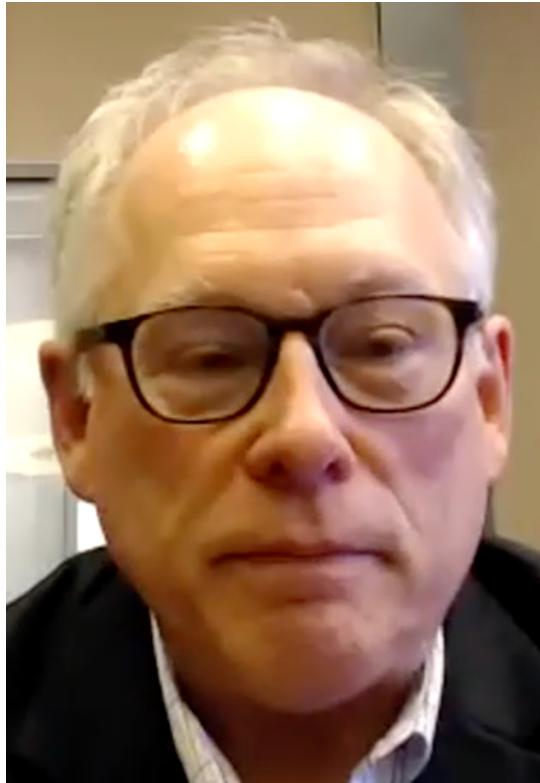


# **DEMOGRAPHIC DESTINIES**

## **Interviews with Presidents of the Population Association of America**

### **Interview with Daniel Lichter PAA President in 2012**



This series of interviews with Past PAA Presidents was initiated by Anders Lunde  
(PAA Historian, 1973 to 1982)

And continued by Jean van der Tak (PAA Historian, 1982 to 1994)

And then by John R. Weeks (PAA Historian, 1994 to present)

With the collaboration of the following members of the PAA History Committee:  
David Heer (2004 to 2007), Paul Demeny (2004 to 2012), Dennis Hodgson (2004 to  
present), Deborah McFarlane (2004 to 2018), Karen Hardee (2010 to present), Emily  
Merchant (2016 to present), and Win Brown (2018 to present)

## DANIEL LICHTER

PAA President in 2012 (No. 75). On April 14th, 2023, we were able to have a hybrid in-person/Zoom interview with Dr. Lichter during the PAA Annual Meetings in New Orleans. The members of the PAA History Committee participating in the interview included John Weeks, Dennis Hodgson, Karen Hardee, Emily Merchant and Win Brown.

**CAREER HIGHLIGHTS:** Daniel Lichter was born in 1953 near Camp Pendleton in San Diego County, California, where his parents were living as a consequence of the Korean War. He grew up in South Dakota, and in 1975 received his Bachelor's degree in Sociology (with High Honor) from South Dakota State University. He went on to receive an M.S. in Sociology from Iowa State University in 1977, and his Ph.D. in Sociology from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, in 1981. That same year he took a position as Assistant Professor of Sociology at Pennsylvania State University, where he was also a Research Associate of the Population Research Center. He was promoted to Associate Professor in 1987 and to Professor in 1992. From 1995 to 1999 he served as Director of Penn State's Population Research Institute and then took a year off to be Visiting Scholar at the Russell Sage Foundation from 1999-2000. In 2000 he became the Robert F. Lazarus Professor in Population Studies at Ohio State University and from 2000 to 2005 was the Director of the Initiative in Population Research there at Ohio State. Since 2005 he has been at Cornell University as the Ferris Family Professor of Life Course Studies and Professor of Sociology. From 2005 to 2010 he was Director of the Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center, from 2011 to 2015 he directed the Cornell Population Center, and from 2015 to 2019 he directed Cornell's Institute for the Social Sciences. He is currently the Ferris Family Professor of Life Course Research, Emeritus, in the Cornell Brooks School of Public Policy.

### OUR INTERVIEW WITH DR. LICHTER:

John Weeks: Okay. We are here today to interview Professor Daniel Lichter, who is currently the Ferris Family Professor of Life Course Research at Cornell University. He has been very, very active in demography over his career, and was PAA president in 2012, at which time you were, Professor Lichter, the 75<sup>th</sup> PAA president. I'd like to start the course with some personal demographics, if you don't mind. I have in my spreadsheet of past PAA presidents that you were born in 1953. Is that correct, or am I wrong about that?

Daniel Lichter: That's right, 1953.

John Weeks: Okay.

Daniel Lichter: In California.

John Weeks: Oh, you were born in California?

Daniel Lichter: Well, my dad was a South Dakota farm kid, and so was my mother. And he went into the Marines during the Korean Conflict, and I was born at Camp Pendleton, I think, or just outside (in Corona).

John Weeks: Right, okay. So –

Daniel Lichter: But then they returned to South Dakota and so most of my life, as a child, I grew up in South Dakota. In Mitchell.

John Weeks: In Mitchell? Okay. So do you know Wentworth, South Dakota?

Daniel Lichter: Wentworth?

John Weeks: Or Madison? Are you familiar with Madison?

Daniel Lichter: Yeah, I know Madison. That's not too far from Mitchell.

John Weeks: Okay, good. Because in fact, my mother-in-law was born and raised in Wentworth, near Madison. One of 12 children to Danish immigrants.

Daniel Lichter: So, I'm one of 11 children to German Catholics – but I go back to maybe the 1860s, 1870s.

John Weeks: Okay. Okay. Very good.

Daniel Lichter: So, 11 kids.

John Weeks: Yeah.

Daniel Lichter: I have seven younger brothers.

John Weeks: Oh, wow. Okay.

Win Brown: But you weren't Hutterite, I understand.

Daniel Lichter: No, no. Not Hutterite, but I might as well have been in terms of natural fertility. They're devout Catholics.

John Weeks: You said that you actually grew up on the farm there in South Dakota?

Daniel Lichter: No, no. My dad and mom were. My dad was trained when he was in the Marines as an electrician, and he came back to South Dakota and was in public utilities—a public utility company--electrical company. So, he was a working-class guy. High school education. And he worked for the same company for 40 years, 50 years--whatever it is.

John Weeks: Oh, wow. Okay.

Daniel Lichter: So, we were not the monied class, by any means.

John Weeks: Well, no. But still, you've got deep roots in terms of what the changing demographics of the country have been over time, and you've done a lot of work there.

Daniel Lichter: I agree. I agree with that. Fertility, with that one, pretty good. Migration, I hit that

one. And mortality, that's going to come in a couple of years, maybe.

John Weeks: So now, how many of your siblings are still alive? Are they all still alive?

Daniel Lichter: They're all alive.

John Weeks: Okay.

Daniel Lichter: My dad passed away early in 2017. My mother's 91. She still lives in Mitchell, South Dakota.

John Weeks: Okay, very good. So now that explains why you would go to the other SDSU, as we call it here in San Diego--South Dakota State University.

Daniel Lichter: You know, I have to look every time when I see those in the paper because I never know whether it's South Dakota State or whether it's San Diego State.

John Weeks: I know. Well –

Daniel Lichter: So I have to check.

John Weeks: Yeah. The South Dakota State Jackrabbits, is that right?

Daniel Lichter: Jackrabbits, yep.

John Weeks: Jackrabbits, versus the Aztecs, yeah. There's at least a difference in how the teams look on that score.

Daniel Lichter: Yeah, no.

John Weeks: Right. Okay. So tell us a bit. Go through your childhood up to going to college and so forth. And give us a bit of that history just so that everybody who's reading this interview has some sense of where you come from. Because those are the things that we really like to know about. Especially in the beginning, because people can read your publications and know the great work that you've done--the great insight that you have. And we'd like to know how that all came about.

Daniel Lichter: Well, I grew up – I think my father and mother, when they came back from California, they started out in some really small towns in South Dakota. My dad was working I think, in a town about 40 miles away from Mitchell. But then when I was maybe four or five, they moved to Mitchell and I spent my entire childhood there. I was always enrolled in Catholic schools until my Catholic high school closed when I was a junior, which is probably the best thing that ever happened to me, because I got exposed to a whole different group of people, as a senior. My parents are devout Catholics, you know. I had one older sister. I think when she was eight, we already had seven kids in the family.

And so, I think what is sort of different during that period from what I think probably our kids' experiences are, is we didn't get a lot of individual attention.

We were on our own a lot. We were pretty resilient. I think we took care of ourselves and took care of each other. Because it was sort of a traditional family until we got into high school, we did a lot of babysitting, did a lot of chores. Worked hard. Saved our money. I think by the time I went to college, I think I had \$4,500 in the bank. You know, working jobs, for \$1.10 an hour, which I think I was getting. And, of course, my parents didn't have money for college, but I think in the end I borrowed \$600 going to four years of college.

Of course, those days are no longer possible, and why I always think we need to rethink how all these state universities have pulled back their financial support. You know, if you want to go to college, you need to pay for college, is sort of the neoliberal kind of thinking. And I'm happy whenever we try to do more for those kids, because I think we're wasting a lot of human potential. As a sociologist, the best thing I have going for me is my sort of rural, working-class background. And I think we're hungrier. I think we have a different perspective on things that's unusual. And I see that today when I am at Cornell, as opposed to some other – I've been in public universities, too – there's not the sense of entitlement, that sort of thing.

I went to South Dakota State University. Didn't have any major in mind, particularly. Never even thought about moving to a college outside of South Dakota. I went to some place that I could afford. And took some sociology classes. Some really boring sociologists, at the time. But I loved the reading. I loved the perspective. I was really interested in family and class, and poverty. That sort of thing.

I majored in sociology. My parents and friends weren't particularly happy about that. They didn't understand what that meant. But I thought I'd be a better person. I didn't have job considerations in mind at all. But I did well and then I went to Iowa State University for graduate school, which was a big deal for anybody in the family to leave the state. I remember having gigantic – I have something like 70 cousins. 70 first cousins, something like that. And many of my relatives in the area converged after I graduated from college. Because I was going off to the big time, to Iowa State, which was about 5 hours away. You know, in another small town.

And I went there for two years. Got my master's degree and then I decided I was going to go to Wisconsin. I wanted to work on some other issues I was interested in. So I went there. Was there for four years. And that's where I really became a demographer, in the sense that when I got there, I began working for Glenn Fuguitt, who was a rural sociologist. He was past president of Rural Sociological Society and he did a lot of demographic work on rural America and small-town America. Growth and decline, migration, that sort of thing. And what kind of places – the dying rural village, that sort of thing.

I was interested in community sociology and everybody said, "Well, you're going to be a demographer if you're going to work for Glenn." And I ended up appreciating demography because there were clear rules about how you measured things like fertility, mortality, or migration. It wasn't BS or a lot of verbiage. It

was sort of the facts and I was interested in family and fertility. I was interested in rural communities. And so that was my segue into the field. And so I've always had an interest, if you look at my resume, in rural issues, and that comes from my background.

And I've always had an interest in family. And that probably comes from my background. You know, this is what they call, "me-search." People study the things that they live themselves. But you know, I've also done a lot of work over time on racial issues and things like that. Native American Indians lived in my hometown, coming off the reservation not too far from us. Maybe 30 miles. So I was always sensitive to these kind of issues.

I still remember going to college and I think I maybe met my first African-American fellow student. Maybe that was the first time, and it was sort of shocking, just because I had never had any experience with that. The thing about Mitchell is, it's the home of the world's only Corn Palace. I don't know if you've heard of the Corn Palace, but it's a big monument to corn, I guess. It's a big palace with corn murals and they have a big fall community celebration. They've done this for 150 years. They had John Phillips Sousa in there, Lawrence Welk. You know, as sort of a celebration to the harvest, fall harvest.

