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Extended Households at Work: Living Arrangements and Inequality in Single Mothers' Employment

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This paper investigates how the presence of other adults in the household influences employment rates and inequality among single mothers who are White, Black, Mexican, or Puerto Rican. Data from the 1998 to 2000 Current Population Surveys shows that Black single mothers experience no *employment inequality compared to Whites* if *they are cohabiting outside marriage or hosting an extended household. For Black single mothers, the employment disadvantage is concentrated among those without other adults in the household. Mexican and Puerto Rican single mothers, however, display an employment disadvantage across all household types. Although the presence of other adults in a single mother's household appears to increase employment, this advantage has important limits.*

KEY WORDS: women's employment; racial–ethnic inequality; household structure; family inequality.

Household and family structures interact with inequality in a number of ways. Racial–ethnic inequalities in job markets, residential segregation, incarceration rates, and health status all affect marriage rates and household structures by limiting options for women (Geronimus *et al.*, 1999; Lichter *et al.*, 1992; Wilson, 1987). On the other hand, family structure—and especially household extension—is also a purposeful response to inequality and economic hardship (Billingsley, 1992; Jarrett, 1994; Jones, 1985b; Roschelle, 1999), especially for Black and Latino families (Angel and Tienda, 1982; Baca Zinn, 1982–83; Hogan *et al.*, 1990). The benefits of household extension may come from pooling money, labor, and other resources, and

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extending personal networks and support systems (Raley, 1995; Tienda and Angel, 1982). One effect of household extension is to facilitate mothers' entry into the labor market (Figueroa and Melendez, 1993; Rosenbaum and Gilbertson, 1995; Tienda and Glass, 1985), which is especially costly and difficult for poor women (Edin and Lein, 1997; Newman, 1999), even as it is increasingly required for their survival (Mink, 1998).

This study investigates two questions regarding the relationship between living in extended households and the employment of single mothers. First, is household extension a means of responding to and reducing employment inequality, especially for Black and Latino families? This would be true if extended household members contribute money, labor, or other resources to the household coffers in ways that help overcome barriers to the labor force. Some previous literature has addressed this question, but we do not know how the effects of household extension on single mothers' employment depend upon household role, which is the second question addressed here. Single mothers who extend their own households (hosts) are in a different position than those who move into the homes of relatives or others (guests). And for hosts, the effects of household extension may differ depending on the characteristics of guests who join the household. Employed adults, older parents and adult children, and welfare recipients in particular have different contributions to offer and make different demands on the households they join.

In addressing these questions, this paper offers several unique contributions. The analysis is the first to address explicitly the issue of household role, examining the distinctions among single mothers who are hosts, guests, or cohabiting with men outside of marriage. Second, the paper uses the only large, nationally representative dataset from the end of the 1990s—after the passage of national welfare reform—that includes sufficient detail on household structure and employment for White, Black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican single mothers in the United States.

Two recent developments underscore the need for revisiting these questions. First, although dramatic increases in the employment of married mothers have gained attention (Landry, 2000; Lehrer, 1999; Leibowitz and Klerman, 1995; Shaw, 1985), single mothers' employment has also increased sharply in the past 20 years (Cohen and Bianchi, 1999), with White women experiencing the fastest increases (Browne, 1997). Second, in the aftermath of the 1996 welfare reform, work requirements are forcing many poor mothers, especially those with young children, to work at higher rates than other mothers (Cohen and Bianchi, 1999; Mink, 1998). Thus, poor, single mothers of young children are now expected to maintain higher employment levels (given their low wage levels) than married mothers or those who are not poor (Piven, 1998). If extended households in part reflect a

response to mothers' difficulties in entering the labor force, that strategy will become increasingly important in the future.

The extended family has received attention in the media and policy arenas as welfare reform takes hold (London, 2000). Some states have given permission to use childcare subsidies to pay caregiving extended family members, who are perceived as important in making entry into the labor force possible for poor mothers (DeParle, 1999; Harris, 1999). For Black and Latina mothers, relying upon extended support networks to raise their children is an old strategy, but its importance is growing in an era of reduced welfare support (Roschelle, 1999) and inadequate access to professional childcare (Buriel and Hurtado, 1998; Uttal, 1999). Still, although kin or household support networks may offer a response to economic hardships, they cannot fully compensate for the long-term effects of economic inequality (Parish *et al.*, 1991). In particular, the benefits of household extension will be conditioned by the economic and health situation of members of the extended household.

