

# Child Care Subsidies and Child and Family Outcomes Panel

Discussant Remarks

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- ▶ **What to make of the different findings across the studies**
    - ▶ Keep in mind the papers are not asking the same questions.



# Interpreting across the studies

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- ▶ **What is the counterfactual?**
  - ▶ “compared to what”
- ▶ **What are the selection processes?**
  - ▶ what might explain differences between the two groups besides the “treatment”
- ▶ **What are the key pathways?**
  - ▶ If the observed differences are real, how do we understand the “why” and “how”?



# Selection Processes

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- ▶ All papers address selection in creative ways.
- ▶ None of the papers can really rule out selection.
- ▶ Makes me want to study the selection processes themselves.
  - ▶ Who takes up and why?
  - ▶ Correlation of employment conditions and child care type



# Key Pathways Through Employment

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- ▶ Subsidies may influence whether and what **employment** parents get, and have their effects on child and family outcomes via the effect they have on employment.
- ▶ In this case, we'd want to understand how subsidies affect employment, and whether subsidies directly or indirectly influence the pathways between employment and child well-being (e.g., financial resources, time, stress)



# Hypothesized Relationships between Employment and Child Outcomes

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## ▶ Financial Resources hypothesis

- ▶ Employment increases income, thereby increasing the economic resources of families. More money allows for greater investment in children. (+)
  - ▶ If subsidies facilitate employment *that successfully increases income*, we might expect the relationship between subsidies and maternal wellbeing/child outcomes to be positive (+)

## ▶ Family Stress hypothesis:

- ▶ Employment taxes psychological resources of parents, making them less able to invest emotionally in children, and affecting their ability to parent effectively. (-)
  - ▶ If subsidies reduce family stress related to employment, we might expect the relationship between subsidies and maternal health to be positive (+)

## ▶ Family Time hypothesis:

- ▶ Employment reduces the amount of time directly invested with children, or overlaps with family time thereby interrupting family routines and practices and affecting ability to parent effectively. (-)
    - ▶ If subsidies result in parents working more, we might expect the relationship between subsidies and maternal wellbeing/child outcomes to be negative. (-)
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# Key Pathways Through Child Care

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- ▶ Subsidies may influence whether and what **child care and early education** children receive, and have their effects on child and family outcomes via the effect they have on children's out of home care.
- ▶ In this case, we'd want to understand how subsidies affect care, and whether subsidies directly or indirectly influence the pathways between child care and child well-being (e.g., quality of nonparental care; dosage; continuity; family-responsiveness of care)



# What outcomes should we look at?

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- ▶ What can we expect from subsidies, and what can we not expect?
- ▶ Can we think of intermediate outcomes that are reasonable and measurable?
- ▶ Importance of contextualizing findings

