Research Brief

Mississippi Urban Research Center
College of Public Service
Jackson State University

Changes in Family Household Structures and Possible Societal Implications

Lindsey Shaw, B.A., Research Associate
Sam Mozee, PhD., Interim Executive Director

ABSTRACT

This research brief examined changes in family household structures occurring in the United States and Jackson, Mississippi since 1980. Some researchers have found household composition has important socio-economic consequences for members of those households, communities, and for public and private resources (Pilkauskas and Cross, 2018). As used in this study, family household structures consist of the following categories: family, non-family, married-couple, and single-mother. This study utilized a quantitative comparative research design to compare selected family household types in Jackson, MS and the U.S. from 1980 to 2017. Sources of secondary data utilized in this study included U.S. Census Summary Files for the years 1980, 1990, 2000 and 2010; and American Community Survey (ACS) 2017 Five-year Estimates. This study found that two-thirds of all households in the United States and Jackson were family households verses non-family households. However, the percentage of family households in the U.S. and Jackson has consistently declined over the 37-year study period. Nationally and locally, married couple family rates have also been declining over this same period. While declines in family households and marriage couple households have occurred in both Black and White households, Black households experienced higher rates of decline than White households. Based upon this study's findings, the notion of what constitutes a family is changing statistically both at the national and local levels. Less clear is the impact these changes are having on society today.

INTRODUCTION

This research brief examined national and local trends occurring in family household structures since 1980. Changes in traditional family household structures have become increasingly widespread over the past forty years (Haskins, 2015; Raley, Sweeney and Wondra, 2015; Wilcox, Wolfinger and Stokes 2015). At issue is whether these changes in family household structures are impacting the overall quality of life in local communities. Some researchers have found household composition has important socio-economic consequences for members of those households, communities, and for public and private resources (Pilkauskas and Cross, 2018). Due to the central role families have historically performed in the functioning of society, it is important to understand what changes have been occurring, and how those changes

could be impacting the quality of life in local communities. By comparing changing family structure trends across time, geographies, and race, this research brief can help public, private, and non-profit officials better understand what changes have been taking place, and how those changes are potentially impacting society today.

METHODOLOGY

This study utilized a quantitative comparative research design to compare selected family household types in Jackson, Mississippi and the United States from 1980 to 2017. Sources of secondary data utilized in this study included U.S. Census Summary Files for the years 1980, 1990, 2000, 2010; and American Community Survey (ACS) 2017 Five-year Estimates. As analyzed in this study, family household structures consisted of the following categories: family, non-family, married-couple, and single-mother. Other specific variables analyzed in this study included race (White, Black) and percent population change between decades. Trend line charts and data tables help visually summarize key statistical findings from the analysis.

Key Definitions

The following definitions help clarify the meaning of specific terms used in this research brief:

* *Household* --- consists of all the people who occupy a housing unit (such as a house or apartment) as their usual place of residence.

* *Family* --- a group of two or more people related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together.

* *Family Household* --- a household that includes one or more people living in the same household related by birth, marriage, or adoption.

* *Nonfamily Household* --- a household that includes an individual living alone or an individual sharing a home with unrelated people.

Married-couple --- this term refers to a household maintained by a husband and wife.

* *Single-Mother* --- this term refers to a mother who brings up a child or children alone, without a partner. The mother may be never-married, widowed, divorced, or separated.

Sources: (USCB, Glossary, 2019) (DC, 2019)

FINDINGS

The 2017 American Community Survey (ACS) estimated the U.S. population to be 321,004,407, and containing an estimated 120 million households (USCB, 2017). This number represents a 49 percent increase from 80 million households recorded in the 1980 Census (USCB, 2017). Of the total households in 2017, 78 million were family households (65 percent), and 42 million households were nonfamily households (35%) (USCB, 2017). By way of

comparison, in 1980 approximately (74 percent) of the U.S. population lived in family households (USCB, 2017).

Table 1 presents data comparing changes in family structure (by type) both in the United States and in Jackson, Mississippi.

