

Doubling Up Among Low-Income Families Before and During the Recession



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- Literature:
 - Household structure is important for child well-being (Waldfogel et al 2010, Manning and Brown 2006, Amato 2005, McClanahan and Sandefur 1994)
 - Instability matters for child wellbeing
 - Union formation or dissolution

- But in our MC work, we find:
 - Among households with children, nearly half (48%) of kids lived with an adult other than his/her parents during a six-year period (du Toit et al 2013)
 - Compared to two-parent-only households, children in our sample who live with other adults have significantly...
 - Less income per capita
 - More economic hardship

- What is doubling up? Census definitions:
 - additional adult - a person aged 18 or older who is (a) not enrolled in school and (b) neither the householder, the spouse, nor the cohabiting partner of the householder
 - shared household – one which includes at least one additional adult
- Significant increase in shared households between 2007 and 2010 (17% and 18.7%, respectively)

Background: Doubling Up (cont'd.)

- Why double up?
 - “joint production advantages” (e.g. increased specialization, division of labor, and risk pooling) and “joint consumption advantages” (e.g. shared use of furniture, food, and other household goods)
 - childcare demands, emotional support
 - sign of distress or hardship

**Table 1.
Sources**



Making Connections
Survey



**Survey of Consumer
Finances**

Funding agency

Annie E. Casey Foundation

Board of Governors of the Federal Reserve System

Summary

Longitudinal study of families in low-income neighborhoods in ten U.S. cities

Preeminent household finance survey in U.S.

Access

Restricted use within NORC's Data Enclave

Public use dataset

Sample type

AP and list of focal children

AP and list, with oversample of high-income Americans

Key advantages

Detailed household roster information and linked personal identifiers

Multiple techniques to provide detailed data on personal and business finances, including dollar probes, range cards, and multiple imputation of missing values

- Inclusion criteria:
 - Households with children
 - Same respondent (for panel cases)
- Reference periods:
 - Time 1: 2005-2007 (*before the downturn*)
 - Time 2: 2008-2011 (*after the downturn*)

- Ns:
 - Panel data:
 - 966 MC households
 - 1,373 SCF households
 - Cross-sectional data:
 - 3,323 MC households at Time 1 (wave 2)
 - 1,940 MC households at Time 2 (wave 3)
 - 1,613 SCF households at Time 1 (2007)
 - 2,385 SCF households at Time 2 (2010)

- Doubled up (dummy): whether household contains one or more 'additional adult' - a person aged **20 or older** who is neither the householder, the spouse, nor the cohabiting partner of the **respondent**
- Household income-to-poverty ratio (continuous): Household's total income from all sources last year, in U.S. dollars, divided by the U.S. poverty threshold for the respective number of persons

- Controls:
 - Site (MC only)
 - Respondent characteristics: race/ethnicity, age, highest level of education, married
 - Household characteristics: children aged 5 or younger in the household, residence is owned, respondent and spouse/partner employment, economic hardship, public assistance

- Descriptive statistics
- Logistic regression models
- Weighted to represent:
 - MC: households with children in MC neighborhoods as of wave 1 (2002-2004)
 - SCF: U.S. households

1. The 7 MC sites are not representative of poor urban communities nationwide
2. Different types of respondents:
 - MC = primary caretaker of a selected focal child
 - SCF = financial head of the household
3. Some noise in using 2007 SCF Panel data to represent pre-housing market crash (Time 1)

R₁: What are the rates of doubling up among residents of very poor neighborhoods (*Making Connections*) as compared to low-income Americans and the nation as a whole (SCF)?

H₁: Doubling up will be more common among *Making Connections* households than among all Americans (SCF).

TRUE.

Time 1: 27% of MC vs. 24% of SCF households

Time 2: 31% of MC vs. 27% of SCF households

R₂ What are the demographic and family characteristics of households that double up?

H₂ The following characteristics will be associated with an increased likelihood to double up: being African American or Hispanic, being unmarried, and having young children in the household.

MIXED RESULTS.

See following slide.

