

Diversity in Family and Household Patterns

This module is designed to illustrate differences in family and household composition patterns for different groups based on race/ethnicity and social class. It also serves as a review of key methodological concepts introduced in the first part of the course.

Learning Objectives

Skills

- Review the Following Methodological Concept:
- Relationships and Group Differences
- Percentage Comparisons
- Representativeness and Generalizability
- Causality, Independent and Dependent Variables
 - Spuriousness, Control
- Conditional Effects

Substance

- Review Substantive Material:
 - Institutional vs. Analytical Definitions of the Family
 - Trends in Family and Household Formation in the United States
 - Sources of Race and Ethnic Differences
 - Originating Culture vs. Historical Experiences vs. Current Ecological Context
- The Significance of Social Class
- Feminization of Poverty

Data Sets

The data sets you will be using come from 5 decades of U.S. Census Public Use Micro-data Set (PUMS) and consist of a random sample of all households (not individuals) in the U.S. There are three data sets that you will be using: [HH5090](#), which includes census data from 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1990; [FPOV7090](#), which includes census data from 1970, 1980, and 1990; and [HHOLDS9](#), which includes data from the 1990 census. The variables included in each of the data sets are as follows:

HH5090 – Contains data on Households in the United States

YEAR (1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990): Date when the census was taken.

RACE (NonBlack, Black): Whether or not the head of household was of a black heritage.

AGE (15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+): Age group of the head of the household

HHTYPE (MrrdCpl, MaleFam, FemIFam, MaleNonf, FemINonf): Whether or not the head of the household was currently married and living with his/her spouse (MrrdCpl), an unmarried male with children (MaleFam), an unmarried female with children (FemIFam), an unmarried male without children (MaleNonf), or an unmarried female without children (FemINonf).

HHSIZE (1, 2, 3, 4, 5+): The number of people who are permanent members of the household.

FPOV7090 – Contains data on Families in the United States

YEAR (1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, 1990): Date when the census was taken.

RACE (NonBlack, Black): Whether or not the head of family was of a black heritage.
AGE (15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+): Age group of the head of the family.
FAMTYPE (MrrdCpl, MaleFam, FemlFam): Whether or not the head of the family and household was currently married and living with his/her spouse (MrrdCpl), an unmarried male with children or other relatives (MaleFam), or an unmarried female with children or other relatives (FemlFam).
POV (Poverty, NearPoor, Other): Indicates whether or not the total family income was below the poverty line for the year (Poverty), between 1 and 1.5 times the poverty line (NearPoor), or more than 1.5 times the poverty line (Other).

HHOLDS9 - Contains data on households in the United States

RACELAT (NLWhite, Black, Latino, Asian, AmIndian, NLOther - Includes Native Americans): This variable is based on questions about race and ethnicity and identifies people who are non-Latino Whites, Blacks, Latinos, Asians, American Indian, vs. other non-Latino groups not fitting any of the remaining categories.
AGE (15-24, 25-34, 35-44, 45-54, 55-64, 65+): Age group of the head of the family.
POV (Poverty, NearPoor, Middle, Comf): Indicates whether or not the total family income was below the poverty line for the year (Poverty), between 1 and 1.5 times the poverty line (NearPoor), between 1.5 and 5 times the poverty line (Middle), or more than 5 times the poverty line (Comf).
HHTYPE (MrrdCpl, MaleFam, FemlFam, MaleNonf, FemlNonf): Whether or not the head of the household was currently married and living with his/her spouse (MrrdCpl), an unmarried male with children (MaleFam), an unmarried female with children (FemlFam), an unmarried male without children (MaleNonf), or an unmarried female without children (FemlNonf).

Methodological and Theoretical Review

1. Some of these data sets use households as the unit of analysis while others use families. What is the difference and what problems can you see in using either unit to precisely study how families have changed over time and how families are structured differently across race/ethnic and social class groups?

Family vs. Household:

Problems/Issues:

2. Using information from your textbook, the web or other sources, explain what the poverty line is and why it isn't necessarily a good indicator of poverty.

Poverty Line:

Problems/Issues:

3. Discuss the three sets of factors that need to be considered when trying to understand differences in family life between different ethnic groups?