Table 1. Percent Change in Households and Types of Households for U.S. and Jackson (1980-2017)

	1980	1990	2000	2010	2017	1980-2017
	%	%	%	%	%	Increase/ Decrease (%)
U.S. Total						
Household Type						
Family household	73	71	68	66	66	**-7%**
Nonfamily household	27	29	32	34	34	**7%**
Family Type						
Married couple	60	56	52	48	48	**-12%**
Single-mother	10	11	12	13	13	**3%**
U.S. White						
Household Type						
Family	73	70	67	65	66	**-7%**
Nonfamily	27	30	33	35	34	**7%**
Family Type						
Married couple	63	59	54	51	51	**-12%**
Single-mother	8	9	9	10	10	**2%**
U.S. Black						
Household Type						
Family	72	71	68	65	62	**-10%**
Nonfamily	28	29	32	35	38	**10%**
Family Type						
Married couple	40	35	31	28	28	**-12%**
Single-mother	27	31	31	30	28	**1%**
Jackson (MS) Total						
Household Type						
Family	72	69	66	64	61	**-11%**
Nonfamily	28	31	34	36	39	**11%**
Family Type						
Married couple	53	46	35	29	27	**-26%**
Single-mother	16	20	25	29	28	**12%**
Jackson White						
Household Type						
Family	69	63	56	52	53	**-16%**
Nonfamily	31	37	44	48	47	**16%**
Family Type						
Married couple	59	53	45	41	41	**-18%**
Single-mother	8	8	8	7	9	**1%**
Jackson Black						
Household Type						
Family	76	75	71	67	63	**-13%**
Nonfamily	24	25	29	33	37	**13%**
Family Type						
Married couple	44	37	30	25	23	**-21%**
Single-mother	28	33	35	36	33	**5%**

Comparison of Household Trends in the U.S. and Jackson, MS (1980-2017)

From 1980 to 2017, nonfamily households increased by 7 percent in the U.S. and by 11 percent in Jackson, MS. The percentage of family and nonfamily households exhibited similar trend line patterns for Jackson households and the U.S. until 2010. From 2010 to 2017, the percentage of U.S. nonfamily households did not change, whereas the percentage of Jackson nonfamily households experienced a 3 percent increase. In 2017, the percentage of U.S. nonfamily households (34 percent) was 5 percent lower than the percentage of Jackson family households (39 percent). Figure 1 compares trends occurring between Jackson and U.S. households for the years 1980 to 2017.

Figure 1. Comparison of US and Jackson Households 1980-2017
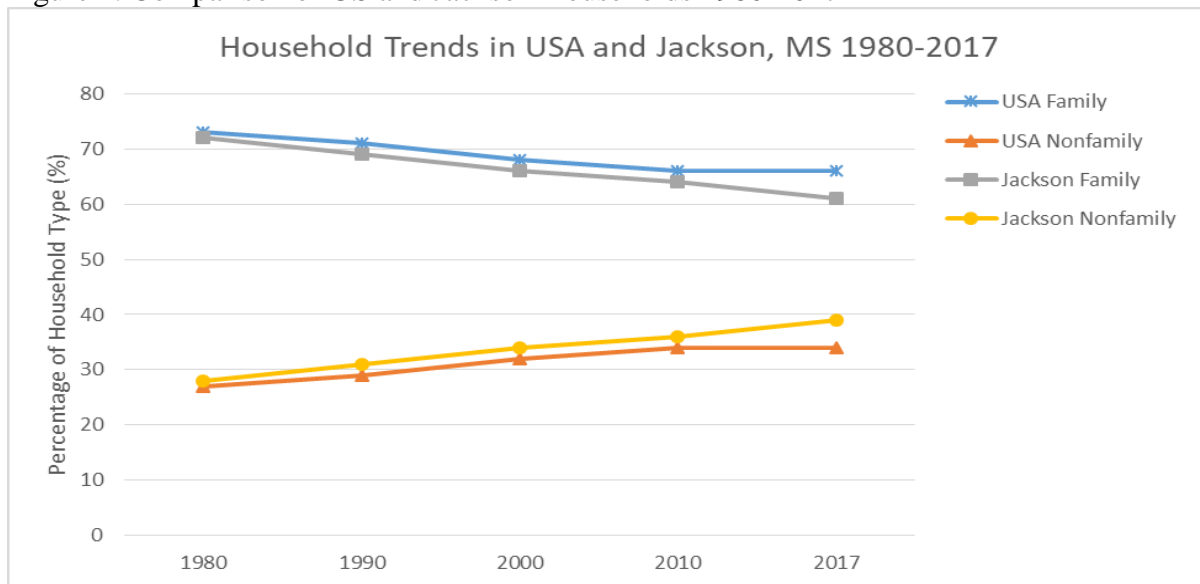
Comparison of Family-type Trends in the U.S. and Jackson (MS) (1980-2017)