The dynamic of household structure and labor market inequality is such that single mothers who most need extended networks also have weaker networks upon which to draw (Goldstein and Warren, 2000). Poor women benefit less from the contributions of extended household members if those additional members are themselves poor (Roschelle, 1999; Trent and Harlan, 1994). Similarly, single mothers who need help from their parents may have parents who are less able to help (Rendall and Speare, 1995; Speare and Avery, 1993).

Extended households cannot solve the problems of postwelfare well-being, just as an increase in the prevalence of marriage would not eliminate inequality among families (Lichter and Landale, 1995). Arguments for the return of the nuclear family often carry patriarchal assumptions about gender relations (Coontz, 2000), but celebrating extended households runs the risk of idealizing the desperate measures of the poor or oppressed as cultural triumphs (Blank, 1998; Roschelle, 1999). Still, household extension is one response to hardship and inequality (Jarrett, 1994; Trent and Harlan, 1994).

EXTENDED HOUSEHOLDS AND EMPLOYMENT

Much of the previous research on household extension has concerned Black mothers' employment problems. Black women are more likely than White women to live in multigenerational families (Cohen and Casper, 2002; Hogan *et al.*, 1990), and this difference increased after the mid-1960s (Kaputo, 1999). One reason for the prevalence of Black extended households is inadequate access to childcare for Black mothers (Uttal, 1999),

who are more likely than White mothers to use unpaid childcare (Hogan *et al.*, 1990) and other kin network supports (Raley, 1995; Smith, 2000). Among employed women, 21% of White women use siblings, grandparents, or other relatives to care for their preschoolers, compared to 31% of Black women and 27% of Latinas (Smith, 2000). Racial–ethnic inequalities in single mothers' employment are compounded by the lack of adequate child support. In 1997, 23% of single Black mothers and 25% of Latinas received child support payments, compared to 46% of Whites. Among those who received payments, White mothers averaged $3996, compared to $2600 for Blacks, and $3012 for Latinas (Grall, 2000).

In recent years White women's employment levels surpassed those of Black women (Cohen and Bianchi, 1999), and the Black labor force disadvantage is most marked among single women who head households. They more frequently suffer from long-term labor market isolation (Browne, 1997) and greater spatial separation from jobs in urban areas (Thompson, 1997). A subset of the literature has also examined Latinas, who have had a longer history of lower employment rates (Kahn and Whittington, 1996). However, I am aware of no study of household extension and employment among Latina mothers that uses recent data (Figueroa and Melendez, 1993; Rosenbaum and Gilbertson, 1995; Tienda and Angel, 1982; Tienda and Glass, 1985; Trent and Harlan, 1994).

Early research on the subject centered on the hypothesis that nonnuclear household members contribute household labor, freeing time for women heading households to engage in labor market work (Tienda and Angel, 1982; Tienda and Glass, 1985). But Tienda and Glass (1985) and Rosenbaum and Gilbertson (1995) find household extension effects on labor force participation (LFP) only for married, not single, women heading households. And contrary to their expectations, Tienda and Glass (1985) find that, among women heading extended households, those with employed nonnuclear members are more, not less, likely to be in the labor force. This finding and subsequent research has complicated the assumptions about resource flows within extended households.

Figueroa and Melendez (1993), using 1980 data, find that the effect of coresident relatives on Black single mothers' LFP depends on whether or not the relatives are employed, with employed relatives increasing LFP and nonemployed relatives decreasing LFP. Parish *et al.* (1991) also find that living with employed kin increases LFP for young mothers. They suggest an "encouraged worker" effect, but acknowledge that the presence of employed members could be a proxy for community or other unmeasured factors. The latter interpretation is consistent with a "disarticulation" effect (Browne, 1997), or the role of social networks in facilitating women's employment (Stoloff *et al.*, 1999). Thus the primary contribution of nonnuclear members

to extended households may not be in the realm of household labor, as had been assumed.