Originating Cultural Differences:

Differences in Historical Experiences:

Current Ecological Context Differences:

4. Discuss some of the ways in which one's social class can influence family life.

5. Review the concept "feminization of poverty" and explain this phenomenon below:

Recent Historical Trends in Household Composition

In this first exercise, you will be using two data sets – [HH5090](#) and [FPOV7090](#) – to examine changes in household composition over recent decades for different race/ethnic and social class groups.

Race/Ethnic Differences in Household Trends

Our ability to use census data to examine race and ethnic differences in household composition over time is limited by changes that have occurred over time in how the census has measured ethnicity and race. As a result, our analysis of trends will be restricted to the analysis of race differences (Black vs. Non-Black). You will be given an opportunity to examine more detailed ethnic group differences in household composition for the year 1990 later in this exercise module.

To begin your explorations of race differences in recent changes in household composition, follow the instructions below:

1. Go to <http://www.ssdan.net/datacounts>
2. Click on the "Data" in the menu bar
3. From there, click "Browse" on the left sidebar. Find "centrend" in the drop-down box and select it.
4. Scroll down through the list of data sets until you find "hh5090.dat" Highlight and click "submit."
5. You can also click [here](#) to launch the dataset in WebCHIP.

Create an info table to read the description of the data set, see the variables and answer the following questions:

1. What is the "Unit of Analysis" in this data file and how many of these units are in the sample?

Unit of Analysis: _____

Number of Units: _____

2. How is a household different from a family and how are both of these different from individuals?

3. These data are based on either a one percent or five percent random sample of the U.S. population in each of the years represented. Do you think that the results of the analyses you are about to perform are representative and generalizable to the entire U.S. population? Explain.

Review Marginal Distributions

Before looking at changes in household composition over time, it is a good idea to get an understanding of the variables and units of analysis that you will be using by examining what are called their "distributions" (a description of how many units (e.g., households or families) can be classified as fitting into each category of each of the variables in the study). To get these descriptive distributions, create a Marginals Table and answer the following questions:

1. What year had the largest number of households? _____
2. What percent of the households over these 5 decades were Black? _____

Is this percentage an accurate reflection of the percent of individuals in the population that were Black over these 5 decades? If so, why? If not, why not?

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3. What percent of households over these 5 decades were married couple households? What percent were single parent households? What percent were non-family households? (You will need to add together percentages to get the latter two numbers)

Married Couple Households = _____

Single Parent Households = _____

Non-Family Households = _____

Examine Recent Trends

The first step in looking at these trends will be to examine how households changed between 1950 and 1990 irrespective of race/ethnicity or social class. To do this, you will need to generate what is called a “crosstabs table” that displays the percent of household units that fit each of the different types in each year separately (i.e., household type by year). Once you have generated such a table it will be possible to compare how the percentage of household fitting any given type changed from decade to decade. You can then speculate as to why some types of households became more or less prevalent or likely than other types based on the understanding of social processes that you have gained thus far in the course.

The “crosstabs table” that you will be creating will have rows that identify different household types and columns that identify different years when data were collected. Thus, we will call the variable “household type” (HHType) the “row” variable and the variable “year” (Year) the “column” variable for this analysis. Once you set up the dimensions of the table, you will then tell the program to calculate percentages for each household type within each year separately (i.e., to “percentage down” the columns). By percentaging down the columns (i.e., dividing the number of units in a given cell by the total number of units in its column and multiplying by 100) the resulting number tells you the percent of all households in the year (identified by the column header) that were of the type indicated by the cell’s row identifier.

This percent tells you the “likelihood” of finding a household during that year which met the description found in the row header for the cell. For example, if the percent found in the cell defined by the row headed “Married Couple Family” and the column headed “1950” was 75%, then this would indicate that 75 percent of all households in 1950 consisted of a married couple family with or without children. Or, another way to think about this number is that in 1950 if you were to knock on peoples doors and ask them about who lived there, you would find that the likelihood of finding a married couple family living there is 75 percent or 75 percent of the time. Note that the numbers in the first row do NOT tell you what year had the highest percentage of Married Couple Families. To get this information you would have had to percentage across the row rather than down the column and the number would probably be different from 75%.