So there was this sort of cosmopolitan part to that rural environment too, because there were always families coming through from Chicago on their way to Yellowstone or wherever. And so, we saw a lot of diversity in that way. It's also home to Dakota Wesleyan University, which at the time was a very small school, maybe 800 kids. But they always had a good basketball program and they always brought in African-American kids from Chicago or elsewhere. And I used to deliver newspapers in the dorm, so there were always Black young adults there, too. These differences were interesting to me. So I always argue that I'm sort of a rural cosmopolitan. I never really – people think we're sort of rural roots, but in some sense, the rural people, they're exposed to urban culture. Urban people aren't exposed to rural culture very much.

But I always wanted to go to urban areas. One of the big events of my childhood is when my brothers and I wanted to go see the Minnesota Twins in Minneapolis. And I remember driving with my dad up there to see the ball game. This was back in the '60s, I think when I was 10 or 12. I never thought much about it, but each of us kids, we paid for our own food, we paid for our hotel. We paid for the ticket to the ball park and we were on our own, pretty much. So we learned how to save money. We were never going overboard. You know, our parents started savings accounts and stuff for us right away when we were young. So, it's sort of the German thing. They also rarely said anything nice about us. The parents would never say give you a compliment or anything because they didn't want us all to get a big head.

Now, they did that with maybe the four or five oldest kids, but they never did that with the younger kids. My parents realized they probably messed up. You know, we're all a bit neurotic. The younger ones are maybe better balanced. Of course, they had more money than I did. I lived as well when I was 21 as I had ever lived

in my life, probably. I had more money than I ever had when I was a kid, probably. With all these TAs now and RAs in college, they all get wound up because they're not getting paid enough, and they're not. But you know, hey. That was a good living for me, you know, when I had my own TA or RA at Iowa State or then at Wisconsin.

Then I went on to Penn State as an assistant professor in Sociology. I was there for 17 years. You know, went through the ranks, became Center Director of the Pop Center there. Went through one NICHD renewal.

I had a divorce in the early 1990s, and I had full legal and physical custody of my two children. They were 10 and 14 and they lived with me full-time. And I learned how to be a mama, so to speak. I understood the emotional labor involved with being a single mother, and without really any support of other single men because they didn't tend to have their kids. And so I learned a lot in terms of being a parent, a single parent.

I remarried after my two kids left for college. Those two kids went to college and I married Sharon Sassler, who's also a demographer (at Hunter College). And we then moved together. We got positions at Ohio State in 1999. I was never going to leave Ohio State but then – I said I'd only move from Ohio State if I had some position in a policy program. I'd always had an applied interest. They've always had a big rural sociology program, or did at the time. And are quantitatively oriented and concerned about poverty and equality and things at Cornell. And they came through with offers for both of us.

I was a founding director of the Pop Center at Ohio State, and then I also was involved in running the Pop Center at Cornell, too. I started with the Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center, of which I was director. The Bronfenbrenner Life Course Center was a one-man shop. And so I talked to the dean and folded it into a new population center. We got NIH grant support for that, but we didn't keep it. We needed more external NIH grants. But that was one of the challenging things as a faculty that's not particularly skilled at attracting external grant money.

So that became my charge – trying to figure out how we could develop the staff and expertise to help faculty there but also how do we get the faculty motivated to do large scale research. And that's almost a cultural problem, or a cultural issue. So, I probably already rambled on long enough about this. So that's where I am. And I just retired a couple years ago.

I was also Director of the university's Institute for the Social Sciences, which is the umbrella of social sciences on campus. These were the same sort of charges I had. We were trying to figure out how to move the faculty away from what I called boutique sociology. You know, just doing individual-led studies and how do we bring big social science to the campus? Build interdisciplinary teams of researchers. So, I've always liked economists. I've always liked population geographers, too. I like the spatial dimensions of social problems. When I was at both Penn State and Ohio State, I really pushed these spatial analysis cores with GIS and that sort of thing. Ohio State and Penn State both have really good

geography programs, and Cornell has its planning program, but they've lost most of their geographers.

I think population geography's coming back a little bit on the population sciences with new software and technology. I was at Cornell for about 16 years, I guess. And then I retired at the end of 2020. With the COVID, I decided it was time for me to move on. The university was restructuring the social sciences and also moving the Department of Policy Analysis and Management into the new Cornell Brooks School of Public Policy. I just thought now's the time to pass the torch. But I'm not really retired. I'm still doing my research and having fun. But I'm following the John Weeks model.

John Weeks: Let just say Dan, by the way, I'm going to let the others ask the questions because my 10-year old German Shepherd here thinks that he should be part of the conversation, but his English isn't always as good as we might like. And before I let others ask questions, I should just say, we were mentioning my mother-in-law who grew up in South Dakota. She actually, I think in 1939, was the Corn Husking Queen in Mitchell.

Daniel Lichter: Oh, really? Wow. Wow. Impressive.

John Weeks: We actually have a photo, a page from the newspaper with her in it. So we do know all about that, at least in our household.

Daniel Lichter: Great.

John Weeks: And by the way, I don't know if we mentioned this earlier but I call the members of the History Committee my Cornell Mafia, because Karen Hardee, Dennis Hodgson, and Win Brown all three have their doctorates from Cornell. So, they may well have some specific questions about what's going on back there right now.

Daniel Lichter: Oh.

Karen Hardee: Actually, John can I ask a question about that? Can you talk a little bit about what the two different centers did?

Daniel Lichter: I don't know if you guys heard – did you guys hear the question?

Dennis Hodgson: A little bit.

Daniel Lichter: Yeah. The main program for a long time there was headed up by Stycos [*J. Mayone Stycos*], who ran the Population and Development Program, which still exists.

Dennis Hodgson: That was my program.

Daniel Lichter: You were in that?



Karen Hardee: I think we're all graduates. Are we all graduates of Stycos?

Daniel Lichter: Yeah. You know, I don't know that I ever met Stycos. Stycos had already retired, I think. Maybe had even passed away before I got there in 2005 [*Editor's note: he passed away in 2016, but had retired in 2000*]. So, they've always had that program there and they get a lot of students with international interests and so on. So when I came in as the Pop Center Director, my goal was to sort of break down some of these institutional boundaries. I mean, sociology was a bit antagonistic toward demographers in general. I remember Charlie Hirschman [PAA President in 2005] and others, they left the sociology department because it was so difficult. You know, demography wasn't the most popular discipline. It was too applied, in many people's minds.

But my goal was always to bring all these dispersed units together and most sociologists at Cornell are outside of the sociology department. So, I was always interested in bringing these other people into the fold, so to speak. And I actually thought I was pretty successful doing that, because I had a lot of people from – I mean, most of the rural sociologists, rural demographers, were involved in our center. In fact, I think my original associate director [Parfait Eloundou-Enyegue] was from what's now Development Sociology and it's moved on to global, I think. Global Studies or something, which came after I left.

So, this group of faculty have always been an important part of the university population program. I've been involved with many different students over the years. But I also wanted to build bridges to economics and other parts of the university--the planning program and so on. And also, I was jointly appointed. I had a no-cost joint appointment in the sociology department. After I was there a year or two, they wanted me to come in to sort of help them a bit. So I was on recruitment committees and so on. And if you look even at the mainstream sociology department, we've hired a lot of demographically-oriented sociologists.

At the same time, the disciplinary boundaries of sociology have become more expansive and permeable, I guess you'd say. The Dean would always say, "Is everything demographic?" and I would say, "Yes." Which wasn't very satisfying, but we also had a really strong group at the time when I was at Penn State and then also at Ohio State. And this is less true at Cornell, but I've always tried to get the biologically-oriented people, the bio-demography and physical anthropologists and stuff.

I remember one of my happiest days was when one of the graduate students in anthropology read a paper in *American Antiquity* or whatever and was looking at the life-table estimates of some prehistoric populations and saying, "These just don't look right." And then we sat down together and realized that they were calculating life tables, but they had abridged life tables and they were multiplying every five year age group by one. So they had a little bit of an underestimate of – anyway, so I always enjoyed those kids a lot. I've always tried to be interdisciplinary, eclectic.

And I spent a lot of time trying to understand the various disciplines. I just love

the culture of – I shouldn't say "love"--I love being interested in the culture of economics, because economics is such a different kind of field from sociology. I mean, there's just so much more of a hierarchy. There's a way to do everything. There's a certain set of topics that are important to study and others that are not so important to study. And you guys may not agree with me on everything. And then sociologists, we're all over the place.

You know, I've had colleagues in my department at Cornell who'd tell the students that they have to: "Go read a little bit of sociology, get some ideas and then do the analysis right." Because they're always trying to solve the endogeneity problem and as sociologists, what's the endogeneity problem? Nobody has any choice and the economists, it's all about choice, you know? So, it's just two different worlds. I always appreciate whenever I'd interview sociologists at Cornell, or in policy in particular, I would always argue that you're going to be a better sociologist hanging out with these economists. The secret is just don't get assimilated by them. You know, still maintain your structural perspective.

With my presidential address on racial integration, economists weren't happy because race is not a variable in their mind. Why would we care about a variable that's fixed? And that's not the point. The point is that people's reaction to race is a variable. And how do we change society in a way that's more inclusive? So I had my old economist friends from Penn State, they were unhappy with my perspective. I remember talking to many of them and I said, "What would you do? I mean, we've got issues of race and structural racism or we're all 'woke' now. What would you do?" And economists almost always said, "I wouldn't do anything," and "The market will take care of this." That was sort of their attitude. I have a good relationship with economists, generally. But I tweak them, too. I tweak them a little bit. And that was a particular case after my PAA address.

Dennis Hodgson: I've got one question for you. Particularly in the context of your background.

Daniel Lichter: Yeah.

Dennis Hodgson: I can see how growing up in South Dakota, a rural place, it's so reflective in what you've done. In terms of research, it's there. The curiosity I have is that, if you think about the discipline, particularly at the time you're going to graduate studies, you're getting your Ph.D. in '81. I got my Ph.D. in '76. And I was with the Stycos program, which was in sociology, at that time. And it was all, "We've gotta do something about the population explosion in the developing world."

Daniel Lichter: Right.

Dennis Hodgson: It was huge and when I look at your work, there's nothing like that in it. And I'm curious. I remember when I read Matthew Connelly's book, *Fatal Misconception*.

Daniel Lichter: Yeah.

Dennis Hodgson: He's in the story and then he dedicates it to his parents for having eight kids. And he says right up there in the front, in the introduction, he says, "No way I believe

there was a population problem.” And I’m curious about, being one of 11, in an environment, in a discipline at the time, you were going to particularly, I guess at Wisconsin, there was this sort of emphasis on high fertility in developing countries and the problematic nature of high fertility. Whether or not your sort of personal upbringing might have moved you away from an interest in what was, at that point in time, a huge component of demography.

Daniel Lichter:

You know, that’s a good question. I don’t have a real good answer to that because I was never really exposed that much either as a high school student or a – you know, we had other fish to fry. I lived about two blocks across the highway from George McGovern [1972 Democratic candidate for President] when I was a kid. And I turned 18 when he was elected and met him out at the airport when he flew into Mitchell Municipal Airport. And I canvassed for the guy and everything. But I don’t know why that wasn’t really on my mental map very much. It just wasn’t.

My parents were not well educated. We didn’t have books around the house. They didn’t talk about anything. My dad worked all the time. My mother worked with kids all the time, pretty much. The kids all went out and “raised hell.” I wasn’t a particularly good student. I was probably street smart but I wasn’t very academic. I didn’t get serious about academics really, until I got into college and I was spending my own money.

So I don’t know much at the time about the population bomb – I always covered that stuff later in my classes. I always teach that historical – you know, the Ehrlich— stuff. I showed films and followed the debates [Ehrlich and Simon], the latest bet and that sort of thing.

