Chapter 10
Children at Risk: Diversity, Inequality, and the Third Demographic Transition

Daniel T. Lichter and Zhenchao Qian

Introduction

The so-called second demographic transition refers to shifting patterns in family structure, namely, delayed marriage, growing shares of single parents, rising non-marital fertility, increasing cohabitation, and family instability (Lesthaeghe 2010). Throughout much of the developed world, including the United States and Europe, family change has been accompanied by the diverging experiences of children. On the one hand there are affluent or middle class children living in stable two-parent families, while on the other there are children left behind in single parent families (Heuveline and Weinshenker 2008; McLanahan 2004). Less often appreciated is that declining fertility and shifting family life in most rich countries also have become increasingly differentiated by race and ethnicity and by nativity (Coleman 2006; Lichter 2013). Indeed, in developed countries with rapidly aging populations, growing ethnic minority and immigrant populations have left an out-sized demographic imprint on ethnic composition and diversity in the wake of slow growth and native depopulation. Moreover, most demographic and economic impacts are often experienced first by children.

The United States is an illustrative case. U.S. Census Bureau projections suggest that the U.S. will become a majority-minority society as early as 2043 if current rates of fertility, mortality, and immigration continue (U.S. Census Bureau2012). Increasing racial and ethnic diversity starts from the "bottom up" – with children (Frey 2014; Lichter 2013). The majority of all births today are racial and ethnic minorities (i.e., populations other than non-Hispanic white) and a recently-released

D.T. Lichter (✉)
Cornell University, Ithaca, NY 14853, USA
e-mail: dtl28@cornell.edu

Z. Qian
Brown University, Providence, RI 02912, USA

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report indicates that children of all ages will be a majority minority population by 2020 if current immigration and fertility trends continue (U.S. Census Bureau 2015). What makes the new demography of race especially troubling is that large shares of today's minority and immigrant children experience chronic poverty as they make their way to adulthood (Brown et al. 2015). Many are "born poor" (Lichter et al. 2015). They begin life's race behind at the "starting line" and never seem to catch up.

Indeed, poverty and inequality are often reproduced and perpetuated from parental to filial generations (Tach 2015). Intergenerational poverty is a persistent and pernicious characteristic of America's historically disadvantaged minority populations. It is a legacy of slavery, conquest, and, in the case of Native American Indians, genocide. For today's children, class boundaries have crystalized and upward socioeconomic mobility and social integration have been compromised by unprecedented family instability, declining school quality and re-segregation, unauthorized immigration, and mass incarceration. The implication is clear: the United States and other high-income countries, especially those with below replacement fertility, require a new public and private commitment to invest in minority and immigrant children – and to invest now. Perhaps as never before, minority children are threatened by growing income inequality and stagnant family incomes in a global economy (Smeeding 2015).

In this chapter, we draw on a variety of current data sources to examine racial change and diversity, the changing living arrangements of U.S. children, and the shifting patterns of poverty and economic inequality. McLanahan (2004) has linked the second demographic transition to the "diverging destinies" of America's children. Here, we argue that inequality is being amplified as the second demographic transition gives way to a newly-emerging third demographic transition, one characterized by unprecedented growth of racial and ethnic minority populations in the developed world (Coleman 2006; Lichter 2013). Inequality and poverty among America's children are reinforced by a new and growing intergenerational divide, one marked by an aging white population and a rapidly growing population of minority children. We conclude our chapter by exploring the options available to U.S. policymakers and identifying lessons from other low-fertility and aging countries in the developed world that face similar demographic challenges.

An Emerging Third Demographic Transition?

The second demographic transition has captivated the attention of demographers worldwide (Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Lesthaeghe 2014; Zaidi and Morgan 2017). It has followed directly from the first demographic transition, which was marked by shifts from high to low fertility in response to declining mortality. For most Western societies today, the second demographic transition has brought rapid family change and below-replacement fertility, which are both the cause and the consequence of delayed marriage and non-marriage, rising cohabitation, increasing union instability, and growing shares of single-parent families. In much of Eastern

and Southern Europe, for example, total fertility rates (TFR) are at historic lows of 1.5 and less, and well below replacement levels (Billari and Kohler 2004; Goldstein et al. 2009; Kohler et al. 2002). In Italy, the TFR was 1.4 in 2005–2010, declining from 2.5 in the late 1960s (United Nations 2015). Indeed, lowest-low fertility is now characteristic of much of Europe (Morgan2003), but it is also widely observed in East Asia (mostly reflecting low marriage rates and low marital fertility rates). In South Korea, for example, the TFR is one of the lowest on record (1.2). In Japan, the TFR has been at roughly 1.3 or lower since at least 2000 (United Nations 2015). Lowest-low fertility has gone hand-in-hand with rapid population aging, natural decrease – an excess of deaths over births – and depopulation across many subregions of the United States, Europe, and East Asia (Reher 2015; Johnson 2011).

Low and declining fertility has fueled rapid population aging throughout the developed world. Incipient native depopulation and natural decrease, in turn, have created labor shortages and new demands for immigrant workers. Transnational migration has accelerated globally. In the European Union, for example, we have seen an unprecedented South to North movement of workers, and the rapid growth of new immigrant groups from former colonies. France (especially in the Paris region) is now home to immigrants from outside of Europe, often from ex-colonies in North Africa, West Africa, and Indochina (Afulani and Asunka 2015; Kaplan 2015). Since the late 1990s, net immigration in England also has spiked upward, with large influxes of low-skill workers from Eastern Europe (e.g., Bulgaria and Romania), but also of non-citizens from outside the EU. Government projections suggest that more than one-half of population growth by 2027 will be directly (through new immigration) or indirectly (through the fertility of the immigrants) traced to immigration. In Sweden, 1.33 million people or 14.3% of the resident population in 2010 was foreign-born, mostly from outside the EU. Some of the largest immigrant groups are refugees seeking asylum, originating from Iraq, Iran, and Syria. Many are Muslim, with high rates of fertility, often far higher than the fertility of the natives. In the United States, roughly one million new immigrants are added to a rapidly aging native white population every year. Minorities accounted for over 90% of U.S. population growth during the first decade of the new century (Frey 2014). Immigration in the United States and elsewhere is directly linked to globalization and the growing demand for cheap labor in the face of population aging, low fertility, and incipient population decline in the so-called "Global North."