Create a Percent Down table with “HHType” as the row variable and “YEAR” as the column variable. This will produce a table of percentages for you to use in describing how household composition changed between 1950 and 1990. Fill in the table below with the appropriate percentages and answer the questions below the table (Note: Refer to the descriptions of these

data sets earlier in the assignment under the heading “Data Sets” for a description of what each category label in the output refers to).

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Married Couple Family					
Single Male Headed Family					
Single Female Headed Family					
Single Male Non-Family					
Single Female Non_Family					

1. What does the percent in the upper-most right cell (Single Female Non-Family, 1990) tell you?

2. Based on the percentages in this table, what would you say about how households changed between 1950 and 1990? What type(s) of households experienced the greatest increase? What type(s) experienced the greatest decrease?

3. Why do you think these changes occurred?

Examine Race Differences in Trends

Now that you have looked at the overall trends in household composition, you can get more sophisticated and look at how these trends may have been similar or different across different race groups (recall that census data in the past was not refined enough to accurately and consistently classify ethnicity over these five decades). Since our research question is how changes in household composition over the five decades may have been similar or different across race groups, we will need to generate two tables like the one above. The first will show household type by year for Non-Blacks and the second will show household type by year for Blacks. Once you have these two tables you can then compare the trends for any given household type over time for Non-Blacks vs. Blacks. If the trends are different, then it may tell us something about how social change affects these groups differently or how the social conditions of these groups changed during this period of time.

To see how household composition changed between 1950 and 1990 differently for blacks vs. non-blacks, create a Percent Down table with “HHType” as the row variable, “Year” as the column variable, “Race” as the control variable. This will produce two tables of percentages for you to use in describing how household composition changed between 1950 and 1990 – one for

Non-Blacks and one for Blacks. Fill in the tables below with the appropriate percentages and answer the questions that follow:

Non-Blacks

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Married Couple Family					
Single Male Headed Family					
Single Female Headed Family					
Male Headed Non-Family					
Female Headed Non-Family					

Blacks

	1950	1960	1970	1980	1990
Married Couple Family					
Single Male Headed Family					
Single Female Headed Family					
Male Headed Non-Family					
Female Headed Non-Family					

As you can see in the above tables, the changes in percentages for female headed non-family households and male headed non-family households over the five decades are similar for both non-blacks and blacks (see the first two rows of each table). For both types of households and both racial groups there was an increase in the percentage of all households in these types of between only 4 and 6 percent over the fifty years covered in the table. There were, however, some notable changes and differences between racial groups in the percentages of single female-headed family households and married couple family households. The questions below ask you to describe and analyze these differences.

1. Compare the differences between Blacks and Non-Blacks in terms of the percentages of households that are composed of a married couple with or without children (Married Couple Families). Which group is more likely to live in such households? How have these percentages changed differently over the years for Blacks vs. Non-Blacks?

2. Compare how the percentage of single female headed and single male headed households changed for Blacks versus Non-Blacks. How have Blacks and Non-Blacks differed in terms of changes in female-headed households?

3. Based on what you have learned in this course thus far about race and ethnic differences, what hypotheses might you come up with to explain why these different trends have occurred for non-blacks vs. blacks?

Social Class Differences in Household Trends

In addition to race/ethnicity, one's social class position has a profound effect on one's family life. Again, due to data limitations, we are unable to examine social class differences in household composition from 1950 to 1990. We can, however, examine differential changes in household composition between 1970 and 1990 for those who live near or below the poverty line versus those who live above the poverty line.

To begin your explorations of these differences, click [here](#) to launch the dataset (**FPOV7090**) in WebCHIP, and select WebCHIP 2.0. Create an info table to read the description of the data set and answer the following questions:

1. What is the "Unit of Analysis" in this data file and how many of these units are in the sample?
2. Unit of Analysis: _____
Number of Units: _____
3. How is the unit of analysis used in this data set different from that used in the previous data set?

