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.

1. 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.
   a. Using the U.S. census bureau's definitions, what is the distinction between families and households?
   b. According to the U.S. Census, would a non-married, cohabiting couple be defined as a family? Why or why not?
   c. What is one strength of the census definition of the family?
   d. What is one shortcoming of the census definition of the family?
   e. Write an alternative definition of the family that you would prefer.
   f. Why do you think your alternative definition is better than the census bureau's?
   g. How is your alternative weaker than the census bureau's?

PART B. Families and Households on your Census Block

1. We will use American Factfinder (an online data extraction tool) to obtain census 2000 data on households and families on the blocks we live in.
   a. Go to the census bureau's home page at http://www.census.gov/
   b. Click on American Factfinder on the left
   c. Click DataSets, and choose the Decennial Census
   d. Select the first data set under 2000 "Summary File 1 (SF 1)"

e. Click Quick Tables from the pop-up menu
f. On the Quick Tables page click on address search tab, and enter your street address, city and state or your street address and zipcode and click on "Go".
g. Move the cursor down to the box containing a list of geographies and select "block" and then scroll to the right and click "Map" to get a map of your block.
    i. Print the map using your browser's print button.
h. Go back to the list of geographies, select block once more and then click "Add" and then "Next".
i. Wait until the screen reloads and then in the list of files available for your block, highlight "QT-P10. Households and Families: 2000". Click "Add" and "Next" to get the table. Print the table.

2. Use the table to write a short half page description of the families found on your block. The description should contain information on the number of families on your block; % 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 on your block. Why or why not? Attach the map and 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 census data set HOUSNG2k.DAT for this analysis.

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 **"census2000"** in the drop-down box and select it.
4. Scroll down through the list of data sets until you find **"housng2k.dat"** Highlight and click "submit."
5. You can also click here to launch the dataset in WebCHIP.

● Create a info table to see information on households in the U.S. during the year 2000.
● To obtain the distribution of household types by race and ethnic groups, create a Percent Down table with "HHTYPE" as the row variable, and "RACELAT" as the column variable. Use the % information produced to complete the following table.

	Race-Ethnic Group				
Household type	Non-Latino White	Black	Latino	Asian	American Indian
Married couples (MrrdCpl)					
Male headed (MaleFam)					
Female headed (FemlFam)					
Nonfamily					

Total					

      a. Which race/ethnic group has the highest % of married couples?
      b. Which race/ethnic group has the lowest % of married couples?
      c. Which race/ethnic group has the lowest % of female headed family households?
      d. Give one reason why some groups have high %s of married couples while others have low %.
      e. Assuming that you had all the information needed in the U.S. census, how would you use this information to "prove" your answer in d?

PART D. Differences in Household and Family Type by Poverty Status in 2000

We are interested in testing one possible explanation for the race-ethnic differences in % married couples observed in table 1. This explanation claims that the differences are partly attributable to diversity in socio-economic status. If we use poverty status as the measure of socioeconomic status, we can test the explanation. First we need to see how family type varies with poverty status and then how poverty status varies with race/ethnicity.

1. How does family type vary with poverty status?
    a. Create a Percent Down table with "HHTYPE" as the row variable, and "POV" as the column variable.
    b. Use the % information produced to complete the following table.

	Poverty Status			
Family Type	Poverty	Nearpoor	Middle	Comf
Married				
Cpl				
MaleFam				
FemlFam				
Total				

      a. How does the % married couples vary with poverty status?
      b. What is one way in which the poverty rate of a group can affect its marriage rate?
      c. What other family types vary with poverty status? How do they vary?

PART E. Differences in Poverty Status by Race-Ethnicity

1. How do poverty rates vary with race-ethnicity?
    a. Create a Percent Down table with "POV" as the row variable, and "RACELAT" as the column variable.
    b. Use the % information produced to complete the following table.

	Race-ethnic Group				
Poverty Status	Non-Latino White	Black	Asian	Latino	American Indian
Poor					
Near poor					

Middle status					
Comfortable					
Total					

    a.   Which is the poorest race-ethnic group?
    b.   Which is the richest race-ethnic group?
    c.   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?
    d.   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.

1.   One more set of analyses - a multivariate analysis of the relationships between three variables – household type, race-ethnicity and poverty status. In WEBCHIP:
    a.   Create a Percent Down table with "HHTYPE" as the row variable, "RACELAT" as the column variable and "POV" as the control variable.
    b.   Use the % information produced to complete the following table.

	Race-ethnic Group				
Poverty Status	Non-Latino White	Black	Asian	Latino	American Indian
Poor (Pov)					
Near poor (NearPoor)					
Middle status(Middle)					
Comfortable (Comf)					
Total					

    a.   Among the poor, which group has the highest % of married couple families?
    b.   Among the poor, which group has the lowest % married couple families?
    c.   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