While employed extended members might help mothers get jobs through their network ties, they may also be part of what Jarrett and Burton (1999:181) refer to as "heterogeneous resource pools" among poor, Black, family networks, with some employed and some receiving public assistance at home. Jarrett (1994:41–42) describes young, Black, poor, single mothers who live with their mothers in part to get help with childcare that enables them to get or keep jobs. In these cases, it is the unemployment, rather than employment, of the hosting parents that increases the younger women's access to the labor force. This scenario appears among Black and Latino working-poor families in Newman's study as well (Newman, 1999), and is consistent with the finding by Trent and Harlan (1994) that White, Black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican teenage mothers are all more likely to be in school or the labor force if they are living in extended households.

Previous research generally has focused on women who host extended households (Hogan *et al.*, 1990; Tienda and Glass, 1985) or on those who join the extended households maintained by others (Trent and Harlan, 1994). Both aspects of household extension are important, because mothers adopt their respective roles in response to quite different circumstances, and the effect of each role with respect to employment has yet to be compared systematically.

Cohabitation also has not been considered in previous studies of household extension and employment. In Tienda and Glass (1985), for example, cohabiting women heading households were included with all other extended households, while women cohabiting in the homes of their partners were not included. Previous research on cohabitation has compared the labor force behavior of cohabitors with married and single people (Rindfuss and Vandenheuvel, 1990; Zhang and Beaujot, 1998), but as a relationship issue rather than a question of household composition. Cohabitation clearly differs from marriage, despite some similarities (Blackwell and Lichter, 2000; Manning and Landale, 1996; South and Spitze, 1994). In a limited sense, it seems plausible that cohabitation, as a substitute for marriage or in the absence of suitable marriage partners, represents a resource-pooling strategy comparable to other forms of household extension (Winkler, 1997).

This summary leads to two sets of hypotheses. The first set deals with the effect of household extension on employment by racial–ethnicity and household role. Household extension should increase access to the labor force for single mothers, other things being equal. If this strategy represents a response to racial–ethnic inequality, we should find stronger effects among Black and Latina women. However, the effect of extension on employment depends on the role within the household and the role of the other members. Hosts

may have higher employment rates if their time is freed up by the household labor of their guests—such as an older parent or sister who provides childcare while the mother is at work. On the other hand, guests may have greater access to the labor market because of pooling resources with their hosts—such as a place to live that doesn't require a large deposit or expensive rent—making childcare, transportation, or other employment-related expenses more affordable. Cohabitors may benefit from the resources of their partners, allowing them to enter the labor force, but they also may be more likely to stay out of the labor force if their partners assume husbandlike breadwinner roles. In any of these situations, living in extended households may help single mothers build social networks that facilitate employment.

The second set of hypotheses deals with the implications of extended household composition for single mothers who host extended households. As noted, older parents or other family members may provide assistance that facilitates employment, but they also may require assistance that makes employment unfeasible (Cooney and Uhlenberg, 1992; Mutchler, 1992). Employed extended household members may bring social networks or other resources into the home, improving the labor market opportunities of the hosting mothers. Finally, the role of guests receiving welfare payments is unclear, although the resource-pooling interpretation suggests these guests may free up their hosts for employment.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this study derive from the 1998 to 2000 March Current Population Surveys (CPS), which include about 50 thousand households per year. Three years of data are pooled to reduce variability from using single years of data and to increase the reliability of estimates for smaller groups in the sample. The sample includes civilian single mothers under age 65.[2] Even with pooled years, the sample size of the CPS is relatively small for the groups in question (e.g., Puerto Rican single mothers hosting extended households). However, given the issues raised by welfare reform and economic change during the 1990s (and the fact that 2000 Census data are not yet available), using the CPS for the end of the decade seems preferable to using the larger decennial Census dataset from 1990.

[2] Although previous research in this area has included single and married mothers (Rosenbaum and Gilbertson, 1995; Tienda and Glass, 1985), the current analysis is restricted to single mothers. Labor-supply models of married women are complicated by the joint determination of marriage and employment (Killingsworth, 1983), requiring more complex models for married women (Lehrer, 1999). Early results showed extension effects were concentrated among single mothers.