Figure 2 compares trends occurring between Jackson and U.S. family types for the years 1980 to 2017. From 1980 to 2017, Married couple families in the U.S. declined by 12 percent, whereas in Jackson Married couple families declined by 26 percent, more than doubling the national rate. U.S. Single-mother families increased by 3% over the 37 year timeframe, whereas Jackson Single-mother families increased by 12%. Overall, the percentage of U.S. Single-mother family rates (10%) was lower than Jackson Single mother family rates (28%). From 1980 to 2017, U.S. Single-mother family trends increased 3%; and remained unchanged between 2010 and 2017. By way of comparison over the same timeframe, Jackson Single-mother family trends increased by 12%. However, between the years 2010 and 2017, Jackson Single-mother families actually decreased by 1%. Future research will help detect whether this decrease represents a statistical aberration or the beginning of a reversal trend in single-mother families.
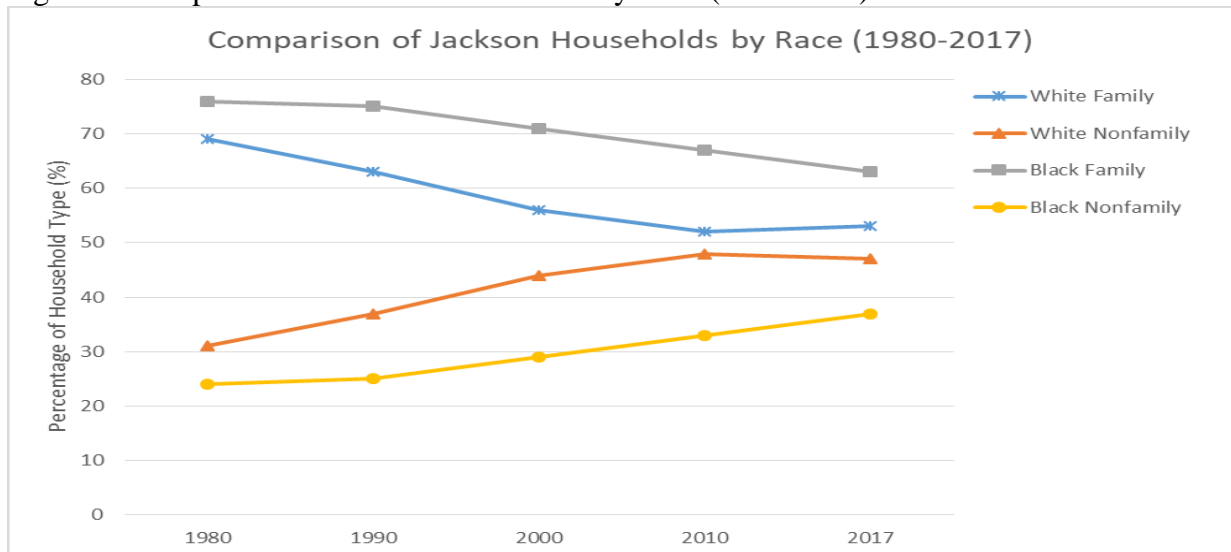
Figure 2. Comparison of U.S. and Jackson Family-type Trends 1980-2017

