

**Economic Restructuring and Family Structure Change 1980 to 2000:  
A Focus on Female-headed Families with Children**

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Economic restructuring has altered men's and women's roles in the economy, in turn influencing changes in the prevalence of female-headed households across counties in the US. Growth in men's employment in a county deterred the growth of female-headed households in that county from 1980 to 1990, as did gains in women's employment in certain industries (McLaughlin, Gardner and Lichter 1999). The proposed study will extend the examination of the relationship between economic restructuring and the change in prevalence of female-headed households to cover the 1990 to 2000 period. In addition, the relationship between economic restructuring and change in the prevalence of female-headed households will be studied for nonmetropolitan counties categorized using the Economic Research Services' County Types, specifically dominant industries and persistent poverty. Variation in the economic base or poverty status of nonmetropolitan counties may differentially affect the relationship of economic restructuring and female-headed household formation and dissolution.

This study primarily will use Summary Tape File (1980 and 1990) and Summary File (2000) data from the US Censuses of Population and Housing to answer the following questions. First, how much variation is there in the prevalence of female-headed households with children across counties in the US and from 1980 to 2000, and

where did the percentage of female-headed households with children grow and where did it decline? Second, have the aspects of economic restructuring associated with growth in female-headship from 1980 to 1990 changed during the more economically prosperous 1990 to 2000 period? Third, does the underlying economic base of counties influence the relationship between economic restructuring and change in the prevalence of female-headed households with children?

These questions will be answered using the following three strategies. First, descriptive statistics on female-headed households and change in the prevalence of those households across counties in the US will be calculated and then mapped for counties across the contiguous United States. To address the second question, fixed-effects models of change in female-headed households from 1980 to 1990 and 1990 to 2000 for all counties and separately for metropolitan and nonmetropolitan counties will be estimated. Finally, fixed-effects models of change in female-headed households for nonmetropolitan counties grouped by key characteristics of the counties will be estimated.

The gain in employment in different industrial sectors, measures of change in family traditionalism, marital incentives and opportunities and demographic characteristics of counties are used as independent variables to predict the change in female headship (Albrecht and Albrecht 1997; Albrecht 1998; Jones and Kodras 1990; Winkler 1994). The results will provide detailed information on the relationship between economic restructuring and changes in prevalence of female-headed households with children across counties in the US. Initial analyses conducted for the 1980 to 1990 decade found that improved employment opportunities for men discouraged the formation of female-headed families. Extending this analysis to the period of economic growth from

1990 to 2000 will allow us to determine whether economic restructuring is as influential and operates in the same fashion to affect change in the prevalence of female-headed households. The aggregate, county-level analysis will not allow us to predict which women and children are likely to enter or leave female-headed households, but it does provide social-structural evidence of the influence of economic restructuring on family structure and how that influence may differ across counties that vary in predominant industry or poverty status.

## References

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