The analysis identifies two forms of household extension for single mothers. The first is the more traditional, marked by the coresidence of adult nonnuclear family members or nonrelatives. The second is nonmarital cohabitation. Single mothers are thus categorized into the following four exclusive groups: (1) nonextended household heads; (2) cohabitors (whether in their own or their partners' home); (3) hosts of extended households; and (4) guests in extended households.[3] The last two categories of extended household include a nonnuclear family adult: any adult other than the householder who is an ever-married child, a child with children of his or her own, any other relative, or any nonrelative.[4] Host and guest roles are determined by whether or not the woman is the householder on the CPS record, that is, the person in whose name the house or apartment is owned or rented.

Only White, Black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican women are included (White and Black are non-Latino). Mexicans include those who self-identified as Mexican/Mexicano (50%), Mexican American (45%), or Chicano (5%).[5] The other Latinas (Cubans, Central/South Americans, and others) and Asian subgroups are too small and too diverse to logically combine for these purposes, given the cultural dimensions of the analysis. This categorization is similar to that used by Tienda and Glass (1985).

The dependent variable in the analysis is *current employment*. Most of the previous research has examined labor force participation, an economic category representing the "supply" of labor, including those who are employed as well as those who are unemployed but actively looking for work. However, there are several reasons to use employment instead for this study. People who have given up on getting a suitable job are not considered to be "participating" in the labor force (Jones, 1985a), and the problems of identifying these "discouraged workers" have demonstrably increased in recent decades (Murphy and Topel, 1997). This is especially relevant to studies of racial–ethnic inequality, because there is greater inequality in employment rates than there is in labor force participation rates. In this sample, among

[3] Cohabitation is given logical precedence in the coding, so that the last two groups do not include cohabitors, regardless of who else lives in the household. The CPS only directly identifies cohabitors if they are either householders or partners of householders (Casper and Cohen, 2000). The great majority of cohabiting single mothers are householders with male guests. Of those cohabiting, only 28% of Whites, 18% of Blacks, 22% of Mexicans, and 15% of Puerto Ricans are living in their partner's household.

[4] Tienda and Glass (1985) used a similar definition of extension, with two exceptions. First, they did not purposely include adult children as extended household members. However, due to an error in the CPS data files for that period (London, 1998), many adult children of householders were misidentified as "other relatives," so they are probably included. Second, they do not distinguish between cohabiting partners and other extended household members. At the time, an ummarried partner category was not available on the CPS. For reasons I was unable to determine, I could not replicate the results reported by Tienda and Glass using the same 1980 March CPS data, despite extensive attempts to do so.

[5] I do not distinguish between foreign- and native-born women (Blank, 1998; Schoeni, 1998).

those in the labor force, 6% of White, 12% of Black, 11% of Mexican, and 13% of Puerto Rican single mothers are unemployed. The attention to single mothers' employment in the wake of welfare reform also suggests the need to examine employment rather than LFP. While many evaluations of the "success" of welfare reform focus on the decline in the number single mothers receiving welfare, their actual employment is often not examined, and there are structural reasons to expect their unemployment rates to remain high, even as their LFP rates rise (Mink, 1998; Weisbrot, 1997). On the other hand, the extent of employment—weeks and hours worked, for example—and wages clearly are also important (Figueroa and Melendez, 1993). Nevertheless, when the issue is entry into the labor force with an emphasis on household factors, employment seems a reasonable measure.

This essay models current employment, which is dichotomous, using logistic regression analysis (Allison, 1999). There are two sets of regression models. The first set, which includes all single mothers, considers the role of different forms of household extension. Dummy variables identify mothers in each racial–ethnic group who are *nonextended household heads*, *cohabitors*, *hosts*, or *guests* (White nonextended household heads are the reference category). Thus, one dummy variable identifies Black single mothers in nonextended households, another identifies those who host extended households, and so forth, so that each group can be compared with White single mothers in nonextended households.