Review Marginal Distributions

Since this is a different data set, you should look again at the distributions of units on the variables to get a better understanding of the data you will be using to explore social class differences in trends in household composition. Create a Marginals frequency distribution table, and answer the following questions:

1. What percentage of the sample live in Married Couple households? _____
2. Why is the percentage living in Married Couple households in this data set larger than was reported in the previous data set? (HINT: The difference has to do with the difference in the units of analysis used in each data set)

3. What percent live near or below the poverty line? _____

Examine Social Class Differences in Trends

To see how household composition has changed since 1970 differently for those living at different levels of poverty vs. wealth, create a Percent Down table with “FamType” as the row variable, “RaceLat” as the column variable, and “Pov”. This will produce three tables of percentages for you to use in describing how household composition changed between 1970 and 1990 – one for those living in poverty, one for those living near poverty and one for those living significantly above poverty. Fill in the table below with the appropriate percentages and answer the questions that follow:

	Below Poverty			Near Poverty			Above Poverty (other)		
	1970	1980	1990	1970	1980	1990	1970	1980	1990
Married Couple Family									
Single Male Headed Family									
Single Female Headed Family									

1. For each year, compare those “Below Poverty”, “Near-Poverty”, and “Above Poverty” in terms of the percentages of family households that are headed by a single-mother. Which poverty group has a greater likelihood of such family households in each year?

2. Looking at changes in the percentages of households headed by a single mother across years for each poverty/wealth group, describe how these percentages changed differently over the years for those living “Below Poverty” vs. “Near Poverty” vs. “Above Poverty”?

3. Why do you think the percentage of single-mother families living below poverty has increased so much more than the percentage of single-mother families living near to poverty or well above poverty?

4. Do these data “prove” that poverty causes single-parent households? Do they “prove” that single parenting causes poverty? Explain your answer.

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5. What do these data tell you about the “feminization of poverty” in American society?

Race/Ethnicity and Social Class Differences in Recent Household Composition

In the previous sections you were able to examine changes in household composition for Blacks vs. Non-Blacks and for those living in poverty or near poverty vs. others. . Due to limitations in the census data, however, it was not possible to separate out different Non-Black ethnic groups from each other (e.g., Latinos vs. Asians vs. Native Americans, etc.) and we were not able to examine the extent to which race/ethnic differences were due to unique aspects of culture and historical experience vs. current socio-economic context (i.e., poverty status). In this section you will be given the opportunity to examine race and ethnic group differences for the year 1990 and to determine the extent to which such differences are due to social class or to cultural and historical experience influences.

To begin your explorations of race/ethnic differences in recent household composition, click [here](#) to launch the dataset in WebCHIP. Create an info table to read the description of the data set and answer the following questions:

1. What is the “Unit of Analysis” in this data file and how many of these units are in the sample?

Unit of Analysis: _____

Number of Units: _____

Review Marginal Distributions

Since this is yet another data set, you should look again at the distributions of units on the variables to get a better understanding of the data you will be using. Create a Marginals frequency distribution table and answer the following questions:

1. What percent of households are headed by someone with the race: Non-Latino Other?

2. What percent of households are living near or below the poverty line?

Near Poverty: _____ Below Poverty: _____

3. What percent of households are non-family households?

Male headed non-family: _____ Female headed non-family: _____

Modify Variables for Analyses

Since we will be examining the comparative importance of race/ethnicity and social class in determining household composition, you will first need to modify several variables to simplify

the comparisons. Please note that once you modify a variable in Student Chip, you will not be able to go back to the original unmodified version without re-opening the data file.

First, you need to omit the category for non-Latino others (“NLOther”) from the variable “RaceLat”. The meaning of this category is too vague and the numbers of households of this type is too small to be meaningful in this analysis.

Second, it would help in interpreting the results if we omitted any respondents who were 55 or older since we do not want to confuse the processes of family formation with those of life expectancy. Omit the following categories from the “Age” variable: “55-64” and “65+”.

Third, the category “NearPoor” is small relative to the other three categories and could be combined with the next smallest adjacent category of “Poverty” to give a more symmetrical distribution. Combine these two categories in the variable “Pov and label the new combined variable “Poor”.

Finally, the contrast categories on household type that we are most interested in are single-parent families vs. married couple families. It is the increase in the latter and the decrease in the former that was most noted in the previous trend analyses. Therefore, you will need to omit all non-family households and combine the two types of single-parent households (MaleFam and FemlFam) into a single category. Omit the following categories from the “HHType” variable: “MaleNonf” and “FemlNonf”.