In the developed world, this societal transformation from a low-fertility, native-born majority population to a high-fertility, racial and ethnic immigrant population is sometimes called the third demographic transition. Coined by David Coleman (2006), this population transition is general (at least across today's developed world, but especially in Europe) and is irreversible (Coleman 2009). In the United States, our focus in this chapter, the 2010 U.S. decennial census revealed that the percentage of non-Hispanic whites decreased from 69.1% to 63.7% between 2000 and 2010 (Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011). Newly-released U.S. Census Bureau projections (based on the 2010 Census) indicate that the non-Hispanic white population is expected to *decline* from roughly 197 million in 2010 to slightly more than 186 million in 2050, as white natural decrease takes a demographic grip on America's

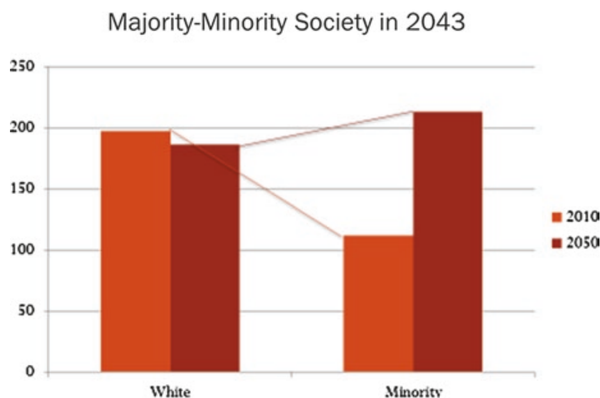

Fig. 10.1 Population of non-Hispanic whites and minorities, U.S., 2010–2050

future (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a). As shown in Fig. 10.1, America's minority populations, in contrast, will nearly double in size over the next 40 years, increasing from 112 million to 213 million persons if recent patterns of immigration, fertility, and mortality continue (U.S. Census Bureau 2012b). All of the projected U.S. population increase is expected to come from groups other than non-Hispanic whites. The U.S. is moving inexorably toward becoming a majority-minority society. In fact, only 46.6% of the U.S. population will be classified as white in 2050 if current demographic trends continue. The racial cross-over is projected to occur in 2043.

Of course, we do not have to wait until 2043 to observe America's transition from a majority white to a majority minority society. It has already occurred among America's children. We show in Fig. 10.2 that the share of all U.S. births to minorities (groups other than non-Hispanic whites) has increased rapidly over the past decade, from 42.4% in 2000 to 50.4% in 2011. The diversity is occurring from the "bottom up" and mostly reflects the high fertility of immigrant minority populations, especially Hispanics (Johnson and Lichter 2010; Lichter et al. 2012). High minority fertility represents a large second-order effect of past and current immigration (Johnson and Lichter 2008, 2010). Significantly, America's transition to a majority-minority society – beginning with children – has been exacerbated by below replacement fertility among the native white population. In 2013, the TFR of non-Hispanic whites was 1.75, the lowest on record (Martin et al. 2015). At the same time, America has experienced, for the first time, absolute declines in the population of white women of reproductive ages (Johnson and Lichter 2010). Below-replacement fertility rates of non-Hispanic white women, applied to a declining population base, have greatly accelerated shifts in racial composition at the bottom of the age distribution. Over the next few decades, members of the post-World War II baby boom cohort will be replaced by a burgeoning minority population of younger people, born of recent immigration and high fertility (Bratter 2015; Lichter 2013).

This third demographic transition is also well underway in Europe (Coleman 2006). As shown in Fig. 10.3, many parts of Europe are experiencing natural

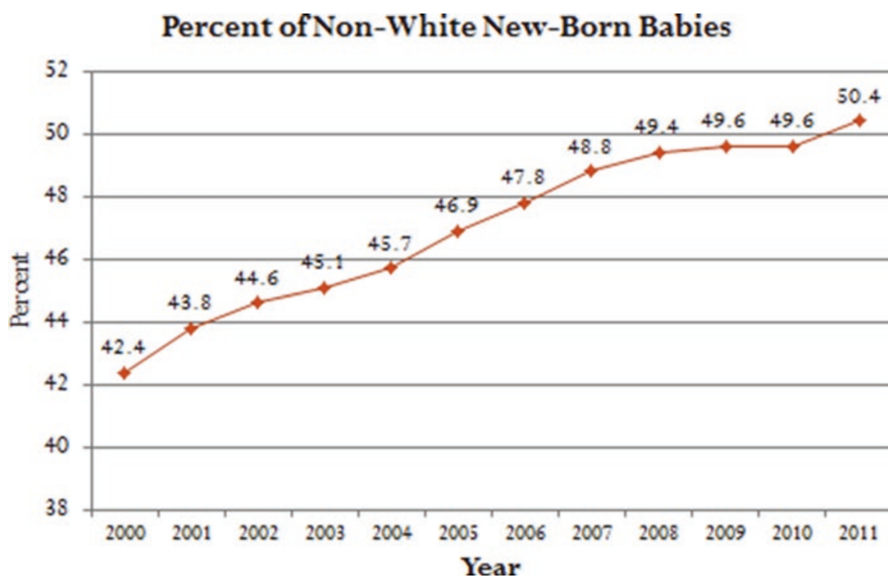

Fig. 10.2 Percentage of minority births to all births, U.S., 2000–2011

decrease. Although most European countries do not collect data on race and ethnicity, natural decrease undoubtedly reflects population aging and the below-replacement fertility of native born populations (mostly whites) rather than non-natives. Indeed, fertility is especially high among new immigrants, which, like in the U.S., has hastened the pace of racial and ethnic change at the bottom of the age distribution in Europe. And, like the United States, immigrants are comprised disproportionately of historically disadvantaged minorities who are seeking work and who face new anti-immigrant political opposition, job discrimination, and social exclusion and segregation. The growing electoral strength of anti-immigration political parties in many European countries (e.g., England, Sweden, and the Netherlands) suggests that the road to social integration and full political participation will be rocky for today's minority children (Alba and Foner 2015). All of this has become more uncertain with the fraying of public and political support for the EU, which has reduced the barriers to intra-European labor mobility and hastened the pace of growing ethnic diversity.