But that was never part of my mental map. It was more about poor, rural people sort of left behind. And it was always domestic. I didn’t really get into international issues until I took my first sabbatical about 10, 12 years ago. I went and spent a year in the Netherlands and I should have done that when I was younger. But it’s kind of funny when you grow up as I did, sort of working-class parents, not very well educated. Not terribly sophisticated. Very religious.

My dad would say, “Having more education makes it harder to get to heaven” – or if I would tell them about some statistical study of mine about the relationship between “x” and “y” and he would say, “Where’s God fit into this, Dan? Where does God fit in?” It’s sort of the idea that God’s micromanaging everyday life. God’s going to take care of the population growth and so on. I don’t know, it was never part of the way I thought. And even at Wisconsin, when I went up there as a grad student, the program was always criticized because it didn’t have much of an international program.

Yeah. And that’s a fair criticism. And not many economists either worry about development issues very much, either. I don’t have a good explanation, other than it was just not part of my formative experience. I didn’t really get probably really interested in that until the economists were saying there’s no problem. We’ll solve this. Who was the fellow, Julian Simon? I read his book. I talk about that in my class and Julian Simon’s son [Daniel Simon] was actually at Cornell too, when I

was there. When I first started there. They didn't realize their dad was such a controversial figure to demographers back then.

Emily Merchant: I have a follow up question on that.

Daniel Lichter: Okay.

Emily Merchant: So when I saw your CV and I saw that you had done your Ph.D. at Wisconsin, I thought, "Of course--Dan Lichter went to Wisconsin." Because in comparison to Michigan or Chicago or Cornell, at that time, Wisconsin was much more focused on domestic issues, on issues of socio-economic inequality.

So in my mind, seeing what you work on, it made perfect sense to me that you had gone to Wisconsin because that department, that Pop Center, didn't have the same emphasis on overseas population control that a lot of others did. And so I'm wondering if you went to Wisconsin because it was a good place to focus on the issues that you wanted to focus on or if going to Wisconsin helped push you towards studying poverty and inequality.

Daniel Lichter: You know, my attraction to Wisconsin, I think, was it was reasonably close to South Dakota and my family. I could still get there in a day's drive. I think that was one part of it. But I was looking for departments that were more technical. And Wisconsin at the time was – they were at the leading edge and you had all these guys that were doing just phenomenal demographic work and sociological work. Social science work. They were quantitative, statistical, in ways that most other departments weren't. Including the Iowa State where I was. Iowa State had a big international development group there.

The ag economists there were all very much involved in international development. But I think it was the technical side, and it was highly ranked. They also had – remember, this is a period when you had Jim Sweet and Larry Bumpass [PAA President in 1990] and all these guys were doing so many interesting things. They directed the National Survey of Families and Households (NSFH), which was designed and carried out at the Center for Demography and Ecology. They included lots of event history data. So we were all jumping on board with the survival models and log-linear models were all the rage. We had people in the stat department there that had a very applied interest. I wanted to do work that – I always say to people, "I want to do work that my mother understood." That I could explain to her rather than some esoteric thing that few people care about.

And I always told my Cornell Colleagues that – I'd get them upset sometimes, but they knew I was just tweaking them – they were doing "boutique sociology" and I wanted to do work that mattered. And that to me was more applied work that – and demography to me, when I got exposed to it, took some classes, was exposed to Jim Sweet and Larry Bumpass and Marta Tienda [PAA President in 2002], when she was there, and Bob Hauser was there, and David Featherman. You know, all these guys doing quantitative work that always had a demographic orientation. And they came to the population meetings.

I think my first population meetings must have been about 1978, maybe. We drove all the way from Madison, me and three other graduate students, to Atlanta, I think. And that was just an eye-opening experience for me to watch serious people talk about serious topics and be credible. It wasn't BS and wasn't a lot of baloney and it made sense because of the mathematics of it. I was always good at mathematics. I loved to take a rate and sort of break it into pieces and try to understand why something's changing. And so, here were professionals that I just admired--just the way they attack the problem.

That's why I like economists – I don't always agree with economists, but the good thing about economists, I love the way they break a problem down. Even if I don't always agree with their perspective and how they interpret data, I just appreciate how they think about possible analyses and that sort of thing. And I share my views with my students. I'm always trying to get them to think more eclectically about the social sciences. Not being wedded too much to their own disciplines. Did I answer your question?

Emily Merchant: Yeah, thank you.

Dennis Hodgson: I've got a question for you. In a context of when you began, you were sort of missing all that highly-political component that was in the discipline of demography, at the time, in terms of high fertility and all that kind of stuff. But I think where you've ended up, right now, is that what you do is the hottest political topic possible. Now I go back and I take a look at –

Daniel Lichter: In which topic? Which topic? Are you talking about, what, rural stuff? Or the –?

Dennis Hodgson: No, I'm talking about your presidential PAA address. If I remember correctly, it was "Integration or Fragmentation? Racial Diversity and the American Future."

Daniel Lichter: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah. I'm very interested in that.

Dennis Hodgson: It was wonderful. I just re-read it for the interview today. And to some extent, it's so topical, particularly your presentation about the future. I mean, you focus on the child cohort, and it's already majority-minority, and you say in the future, it's just going to get more and more majority-minority. And look at what we're doing to these kids. They're impoverished, they have lousy housing, lousy education, lousy healthcare. And there was really a policy component. We've got to do something for those kids, because they're America's future.

Daniel Lichter: Exactly. That was my message. That's been my message. And I still believe that.

Dennis Hodgson: But same today. Same thing. Exactly. Now, if you think about how political it has become, all of the sudden, in the context of U.S. politics, that's it. You try to give help to kids and what happens? We had a wonderful pandemic program that lasted one year. And it reduced job poverty tremendously. And then we have absolutely no one pushing for it.

Daniel Lichter: Yeah.

Dennis Hodgson: And it's basically hitting at your point. To some extent, it seems obvious that unless we do something major, this is going to be a terrible thing for the country. To let this generation –

Daniel Lichter: I agree. I agree 100 percent. I mean, if we don't invest in kids today, we're in big trouble. And this is going to come on us way, way faster than we even can imagine. I mean, the baby boom was – you know, I was born during the baby boom. We're not going to be around too much longer. So what's going to happen? Well, we better make some space for this very diverse population, or we're in big trouble, I think. I don't know what the alternatives to doing that are. I just think we have to do that.

Just to do a little politics here. I just don't understand why Republicans don't want to become a little more inclusive. They could get the Hispanic vote. They could get the Asian vote. I don't think they'd ever get the Black vote, but seems like they could get these populations – it's not like anything's going to change. I wrote a paper for *Population and Development Review* with Ken Johnson, maybe 10, 12 years ago. And we were looking at not just – you know, we could cut off the borders right now and eliminate every immigrant, but it's built into the system with high fertility.

We got this big second order effect of fertility with younger immigrants who are having kids. It's just not going to change. And it may slow, but it's not going to reverse to “good ole” America in 1950 or anything, you know? It's just not. I'm always an advocate for kids. And probably the most receptive audience I ever had when I've talked about this maybe, was when I gave a university lecture at BYU, which is very family oriented. And I came in for a university lecture and they were very, very receptive. Because they believe in supporting kids, even if they may be conservative on other dimensions. That was a good experience for me.

And I've always sort of been a friend of BYU over the years, doing various things. They're very activist. We went to a food bank and of course they proselytize immigrants and that sort of thing but I think they care about people in their own way, you know?

Dennis Hodgson: So are you optimistic that we're going to get this rich, white, baby boom generation to funnel the resources that are needed to have a successful socialization of that growing, young population?

Daniel Lichter: Well, I was worried. You know, everybody thinks we're going to keep going on in a positive, more inclusive way and my PAA address was really a cautionary lesson to that based on what I saw first-hand when I'd go back to South Dakota. So, I don't know, with the Trump era and everything, it's just hard to know what's going to happen here. I worry a little bit about being like Brazil, I guess. I don't know enough about Brazil to say, but it's sort of a white minority that runs the show, basically.

So I worry that we're sort of re-institutionalizing racism that in a way, that's going

to strengthen the hold of the white elite, or the white middle-class and upper middle-class, and wealthy people to run the country as they always have. That's what I worry about. Especially when you get into voter suppression and gerrymandering. There are things that could be done. The Supreme Court now, we're in turmoil on that. I can't say that I'm optimistic, but I'm not pessimistic either.

I gave a talk in Cornell's planning department a few years ago. I gave a lecture on that and somebody asked me the same thing and I said, "Well, old people are going to die, that's what's going to save us." Cohort replacement. And there's some truth to that. There's some truth to that, in certain circles. I was just in Mississippi—at Mississippi State University. Right in the middle of the campus is this statue of the first president of Mississippi State University in Starkville and I had not heard of him. His name is Stephen Lee. Stephen Dill Lee. It said Major General to Confederate States of America, first inaugural president of the university.

So I did a little looking at him, said what the heck's this thing doing out here in the middle of the campus. Right in the most prominent place on campus. And this guy was a self-proclaimed segregationist and identified himself as a white supremacist and led Jim Crow in Mississippi and he was president of the university for 20 years. And they think that they're going to attract a lot of – 40 percent of the population of Mississippi is Black, you know? What are they going to do with these young Black kids? They don't have a big Asian population, but why would a Black kid want to go there?

How do we integrate? So they go to these predominately black schools, historic Black Land Grant schools, at Jackson State or wherever? Isolated and separated. So why keep and not replace the president's statue, even now – I suppose there are laws against it. I know in some states there are laws against removing these things. I'd take that thing off, if I were university president right now, and I'd stick it in – you got to acknowledge history and people are victims or they come out of their own individual, historical environment – a museum or some sort of heritage exhibit or something. But don't celebrate it in the center of campus right now. To me, it's just crazy. So those are the little, tiny things that we – I really do believe, by the way, and I know that people may not agree with this, but I really do believe in this anti-racism idea.

It's not just a matter of being not racist. You need to do something about changing the structural side. You know, the laws and the norms and the way we fund schools. And all these issues that sort of keep us apart, especially as we move towards a much more diverse society over the next 10 or 15 years. I mean, this change is going to come on us really, really fast. Unless the baby boomers all live another 50 years, which I don't think so. We're going to have a lot of change and it's going to be an uneven change across the country.

You know, I do a lot of work in rural areas and that racial change is very uneven. We've always had Blacks in the delta and the Deep South and Hispanics in the southwest along the Rio Grande and Indian reservations where I came from. But

that's just a different kind of segregation, that's a kind of macro-segregation – that's another thing that I've always sought is a much more spatially comprehensive view of segregation. Why do we just focus on maybe 30 to 40 percent of the U.S. population that lives in central cities, in the biggest cities?

The majority of the population lives in suburbs. And then we've got this macro-segregation that takes place in the ways I've just described. We need a spatially inclusive perspective that acknowledges these larger regions. Not just neighborhood to neighborhood. I've focused my research on political units rather than neighborhoods, per se. Because I see cities or communities, municipalities, they're the ones who are imposing certain kinds of local tax rates. Or they're funding the schools, or they're doing certain zoning practices.

My wife is Jewish. She is from northern New Jersey, west of the bridge, you know? As a child they had these exclusionary zoning laws that you couldn't do certain things, you couldn't sell to a Jew and so on. She always shows that stuff in her class. That's the kind of structural racism or discrimination that's not going to go away unless we do something about it.

Win Brown:

I want to acknowledge that we're all leaning on the edges of our seats because this is profound. We're super interested. I want to pick up a little bit if I could, on just what you've been saying maybe the last two minutes on your ideas about maybe moving more into spatial data and spatial understanding of the things that you've just talked about.