Table 2. Regression models predicting doubling up at Time 1 among MC and SCF Families with Children	MC		SCF	
	Estimate	Std Error	Estimate	Std Error
Intercept	-2.59***	0.68	-4.34***	0.04
Site	(no effect)		(no effect)	
Respondent Characteristics				
Race/ethnicity				
Black	0.30	0.31	0.31***	0.02
Hispanic	0.25	0.31	0.74***	0.01
Other	0.98*	0.40	-0.10***	0.01
Female	0.46	0.31	0.42***	0.02
Age	0.02	0.01	0.07***	0.00
Highest level of education				
Less than high school degree	0.17	0.21	0.44***	0.05
More than high school degree	0.05	0.21	-0.08***	0.01
Married	-0.72***	0.20	-0.37***	0.01
Household characteristics				
Young children in household	0.45*	0.19	-0.18***	0.02
Residence is owned	0.30	0.20	-0.01	0.01
Number of employed principals	0.10	0.16	0.06***	0.01
Household income-to-poverty ratio	-0.27*	0.11	-0.01***	0.00
Economic hardship	-0.01	0.07	n/a	n/a
Public assistance	-0.16	0.08	-0.03***	0.01

* $p < 0.05$, ** $p < 0.01$, *** $p < 0.001$.

R₃ Is doubling up an *economic* strategy?

H₃ There is a statistically significant relationship between the household income-to-poverty ratio and the likelihood of doubling up.

TRUE, though relationship weakens when controlling for other factors.

$B_{MC} = -0.27$ (SE=0.11), $B_{SCF} = -0.01$ (SE=0.0)

Figure 1a. Percentage of Doubled Up Households among Families with Children (Cross-sectional samples), Weighted