Poverty Among U.S. Children: Minorities on the Front Line

What does all of this mean for U.S. children today? What are their prospects for social and economic inclusion? In her 2003 presidential address to the Population Association of America, Sara McLanahan (2004:607) argued that many of the trends associated with the second demographic transition, such as nonmarital

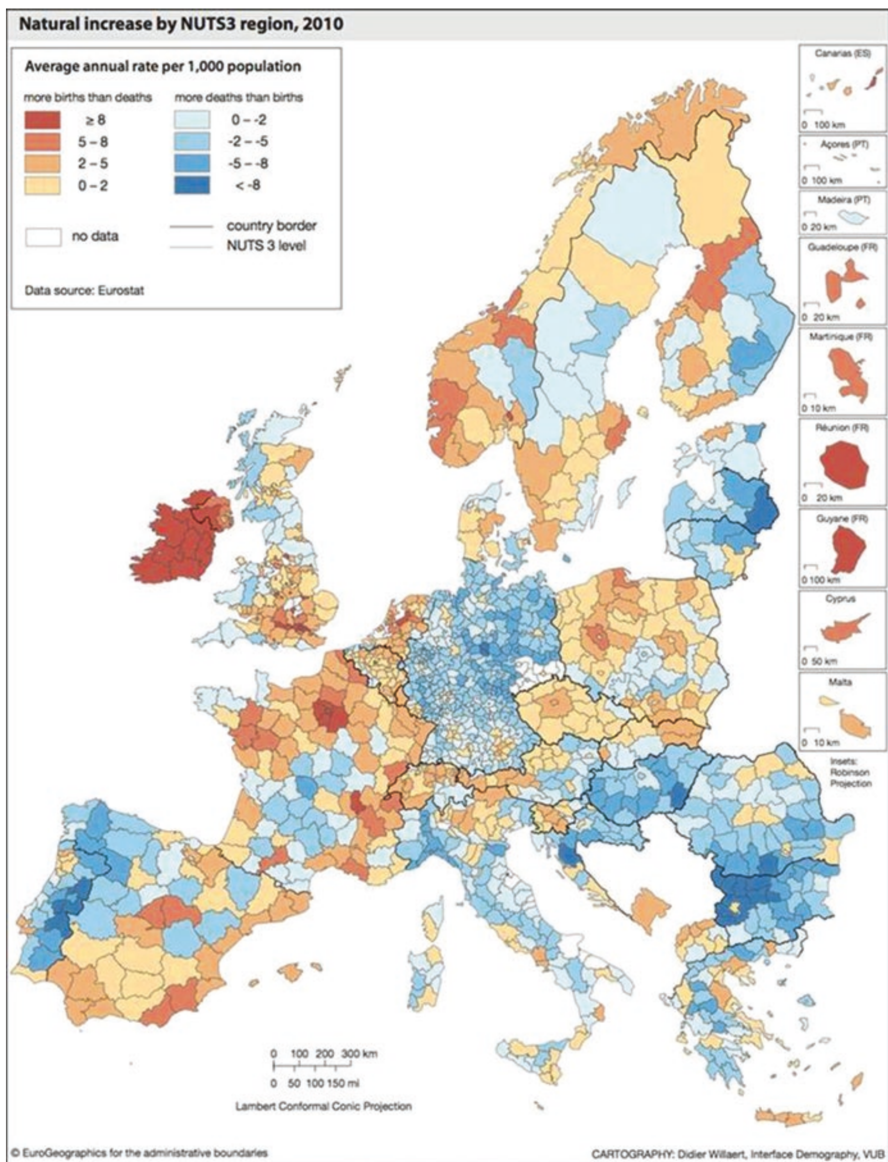

Fig. 10.3 Natural decrease areas in Europe, 2010

fertility, divorce, and cohabitation, have negatively impacted the resources available to America's children. Significantly, societal shifts in family structure and processes have disproportionately affected children at the bottom of the income distribution, reinforcing growing disparities between affluent and poor families and children. In a global economy, growing poverty and inequality among children represent threats

to America's competitive future. McLanahan (2004) argued that government has a role to play in addressing the growing inequalities among America's children. Specifically, "how can we get women from disadvantaged backgrounds to delay childbearing, invest in education and training, and form stable partnerships? Similarly, how can we get men from disadvantaged backgrounds to remain committed to their children?" (McLanahan 2004:622).

Interestingly, McLanahan (2004) did not discuss race or ethnicity, perhaps not wanting to conflate policy concerns about children's wellbeing in unstable families with the more general issues of persistent racial inequality. Yet, from a strictly demographic standpoint, the experiences of all U.S. children today cannot be easily divorced from those of minority children, especially Hispanics and Blacks. Minority children are on the frontline of family and economic change. It is their experiences that are largely responsible for "diverging destinies" in as much as they disproportionately face firsthand the economic and developmental consequences of being born to never-married single or cohabiting mothers, or of having parents who divorce (Brown et al. 2015). Minority children represent the American future. What we do or do not do today to insure their long term economic success and integration into American society will be revealed later in growing poverty and inequality and in fraught racial and ethnic relations. Some social commentators raise the specter that America will rapidly become a white oligarchy, as minorities and those at the bottom of the income distribution fall farther and farther behind those at the top of the income distribution (i.e., the so-called 1%).

To be sure, in the absence of declines in racial inequality, the "browning of America" –the third demographic transition – means that growing shares of children face the prospect of poverty as they age into adulthood. Child poverty rates spiked during the Great Recession and its aftermath, even as poverty rates among the elderly declined (Fig. 10.4). Roughly one in five American children today are poor, compared with less than one in ten elderly. The gap in poverty between the young and old has never been greater.

Much of this difference in poverty can be linked directly to racial composition. In fact, as shown in Fig. 10.5, 72% of all poor children were racial and ethnic minorities in 2013, a figure well above the figure for the population overall (58.5%). As the racial composition of America's population changes, the poor have become increasingly comprised of minorities, a demographic fact that has its own implications for public and political support for government programs that support poor people. Today, pundits on the political left sometime refer to the "War on the Poor," which has supposedly been launched by older, mostly white, anti-tax conservatives (i.e., the tea party) who complain about government handouts and the 47% who make up the so-called "takers." The new "minority threat" can be linked directly both to growing intergenerational differences in ethno-racial composition and the emergence of a "majority minority" electorate (Lichter 2013).

