

This module is updated based on one created by Kori Benefo of CUNY-Lehman to include recent ACS Data, for ease of use with WebCHIP 4.0 and to integrate updates to American FactFinder.

# **Sociology of the Family Census Assignment**

## **Race and Ethnic Diversity Among U.S. Families**

### **LEARNING OBJECTIVES:**

#### Skill

- To use census data in the sociology of the family
- Use computer software to access and analyze census data
- Produce and interpret simple statistics.
- Identifying independent and dependent variables
- Learning how to construct, read, and interpret bivariate tables displaying frequencies and percentages
- Using real world data to enhance and support key course concepts

#### Substance

- To think about contemporary race and ethnic diversity in families

### **PART A.**

- According to the U.S. Census Bureau, a household is composed of one or more people who occupy a housing unit. Not all households contain families. Family households consist of two or more individuals who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption, although they also may include other unrelated people. Nonfamily households consist of people who live alone or who share their residence with unrelated individuals (McFalls 2003). As most of the information we get about families in the U.S. comes from the decennial census, the bureau's definition has a considerable impact on how scholars and policy makers address family issues. In this exercise, we will use the 2000 U.S. census to obtain data on the types of families and households currently found in the U.S. and to examine race and ethnic differences in family types.

- Using the U.S. census bureau's definitions, what is the distinction between families and households?
- According to the U.S. Census, would a non-married, cohabiting couple be defined as a family? Why or why not?
- What is one strength of the census definition of the family?
- What is one shortcoming of the census definition of the family?
- Write an alternative definition of the family that you would prefer.
- Why do you think your alternative definition is better than the census bureau's?
- How is your alternative weaker than the census bureau's?

## **PART B. FAMILIES AND HOUSEHOLDS ON YOUR CENSUS BLOCK**

- We will use American Factfinder (an online data extraction tool) to obtain census 2010 data on households and families on the blocks we live in.
    - Go to <http://factfinder.census.gov>
    - Under the "Community Facts" heading find the search bar and enter your zip code.
    - Click on "Population" on the menu to the right.
    - Under "Popular tables for this geography" and "2010 Census" find "General Population and Housing Characteristics (Population, Age, Sex, Race, Households and Housing, ...)" and follow the link.
    - Use the print button to create a PDF version of the table.
1. Use the table to write a short half page description of the families found in your zipcode. The description should contain information on the number of families; % of families that are male headed versus those that are female headed; the average family size; and the distribution of families (% of married couple families, % of female headed families etc) with dependent children. Please note what proportion of the dependent children are own children. Do you think this description sufficiently describes the family groupings found in your zip code? Why or why not? Attach the table to your answer when you turn it in.

## **PART C. RACE AND ETHNIC DIFFERENCES IN HOUSEHOLD AND FAMILY TYPE IN 2000**

We are interested in looking at how family types vary by race and ethnic group. We will be using the computer software WebCHIP and SSDAN American Community Survey data set housing.dat for this analysis.

- Go to <http://ssdan.net/datacounts/webchip>
- Under "collections" find **acs2010** in then under "datasets" find **housing**.
- Create an info table to see information on households in the U.S. during the year 2010.
- Create a Percent Down table with "HHType" as the row variable, and "RaceEth" as the column variable.
- Use the % information produced to complete the following table.

	Race-Ethnic Group						
Household type	NHWhite	Black	Asian	Hispanic	AmIndian	NHOther	NHMulti
Married couples (MrrdCpl)							
Male headed (MaleFam)							
Female headed (FemFam)							
Male Nonfamily (MaleNonf)							
Female Nonfamily (FemaleNonf)							
Total							

1. Which race/ethnic group has the highest % of married couples?
2. Which race/ethnic group has the lowest % of married couples?
3. Which race/ethnic group has the lowest % of female headed family households?



Poverty							
NearPoor							
Middle							
Comf							
Total							

1. Which is the poorest race-ethnic group?
2. Which is the richest race-ethnic group?
3. Do Tables 2 & 3 together provide some evidence that race-ethnic differences in poverty rates probably account in part for race-ethnic diversity in marriage rates? What is this evidence?
4. Latinos have poverty rates almost as high as Blacks and yet their rates of married couples are much higher. Why?

**PART F. Percent of married couples in each race-ethnic group by poverty status.**

- One more set of analyses - a multivariate analysis of the relationships between three variables - household type, race-ethnicity and poverty status. In WEBCHIP:
  - o Stay in "FamPovGeo" under "acs2010".
  - o Create a Percent Down table with "FamType" as the row variable, "RaceEth" as the column variable and "PovLevel" as the control variable.
  - o Use the % information in the "PovLevel=Poverty" table to complete the following table.

	Race-ethnic Group						
Poverty Status	NH White	Black	Asian	Hispanic	AmIndian	NHOther	NHMulti
MrrdCpl							
MaleFam							
FemFam							
Total							

1. Among the poor, which group has the highest % of married couple families?
2. Among the poor, which group has the lowest % married couple families?

3. Why do the black poor have much lower rates of married couple families than the poor in other groups?

References. McFalls Jr, Joseph A. 2003. "Population: A Lively Introduction,"  
Population Bulletin, 4th edition