After a baseline model tests overall differences in employment, the second model measures employment differences across household roles for each racial–ethnic group. The third model includes extension types as well as control variables. These include controls for *age* (in years), *child under* 6 (1 = yes), *education* (in years), and *other household income* (the natural log of total household income less the woman's own earned income, in constant 1999 dollars). These are common controls for labor force participation models in this area (Browne, 1997; Christopher, 1996; Cohen and Bianchi, 1999; Tienda and Glass, 1985), except that other income, which is intended to capture the need for the woman's own earnings, is calculated here based on household income rather than the more common family income. The measure thus includes the income of nonnuclear and nonfamily household members, as well as the welfare and public assistance income of all household members, which controls for the potential of public assistance to have a suppressive effect on labor supply. This is similar to the control measure used by Browne (2000). Because initial tests determined that several important control variables had significantly different effects across groups of women, all control variables are entered in interaction with each racial–ethnicity.

The second set of regression models tests how employment among single mothers who host extended households is affected by the characteristics of the nonnuclear family members. These are restricted to White, Black, and Mexican women because of the smaller number of hosts.[6] Two dummy variables identify those who host an *adult child* or a *parent*. A third variable identifies the number of *employed*, *nonnuclear family members* in the household, and a fourth indentifies the presence of a nonnuclear member who received any *welfare or public assistance* payments in the previous year. These variables, along with the controls described above, are entered into separate models for White, Black, and Mexican extended household hosts. This strategy is adopted from Tienda and Glass (1985) and Rosenbaum and Gilbertson (1995).[7] All analyses use the March CPS person weights (normalized to a mean of 1 in the logistic regressions). Unweighted *N*s are presented in the descriptive tables.

RESULTS

Table I offers some descriptive statistics for the sample. Mexican single mothers are the least likely (49.9%), and Puerto Ricans are the most likely (69%) to live as nonextended household heads, with Black and White single mothers in between. Other notable differences include the rare occurrence of cohabitation among Black single mothers (5.5%), and the high rates of guesting among Mexican single mothers (25.5%). The table also shows the total employment rates, and the bivariate relationship between household extension and employment for each group of women. White single mothers have the highest employment rates overall (75%) and in each household category. One striking pattern is that in all groups, extended household guests have the lowest employment rates. Clearly, then, it is important to differentiate between host and guest roles in this regard.

Table I also shows the total household income divided by the number of household members, to offer an overview of economic well-being by household extension for single mothers. Whites live in households with the highest per capita incomes. Per capita household income is higher in extended households of all four groups, and the White advantage is greatest in nonextended households. Higher per capita income could result from several factors. The

[6]The logistic model with Puerto Rican hosts produced a nonsignificant likelihood ratio chi-square.

[7]Tienda and Glass (1985) include the number of nonnuclear household members, and the proportion of extended members who are female. I found, however, that these variable are highly correlated with the ones that I have used here (and with each other). I tested for different effects by the gender of the adult child present, and, finding none, elected to use a single variable for adult children.

Table I. Descriptive Statistics: Single Mothers, 1998–2000

	White[a]	Black[a]	Mexican[b]	Puerto Rican
Household role (%)				
Nonextended household head	63.9	66.7	49.9	69.0
Cohabiting	12.5	5.5	9.3	8.0
Extended household host	9.5	10.0	15.4	10.3
Extended household guest	14.1	17.9	25.5	12.7
Employed (%)				
Total	75.0	65.4	59.5	52.9
Nonextended household head	77.4	65.6	65.5	52.0
Cohabiting	72.3	70.6	58.3	64.0
Extended household host	73.9	71.5	57.7	53.1
Extended household guest	67.5	59.8	49.1	51.3
Household income per person (1999 dollars)				
Nonextended household head	11,272	6,471	6,148	5,660
Cohabiting	12,430	9,742	8,012	9,221
% difference from nonextended	10*	51*	30*	63*
Extended household host	12,862	8,686	6,366	7,525
% difference from nonextended	14*	34*	4	33†
Extended household guest	13,185	8,657	7,094	9,011
% difference from nonextended	17*	34*	15*	59*
Individual characteristics (means)				
Age	34.9	32.7	33.2	32.5
Child under 6 (%)	38.4	46.9	50.5	50.1
Education	13.1	12.7	10.6	11.8
Other income[c]	8.17	7.00	7.78	7.46
Unweighted *N*	6,724	3,251	1,773	558

[a]Non-Latino.
[b]Mexican American, Chicano, Mexican, and Mexicano.
[c]Natural log of household income less own earnings.
*$p < 0.05$ (two-tailed test); †$p < 0.10$ (two-tailed test).

single mothers in these households may work more and/or earn more; the other adults may add higher incomes than the single mothers have; or the extension may add more adults than children to the household, bringing up the average income per person. By whatever mechanism, however, household extension is associated with greater access to—or at least proximity to—income for single mothers and their children. It is thus also associated with reduced racial–ethnic income inequality.