From a demographic standpoint, the increasing share of poor children who are minorities (from less than 60% in 1990 to 72% in 2013) reflects patterns of immigration and differentials in fertility (Lichter et al. 2012). But it is also located in the lack of progress in closing the racial gap in poverty among American children over

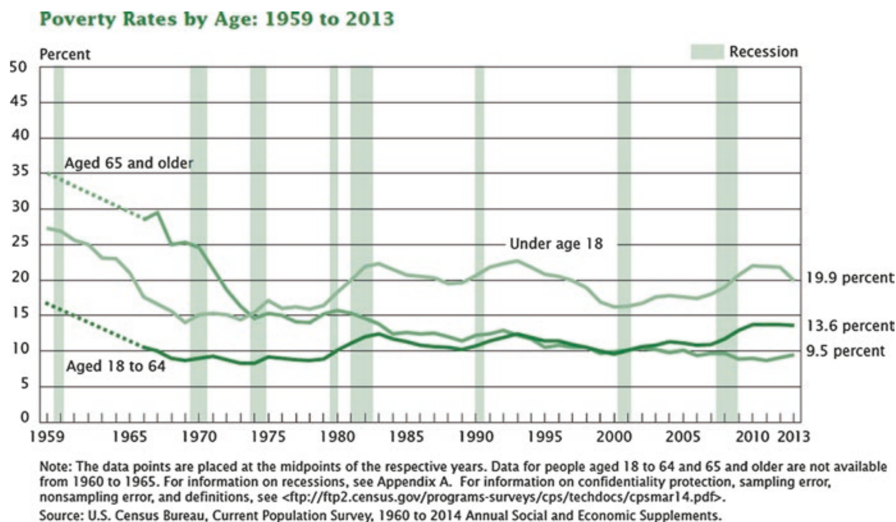

Fig. 10.4 Poverty rates by age, U.S., 1959–2013

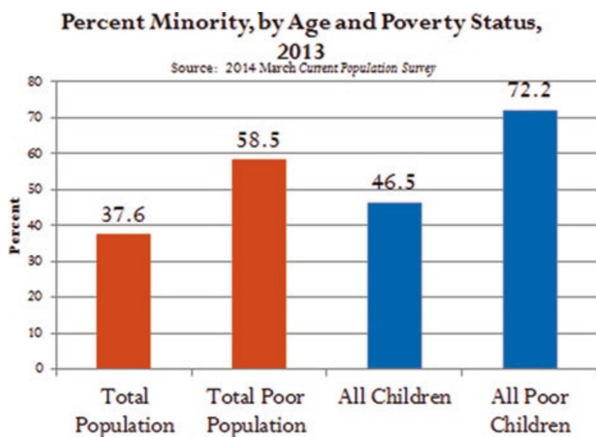

Fig. 10.5 Percent minority by age and poverty status, U.S., 2013

the past decade or so (see Fig. 10.6). For Hispanics, who now account for roughly 25% of all U.S. births, the poverty rate among children in the late 1990s was little different from the child poverty rate today (i.e., roughly 35%). Progress toward reducing or eliminating the poverty gaps among children has been slow. One of the reasons for such slow progress undoubtedly is located in recent immigration patterns; the massive influx of low-skilled immigrant families (many unauthorized) and their children. But this is not the only explanation. Poverty rates among African American children over the same period (the last 15 years) also have been "stuck,"

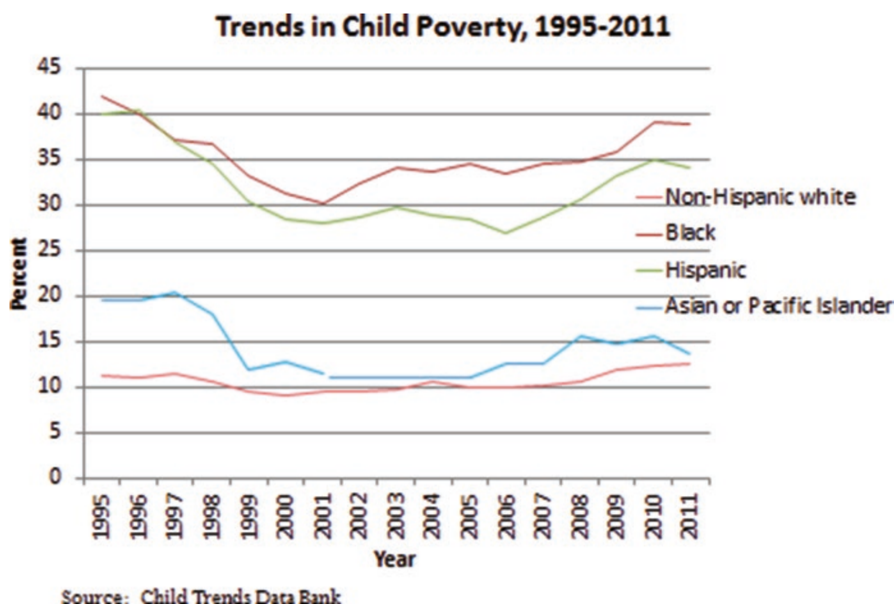

Fig. 10.6 Trends in child poverty, by race and ethnicity, U.S., 1955–2011

at nearly 40%. The inability to close the poverty gap cannot be blamed on new immigration; the foreign-born population does not constitute a large share of the U.S. black population. Moreover, African-born and Afro-Caribbean immigrants to the United States tend to have higher levels of education than native-born African Americans (Kent 2007).

To sum up, diversity is occurring from the "bottom up." And, as we have already noted, economic disparities also occur prominently among children, at the bottom of the age distribution, where the United States has witnessed the largest increases in the absolute and relative size of minority populations. This fact alone behooves us to consider the many current "threats" to upward socioeconomic mobility now facing historically disadvantaged minority children and the children of immigrants. We will start first with families, highlighting the changing living arrangements of American children and the implications for racial inequality and America's long-term future in a globalizing economy.

