
- 2003
 - Less likely: 50% receive any; 50% receive child-specific; 23% receive shared
 - Some consistency: of those who received any in 98, 66% also receive in 03; of those who did not receive any in 98, 74% also do not receive in 03
- Note everyone who provides shared support also provides child-specific support. So “any” support is the same as “child-specific” support

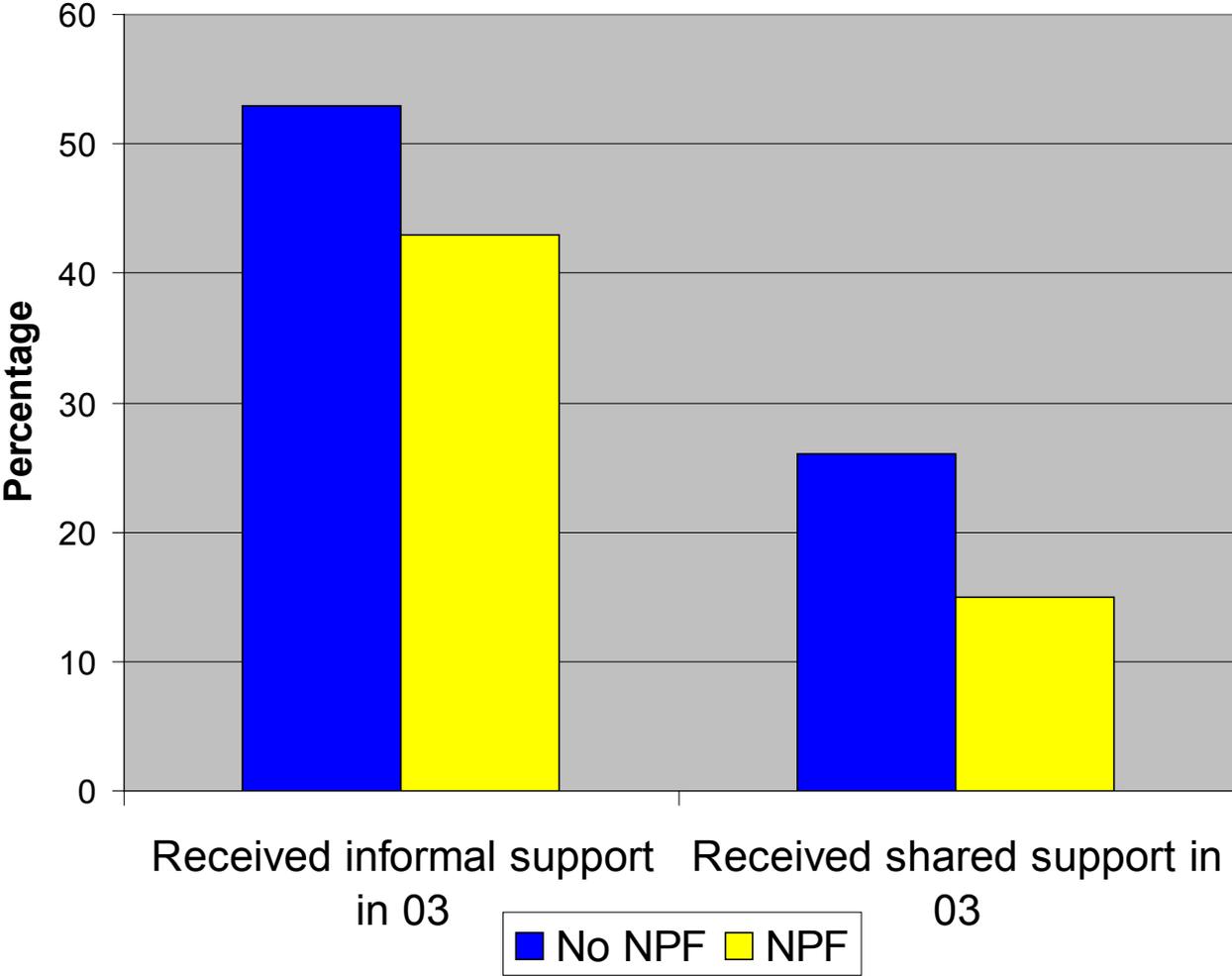
Multiple-partner fertility (MPF), 1998, and new-partner fertility (NPF), 1998-03



Between 1998 and 2003:

- 29% of mothers had a child with a new partner

NPF and Informal Support 98-03



Simple Answer, Concern and Response

- Simple relationship: fathers less likely to provide support (and shared support) when mother has had child with a new partner
- But selection is a substantial concern
 - Mothers who have children with more than one partner may have partnered with men who are less likely to support children
- Response
 - 1. Control for a variety of observed variables (see next slide)
 - 2. Control for differences between those who will have NPF and those who won't -- difference-in-difference framework

Basic Models

- Examine any informal support and any shared support in 2003
- Key independent variable: mother's new-partner fertility
- Control for:
 - Whether formal child support is owed and paid
 - Father's ability to provide support and constraints (his earnings, education, age, current marital status, kids in fathers' HH)
 - Father's willingness to provide support (number of children together, age of youngest child in sibship, marital child or not)
 - Mother's need (own income below poverty, her current partnering status, her TANF receipt)
 - Other controls (mother's race, focal child's gender)

Summary of Results: Are Those Whose Partners Have NPF Less Likely to Provide Informal Child Support?

	Any	Shared
Simple logistic regression: NPF	Less**	
Difference-in-Difference		
Time (2003)		
New-partner fertility		
New-partner fertility * time		

* <.1 ** <.05 ***<.01

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Simple logistic regression: NPF	Less**	Less***
Difference-in-Difference		
Time (2003)	0	More*
New-partner fertility	Less**	0
New-partner fertility * time	0	Less*

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Summary of Results: Other Factors Related to Informal Child Support

- Fathers more likely to provide any or shared when:
 - Father doesn't owe formal CS (any)
 - Father pays more formal support (shared)
 - Father has more ability to provide -- higher earnings, higher education (any), no resident children, currently partnered (shared)
 - Proxies for father's willingness to pay -- more children together, younger children
 - Mother's have greater need – TANF (any), not living with partner
 - Mother African American, focal child is girl (any)

Some Limitations

- Limited generalizability: TANF sample in a single state
- Focus on a specific father, and on any support (rather than the amount). It's possible that when there are multiple fathers some fathers are less likely to contribute, but overall there's still a father contributing, and the total amount may be as much or more

Tentative Conclusions

- Fathers provide less informal support, and less shared informal support, over time, and especially so when mothers have children with new partners
- Suggestive evidence that the reason those whose partners had NPF provide less informal support is more about the types of cases with NPF, rather than NPF itself
- Suggestive evidence that the reason those whose partners had NPF provide less *shared* support may be because of (causally related to) mother's NPF

Implications and Questions

- Should we worry that formal child support merely displaces informal, so that the custodial family is no better off? No evidence here.
- Is informal support so limited and unstable that the formal support system can continue to ignore it?
- Is the typical pattern that informal support is common early, then stops, which drives CPs to pursue formal support?