

Nonparent Adults and Economic Realities for Children in Low-Income Communities

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The analysis and conclusions set forth are those of the authors and do not indicate concurrence by colleagues, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, or NORC.



..Research evidence indicates that, on average, children who have (a) **two parents** who are committed to one another, (b) a **stable home life**, (c) **more economic resources**, and (d) the advantage of being **intended or welcomed** by their parents are more likely to flourish.

...Stability—in resources and relationships—is the foundation for a healthy American childhood. ..The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed and intensified preexisting conditions for American children in the domains that this report has prioritized: household resources, family structure and stability, early development, health, education, and the teenage years.

Cabrera, N., Deming, D. de Ruby, V., Gennetian, L.A., Haskins, R., Bowen Matthew, D., Reeves, R., Sawhill, I., Whitmore Schanzenbach, D., Simon, K., Stevens, K., Strain, M.R., Streeter, R., Sullivan, J., Bradford Wilcox, W., & Bauer, L. (2022). *Rebalancing: Children First. Report of the AEI-Brookings Working Group on Childhood in the United States.*

Problems:

1. Households in low-income communities are diverse



Solutions:

Include non-parent adults such as grandparents, aunts, uncles, unrelated others, etc.

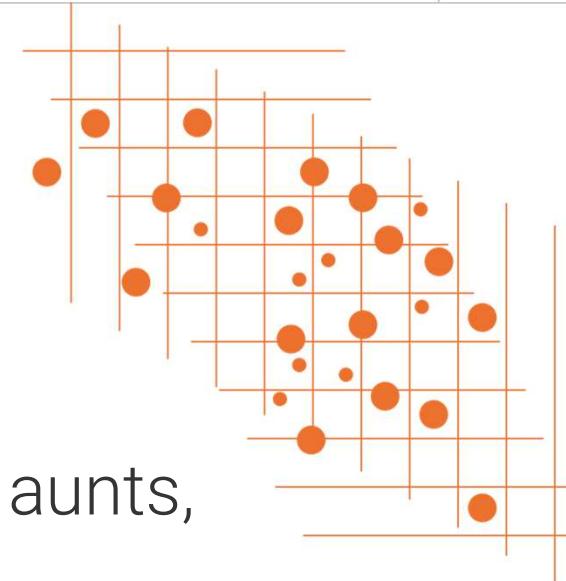


Define household structure based on the relationship of each adult to a focal child

2. Household change takes many forms



Define instability based on *any change* in the adult composition of the household



Objectives

1. Quantify the prominence of grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. in low-income households
2. Determine whether the presence of these non-parent adults is associated with any benefit or detriment to economic wellbeing
3. Examine the impact of losing and/or gaining non-parent adults on economic wellbeing

Analysis

- Panel sample:
 - 1,619 households with children
 - Participated in W2 & W3
 - Inclusion criteria:
 - Same focal child in both waves
 - Valid relationship info



n=1,212

Analysis (cont'd.)

- Methods:
 - Descriptive statistics
 - OLS regression models
 - Weighted to represent households with children in MC neighborhoods as of wave 2 (2005-2007)



Variables

Independent Variables		Dependent Variables	
Variable(s)	Description	Variable(s)	Description
Non-parent present in the household (ever)	Dummy variable indicating whether, across two waves, the focal child EVER lived with a non-parent adult (e.g. grandparent, aunt or uncle, other extended relative, unrelated adult, etc.) in the home	Square root of household income per capita	Continuous measure of the household's total income from all sources in the year prior to the wave 3 interview
Change in non-parent adult in the household (ever)	Three dummy variables indicating whether the household experienced a numeric change in the number of non-parent adults living in the home between waves (gained, lost, no change)	Economic hardship	6-point continuous measure indicating how many of the following the household experienced in past year: (1) did not fill or postponed filling a prescription for drugs; were not able to pay the (2) mortgage, (3) phone, or (4) utility bills; or (5) were without enough money to buy food
Family Disruption variables	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Ever a change in parents •Moved since prior wave 		
Controls	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •Respondent characteristics: foreign-born, race/ethnicity, sex, age, highest level of education, married, cohabiting •Household characteristics: #people, #parents, relationships to focal child, employment status (all adults) 		

R₁: What are the characteristics of families that include one or more non-parent adults?

	Never included non-parent adult (NNP)		Ever included non-parent adult (ENP)	
	Figure	SD	Figure	SD
Household Characteristics				
Number of people in the HH (mean)	3.87	1.32	4.17	1.47
Number of parents (%)				
None	0.00		16.09	
One	49.60		51.50	
Two	50.40		32.40	
Relationships to focal child (adults, %)				
Aunt/uncle	0.00		18.03	
Grandparent	0.00		39.70	
Other relative	0.00		5.36	
Boarder/roommate/unrelated	0.00		12.66	
Employment status (adults, mean)				
Employed	1.11	0.82	1.20	0.96
Disabled	0.08	0.29	0.23	0.49
Retired	0.01	0.08	0.17	0.45
Unemployed	0.20	0.44	0.25	0.53
Family Disruption				
Moved since prior wave (%)	48.53		55.58	
Ever a change in parents (%)	15.15		31.76	

R₂: What impact, if any, does the presence of one or more non-parent adult have on household economic wellbeing?

	Household income per capita (sq root)		Economic hardship	
	Estimate	Std Error	Estimate	Std Error
<i>Intercept</i>	64.02 ***	6.92	2.12 ***	0.31
Focus Variables				
Ever with non-parent adult in the home	-3.49	2.08	-0.08	0.09
Household Characteristics				
Number of parents in household	3.15	1.81	-0.12	0.08
Number of employed adults	5.80 ***	1.28	-0.10	0.06
Number of disabled adults	-7.82 **	2.60	0.25 *	0.11
Number of retired adults	-4.89	3.60	-0.25	0.16
Number of unemployed adults	-8.83 ***	2.12	0.20	0.09
Economic hardship	-4.39 ***	0.65		
Square root of income per capita			-0.01 ***	0.00
Family Disruption				
Moved since prior wave	-6.14 **	1.88	0.03	0.08
N	1,212		1,212	
R-Squared	0.34		0.10	
F	41.55		9.24	
Degrees of Freedom	15		15	

Findings

- 1) Quantify the prominence of grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. in low-income households
- 2) Determine whether the presence of these non-parent adults is associated with any benefit or detriment to economic wellbeing

→ **38% at one or both waves**

→ **No significant impact for income nor hardship**

Findings (cont'd.)

- 3) Examine the impact of losing and/or gaining non-parent adults on economic wellbeing

→ Adding a non-parent = no impact

→ Losing a non-parent = more HH income per capita

→ No impact on economic hardship

Thank you!

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