Children's Living Arrangements and Poverty

With whom the children live matters – and this is especially true in the United States vis-à-vis other European countries. In 2013, almost 20% of U.S. children were classified as poor by the federal government, compared with 14.5% for the population overall. Children make up almost one-quarter of the U.S. population, but account

Table 10.1 Shares of poor children and child poverty rates, by headship status, 2013

	Husband-wife	Male-headed	Female-headed	Total
Total	67.2	7.1	25.7	100.0
Poor	32.2	8.3	59.5	100.0
Non-poor	75.9	6.8	17.3	100.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Poor	9.5	23.3	46.1	19.9
Non-poor	90.5	76.7	53.9	80.1

for nearly one-third of the nation's poor population (DeNavas-Walt and Proctor 2014). Table 10.1 shows the poverty rates of children in 2013, disaggregated by living arrangements (or type of family). Here we distinguish among children living in husband-wife families, male-headed families, and female-headed families. These data reveal extraordinarily high poverty rates among children living with single mothers. Over 46% of children living with a single mother (or a female caretaker) are poor, which is nearly four times greater than the poverty rate among children living with married parents. Over 8.7 million children – nearly 60% of all poor children – live with a single mother (data not shown). These data clearly reinforce the central point of McLanahan (2004), i.e., that family change associated with the second demographic transition has placed a large share of children "at risk" of poverty. From the perspective of children today, it also suggests that public policy that addresses family change – either slowing such change or addressing its economic consequences – is fundamental for improving the lives of children and to insuring American prosperity in the years ahead.

This challenge, as we have argued, is complicated by an emerging third demographic transition that is now picking up steam. Disproportionately large shares of minority children, especially blacks and Hispanics, live with single parents and, based on the past, face the specter of chronic poverty as they age into adulthood and hopefully productive adult roles. For example, 55.1% of non-Hispanic black children live with single mothers (or female caretakers), a figure well above the national percentage in 2013 of 25.7%. For Hispanic children, the percentage is 30.7% (data not shown). More than one-half of these children are poor (i.e., 52.4%). Among black children living with female householders, 54.6% are poor. Clearly, racial and ethnic differences in family structure are contributing to racial disparities in economic wellbeing (Bloome 2014; Bratter and Damaske 2013). This demographic fact alone suggests one obvious target for policy intervention – the family.

A simple accounting exercise easily highlights the statistical link between ethnoracial differences in children's living arrangements and poverty status. We ask: What would be the poverty rate of minority children if they had the same living arrangements as white children? Previous work (Eggebeen and Lichter 1991; Lichter et al. 2005) has demonstrated the large economic role of family structure. Our analyses here, using methods of standardization, show that 24.1% of black children (rather than 39.1%) would be poor if black children had shares living in married-couple, single father, and single mother families that were the same as

white children. This means that the poverty rate among black children would be almost two-thirds lower than the observed rate if blacks were distributed across married-couple, male headed, and female-headed families in the same percentages as white children. The black-white poverty gap in 2013 would be reduced from 28.4 to 13.6 percentage points. More than one-half of the black-white poverty rate among children is due to black-white differences in family structure. For Hispanics, our analyses revealed that the poverty rate among Hispanic children would be 25.7% rather than the observed rate of 30.4%. This represents a reduction in Hispanic child poverty of only 4.7 percentage points or 18.3%. Of the observed Hispanic-white poverty gap of 19.7 percentage points, Hispanic-white differences in family structure account for only 4.7/19.7 or about 23.8% of the gap. Of course, this crude approach has its limitations, especially if poverty itself is responsible for current family patterns (e.g., economically-distressed married couples divorce and separate into two poor households).

At a time of increasing racial and ethnic diversity at the bottom of the age distribution, it seems clear that poverty – now and in the future – is linked inexorably to family structure (either as cause or consequence). Indeed, over 40% of all babies today are born outside of marriage (Martin et al. 2015). This percentage is even higher among African Americans (over 70%) and Hispanics (over 50%). This has occurred even as pregnancy and birth rates among minority (and all) teenagers have plummeted over the past two decades. DeLeone et al. (2009) showed, for example, that nearly half of the black-white difference in the nonmarital fertility ratio was due to black-white differences in marriage. Marital births are comparatively low because shares of married persons are especially low among African American women (and men). Among Hispanics, we see a different pattern. All of the difference from whites in nonmarital fertility ratios (i.e., the share of all births to unmarried women) was due to the much higher rates of nonmarital fertility. Hispanic marriage rates (and early marriage rates) are high, but so are rates of childbearing among unmarried women. Of course, some of this difference in nonmarital fertility is due to higher rates of fertility among cohabiting Hispanic couples in marriage-like living arrangements (Lichter et al. 2014).

Compared with other developed countries, poverty in the United States is exceptional in showing an especially strong statistical link between family structure and child poverty (Brady and Burroway 2012; Caminada et al. 2012). That is, poverty rates among children are lower in most other Western industrialized societies, and children living with single parents are less likely to suffer from low family income, in part because family social policies do a better job supporting children. In the United States, as in Europe, most children born to unmarried parents are born to co-residential cohabiting couples. In Norway, for example, 54% of all first births in 1995–2004 were to cohabiting couples; only 5% were born to single (non-cohabiting) mothers (Perelli-Harris et al. 2012). The share of first births to cohabiting couples also exceeds those to single mothers in Austria, Bulgaria, France, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Netherlands, Romania, and the UK. Still, child poverty in Norway and in most other European countries is comparatively low (Gornick and Jäntti 2012), and these couples are much more stable than similar couples in the United

States. In the United States, nearly 60% of children born outside of marriage are born to cohabiting couples (Lichter et al. 2014). But many if not most of these couples have high rates of dissolution. If the parents marry, these children face higher rates of parental divorce than other children who were born to married couples or to their European counterparts. The obvious question is the following: What can America learn from the Europeans?