Table II shows results, as odds ratios, from three logistic regression models for single mothers' employment. All single mothers are included in each model, and all variables are calculated in interaction with the racial–ethnicity dummy variables. The baseline model provides a test of the total employment differences between the racial–ethnic groups shown in Table I. This shows that the lower employment rates for each group relative to White single mothers are statistically significant.

The second model includes only variables for the types of household extension shown in Table I. The final model includes extension types as

Table II. Logistic Regression for Single Mothers' Employment on Household Extension

	Odds ratios		
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
White	1.00		
×Nonextended head	—	1.00	1.00
×Cohabitor	—	0.77*	1.44*
×Host	—	0.83	1.31*
×Guest	—	0.61*	1.37*
×Age	—	—	1.00
×Child under 6	—	—	0.49*
×Education	—	—	1.36*
×Other income	—	—	0.87*
Black	0.63***		
×Nonextended head	—	0.56*	0.34*
×Cohabitor	—	0.70*	0.88[b]
×Host	—	0.74*,[b]	0.86[b]
×Guest	—	0.44*,[a,b]	0.58[a,b]
×Age	—	—	1.00
×Child under 6	—	—	0.60*
×Education	—	—	1.42*
×Other income	—	—	0.83*,[a]
Mexican	0.49***		
×Nonextended head	—	0.56*	3.81*
×Cohabitor	—	0.41*,[a]	4.06*
×Host	—	0.40*,[a]	4.16*,[a]
×Guest	—	0.28*,[a,b]	3.21*
×Age	—	—	1.00
×Child under 6	—	—	0.56*
×Education	—	—	1.16*,[a]
×Other income	—	—	0.89*
Puerto Rican	0.38***		
×Nonextended head	—	0.32*	0.86
×Cohabitor	—	0.52	2.42[b]
×Host	—	0.33*,[a]	1.36
×Guest	—	0.31*,[a]	1.65
×Age	—	—	0.99
×Child under 6	—	—	0.61
×Education	—	—	1.34*
×Other income	—	—	0.82*
Likelihood ratio chi-square	225 (3 df)	313 (15 df)	1,660 (31 df)

[a] Difference from White effect significant at $p < 0.05$.
[b] Difference from same racial–ethnicity nonextended heads significant at $p < 0.05$.
* $p < 0.05$.

well as control variables. Three statistical significance tests are shown. The first (∗) shows the significance of the odds ratio relative to 1.0, which is the employment of the reference category (White single mothers in nonextended households). The second (*a*) shows the significance of the odds ratio relative to the same variable for White women, and the third (*b*) shows

the significance of the odds ratio relative to nonextended household heads within each racial–ethnic group.

Results in the second model show that the lower employment rates observed for Black, Mexican, and Puerto Rican single mothers are partly accounted for by lower rates among extended household guests. In all the racial–ethnic groups here, guests have the lowest employment rates. Among Black women in particular, extended household hosts have significantly higher employment rates, and guests have significantly lower rates, than nonextended household heads.

The third model tests these relationships in the presence of control variables in interaction with each racial–ethnic group. Consider Black single mothers. With the controls added, Black women in all forms of extended households have higher employment rates than those who are heading nonextended households. We may conclude from this that Black single mothers who are guests are less likely to be employed because of their other characteristics, especially lower educational attainment and greater odds of having young children. Once these factors are controlled, living in another's extended household apparently increases employment. The results for Black women are thus consistent with the hypothesis that the different forms of household extension are strategies to pool resources in ways that increase access to the labor market for Black single mothers. The same appears to be true for White single mothers in extended households—for whom employment rates are also higher in the presence of the controls—but not for Mexican and Puerto Rican mothers (except Puerto Rican cohabitors).