And I wonder if I could stimulate your thoughts by asking you, do you think that our very common jargon or lingo, things like "fly-over states," "red states, blue states," you mentioned gerrymandering. Do you think the language and the structures that we have now that denote spatial patterns are helping us or are hurting us? And do you think there's a different way to view ourselves as a nation, as multi-cultural, through spatial terms that we don't have now? And I'm sorry if that's maybe a complex question, but I'm hoping you'll pick up on that.

Daniel Lichter:

Well, yeah. No, I don't know if they help or hurt. I mean, they probably help in some cases just to communicate to a less-technical audience. But then they hurt because they obfuscate so much nuance. So it's hard to make a blanket generalization. I mean, if you look at America though, at least until the last decade, migration was an equilibrating mechanism or process that I think sort of smoothed out spatial inequalities. But I think those days are over. I don't think that's true anymore and I don't know what the latest research is, I haven't really followed it that carefully. But I see a sort of macro-economic and demographic segregation. Not just inner-city neighborhoods, that sort of thing, which most people focus on.

I just see a larger – and the "blue states, red states," I don't know if that's helpful or not. It's a shorthand for the reality of some states are predominately Democratic and others are Republican, so I don't know how you would use different terms. The fly-over thing, yeah, that's pejorative. I don't think that's very useful. So some are maybe more offensive and offending than others. But I don't know whether we would ever agree on any particular concepts because these words



mean different things to different people, I think, in different parts of the country.

We've got amazing cultural diversity in a lot of ways here. Maybe 25 years ago if someone asked me, "Who's the best theorist today?" I'd always say, "IBM," or something like that. I think so much social change is driven by technology. I mean, the spatial statistics, this hardware, the software, the mapping and all this stuff has created a whole new world. It's also created sort of, micro-targeting with the media and so on. It's made existing cultural and racial differences bigger.

And that's where I wrote something about fragmentation back in the '90s. I've never been able to find – it was a chapter in a book and I remember talking about how we're going to get fractured by this social media because the radio stations, they have their little areas where you can get the radio show, the Hispanic radio show, and the NPR. You know, different things in different parts, and they really can target now. And it's hyper-that today.

And so, we're creating our own little worlds, our own little fragmented worlds. And as you know, we don't always know what the truth is. I wrote a thing with a colleague here about three or four years ago, just before the pandemic and after Trump was elected, and I got some money for it, to try to educate our students about disinformation and propaganda and so on.

But then I had a heart attack. I had bypass surgery, and a pacemaker and all these things and so I never actually got the study done. But we've got an information problem here if we can't agree. And you guys know this. I'm not telling you anything you don't know. But I see it as a really major issue about social media fragmenting us. And I don't know how you get away from that in a democratic society. I'm not talking very much demography here though, am I? Sorry.

Dennis Hodgson: Well, in a way you are. I mean –

Daniel Lichter: Well, yeah, in a way. But it's sort of politicizing. There was an article in *Pop Studies* here not too long ago about political demography. There really is a demography of politics. There's no doubt of more than ever, as far as I'm concerned. Can't remember who wrote it. I thought it as very good. It was somebody from the old population bomb era. But I can't remember who it is, right off the top of my head. [Editor's note: Michael Teitelbaum, "Political demography: Powerful trends under-attended by demographic science," *Population Studies*, Volume 69, 2015 - Issue sup1: Population: The long view.]

Dennis Hodgson: So I like all your empirical findings that do use real, hard data. You take a look at segregation, you take a look at residential segregation at a variety of levels. You take a look at empirical data on education. Empirical data on healthcare. All this stuff, which as far as I can see in terms of your findings, they're sobering with respect to racial diversity and integration. You're not finding too many optimistic empirical trends saying we're moving in a right direction.

But you always have a little bit of an optimistic overall perspective. This is what we've got to do, and we're not doing it, seems to be the sort of thrust. So I find it

highly political in the sense that it's always a call for action.

Daniel Lichter: I get criticized sometimes because I don't really want to be an advocate, either. I want to be a social scientist and I want to be careful about politicizing what I do. I know there's the public sociology, public social science element out there today. And I don't have any problem with that, but I have people come up to me and they're upset because I'm not political enough. They think because I'm not screaming left-wing politics that I'm really a conservative, especially on when I've talked about family structure and poverty.

It took Sara McLanahan [PAA President in 2004], I think a few years later, to do research on family change and divorce, and teen pregnancy—somebody legitimate to do it—and then the field changed a little bit. But I had been working on that stuff and I was always getting in trouble with somebody because everybody wrongly thought my argument was: "If we just get women to be married and have babies and stay home and take care of their kids, we'd be a better place." And you know, I was just always raising issues and then letting the chips fall where they may, and then trying to understand them.

I go beyond the data, but I want to stay with the facts. I don't want to embellish the facts. I want to say what I think is true, but people wanted different things from me sometimes. Again, I sort of feel vindicated on that issue, feel vindicated a bit on my presidential address, which irritated some economists and some of the older established race scholars.

The "youngsters" in the field always seemed to like work I did. They said, "Oh, this is so obvious. I'm glad you're saying it." In fact, I had a retirement party last night and a woman who's African, she said that she was just happy about my presidential address because she said, "Finally, people are paying attention to how the world's changing." And that's not the reaction I was getting from older, white scholars of race, really. And so I sort of feel vindicated a little bit. I was happy to hear that.

Emily Merchant: What did the older scholars say about the address?

Daniel Lichter: Here's the argument I would hear, without trying to identify anybody. Basically, the white population's going to decline and it's going to create new opportunities for other minorities, basically. And it probably can. It probably can. But people create laws, they put things that solidify their own privileged positions and that's likely to go into hyper drive when they feel threatened.

Emily Merchant: Yes, it does.

Daniel Lichter: And I use that word "majority-minority," Some people don't like that. And maybe that's one of those terms that's not a good term to use, because it scares people, maybe. Scares some people. But I never use it as, 'Okay, we have a majority of minority people today.' I always use it in the sense of we're becoming more diverse. We're becoming more diverse. If current trends continue, it's built into the system. Let's just acknowledge that and work toward improving that future,

because we're going to have an entirely different kind of population, I think.

And then Dowell Myers--I always appreciated Dowell Myers because he wrote the book on about how we need to invest in younger, minority people because they're going to have to take care of the baby boomers. They're going to have to take care of the old people. And you see that everywhere. They're going to be paying the Social Security, they're going to be the child caretakers.

And you go to any big city hospital and who's there? There's minorities. Even out in South Dakota, in Mitchell, the doctors tend to be minority immigrants of one sort or another. And even in State College, my cardiologist was from India, my -- I got too many doctors here, but another doctor was from Lebanon. Another one was from South Korea. She was an interesting person, because she was married to -- I do a lot of work on interracial marriage, too, for the last 20 years, 25 years with Zhenchao Qian. She had a picture on her thing and I realized she's married to a white guy. She's married to a white guy. So, I had naturally, being a patient, I asked her about her kids and how they identified, racially.

And so I've been interested in this topic because we always talk about self-identified race and you know, parents are identifying their kids in the Census. Whoever's filling out the survey is identifying the race of their kids. So I was asking her how they identified their kids at birth and then how the kids themselves identified. She went through every kid, telling me, they only date Asian kids or all their friends are white or -- every one of those kids were different and why were they different? Because phenotypically, they looked different. They looked different. And they sort of took on the racial identity of the people who viewed them.

I mean, sort of the old "looking-glass self," where people would assume the identity of what they thought other people were seeing of themselves. So that was an interesting question. I got into research on it a little bit with Zhenchao Qian because I was interested in if parents are defining their kids somehow, as either White or Black or mixed race--the fastest growing population. I think it may be 10 percent now are mixed race. I mean, it's much higher than that because so many African-Americans are of mixed race, but because of the "one-drop rule" many mixed people that are still identifying are living in a culturally Black world, for the most part.

But I was looking at how the kid was identified by the parents depending on their relative levels of education. If one was native born, one was immigrant. The age difference. You know, a whole bunch of things that might indicate more power and that was true. The more powerful spouse using these different measures, where they took on that race or they were identified as such. And then of course as you'd expect, there were large differences in whether the multiple races were mentioned for the kid as opposed to mono-race. So, as you might expect, a lot of the Black kids with a White parent and a Black parent, the kid would be identified as Black. That just sort of reinforces this sort of one-drop rule.

John Weeks:

Now Dan, can I just jump in here for a second? Because things you're talking

about here do go back to your presidential address and I did notice that you do talk about Richard Alba, you talk about Dowell Myers and all of you, I think, had a major impact in the last decade to get the OMB and Census Bureau to essentially redo how we even ask the questions and then analyze the questions about race.

Daniel Lichter: Right.

John Weeks: So, Richard Alba really has, with his latest book that both Dennis and I have reviewed actually. Turns out that he's just saying if you actually redefine who people are, we're not necessarily a majority-minority, but we're more majority-majority.

Daniel Lichter: Right.

John Weeks: And so it really depends on how you define it. Exactly like you were saying with how do mixed race people identify their kids. That's –

Daniel Lichter: Yeah, that's the question I'm interested in. And Richard's less interested in that. I've actually had a lot of conversation with Richard recently, because we're trying to work together with one of these RDC, these data enclaves to get into some of the confidential data. Then we can find out who's actually filling out a survey. And there are some sociologists that are talking about how racial and ethnic boundaries are always in flux so they're sort of dynamic. And they are.

Is it because the kids as they grow older, are getting redefined or is it some new parent that's defining that kid? Or grandma's defining that kid now. Or the kid goes from 15 to 25 and now the kid says, "Oh, I'm defining myself, not mom." So, what's the change coming from? What I want to do with those data, I want to actually link the racial identity over time and I also want to know who's actually filling out the survey. Because that's self-identification. So that's what I'm interested in. I think Richard is more interested in defining what is the "mainstream."

Because historically, the Irish were not defined as white and Jews were not defined as white. And they've been redefined as white, in part, because of upward mobility and so on. And he's optimistic in the sense that some part of the Hispanic population, maybe those with a European bent are going to get redefined as part of the mainstream. And they'll be the new Irish or the new Jew. So that majority-minority doesn't mean really very much. And I agree with that, to a large extent. So what is the majority? The majority is we're just going to redefine "Whites" in the future.

John Weeks: Well, and thinking about that, going back to my mother-in-law growing up in South Dakota, she was the middle of 12 children and she and her younger siblings didn't learn Danish as they were growing up because about the time she was born, South Dakota passed a law that you couldn't speak anything except English in public. Now the Supreme Court ultimately said no, you can't do that. But her parents actually paid attention to that and spoke English only to her and to her siblings. So –

Daniel Lichter: Right. That's interesting. You know my grandmother, when she was alive, she was born in 1900. I remember her talking and 1900 was kind of an interesting year because she sort of came of age during the big influenza thing and a lot of people out there died and there was also the war. And being part of the German community there, a lot of Germans at the time, you know. Lutheran Germans who hated the Catholic Germans and vice versa. And they'd have their little parcels of land and went to their different churches.

They say the feds were in there all the time, scooping up people and you'd see them one day and not see them the next. And they'd never know what happened to them. Whether they got deported or what. So there was really an incentive with the wars, to assimilate.

And we see that in big cities where we don't see the German parts of the town like we used to, or German restaurants. And she said they only spoke English. They were assimilationists to the core. They wanted their kids to be Americans. And some of that came right out of that anti-German sentiment at the time. I wish I could talk to her now that I know maybe a little more than I did. And you know, there's nothing much written about those sorts of things. If you're in the middle of the heartland and rural America, who's going to do that kind of work?