Other Threats to Children's Economic Wellbeing

Living with single parents is clearly linked to elevated rates of poverty among children, especially minority children, who, as we have argued here, represent America's future as the third demographic transition unfolds over the foreseeable future. The *proximate* demographic processes underlying growing shares of children (including minority children) in at-risk single-parent families are well known: rising nonmarital fertility (as a share of all births), declining marriage rates and increasing cohabitation, and union instability (Cherlin2010; Smock and Greenland 2010). But these proximate demographic processes are also tied indirectly to other *distal* factors that undermine family stability and exacerbate chronic or long-term poverty among today's children. These distal factors also represent possible targets for new policy intervention.

To start the discussion, we will begin with family income and the government safety net, the two institutional pillars of financial support for children. At the risk of some over-simplification, previous studies have shown that fertility rates, including nonmarital fertility rates, are inversely associated with income and education (Raley and Sweeney 2009; Sweeney and Raley 2014), while marriage rates have diverged by socioeconomic status and income (Sweeney 2002). High rates of fertility place upward demographic pressures on child poverty rates (Lichter et al. 2015). The implication is clear: poverty and family formation are self-reinforcing. That is, poverty among poor minority children begets more poverty later, often by exposing growing children to unhealthy school and neighborhood environments and by triggering maladaptive responses in the form of early unintended childbearing and unstable unions. Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprisingly that intergenerational poverty – from parental to filial generation – is connected through disruptive family processes (e.g., out-of-wedlock childbearing and low marriage rates and instability). The problem today is that U.S. wage growth has stagnated, especially for those at the bottom of the income distribution, and that the average family incomes at the 20th and 50th percentiles have dropped farther and farther behind incomes at the top of the distribution. For the minority population, in particular, family change has thwarted upward mobility as class boundaries have become more rigid, while reinforcing income and wealth inequality in America.

Since the mid-1990s overhaul of America's cash assistance welfare program, from AFDC to TANF, the welfare poor have been increasingly replaced by the working poor (Thiede et al. 2015). Indeed, Moffitt (2015) has recently documented

the fact that income support and government assistance have shifted over time from the poorest poor to other low- and middle-income families (e.g., the growth of EITC). He claims that 57% of single-mother families in deep poverty in 1983 received cash support from AFDC, but that this percentage declined to 20% in 2004 under TANF. Over the same period, the receipt of food stamps declined from 73% to 54%. This is a troublesome development at a time when children, especially minority and immigrant children, are increasingly living with single parents and often require a helping hand.

Growing inequality and the rise in child poverty have gone hand-in-hand with other societal shifts that have placed poor children in harm's way. For example, after declining during the decades of the 1990s, spatially-concentrated poverty has increased over the past decade or so (Kneebone et al. 2011; Lichter et al. 2012). The number of high-poverty neighborhoods and the share of poor people living in them increased during the first decade of the new century. The deleterious consequences of living in poor and often racially segregated neighborhoods are potentially large (Ludwig et al. 2012; Sharkey and Faber 2014). Concentrated poverty matters for growing children and youth. Living in poor neighborhoods has been linked to subjective well-being, physical and mental health (e.g., obesity and depression), greater exposure to crime and violence, access to jobs, school outcomes (e.g., test scores and graduation rates), and early and unintended fertility. Poor children living in poor neighborhoods are doubly disadvantaged. Reardon et al. (2015: 85) recently reported that black and Hispanic minorities tend to live in much poorer neighborhoods (as indicated by median incomes of neighborhood), even when they have the same family incomes as their white and Asian counterparts. Their conclusion was the following: "neighborhood median income for poor black and Hispanic households is roughly two-thirds that of equally poor white and Asian households." Stated differently, poor blacks and Hispanics were more likely to live in the poorest neighborhoods.

Funding for local school districts often depends heavily on local property taxes. For poor and minority children attending public schools, the potential long-term effects of concentrated poverty on access to good schools and, hence, on school outcomes are large. Despite *Brown vs. Board of Education*, public schools in the United States remain highly segregated (Logan et al. 2008; Reardon et al. 2012). In their recent review, Reardon and Owens (2014) concluded that declines in black-white school segregation have come to a standstill or, worse, have increased (depending on the segregation measure used). They also suggested that students today have become more segregated by income across schools and districts since 1990. The gap between highly-resourced and poorly-resourced schools apparently has grown. Does this matter? Logan et al. (2014) recently showed that black, Hispanic, and Native American Indian students, on average, attended schools that scored between the 35th and 40th percentile on performance in comparison with other schools in the state. They concluded that "separate means unequal."

The social ecology underlying persistent racial and ethnic inequality in America cannot be underestimated (Massey and Brodmann 2014). Mass incarceration has upended family formation and stability among minority populations, especially

African Americans living in poor neighborhoods. This is a uniquely American phenomenon and a comparatively recent one that has coincided with the explosion of prison construction, beginning in the 1990s, along with strict mandatory sentencing guidelines, three strike rules, and punitive policing practices, such as racial profiling or targeting of minority men (i.e., "driving while black"). Wildeman (2009) recently showed that one in four black children born in 1990 had a parent imprisoned by the time they reached age 14. For black children whose parents were high school dropouts (and presumably heading poor or low-income families), the figure increased to over 50%. The "missing men" in many poor minority neighborhoods have also contributed to neighborhood and community instability, reduced marriage opportunities for the women left behind, added to the rise in out-of-wedlock children and single-parent families, and reduced the job opportunities for men returning to the community with a prison record. The effects on children's academic and psychosocial development have also been revealed in compromised trajectories into adulthood (for reviews, see Wildeman and Muller 2012; and Wakefield and Wildeman 2013). Mass incarceration has slowed or even reversed progress toward racial equality in America, and this has been felt most keenly by minority children, who have seen their own families and communities torn apart by unprecedented rates of imprisonment, even as violent crime has declined across the country over the past decade or so.

The racial and ethnic composition of children in America is changing rapidly – and so are the threats to their personal dreams and lifetime success as they make their way to adulthood and productive adult roles (i.e., partners, parents, employees, and citizens). The threats to children are uniquely American. Whether measured by comparative rates of poverty, access of public assistance, exposure to unstable families, incarcerated parents or family members, and poorly functioning schools or bad neighborhoods, U.S. children fare worse than their counterparts in other Western developed countries. All of these threats come down hardest on minority children.

What to Do?