Combine the male and female single parent households in the “HHType” variable: “FemlFam” and “MaleFam”. Label the new combine variable “SingleP”.

To verify that you successfully modified these three variables, look at the Marginals frequency distribution table and compare your results to the appropriate percentages in the tables below:

Race/Ethnicity (RACELAT)

NLWhite	Black	Latino	Asian	AmIndian
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Age (AGE)

15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54
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Poverty Status (POV)

Poor	Middle	Comfort
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Household Type (HHTYPE)

Single	Married
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Examine Race/Ethnic Differences

To see how household composition varied in 1990 across different race/ethnic groups, create a Percent Down table with "HHType" as the row variable and "RaceLat" as the column variable. This will produce a table of percentages for you to use in describing how household composition varies across race/ethnic groups. Fill in the table below with the appropriate percentages and answer the questions that follow.

	NLWhite	Black	Latino	Asian	Native American
Single Parent Household					
Married Couple Household					

1. Based on the percentages in this table, what would you say about the relationship between race/ethnicity and household type?

2. In this analysis, what is the independent variable? What is the dependent variable?
Independent Variable: _____ Dependent Variable: _____
3. Does it make sense to describe this relationship as either a positive one or a negative one? Explain?

4. Is the relationship a strong one or a weak one? How did you determine this?

5. What are some possible explanations for why some race/ethnic groups are more likely than others to live in single parent households while others are comparatively more likely to live in married couple households?

Examine Social Class Differences

To see how household composition varied in 1990 across different socioeconomic groups, create a Percent Down table with “HHType” as the row variable and “Pov” as the column variable. This will produce a table of percentages for you to use in describing how household composition varies across poverty groups. Fill in the table below with the appropriate percentages and answer the questions that follow.

	Poor	Middle	Comfortable
Single Parent Household			
Married Couple Household			

1. Based on the percentages in this table, what would you say about the relationship between economic well-being (i.e., living “comfortably”) and the likelihood of living in a single-parent family household?

2. In this analysis, what is the independent variable? What is the dependent variable?
Independent Variable: _____ Dependent Variable: _____

3. Is the relationship a positive one or a negative one? Explain?

4. (4) Is the relationship a strong one or a weak one? How did you determine this?

5. (5) What are some possible explanations for why some socioeconomic groups are more likely than others to live in single parent households while others are comparatively more likely to live in married couple households?

Examine Race/Ethnicity Differences Controlling for Socioeconomic Status

The final question we want to answer concerns the extent to which race/ethnic differences are due to originating cultural differences and historical experiences versus current socioeconomic conditions. To do so, you will run a “controlled” analysis of the relationship between race/ethnicity and household type. By looking at this relationship under different conditions of socioeconomic status, we will be able to see if race/ethnicity still makes a difference even when socioeconomic resources are the same.

Create a Percent Down table with “HHType” as the row variable, “RaceLat” as the column variable and “Pov” as the control variable. This will produce three tables of percentages for you to use in describing how household composition varies across race/ethnic groups. Fill in the appropriate percentages in the tables below and answer the questions that follow.

Poor

	NLWhite	Black	Latino	Asian	Native American
Single Parent Household					
Married Couple Household					

Middle

	NLWhite	Black	Latino	Asian	Native American
Single Parent Household					
Married Couple Household					

Comfortable

	NLWhite	Black	Latino	Asian	Native American
Single Parent Household					
Married Couple Household					

1. In this analysis, what is the independent variable? What is the dependent variable? What is the control variable?

Independent Variable: _____ Dependent Variable: _____
 Control Variable: _____

2. Based on the percentages reported in this table, to what extent would you say that the relationship between race/ethnicity and household composition is spurious vs. causal? Explain your answer.

3. Do you see any evidence of conditional effects of race/ethnicity on household composition based on poverty status (HINT: Look at the difference in the percent of single parent households between NLWhites and Asians under poverty conditions vs. comfort conditions. Also look at the different in percent single parent between Blacks and NLWhites under poverty vs. comfort conditions)? Explain these conditional effects.