Dennis Hodgson: You know, at the very end of your presidential address, you make this diversity comment about demography. And I thought it was wonderful.

Daniel Lichter: Really?

Dennis Hodgson: You're saying that – yeah. "Faculty in most American universities will be replaced over the next decade by a new generation of educators and administrators with a much different racial and ethnic mix." Then you say, "Demography as a profession will and must diversify in terms of its practitioners, its subject matter and its methodological approaches." And that's how you ended.

Daniel Lichter: Yeah. I'd forgotten that I'd put that in there. I had a much longer prescriptive discussion. And the reviewers and editor thought it was too long. And it probably was. But yeah. No, I believe that. And I think corporate America knows that to be the case, too. Not just universities. Who cares about their employers, employees and consumers and everything else? They gotta get with the program. The military also knows this. You look at the military. They've done a good job in terms of talent, really. They've diversified.

Dennis Hodgson: Right. Yeah. With respect to demography, what do you think new subject matter should be and what do you think, what kind of new, methodological approaches might come into play, for our discipline? Subject matter and methodology.

Daniel Lichter: I sort of feel like a dinosaur because I'm always saying to my students, I said, "You guys are going to need to define the question. You guys are going to need to discuss. And the reason I say that is because I don't know how many times I've heard senior scholars like myself poo-poo the younger generation. You know,

“They’re just not as good as we were.” And then I would say, “Well, go back and look at an article in 1960 and judge its sophistication. Just go look. It’ll be shocking.” And the other thing they say is, “I’m doing the best work probably I’ve ever done in my life.” And I would say, “You know, I probably think that way too. And it may be true. But nobody really cares what you say anymore. Nobody cares about the questions you’re raising. They have their own set of questions. Their own friends and colleagues that define things differently.”

Of course, they don’t like when I tell them this. But I don’t think they still have the voice for the generation that’s coming on board now. I just don’t think they do. So the “youngsters” have to decide what’s important, I think. And again technology, I think in a lot of ways, is going to drive that. Just technology.

Dennis Hodgson: So you don’t have a clear vision of demography 30 years hence?

Daniel Lichter: When I wrote the NIH center grant renewal at Penn State, I had just become director. I had 6 months to get the thing done. Dennis Hogan had gone to Brown and so I was trying to put this thing together. So I put together a spatial core. So the spatial technology stuff I think is really important, for a lot of reasons. Policy and otherwise, I think it’s just interesting. But it’s very descriptive, usually. The econometricians are getting in there to do spatial econometrics. What I thought was the big issue is, I thought bio-demography was going to be the issue. And nothing would get people more wound up than collecting biological data.

But we started – I had a little thing in our proposal about providing seed money to get some of these people to collect testosterone or other stress hormones and all these things, which I just thought was really, really interesting. But boy, people just reacted so negatively, it sort of brought up the old issues of eugenics. But I always thought they had such an unsophisticated view of what was going on.

Here’s an example. I was interested in behavioral genetics. I was interested in these sorts of things. But even things like how your brain develops in adolescence. We know that kids do crazy things, you know? They drink too much, they have unprotected sex. Well, their brains are just different. They’re not developed yet. So they’re doing stuff that – their executive function isn’t quite right yet until they – and you know, there’s things that affect the development of the executive function, the prefrontal cortex, the decision making. You know, stress and parental care, nutrition. All these things. So to me, to know that, you could do some biology there in a sense that you might want to – it suggests to me as a caretaker, you might want to put some restrictions on your children say, or certain ways of parenting and that sort of thing.

Our schools too. I mean, that would be one thing. But people react so negatively to that. And I think now people understand that it’s both social and genetic. And people have always known that so it’s always sort of an argument about what’s more important. To me, what I don’t like is when I see newspaper articles that talk about some hormone is related to some behavior. But I’m thinking about long-term social change. The biology does not. Biology in a population doesn’t change that fast. I mean, how are you going to get social change by knowing that

you've got more kids today where their pre-frontal cortex is underdeveloped. I mean it just doesn't make any sense.

We're looking at differences across different societies and the like. I've been less interested in that, maybe in part because I think demographers aren't doing that like I think they were doing 20 years ago. I think they've sort of backed away from that. Although they are collecting fluid samples of all sorts. But they're not necessarily publishing them in journals that maybe we know in the PAA. I don't know if there's even any such PAA sessions on this topic anymore. But that was a really hot area for a while. I thought that was the future. I did.

I remember somebody asked that very question about what's the future and everybody was talking about these boring, I thought were kind of boring, things. And I was kind of getting bored. There was like five of us. Barbra Entwisle [PAA President in 2007], and Phil Morgan [PAA President in 2003]. A lot of luminaries. It's population aging. It's aging that's doing it. Or it's immigration. Or something. And I said, it's this issue of incorporating biology and I was at Irvine and Robin Williams just went off on me for being interested in biology. But I think you can probably do it right, you just have to be careful, you know? I don't know.

Dennis Hodgson: Good.

Karen Hardee: So when you walk around PAA today, are you optimistic about the diversity and the changes?

Daniel Lichter: You know, PAA is totally different in terms of its structure. It was mostly White males. But so much of demography has changed, and there's so much emphasis on family and fertility, I think that's brought in lots of women and I just think the ASA and some of the professional organizations, with some of their programs, have attracted people to demography. I think the students themselves find, minority students find the issues that are covered in demography important and relevant to their own personal life. So they're getting into it and you see it with our kids today. It's just amazing to me. I think it's all for the better.

Sometimes when you've "feminized" a discipline or you've changed the racial structure of the discipline, you may lose something with other more powerful groups. But we'll see. I'm optimistic about that part of it. I think we're going to raise better and better questions all the time. And there has been a democratization of demographic data that I think has led to a democratization of ideas, too. Because everybody now really is a demographer. I mean, they can jump in, grab all kinds of census data, do all kinds of things that you couldn't do in the old days when you were relying on a big population center like Wisconsin where you had staff to spin tapes. You needed a mainframe computer and you needed some expertise to run data. Everybody can do it on their laptop today, in some ways. And it's so much easier to use data sets.

I think that's all good. Of course, it makes the boundaries of demography kind of difficult to define. And I think some people worry about that. A lot of stuff in demography, especially around health – when I was editor of *Demography*, we

rarely published anything really on health or – that was epidemiology and we rarely published anything on public policy. That should go in a public policy journal. There was stuff on the big pictures of population health, but not like today. The old, traditional areas just aren't attracting the same level of interest, I don't think.

So what is demography? Well, John, put that in your next edition of your introduction to demography. What is demography? It's just not fertility, mortality, migration. People are interested in a lot of things that are either demographic in their own right or have demographic implications. Or demographic origins of some sort.

John Weeks: Dan, you said it earlier, as I've said for a long time, demography is everything and everything is demography. And that really is the case. And that's really what you're saying is this: the field gets bigger because as more data and more understanding of demography gets out there, everybody does, whether they realize what they're saying or not, they are getting into the mold of demography matters to everything.

Daniel Lichter: Right and you know the newspapers, they have their own staff. They're out there doing stuff. New York Times, Washington Post, they have their own technical staff that can do a lot of this work now, without any problem. That just wasn't possible in the past. So they are marketing demography, too. People see the obvious link between demography and voting patterns, for example. It's just apparent, self-evident. Last night I think I said, "It's a good time to be a demographer." Because everything is linked to – whether it's population aging and having Social Security, or whether it's diversity and school integration, and better outcomes for minority kids. Whatever it is, there's a demographic angle to this.

Karen Hardee: Can I ask you – I heard a presentation this morning and I think I saw your name as one of the co-authors in the session on masculinity.

Daniel Lichter: Oh, yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Karen Hardee: And Trump voters, young men...

Daniel Lichter: Did you guys hear that question?

John Weeks: Actually, I did not, no.

Daniel Lichter: I have a paper with my long-time colleague, Zhenchao Qian. There's a graduate student [Michał Gulczyński] from Bocconi University, his dad's an economist at the University of Warsaw. But Francesco Billari flew him over because Michał wanted to do some work on intermarriage. And so he wanted to meet with Zhenchao and me and so I drove up to Brown, he spent a couple weeks at Brown and we talked him into doing certain things.

Michał was interested in sort of a masculinity threat from high achieving women.



They have more education than men, and better jobs, often. Or good jobs. They don't need a man to support themselves, necessarily. And so we were trying to understand the voting data on Trump over the last couple cycles. Whether these men in certain kinds of occupations were voting in particular ways. We were interested in have him look at the rural vote among unpartnered men, some of whom might call themselves Incels?

Karen Hardee: Incels, yes.

Daniel Lichter: Incels. These guys have problems attracting a female partner. In the Middle East, where a lot of the political foment comes from – women are the great “civilizers.” That probably sounds like a sexist thing, but when you look historically at how well men do, men behave better when they're in a partnership and we see it on most land grant schools with big engineering programs or agricultural programs or whatever that came up overwhelmingly male. Those tend to be big party schools. It's like the wild, wild west, you know? And so, that's basically where the ideas come in.

You know, if men don't have partners and if they can't command – or attract a woman or a partner, they're going to get resentful and they'll become more easily radicalized. And they're going to be more likely to vote for Trump and join some rural militia group or whatever. So we're a bit away from where Zhenchao and I wanted him to be. We're meeting with Michal in the morning at the conference. But it's an interesting idea. We'll see. If you look at rural America, women tend to leave more than men do. There's nothing there for women but the men are working in agriculture, they're working in town, they're in their pop's business or whatever the case may be.

But the sex ratios in some of those small towns for young adults are pretty negative for men. So, what are they going to do? They're going to be eating badly -hot dogs--and getting their AR-15s and joining the movement. So that's kind of the stylized way we're thinking about that issue. And there's some evidence that that's the case, but we need to do a lot more work on that paper before it's ready for submission anywhere.

I wrote a paper a couple of years ago that was in *Journal of Marriage and Family*. I was at BYU and I was talking to an economist and I said, you know, what if we just thought that all the unmarried men were – anybody who was not married we would treat them as “missing data.” And then say if men or women married in the same way that men and women marry today, what would their partners look like? We could identify how many of these counterfactual males or females are available for them to marry. So basically, we were actually calculating shortages of men and women on the basis of the observed marriage patterns of the currently married. And when you do that, there's gigantic shortages of highly educated men for highly educated women to marry.

In that paper, it sort of went viral, because they put out a press release, I was calling them “economically unattractive males.” And these guys were not getting married. There was just a complete shortage of women available for those guys

to marry. And it's even related to things like situational homosexuality. You see in the Netflix's show Ozarks, where men who don't have partners are getting involved in homosexual relationships. It's just a whole area of research that we don't know very much about. But there's a few little things here and there. I'm sort of interested in this Incel movement, but we haven't really done it right yet.

Karen Hardee: The info is fascinating.

Daniel Lichter: But I think it's a good topic right now. Especially in rural areas where there are shortages of female sexual partners. You've seen those dating apps, such as FarmersOnly or whatever. They're trying to reach unmarried men out into these rural areas. That's just not here in the United States, it's in China, it's in Southeast Asia. It's in Korea.

Korea, 10 percent of their babies are born by women who are not Korean, they're brought in from other countries and, you know, the Korean language is a tough language to learn. Children from those mixed marriages, those mixed nationality marriages are mostly in rural areas, they don't get the support they need. And those kids are not doing very well in school right now. Of course, we already know that Korea has an extraordinarily low fertility rate.

John Weeks: Listen, Dan. I think honestly we could all spend a lot more time talking with you. This has been really, really wonderful. Technically, our reservation in the room where you're sitting is up in about five minutes and I don't want people bursting in on us. I don't know whether that's going to be the case or not, and of course, you guys who are there in New Orleans have a PAA presidential address to get to in a little while. But is there any one last thing that you think we should know for the record here before we conclude?