> A nation that does not stand for its children does not stand for anything and will not stand tall in the 21st century world or before God. (Marian Wright Edelman – *Children's Defense Fund*)

Concerns about current threats to minority children reflect economic worries about America's place in an increasingly competitive global economy. They also reveal the ascendency of moral or religious values about doing more to be inclusive, to redress the problem of the poor. There are few disagreements about the problem, or its growing magnitude. Rather, the debate centers instead on alternative political ideologies or prescriptions in an era of neo-liberalism and anti-government sentiment. Is government the problem or the solution to eradicating poverty, to lifting up minority and immigrant children and preparing them for productive futures? We cannot adjudicate this debate here, even if it was feasible. Instead, we will start with

the assumption that government has a role to play in addressing current inequalities, including confronting the racial divides that have grown intergenerationally as the third demographic transition has picked up speed. We are not the first to state that addressing poverty and inequality starts with the "political will" to do something about the problem. This does not mean "throwing money at the problem," but to identifying evidence-based solutions that reflect our common values. And it means more than just conducting narrowly gauged experiments (e.g., Moving to Opportunity or Healthy Marriage Initiatives) that have little real hope in today's acrimonious political climate of being ratcheted up to the national level or sustained on a grand scale.

From a public policy perspective, we will focus our attention here on immigration policy, the shredding of the family safety net, and housing policies (that affect neighborhood and school segregation). We will make three specific recommendations that work to insure the future of today's children – today's minority children – as they make their way to adulthood. These are (1) finding a pathway to legal status and citizenship for unauthorized children (i.e., the so-called "dreamers") and their parents, (2) developing a multifaceted effort to support – for the sake of children – strong, healthy, and stable families; and (3) creating new tax incentives and school funding formulas that break down neighborhood and school segregation, and that create the conditions for mutual understanding and respect in today's multi-racial, multi-cultural society.

Ethno-racial diversity in America is being driven by new immigration from Latin America and Asia, and by the large second-order effects of high fertility, which heighten diversity at the bottom of the age distribution (Johnson and Lichter 2010; Lichter 2013). Diversity has taken on demographic momentum that will not be reversed in the short-term by restrictive new immigration. Indeed, the large majority of children of immigrants (over 90%) are U.S. citizens by birth, even if their parents are not here legally (i.e., mixed status families). Yet, 1 million unauthorized U.S. immigrants in 2010 were under age 18. Another 4.5 million were born in the United States to parents who were unauthorized (Passel and D'Vera Cohn 2011). Like the children who accompanied their parents here without authorization, these U.S.-born children – American citizens – are "at risk" of compromised futures by virtue of the economic and social challenges faced by their parents. These children and their parents often live in the shadows of society, i.e., in segregated and poor neighborhoods, and the opportunities for economic integration and upward mobility are limited at best (see Donato and Armenta 2011; Zhou 1997).

The so-called "Dream Act" provided immediate relief for potentially 2.1 million children in the United States without authorization, i.e., DACA (Batalova et al.2014). President Obama's executive order to provide additional relief for over 4 million unauthorized parents of children who are lawful permanent residents, i.e., DAPA (National Immigration Law Center 2014) was stalled and later in 2016 not supported by the U.S. Supreme Court. To insure America's future, our recommendation is straightforward: We need to provide a humane pathway to the social and economic integration of today's immigrant children, and moving ahead with immigration reform and fully implementing President Obama's executive orders are but a

first step (i.e. Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals [DACA] and Deferred Action for Parental Accountability [DAPA]). Poverty among racial and ethnic minority children cannot be fully addressed without confronting immigration policy. These programs provide a stepping stone to a comprehensive immigration reform bill that benefits some of America's most vulnerable children.

Throughout this chapter, we have emphasized the role of changing living arrangements among American children, and the link to poverty, inequality, and intergenerational mobility. Cherlin and Seltzer (2014:231–232) have claimed that the growing complexity of American families is "fraying the family safety net that protects vulnerable children." Part of the problem is definitional: there is little agreement about "who is in the family and who is not." And, we would argue here, this seems much more likely to apply to historically disadvantaged minority and immigrant families, where children are disproportionately likely to live with single-parents; with cohabiting couples (where one or both may be biological parents); with extended family members (i.e., "doubling up"); with step-parents, step-siblings, and half-siblings in blended families; with foster or adoptive parents; or with grandparents or other caretakers, who may or may not be relatives. For immigrant children, they may also be part of a much larger transnational kin network, with divided national loyalties and sometimes ambiguous legal statuses. Family law and social policy have lagged the reality of growing family complexity (Cherlin and Seltzer 2014; Huntington 2015), and many children are falling through the safety net.

To help children, we can start with appropriate legal definitions that underlay the provisions of government support and the state and federal laws that provide the guidelines or rules for social welfare provisions. But there is no silver bullet or panacea. Our general recommendation is not new – to support strong and economically stable families. Strong families, however they are defined, are a public good. The Healthy Marriage Initiative, beginning under the Bush administration, was designed to promote marriage as a solution to the problems children face growing up in single-parent, and often poor, families. Estimates suggest that the federal government will have spent roughly $800 million to support a range of education and responsible fatherhood programs designed to encourage couples to marry – if that is their desire – or to have better relationships – for the sake of children. Despite large infusions of time and money, the results of this social experiment have been modest, and the retreat from marriage over the past decade or so has continued unabated. Our own work suggests another possible pathway: Support public and private efforts to reduce out-of-wedlock childbearing. Nonmarital childbearing reduces the likelihood of marrying, staying married, or marrying well, i.e., to a spouse making a living income (Lichter et al. 2003; Qian et al. 2005). Children – over 40% of whom today are born outside marriage – pay a huge price from their parents' behaviors. Lacking evidence of recent declines in poverty rates among female-headed families with children (due, for instance, to male-female wage gaps and lack of child support), then efforts to reduce out-of-wedlock childbearing is a key to insuring the future of American children. And this means directly addressing the question of

broader access to reproductive health services at a time when many state legislatures are working to limit access to contraceptive and abortion services (Gold and Nash 2012).