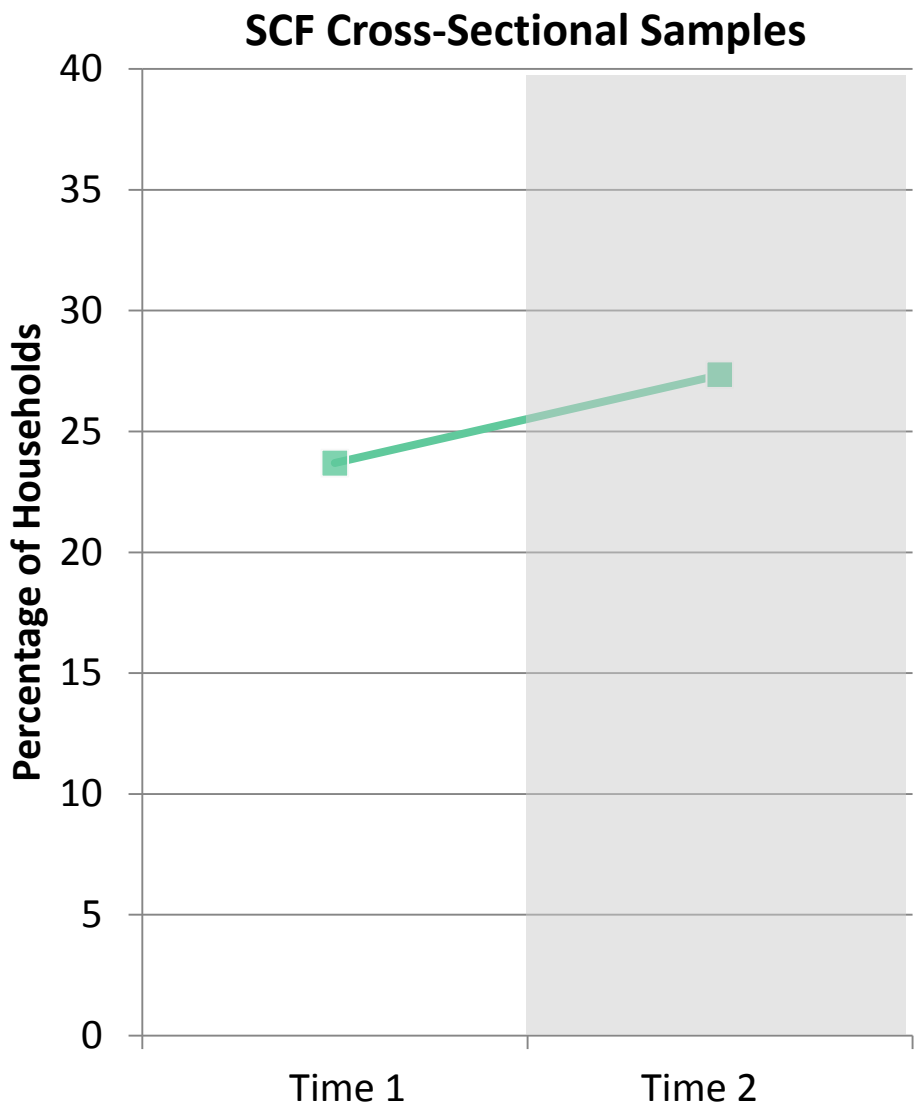
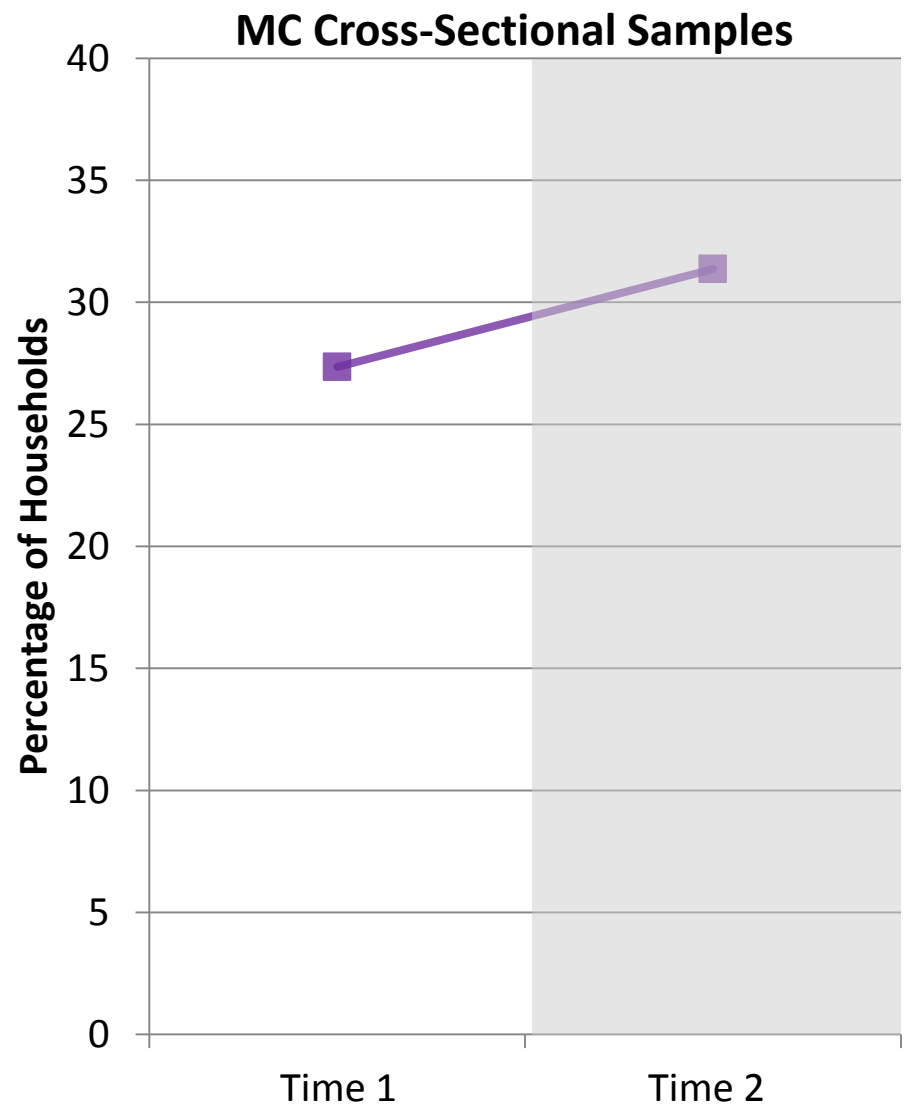
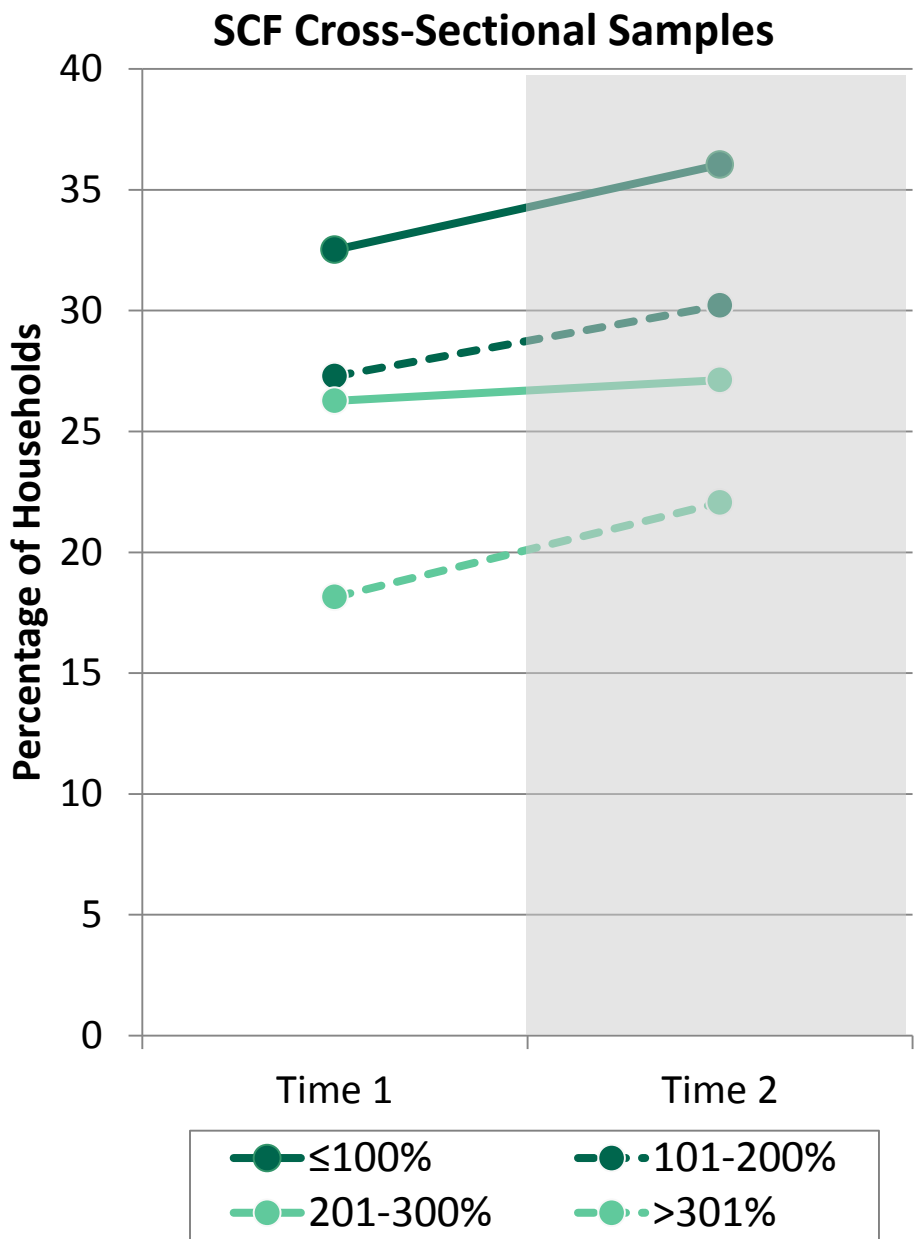
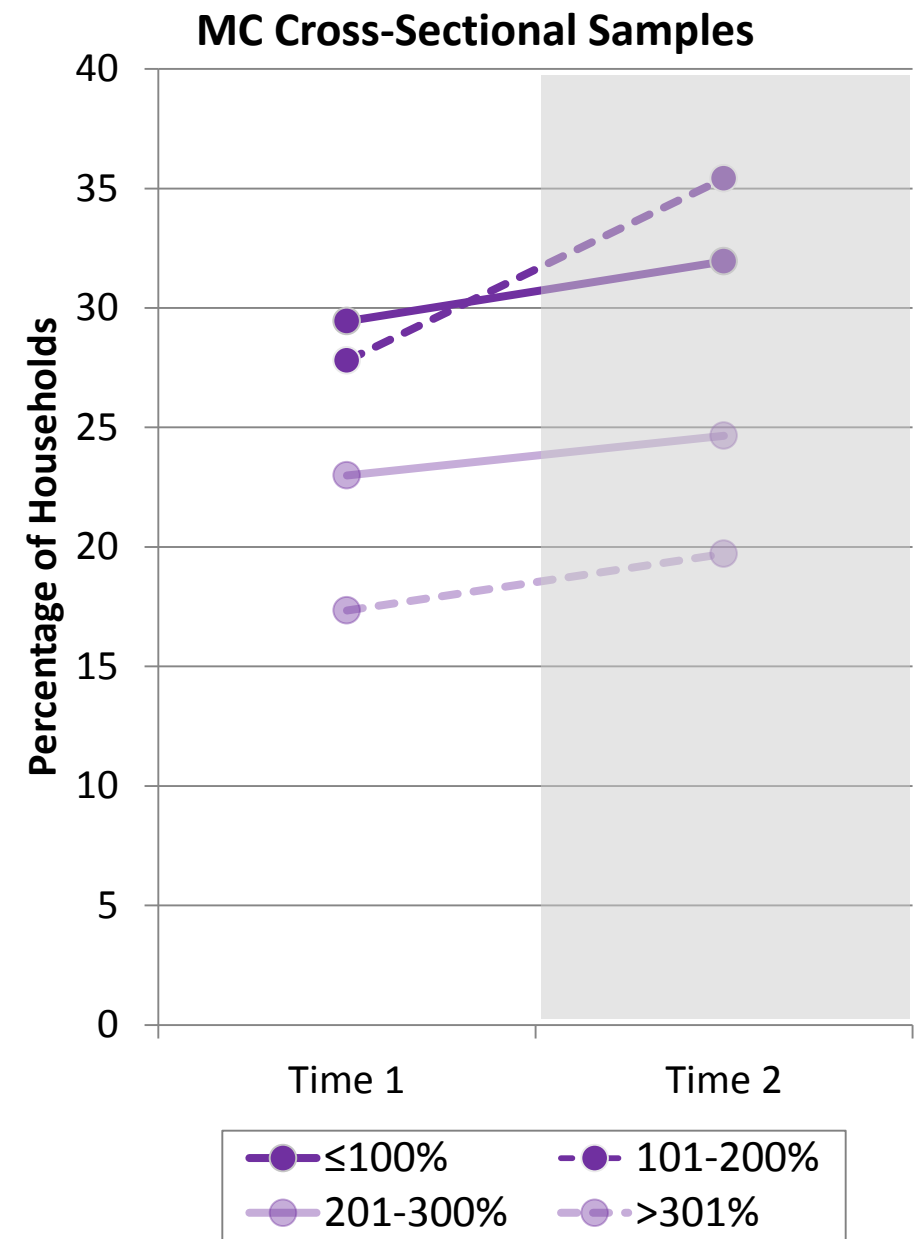


Figure 1b. Percentage of Doubled Up Households among Families with Children (Cross-sectional samples) by Poverty Group, Weighted



- Many children live with adults who are not their parents – particularly in low-income communities
- All poverty groups became more likely to double up post-downturn, including the most vulnerable
- Doubling up is not a new economic strategy
- Welfare policies that anticipate presence of nonparent adults and changes in household composition will better serve families

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Thank You!



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