What about racial–ethnic inequality in employment? When controls are added in the final model, Black nonextended heads and guests have significantly lower employment rates than White women, but extended hosts and cohabitors do not. Thus, Black hosts and cohabitors—while still having lower employment rates than White single-mother hosts and cohabitors—have significantly less disadvantage in employment rates than other Black single mothers. For Mexican and Puerto Rican single mothers, household extension and the control variables account for racial–ethnic differences in employment, but the relative role of these factors varies. For Mexican women, the greatest factors in their lower employment rates are their lower levels of education and substantially lower returns to education. Mexican single mothers are *more* likely to be employed once age, children, education, and other income are taken into account.

From the regressions in Table II, we learn that White and Black single mothers may increase their employment rates by extending their households. Next, we examine characteristics of extended households and the women who host them to see how this occurs. Table III presents descriptive statistics about White, Black, and Mexican single mothers who host

Table III. Extended Households (Hosts): Black, White, and Mexican Single Mothers

	White	Black	Mexican
Percent employed	73.8	71.5	57.7
Number of nonnuclear adults	1.14	1.21	1.39
Percent living with adult child	10.2	17.7	17.9
Percent living with parent	16.5	21.3	23.0
Number of employed extended members	0.74	0.61	0.78
Percent with nonnuclear adult receiving welfare	4.0	8.1	6.7
Age	35.4	35.1	34.6
Education	13.0	12.6	9.9
Percent with child under 6	38.1	41.3	48.1
Other income[a]	9.65	9.33	8.82
Unweighted *N*	621	333	276

Source: 1998–2000 March Current Population Survey, Unmarried mothers under age 65.
[a] Natural log of household income less own earnings.

extended households and the nonnuclear family members in their households. White women host the smallest extended households, while Black and Mexican extended households include the largest proportion of family members. Black extended household hosts include the fewest employed nonnuclear family members—an average of 0.61 per household—and the highest proportion of welfare recipients among their guests. This suggests that, for single mothers, Black extended household networks draw from an economically weaker pool than those of Whites. Although Mexican single mothers are more likely than their Black counterparts to include employed, nonnuclear family members, the income provided by others in the household is lowest in Mexican extended households, averaging just 8.82 in logged dollars (less than $7000). The logged other income of 9.65 for White women is highest (more than $15,000), and Black women's 9.33 is equivalent to about $11,300.

Clearly, White, Black, and Mexican extended households present very different profiles, with White women's extended household members bringing in more economic and employment-related resources. The implications of these differences are explored in the logistic model for employment among single mothers hosting extended households. Odds ratios for the three models are shown in Table IV.

The most striking result in Table IV is the effect that employed nonnuclear family members have on their hosts' employment rates. For all three groups, single mothers whose guests are employed are significantly more likely to be employed themselves, even after controlling for the effect of the income the guests bring to the household. Rather than imposing housework burdens in ways that impede employment, as proposed by Tienda and Glass (1985), employed nonnuclear members appear to facilitate or encourage

Table IV. Logistic Regression for Single-Mother Hosts' Employment on Extended Household and Host Characteristics

	Odds ratios		
	White	Black	Mexican
Living with adult child	0.74	0.65	0.87
Living with parent	0.94	0.69	0.75
Employed nonnuclear members	1.66*	1.99**	1.59
Nonnuclear welfare recipient	0.69†	0.27**	1.23
Age	1.02	1.00	0.98
Child under 6	0.64†	0.76	0.39
Education	1.52***	1.46***	1.04
Other income	0.90†	0.88	0.94
Likelihood ratio chi-square (8 df)	86.7	52.6	15.7

† $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

employment, consistent with results from Figueroa and Melendez (1993) and Parish *et al.* (1991). This is consistent with the finding that, among White and Black single mothers at least, hosts of welfare-receiving, nonnuclear family members are less likely to be employed. The presence in the home of guests who receive welfare might contribute housework or childcare to free up the hosts for employment, but instead is associated with lower odds of employment for hosts.