Finally, government cannot be indifferent to where minorities and poor people live. After all, some scholars have outlined the large role that government – at all levels – has played, albeit often indirectly or unwittingly, in segregating America's racial and ethnic minorities from the mainstream, e.g., home mortgage programs, zoning ordinances, and annexation laws. Spatial integration is often viewed as a necessary condition for social and economic integration (Alba et al.2014). Spatial access to good schools, jobs that pay a living wage, and mainstream culture, e.g., the arts, museums, or institutions of higher learning, will all go a long way toward eliminating economic despair, widespread alienation from society, and the formation of a so-called "oppositional culture." As we have argued here in this chapter, for children living in racially segregated, poor, and neighborhoods prone to violence with poorly-funded schools, the current situation is hardly a recipe for insuring the economic future of today's minority children. If we are guided by traditional American values of inclusion and equal opportunity for all, then we can and must do better as a society.

In the social sciences, an emergent literature now emphasizes the growth of mixed-income housing development, which contrasts vividly with the days when poor people – disproportionately minority – were warehoused in high-rise public housing complexes, often set off from stable middle or working class communities and neighborhoods. Presumably the availability of mixed-income housing will help reduce minority segregation in impoverished and declining neighborhoods, i.e., to disperse concentrated poverty and provide greater access to middle-class social networks and to better schools (Brophy and Smith 1997). Mixed-income developments usually provide various housing options, including apartments and single-family homes that accommodate families of all income levels. The goals are to "to provide social diversity, help low-income people get access to higher-quality goods and services, and achieve social and economic integration" (Tach et al. 2014). Whether they are actually successful in promoting spatial inclusion and reducing segregation, while fostering positive interactions among neighbors, is far from clear (Bridge et al. 2012; Chaskin 2013; Tach 2009). President Obama has made a bid to increase diversity in wealthy neighborhoods by implementing new regulations on how monies are dispersed to municipalities. The new regulations would use HUD grant monies to incentivize communities, including affluent communities, to provide more affordable housing for low- and middle-income populations, which are disproportionately minority (Devaney 2015). Unless we can find a way to reduce segregation and concentrated poverty through fair housing legislation and school funding formulas, our racially-segregated public schools will continue to reproduce poverty and racial inequality from generation to generation. Reducing segregation by promoting mixed-income housing may be one way to break the cycle (Sharkey 2013).

Discussion and Conclusion

How can the United States contribute to the material success of today's children who are often starting life's race well behind the starting line, poor and economically disadvantaged? This question has become more important than ever as America and other developed countries move from the second to the third demographic transition as a result of unprecedented transnational migration, high immigrant fertility, and below-replacement fertility and depopulation among the native born (Coleman 2006; Lichter 2013). The title of Robert Putnam's (2015) book – *Our Kids: The American Dream in Crisis* – speaks volumes about the deteriorating circumstances of American children in an era of growing income inequality and dysfunction in our political system. Going forward, America will be challenged as never before to become racially more inclusive as the racial and ethnic composition changes – from the bottom up – and to reduce or remove the legacy of slavery, conquest, and racism.

In this chapter, we have placed the spotlight squarely on demographic and economic change among America's historically disadvantaged minority children, who disproportionately face the challenges of economic globalization and unprecedented family change first hand. U.S. fertility rates today are at record low levels among the native-born white population (the TFR is under 1.8). As America moves toward a minority-majority society, as early as 2043, it will be important to find appropriate and effective government and market solutions that work to reduce child poverty and racial inequality. Here we have emphasized children's changing living arrangements which reflect and reinforce poverty and racial inequality. But distal factors also matter and challenge us to do better as a society.

As we have argued in this chapter, minority and immigrant children are threatened by a fraying safety net, mass incarceration, racial segregation and concentrated poverty, poorly-funded public schools, and a polarized political system that makes solving our most pressing domestic problems difficult if not impossible. Without real immigration reform, for example, the children of immigrants – whether they are born in the United States or elsewhere – face an uncertain future. It is not at all likely that they will catch up with their native-born peers of native-born parents. This is why we included immigration reform and provided a pathway to legal status as an important goal, along with rethinking family social policy (e.g., Healthy Marriage Initiative) by placing the emphasis instead on reducing the out-of-wedlock birth rate. And, last but not least, we have argued that racial and economic segregation represents a persistent barrier to positive development among children. With growing diversity, we need to rethink government housing policies so as to insure today's children's access to safe neighborhoods, critical institutional resources, and positive social networks that can insure children's long-term success.

The United States is the single largest destination for new immigrants, with a foreign-born population of roughly 40 million in 2010. America has added about 1 million new legal permanent immigrants to the U.S. population every year since the late 1990s. No other rich country comes close to these numbers. The experience of massive immigration and unprecedented racial and ethnic diversity in the United

States provide some important lessons for Europe and East Asia. At a time of growing opposition to immigration in many European countries, one lesson from America is that diversity and immigration are important sources of long-term population and economic growth, industrial innovation, and creativity. How can European countries today absorb minorities and immigrants without losing their national identities or fracturing the existing social and political order? This is the question virtually all rich nations face as they grapple with lowest-low fertility and international labor mobility.

Shrinking the social safety net or restricting immigration may reduce immigration or discourage immigrants from staying. This has been a route increasingly taken in the United States (e.g., since the overhaul of welfare in 1996 placed limitations on helping immigrants). Indeed, for rich countries everywhere, taxes and transfers have had the effect of reducing child poverty, but have contributed to only small reductions in the United States compared with Nordic and Western European countries (Gornick and Jäntti 2012). The differences are due less to country-to-country differences in demography (i.e., race and family structure) than to institutional factors, including labor market structure and policy instruments (Smeeding and Rainwater 2003). In an age of neoliberalism, it is unclear whether rich countries will keep their borders open or continue to provide the same level of family social support that they have in the past, especially for new arrivals.

Finally, we have emphasized here an inexorable process of racial and ethnic change that will transform the United States over the foreseeable future. We have placed the spotlight on children because they are in the vanguard as the third demographic transition unfolds in the United States and around the globe. In a period of below-replacement native (white) fertility, policy efforts to encourage more childbearing have been mostly unsuccessful. Immigrants and minorities will fill the labor vacuum for the foreseeable future. It is hard to identify or imagine a demographic scenario that suggests otherwise. As a society, we need to act, and to act now.

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