Family Trends in US and Jackson, MS (1980-2017)
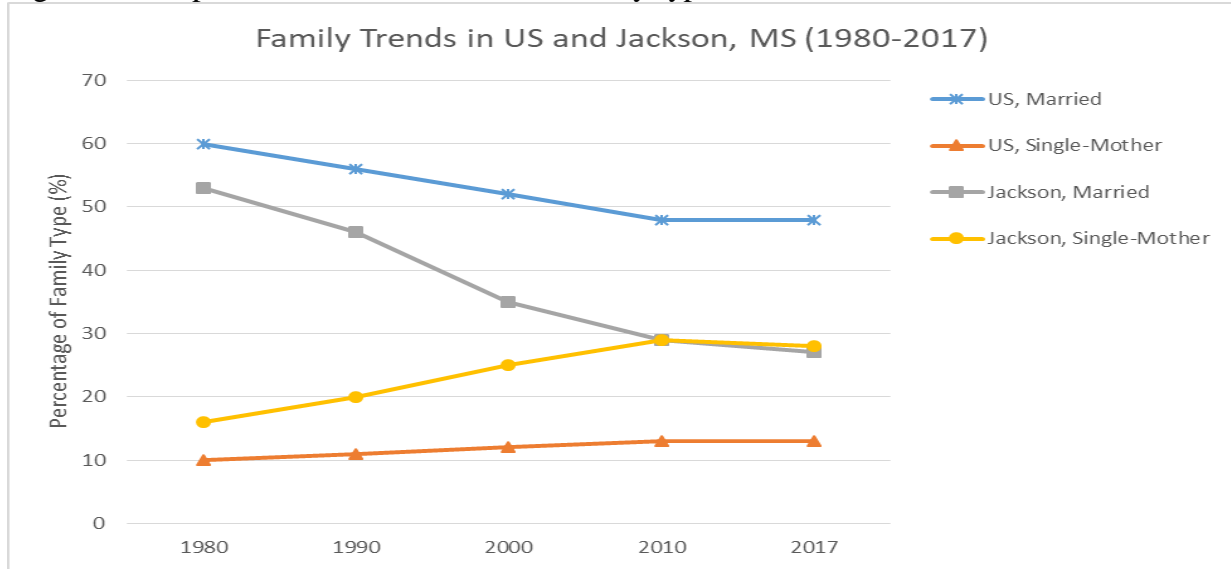
Comparison of Jackson Household Trends by Race (1980-2017)

Overall, the percentage of Black family households (63%) is higher than the percentage of White family households (53%). In terms of nonfamily households, Whites nonfamily households (47%) were higher than Black nonfamily households (37%). From 1980 to 2017, White nonfamily households increased 16 percent whereas Black nonfamily households increased by 13 percent. Although White nonfamily households increased quickly from 1980 to 2000, those same households decreased by 1% from 2010 to 2017. Generally across race, the rates of family and nonfamily households appear to be similar for Whites and Blacks, but the rate of change among family and household trends is higher among Black households. Figure 3 presents a comparison of Jackson (MS) household types by race for the years 1980 to 2017.

Figure 3. Comparison of Jackson Households by Race (1980-2017)

Comparison of Jackson Households by Race (1980-2017)

Comparison of Jackson Family-type Trends by Race (1980-2017)

Figure 4 presents trends occurring in Jackson family-types over the 37-year period. As a proportion of all Jackson families, Married couple families declined from 53% in 1980 to 27% in 2017, while the proportion of Single-mother families increased from 16% to 28%. The percentage of White married couple families declined by 18% and the percentage of Black married couple families declined by 21% between 1980 and 2017. However, the decline in the percentage of Married couple families have slowed for both Blacks and Whites. Overall, the percentage of Black single-mother families has been consistently higher than the percentage of White single-mother families over the 37-year study period.

Figure 4 Comparison of Jackson Family by Race (1980-2017)
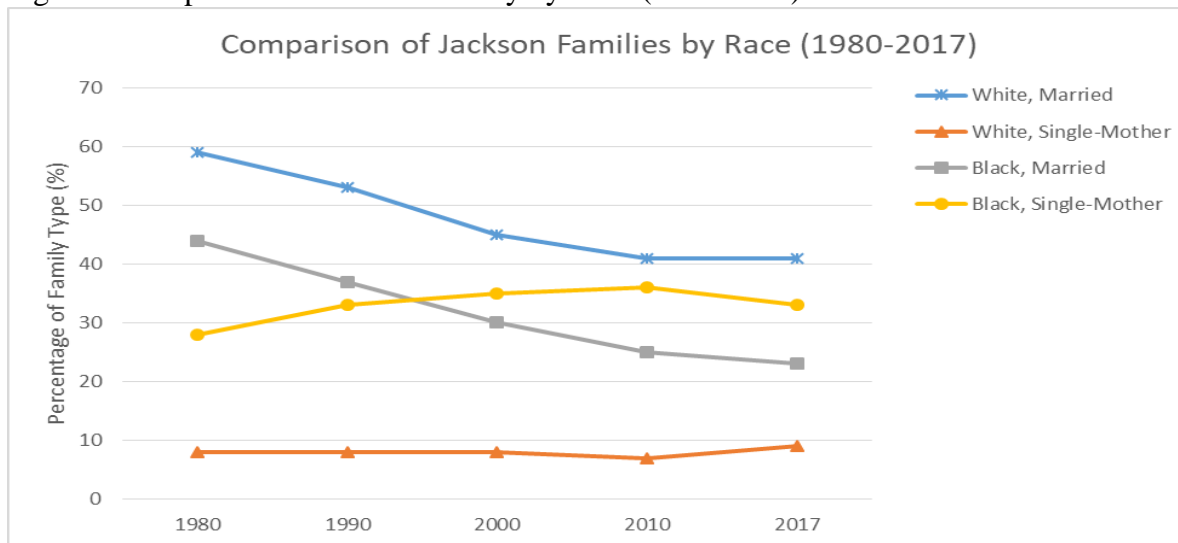
DISCUSSION