Daniel Lichter: No, I'm happy to chat here and I'd probably look at all these issues a little differently than some. I always think my background is my biggest advantage. Big family, living in a rural area. I can talk to my colleagues at Cornell and I remember a few times in the faculty meetings I'd say, "Do all of you have parents that are professors?" Sort of the intergenerational curse.

So, I'm always the sort of outlier in terms of social class. I'll be at meetings and the faculty member will have a cup of Starbucks and see me and say, "I see you got your cup of Dunkin Donut coffee," and stuff, you know? So, I guess I see myself as sort of a "marginal man." I don't quite fit into any place in particular. I certainly don't fit into my parents' environment, but I don't always fit very well into the educated elite class, either.

John Weeks: We think you fit in really, really well. Certainly with us. No question about that.

Daniel Lichter: And I'm kind of a trouble maker at faculty meetings. That's the other thing. I'm the only one who has a joke periodically and the economists, I try to get them to laugh. And I do get them to laugh, occasionally.

John Weeks: Well...

Daniel Lichter: So anyway, thank you for the opportunity.

Male Speakers: Thank you. Thank you.

Daniel Lichter: I enjoyed it.

John Weeks: Okay. Listen, thank you so much for meeting with us and we really, really appreciate that and we will be back in touch when we get the transcription and everything so that we can relive this moment.

Daniel Lichter: Okay. Thanks so much.

John Weeks: Okay, thank you.

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Edited by John Weeks and Dan Lichter

## Integration or Fragmentation? Racial Diversity and the American Future

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**Abstract** Over the next generation or two, America's older, largely white population will increasingly be replaced by today's disproportionately poor minority children. All future growth will come from populations other than non-Hispanic whites as America moves toward a majority-minority society by 2043. This so-called Third Demographic Transition raises important implications about changing racial *boundaries* in the United States, that is, about the physical, economic, and sociocultural barriers that separate different racial and ethnic groups. America's racial transformation may place upward demographic pressure on future poverty and inequality as today's disproportionately poor and minority children grow into adult roles. Racial boundaries will be reshaped by the changing meaning of race and ethnicity, shifting patterns of racial segregation in neighborhoods and the workplace, newly integrating (or not) friendship networks, and changing rates of interracial marriage and childbearing. The empirical literature provides complicated lessons and offers few guarantees that growing racial diversity will lead to a corresponding breakdown in racial boundaries—that whites and minorities will increasingly share the same physical and social spaces or interact as coequals. How America's older population of elected officials and taxpayers responds *today* to America's increasingly diverse population will provide a window to the future, when today's children successfully transition (or not) into productive adult roles. Racial and ethnic inclusion will be reshaped by changing ethnoracial inequality, which highlights the need to invest in children—now.

**Keywords** Immigration · Segregation · Intermarriage · Poor children · Intergenerational conflict

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## Introduction

The United States may be the most demographically diverse country among the world's Western democracies. America's population diversity is revealed along many different dimensions that sometimes divide us, including age, class, religion, nativity (and language), politics, sexual orientation, geography, and, of course, racial and ethnic background, which animates the social, economic, and political implications of virtually every aspect of diversity. Growing population diversity—and the myriad ways it is expressed every day in America—will be driven by ongoing demographic processes and shifting ethnoracial boundaries. To be sure, America is a land of racial and ethnic immigrants with diverse sociocultural and economic backgrounds (Hirschman 2005; Tienda 2002). The nation has moved well beyond the “melting pot” metaphor. We have instead embraced a new multiculturalism, while also acknowledging the possibility of segmented assimilation, transnationalism, and downward mobility (among some groups) into a minority underclass. Assimilation into a white majority is neither inevitable nor always desirable (Alba and Nee 2003; Portes and Zhou 1993).

A concern today is that racial and ethnic diversity—which is often celebrated in anticipation of achieving a new postracial society—may instead be a source of growing political conflict, cultural disunity, and loss of community or cohesion. The politics of racial diversity may grow in importance rather than dissipate over the foreseeable future as the United States moves toward becoming a majority-minority society as early as 2043 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a).

Is America fragmenting?<sup>1</sup> This is a contentious question that politicians and pundits often raise today (e.g., Buchanan 2011; Huffington 2011; Murray 2012), but also one that has been common historically in America's social and political discourse, especially during periods of social and political upheaval and rapid immigration (see Fischer and Mattson 2009; Hollinger 2008; Portes and Vickstrom 2011). Now is one of those times.

Indeed, current and future demographic shifts pose extraordinary challenges for America that cannot be ignored or easily dismissed. Growing racial diversity may provide opportunities for a more integrated future (Alba and Nee 2003; Hochschild et al. 2012; Lee and Bean 2010), but this will not come easily (Bobo 2011; Hero 2007). The failure to effectively address questions of persistent racial and ethnic economic inequality, immigration (especially undocumented arrivals) and immigrant incorporation, and racial and ethnic geographic balkanization may reveal new and unanticipated patterns of cultural and economic fragmentation. As the future unfolds, how will the American people—individually and collectively—respond to the nation's rapidly changing racial and ethnic mix? Will racial boundaries be redrawn and persistent racial and ethnic inequality decline over the foreseeable future? Will America become “one nation” with a common national and cultural identity? Will

<sup>1</sup> This theme is familiar from previous presidential addresses of the Population Association of America. Samuel Preston (1984) was concerned about the growing economic divide between America's elderly and children. Sara McLanahan (2004) emphasized the “diverging destinies” of American children and how they are shaped by economic inequality and family diversity. Douglas Massey (1996) highlighted America's new “age of extremes,” marked by the concentration of poverty and increasing geographic separation of the affluent from the poor.

it become a postracial society, where race no longer matters? Or will America become something else?

This article highlights the demographic parameters of current and future racial and ethnic change in America. I begin by presenting evidence of a “Third Demographic Transition” marked by unprecedented changes in America’s racial and ethnic makeup over the next 40 years.<sup>2</sup> Racial diversity will be driven by new immigration, but it also will be shaped by minority fertility and white natural decrease, which I argue will give demographic impetus to higher poverty rates and more inequality in the future. Diversity begins with children—from the “bottom up.” Over the next generation or two, an older, largely white and affluent population will be increasingly replaced by today’s disproportionately poor minority children, who will reshape America’s future and its place in a globalizing economy.

The social and political implications of growing racial and ethnic diversity will ultimately depend on changing race relations and the breakdown of racial boundaries that have been resilient to change. Racial divisions have been shaped historically by limited opportunities for interracial interaction in neighborhoods, schools, and the workplace and by in-group solidarity (as revealed in racially homophilious relationships), which are often reinforced by racism and anti-immigrant hostility (Massey and Sánchez 2010). Indeed, as I illustrate here, growing racial diversity could “brighten” rather than redraw current racial boundaries or create a new racial order (e.g., Frank et al. 2010; Hochschild et al. 2012). Growing diversity over the foreseeable future is no guarantee that people of different cultural backgrounds will share the same physical and social spaces. New opportunities for intergroup contact, if measured by declining racial segregation, may also be offset by growing in-group racial preferences in social networks, friendship cliques, and interracial marriage.

In the end, opportunities and preferences for interracial contact and affiliation will depend heavily on the prospect of upward socioeconomic mobility among today’s minority children—the next generation (Alba et al. 2011). Here, I highlight several emerging threats to minority socioeconomic mobility and to harmonious race relations in the future. How America responds *now* to the new challenges of racial and ethnic diversity will determine whether it becomes a more open and inclusive society in the future—one that provides equal opportunities and justice for all. This is a demographic “pipeline” issue that will not go away anytime soon and that will reshape racial politics over the foreseeable future.

### America’s Racial Future: A Third Demographic Transition?

The Third Demographic Transition, as coined by David Coleman (2006), refers to the societal transformation from a low-fertility, native-born majority population to a high-fertility, racial and ethnic immigrant population. This population transition is general (at least across today’s developed world, but especially in Europe) and it is irreversible

<sup>2</sup> These issues are not limited to the United States. David Coleman (2006, 2010) refers to the Third Demographic Transition in much of Europe, including Great Britain, which will undergo profound changes in its racial and ethnic composition over the next half-century.

(Coleman 2009).<sup>3</sup> To claim that the United States is in the throes of a Third Demographic Transition, we must start with some basic demographic facts, if only to reinforce casual observations or impressions about growing racial diversity in America.

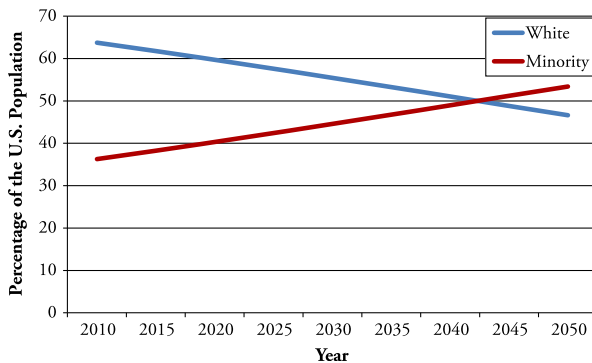
The 2010 U.S. decennial census revealed that the percentage of non-Hispanic whites decreased from 69.1 % to 63.7 % between 2000 and 2010 (Humes et al. 2011).<sup>4</sup> More significantly, newly released U.S. Census Bureau projections (based on the 2010 census) indicate that the non-Hispanic white population 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 future (U.S. Census Bureau 2012a). 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 as they have (U.S. Census Bureau 2012b). All of the projected U.S. population increase will come from groups other than non-Hispanic whites. The United States is moving inexorably toward becoming a majority-minority society. Indeed, only 46.6 % of the U.S. population will be classified as white in 2050 if current demographic trends continue. The racial crossover occurs in 2043 (see Fig. 1).

Projected increases in the racial and ethnic minority population may give demographic impetus to more poverty and inequality in the future. This can be effectively demonstrated with a simple accounting exercise. Applying age-race-sex-specific poverty rates (from the 2010 American Community Survey) to projected age-race-sex populations in 2050 yields projected poverty rates in 2050 (see Murdock et al. 2003 for similar approach). As shown in Table 1, this exercise implies a 2050 poverty rate of 16.6 %, which compares unfavorably with the published poverty rate of 15.1 % in 2010 (DeNavas-Walt et al. 2011).

Of course, projected poverty rates in 2050 reflect not only the influences of racial composition but also changes in the age-sex composition (e.g., an older population will have lower overall rates of poverty). Yet, as shown in Table 1, projected poverty rates in 2050 exceed the poverty rate in 2010 for all groups—children, prime-age adults, and seniors—a fact that mostly reflects shifts in the racial and ethnic composition only. These projected increases, although seemingly small (i.e., representing roughly a 10 % increase in poverty), nevertheless translate into almost 5 million more poor people in 2050 than if

<sup>3</sup> In some countries, diversity is often framed in terms of religion, but the issues are much the same. Take the example of Israel. There, ultra-orthodox Jews and Arabs exhibit extraordinarily high rates of fertility while secular Jews have below-replacement fertility. Group differences in socioeconomic status, education, and welfare dependence have fueled contentious debates about Israel's continuing sustainability, political conflict, and sovereignty (Rebhun and Malach 2012).