Because this analysis is cross-sectional, we cannot exclude the possibility that causality runs in the opposite direction. Employment rates may be higher among single mothers who head extended households because single mothers who are not employed do not welcome additional household members, or because people looking for places to live seek out employed members of their personal networks. Similarly, the finding that employed guests are associated with higher employment rates among hosts may reflect the fact that only employed guests are welcome in households with employed hosts. Hosts who are not employed may only be willing to share their homes with nonemployed guests if those guests bring welfare payments into the home, which could explain the welfare effects for Whites and Blacks shown in Table IV. Still another possibility is that the employment and welfare variables serve as proxies for family, local community, or neighborhood characteristics, and thus might not represent effects of member characteristics.

CONCLUSIONS

Results presented here are consistent with the hypothesis that household extension facilitates mothers' employment and reduces racial–ethnic

inequality in employment. But the effect is not universal or overwhelming. Differences by racial–ethnicity, household role, and household composition help explain how living arrangements may represent a means of responding to inequality. Further, inequality in the characteristics of extended household network members appears to compound existing labor market inequality across racial–ethnic groups.

There is support for the first hypothesis, that household extension increases access to employment for single mothers, other things being equal, for Whites and Blacks, but not for Mexicans or Puerto Ricans. The higher rates of extension among Black and Latina mothers are also consistent with the suggestion that extension is a response to inequality (Angel and Tienda, 1982; Billingsley, 1992). There is also evidence here consistent with the assertion that extension reduces racial–ethnic inequality in single mothers' employment rates. Black and Latina single mothers who host extended households or cohabit with men outside of marriage do not have significantly lower employment rates than comparable White women. For Black women, even single mothers living in the extended households of others—who have significantly lower employment rates overall—have higher rates when other individual characteristics are controlled, consistent with the findings of Trent and Harlan (1994).

Differences in the effects of extension clearly justify the distinctions among host, guest, and cohabiting household roles. Hosts are at least as likely to be employed as are guests, and usually substantially more so. Cohabitors, too, are generally more likely than women heading nonextended households to be employed. Cohabitation is one form of household extension and is reasonably included in this study. However, additional study, including comparison with marriage and analysis of partner characteristics, is required to understand its effects in broader context.

The type of extension has significant consequences for single mothers who host extended households. There is continued evidence here, covering a later period, that the employment of extended household members increases the employment of hosting single mothers (Figueroa and Melendez, 1993; Parish *et al.*, 1991). Bringing working, nonnuclear family members into the household could be a means of reducing the need for single mothers to enter the labor force. However, the results here are not consistent with that interpretation, as employed guest members increase rather than decrease the odds of employment for hosts. Employed, nonnuclear family members may bring resources or network connections to the household that reduce barriers to the labor force for single mothers. As noted, it is also possible that the causality is reversed. That would be the case if employed hosts are more likely to extend their households to adults who are employed; if women with stronger networks were also more employable themselves; or if

women who are not employed are less willing to open their homes to those who are not employed. These competing explanations cannot be ruled out here. However, that White single mothers have stronger networks is clearly implied by their greater likelihood of bringing in employed household members and members who are not welfare recipients. The disadvantage of Black and Mexican women in this regard underscores that for them household extension is a response to inequality, but it cannot overcome the structural inequalities they face.

Important limitations to the beneficial role of household extension are apparent. Black single mothers are much less likely to have employed extended household guests. Without greater employment opportunities for the Black single mothers' network members, the benefits of household extension are limited to housework, childcare, and related contributions, including welfare payments (which may be quite significant). Second, current employment is a low hurdle compared to satisfactory employment in terms of weeks and hours employed, as well as occupational and earnings attainment (Figueroa and Melendez, 1993).

Finally, single mothers may face greater material hardship when employed rather than relying on welfare support for income (Bauman, 2000). Employment is often assumed to be a positive outcome because we know that without employment single mothers and their children face potential economic hardship due to inadequate welfare support (Butler, 1996). With a greater range of options, many women would not choose employment—given the limited jobs available—especially when they have young children at home (Lehrer, 1999).

The negative effect of other income on women's employment means that economic necessity plays an important role in women's labor force outcomes. It suggests that, given a choice, many single mothers would not be in the labor force. Despite the advantages of household extension, this study provides no evidence that this strategy can adequately make up for reduced public assistance support following the federal and state welfare reforms of the late 1990s (Mink, 1998). Nonetheless, the present results are consistent with the assertion that household structure represents an important mechanism for responding to inequality for single mothers who face structural barriers to labor market access.

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