Two-thirds of all households in the United States and Jackson were family households. However, the rate of family households in the U.S. and Jackson has consistently declined over the 37-year period of this study. Nationally and locally, married couple family rates have also been declining over this timeframe. While declines in family households and marriage couple households have occurred for both Blacks and Whites, Black households declined at a higher rate. Based upon this study's findings, there is statistical evidence of significant changes occurring in family household structures in the United States and in Jackson (MS). While the "Married-couple" is still the predominant family type in the U.S. (especially among Whites), long-term trends indicate this household type is declining among the general population.

Based upon comparing changes in local household and family structures, several noteworthy findings emerged. Since 1980, the rate of nonfamily households in Jackson has increased for Blacks and Whites, but more so for Whites. Today, nearly half (48%) of all U.S. households were married couple families, compared to about 26% in Jackson. Single-mother family rates have accelerated. Both Black and White families in Jackson experienced an increase in single-mother families. Households and families are starting to look very different than they

did nearly forty years ago. The notion of what constitutes a family is changing statistically both at the national level and at the local level in Jackson. Less clear is the impact these changes are having on society today.

SOCIETAL IMPLICATIONS

Long-term trends indicate that the nuclear family structure is declining as the societal norm. Social and economic structural changes in the U.S. are having significant ramifications on the formation and functioning of families. Today, it is not uncommon for women to bear children and remain single. Nor is it uncommon for many households to be comprised of single (live alone), same-sex, unmarried, and/or multi-generational individuals. The world is changing and so are the definitions of what constitutes a family.

There are many explanations that seek to explain changes in family structures overall, and marriage rates in particular. Some of those explanations include: (1) men and women as young adults pursuing careers and financial stability prior to seeking marriage; (2) the expanding role of women in society has shifted traditional gender roles and gender identities; (3) as marriage and divorce laws grow in diversity, traditional family roles diminish; (4) contraception use is more socially accepted; and (5) the traditional family structure weakens as society becomes less religious (Cutrona, Russell and Burzette, 2011) (Edin & Kefalas 2005) (Parker, 2018).

All of the above changes have implicit and explicit consequences for society overall, and urban areas in particular due to these areas housing the majority of the U.S. population. For example, some researchers have identified negative consequences related to changing family structures that include unmet parental and childcare needs; higher levels of poverty; higher levels of drug use; reduced educational attainment; poor physical and emotional health; and rising crime rates (Lafree, Baumer, & Obrien, 2010) (Krueger, Jutte, Franzini, Elo, & Hayward, 2015) (Fothergill, Ensminger, Green, Thorpe, Robertson, Kasper, & Juon, 2009) (Lund, 2009) (Waite, 2009) (Morse, 2003) (Montgomery, Kiely, & Pappas, 1996).

FUTURE RESEARCH

This research brief provides insight regarding national and local changes occurring in family structures. It is one in a series of upcoming research activities designed to examine how changes in family structures are potentially impacting the quality of life in urban areas. Future research activities will include a research forum exploring issues associated with changing family structures; and a research-based study examining linkages between changing family structures and socio-economic conditions. By comparing family structure trends and their potential socio-economic implications, policymakers, practitioners, service providers, and religious institutions can better understand and prepare for the potential impact of those changes.

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