<sup>4</sup> Current figures mask the full extent of racial and ethnic diversity in America. Racial and ethnic classifications, based on self-identification, are both crude and fluid (Perez and Hirschman 2009). The Office of Management and Budget (OMB) defines "whites" as persons "having origins in any of the original peoples of Europe, the Middle East, or North Africa." It also includes people who listed themselves as Caucasian or self-identified as the Irish, Lebanese, or Egyptian, among others. Some whites enumerated in the 2010 census also claimed other races as part of their racial identity. This is the so-called multiracial population. In 2010, 3.2 % of the white population (alone or in combination with another race) checked another box on the race question or wrote in another race on the census schedule (Hixson et al. 2011). Overall, 2.9 % of the U.S. population listed two or more races in 2010, up from 2.4 % in 2000 (Humes et al. 2011). Such diversity is only the tip of the iceberg; a large but unknown percentage of people who listed only one race are in fact multiracial, especially in the case of African Americans (see Perez and Hirschman 2009). Moreover, growing diversity led the U.S. Census Bureau to translate its 2010 census schedule into 59 different languages for distribution to different population groups across the United States. The Census Bureau also used bilingual (e.g., English/Spanish) forms in some parts of the country.



**Fig. 1** Projected racial composition of the U.S. population, 2010–2050. *Source:* U.S. Census Bureau (2012a)

poverty rates stayed at 2010 levels. And they also tell us that over 70 % of America’s poor in 2050 will be minorities—a fact that has its own political consequences, if measured in public support for the poor (Gilens 2000).

Of course, future age-race-sex-specific poverty rates may not stay at 2010 levels; they may increase or decrease unpredictably over time for different segments of the U.S. population.<sup>5</sup> Yet, looking back 35 years rather than forward, the child poverty rates in 1976 were 40.6 % and 30.2 % for blacks and Hispanics, respectively. These figures are little different from 2010 poverty estimates (i.e., 39.0 % for blacks and 34.9 % for Hispanics; U.S. Census Bureau 2012c). Of course, race categories are highly fluid (Perez and Hirschman 2009; Waters 1990). Racial self-definitions are often situational and can change over time and across generations (Duncan and Trejo 2007), which potentially has uneven implications for poverty measurement across ethnoracial groups. Immigration and immigration policy also may change, perhaps unexpectedly, and America’s economic and job outlook is impossible to forecast accurately over the long term. Thus, my point here is largely a heuristic one—that a disproportionately white, elderly, and nonpoor population will be replaced by a disproportionately nonwhite, non-elderly, and poor population. Projected changes in America’s racial composition may mechanically drive up U.S. poverty rates unless age-race-sex-specific poverty rates decline or racial and ethnic differences in poverty are reduced or eliminated. This demographic and economic forecast can be avoided, but it will require the political will to act now to support America’s children and minority families.

## Population Processes and Ethnoracial Diversity

### Immigration and Diversity

The conventional view today is that immigration is driving America’s growing ethnoracial diversity. This is understandable in light of the massive new

<sup>5</sup> For example, the generational mix of Hispanics, who have disproportionately high poverty rates, will change dramatically from a population of immigrants to one of native-born Americans, who have much lower rates of poverty (Lichter et al. 2006; Van Hook et al. 2004). As the minority share of the electorate increases, voting power alone may change the political discourse and the nature of public investments.



**Table 1** Poverty rates, by age, 2010–2050

Age	2010	2050
0–17	21.6	24.1
18–64	14.2	15.8
65+	9.1	11.0
Total	15.3	16.6

*Sources:* Estimates based on the 2010 American Community Survey and U.S. Census Bureau (2012a).

immigration into the United States since 1980. Net international immigration into the United States accounted for 7.5 million new residents or 31.3 % of the nation's total population growth of 23.9 million people between 2000 and 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012d). The United States has more foreign-born residents (about 39 million) than any other country in the world; more than 4,000 new immigrants (legal and unauthorized) arrive in the United States each day (Martin and Midgley 2010). The overwhelming share of new immigrants and the foreign-born population are racial and ethnic minorities, mostly from Asia, Mexico, and other parts of Latin America. Moreover, the secondary migration of racial and ethnic minorities has hastened the pace of racial and ethnic change in cities, suburbs, and small towns across America (Kritz et al. 2011; Lee et al. 2012; Lichter and Johnson 2009; Massey 2008). The recent spatial diffusion of Hispanics to “new destinations” and Asians to (mostly) metropolitan “ethnoburbs” has reinforced the view that new immigration has altered America's fundamental character. Immigration has become a national political issue rather than just a state or local one.

The big picture of widespread and growing diversity, however, masks a more fundamental demographic reality: changes in America's racial mix have been observed first and disproportionately among the nation's children and youth (Johnson and Lichter 2008, 2010). A large but often unappreciated second-order demographic effect of recent immigration is the changing racial mix of newborns and children. The *children* of America's racial minority and immigrant populations—the new second generation—will be the lifeblood of America's economic and political future. They are in the vanguard of the Third Demographic Transition that will remake America.

### Majority-Minority Children: Diversity From the Bottom Up

For America's children, the future is now. Recently released estimates from the U.S. Census Bureau showed that minorities—that is, populations other than non-Hispanic whites—accounted for the majority (50.4 %) of the U.S. population under age 1 in 2011 (U.S. Census Bureau 2012e).<sup>6</sup> In 2010, fertility among non-Hispanic whites (1.79) and

<sup>6</sup> In 2009, natality statistics from the National Center for Health States revealed 4.1 million births reported to U.S. residents (Martin et al. 2011). Of this total, 2.2 million or 46.4 % of births were to non-Hispanic white women. Of course, these numbers are based on the race and ethnicity of the mother, not the father. NCHS figures undoubtedly underestimate the percentage of minority births. About 5 % of children under age 5 are multiracial.

Asians (1.69) was well below replacement; rates among non-Hispanic blacks (1.97) were much closer to replacement levels (Martin et al. 2012). For Hispanics, however, the total fertility rate was well above replacement (2.35), especially among Central and South Americans (2.98). If current period rates continue indefinitely, the U.S. white population will experience natural decrease—deaths exceeding births—along with absolute population decline in the absence of more white immigration. White natural decrease will exacerbate the downward share of the current white majority, especially as population aging increases rapidly over the next decade, when the numerically large baby boom cohort moves into retirement and dies off.<sup>7</sup> America's children have become much more diverse than the elderly population.<sup>8</sup>

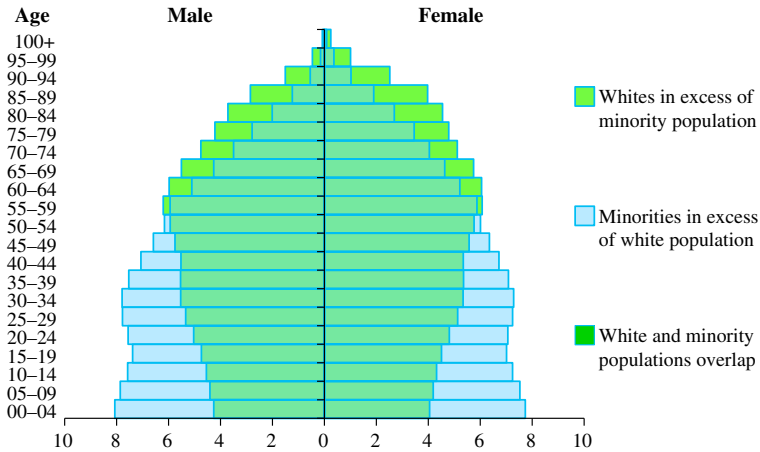
The potential long-term demographic implications of today's diversity at the bottom of the U.S. age distribution is revealed in Fig. 2, which gives the age-sex pyramids of projected majority and minority populations in 2050 (see U.S. Census Bureau 2012b for a description of the data). These pyramids show rather extraordinary minority population surpluses at younger ages, especially among children, along with a majority white population among those aged 55 or older. Even if the pipeline of immigration slows to a trickle, ethnoracial diversity will continue to grow through the large second-order effects of past and current immigration: high fertility among Hispanics, below-replacement fertility among white women (who are declining in population size), and population aging, especially as the mostly white baby boom generation dies off.

### Whose Babies?

In his seminal presidential address to the Population Association of America nearly 30 years ago, Samuel Preston (1984) documented the different trajectories of economic well-being among America's younger and older dependents over the 1970–1982 period. At the time, the elderly had benefited enormously from governmental responses to high rates of poverty through Social Security and Medicare. America's children were not so fortunate. Only 38 % of U.S. voters at the time were living with a child and could represent children's interests through the ballot box (Preston 1984:452). Today, this percentage is even lower, and the racial profile of the U.S. voting-age population is much different for the electorate (i.e., the voting-eligible population) than for the population that actually votes. Perhaps not surprisingly, the poverty gap between young and old today is now larger than ever (Fig. 3). In 2010, the age poverty gap was 13.0 percentage points (22.0 % among the elderly over age 65 vs. 9.0 % among children under age 18) compared with 7.3 percentage points (21.9 % vs. 14.6 %) in 1982, at the time of Preston's analysis.

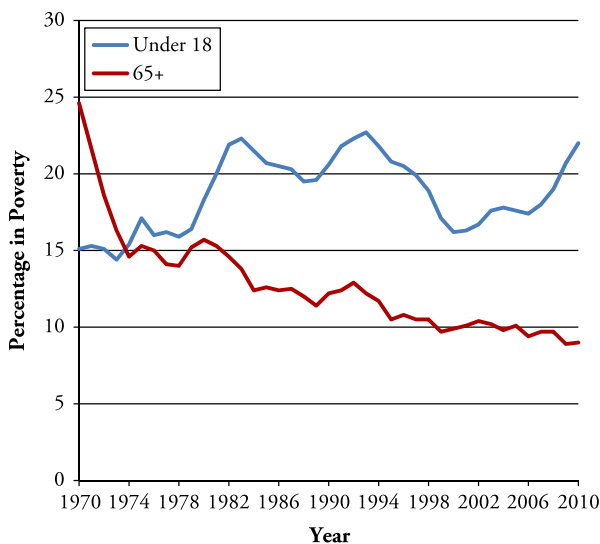
<sup>7</sup> An early view of America's future is revealed in the rural heartland (Johnson and Lichter 2012) and California (Myers 2007a), where new immigration and minority fertility have offset population losses associated with widespread white natural decrease.

<sup>8</sup> That racial and ethnic diversity is occurring from the “bottom up” can be demonstrated with the so-called Simpson diversity index. This index gives the probability that two randomly chosen people will be of a different race or ethnicity. My calculations using data on seven ethnoracial groups from the 2010 *American Community Survey* indicate that diversity among children is much larger (.637) than among working-age adults (.542), especially the elderly (.350). A random draw of two children from America's population is twice as likely to yield children of different races as of the same race. The opposite pattern exists for America's elderly.



**Fig. 2** Projected age and sex composition of the U.S. population: 2050 (in millions). *Source:* U.S. Census Bureau (2012a)

Two questions concluded Preston's (1984) address: (1) do we care collectively about our children, and (2) how should we proceed as a society if we do? Both questions have large racial dimensions today. The concerns are obvious: will a shifting age-race profile of America's population lead to a new generational divide between a slow-growing, older, non-Hispanic white population and fast-growing, younger, minority populations? Do older white people care about "other" people's children? The answer—and a glimpse of the future—is contained in a recent study by Figlio and Fletcher (2012), which showed that population aging in America's suburbs is causally linked to cutbacks in local school funding. Cutbacks were especially large if there was a racial mismatch between the elderly and the school-aged population (see also Poterba 1997).



**Fig. 3** Poverty rates, by age, 1970–2010

What does the bottom-up nature of America's racial and ethnic transformation mean for America's investments in the future? The answer depends on who is bearing and rearing today's children, which can be found in data from the 2006 to 2010 microdata files of the American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS asks this question of women aged 15–50: “Has this person given birth to any children in the last 12 months?”<sup>9</sup> Past-year childbearing can be linked directly to households, including the social and demographic characteristics of the coresidential mothers. As shown in Fig. 4, newborns today are overrepresented among poor families, which have the least educated mothers who are often unmarried (Sanders and Lichter 2012).

Indeed, these data show that 23 % of America's babies were born to poor women. Although not shown here, the share is much higher (57 %) among babies of racial or ethnic minority mothers. Nearly one-third were born to single mothers (measured at the time of the interview), and almost 40 % of newborns had mothers with low education (i.e., a high school diploma or less), while one-fifth were born to foreign-born mothers. Overall, nearly 40 % of America's babies today had mothers with two or more disadvantages, and over 60 % had at least one disadvantage. Among the nonwhite minority population, almost 80 % had at least one disadvantage, while 55 % had multiple disadvantages.

Ethnoracial diversity in the future clearly is rooted in current fertility. But perhaps more sobering, today's fertility patterns are driving current *and future* poverty and economic inequality. In life's race, America's minority children today begin well behind the starting line. Now is not the time for cutbacks in investments in America's children.

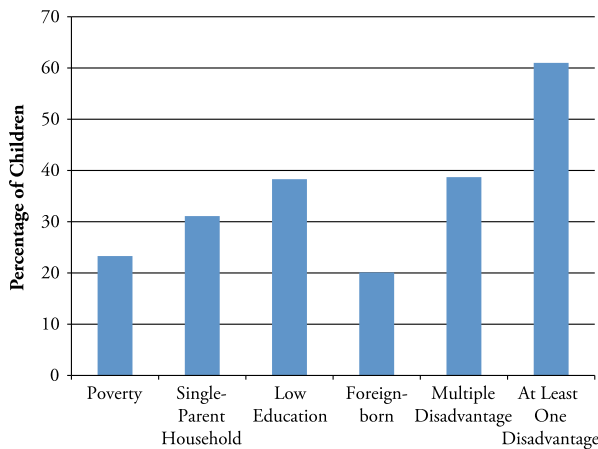
## Racial and Ethnic Boundaries: Now and in the Future

### Racial Diversity and Demodystopia

Projected changes in racial and ethnic composition, especially among the young, will reshape America's future. Exactly how is unclear, but it will almost certainly depend on whether racial relations improve as today's children grow into adulthood. In the extreme, some pundits (e.g., Buchanan 2011), politicians (who exploit white fears), and even some scholars (e.g., Huntington 2004) are concerned that the United States may become a “third-world nation” or that it is committing “race suicide” unless the influx of racially or culturally different groups is curtailed significantly or stopped altogether. According to this view, U.S. society may be rocked in the future by racial vitriol and cultural disunity.

In demography, there is a tendency to make alarmist claims of impending “demodystopia”—demographic forecasts of future “demographic hell” or imminent catastrophe (Domingo 2008). This has been evident in past debates about overpopulation and the “limits to growth” and more recently when drawing out the implications of lowest-low fertility in Europe and East Asia (for discussion, see Lam 2011; Morgan 2003). But demographers have generally steered clear of discussions of demodystopia tied to

<sup>9</sup> The ACS is a rolling monthly survey. Births recorded in a particular survey year may have occurred in the year preceding the survey (e.g., mothers interviewed in June 2007 may have borne children between July 2006 and June 2007). ACS births recorded in a particular calendar year therefore do not correspond precisely with the annual data provided through the vital registration system (collected by the National Center for Health Statistics), where births are recorded in the year that they occurred. For a comparison of ACS and NCHS fertility data, see Dye (2010).



**Fig. 4** Percentage of children born poor and disadvantaged, 2006–2010. *Sources:* American Community Survey, 2006–2010; Sanders and Lichter (2012)

growing racial and cultural diversity; instead, many (but not all) give a rather hopeful vision of future minority integration and accommodation.<sup>10</sup> For example, cohort succession presumably will mean that less racially receptive segments of the U.S. population (i.e., older whites) will be replaced with more racially tolerant populations (including young minorities).<sup>11</sup> Jennifer Lee and Frank Bean (2010) coined the term “diversity paradox”; they argued that growing diversity and sociocultural changes—ushered in by new immigration—are now breaking down ethnoracial boundaries and buffering persistent black-white antagonisms (see also Hochschild et al. 2012). Shifting racial boundaries also are likely to occur first among America’s children and youth. In fact, polling data confirm that young people today are much less race-sensitive than America’s older populations.<sup>12</sup> Ongoing demographic processes of immigration and cohort replacement may thus diminish the relevance of racial boundaries in the future.

Richard Alba (2009:162) also argued that the next several decades offer an “extraordinary opportunity for minority mobility.” America may be entering a period of non-zero-sum mobility, where the upward mobility of minority populations does not come at the expense of the majority white population. The impending retirement of America’s baby boomers may create a vacancy chain of job opportunities that

<sup>10</sup> This optimistic theme clearly is evident in the titles of several recently published books, including *Creating a New Racial Order* (Hochschild et al. 2012), *The Diversity Paradox: Immigration and the Color Line in 21st Century America* (Lee and Bean 2010), *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America* (Myers 2007b), *Achieving Anew: How New Immigrants Do in American Schools, Jobs, and Neighborhoods* (White and Glick 2009), and *Blurring the Color Line: The New Chance for a More Integrated America* (Alba 2009).

<sup>11</sup> The optimistic inferences we draw from observing the seemingly color-blind associations among our children sometimes ignore ongoing developmental processes. That is, racial identities (and racial attitudes) are not innate but come from social interactions that unfold over time with family members, and with others in schools, neighborhoods, peer groups, and voluntary associations (that are often homogeneous racially) (Raabe and Beelmann 2011).

<sup>12</sup> For example, Taylor and Mateyka (2011), using the General Social Survey, reported that age is associated with more stereotypical beliefs about blacks, less receptivity to sharing social spaces (e.g., living in neighborhoods), negative attributions of poverty (e.g., laziness as opposed to structural conditions), and racial resentment.

benefits historically disadvantaged groups. Economic threats to “white privilege” will be less pronounced than in the past, and the benefits will redound to America’s minorities, especially today’s disproportionately nonwhite children. The key, according to Alba (2009), will be to effectively convert their upward socioeconomic mobility into greater proximity to whites in various arenas of social interaction (e.g., neighborhoods).

Such hopeful forecasts beg a simple question: what does the recent empirical social science literature tell us about the association between rising racial diversity—in communities, neighborhoods, workplaces, and organizations—and race relations? Do race relations improve or not? By *racial relations*, I mean the behavioral or institutional mechanisms that create, reinforce, or eliminate *boundaries* that divide us. Many scholars draw hope from the historical record—from the erosion of large sociocultural and economic differences among America’s white ethnics (of different national origins) over the course of the twentieth century. The optimistic view is that cultural, political, and economic fracturing along racial and ethnic lines may similarly decline in the future, even as racial diversity increases. After all, America recently elected its first African American president in 2008, who was then reelected in 2012 with the help of a diverse coalition of racial and ethnic minorities (including an emergent block of Hispanic voters). Clearly, along many economic and political dimensions, America has made demonstrable racial progress since the Civil Rights period of the 1960s (Bobo and Charles 2009; Farley 1988).

Yet, social boundaries of all kinds separate one group from another, insiders from outsiders, and us from them (Tilly 2004; Wimmer 2008). Boundaries, as an organizing concept (Lamont and Molnár 2002; Sanders 2002), have been especially useful for studying racial and ethnic divisions (Alba 2009; Massey and Sánchez 2010). In the future, as in the past, racial boundaries presumably can shift, be crossed, or blur (Alba and Nee 2003). Boundary *shifts* occur when entire groups are redefined racially. For example, a century ago, the Irish, Italians, and Jews were redefined as “white” with generational succession and assimilation (Alba 1985; Hout and Goldstein 1994). Some scholars have argued that Hispanics today are not unlike Italians from the early 1900s (Perlman 2005).<sup>13</sup> Racial boundaries also can be *crossed*, which usually means that racial and ethnic minorities, by virtue of improvements in socioeconomic status (e.g., increasing education or income), are able to operate on either side of the racial divide. Upwardly mobile minorities, students in racially integrated schools, and interracial couples serve as associational brokers that bridge majority and minority populations and help break down racial boundaries and promote mutual understanding. Finally, boundary *blurring* means that racial boundaries have become less distinct or “bright” (Alba 2005); racial identification can also be dimmed or lost from generation to generation (Duncan and Trejo 2011). Mixed-race individuals, for example, often occupy a unique place in the racial hierarchy. They serve as racial ambassadors who stitch together different racial and ethnic

<sup>13</sup> Hispanics may be “whitening” along a continuum between whites and blacks at opposite poles, although their placement will be heavily influenced by skin tone (Burton et al. 2010). The racial divide may be changing from white-black to white-nonwhite to black-nonblack, or even to a new tripartite classification in which nonwhite nonblacks occupy a growing middle category (for discussion, see Bonilla-Silva 2002; Lee and Bean 2004). Others claim that Hispanics are being “racialized,” at least for some national-origin groups (e.g., Mexico’s *mestizos*) and for those with “dark” skin (Telles and Ortiz 2008; Telles and Sue 2009).

segments of the populations, although they also may be marginalized by both majority and minority populations (for a critique, see Spencer 2011).

Better understanding America's racial future requires giving attention to two key questions: (1) how have racial boundaries changed—shifted, crossed, or blurred—over the past decade or two, and (2) how are boundaries likely to reveal themselves in the future, especially as today's children lead us toward a majority-minority society? From a demographic perspective, two indicators of changing racial boundaries seem especially relevant: racial segregation and racial homophily, which represent *opportunities* and *preferences*, respectively, for intergroup contact.

### Opportunity: Changing Residential Segregation

Spatial boundaries mark arenas for social interaction. A century ago, Robert Park (1915:608) asked whether Chicago's burgeoning ethnic immigrant populations would be revealed spatially in "a mosaic of little worlds that touch but do not interpenetrate." In the future, projected increases in America's racial minority populations will be played out differently across geographic space, which will shape opportunities for interracial interactions of all sorts—in neighborhoods, schools, community organizations, and work settings. Spatial proximity or propinquity is a necessary condition for intergroup contact and mutual understanding among racial groups (Putnam 2007).<sup>14</sup>

Some optimism about the future is usually drawn from conventional demographic analyses showing long-term declines in neighborhood racial and ethnic segregation, especially among blacks. A recent Manhattan Institute report (of black/nonblack segregation) by economists Edward Glaeser and Jacob Vigdor (2012) is boldly titled *The End of the Segregated Century*. Others researchers are less sanguine. In a report titled *The Persistence of Segregation in the Metropolis: New Findings From the 2010 Census*, sociologists John Logan and Brian Stults (2011) showed that black-white neighborhood segregation (measured with the index of dissimilarity) declined from an average of 79 in 1970 to 59 in 2010 in the 50 largest U.S. metropolitan areas. For 2010, this means that 59 % of blacks must move to other neighborhoods (i.e., disproportionately white census tracts) to achieve equality in the percentage distribution of blacks and whites across all neighborhoods. These recent downward trends in residential segregation presumably reflect the enforcement of fair housing legislation, changing racial attitudes, rapid suburbanization of minority populations, and the demolition of public housing projects that warehoused poor minorities in the past (for review, see Charles 2003).

Yet, despite these declines, black-white segregation remains very high. The average black person lives in a neighborhood that is roughly 35 % white. And there has been little or no change or perhaps even small increases in segregation among the nation's fastest growing populations of Asians and Hispanics. With America's growing diversity, there seems to be a pause in previously declining rates of neighborhood segregation. My general concern is straightforward: as today's children transition into adulthood over the next decade or two, conventional demographic approaches to

<sup>14</sup> Separating opportunity structure from preferences is a difficult task; people—at least some—choose their own opportunities. That is, they choose to live (or not) in racially integrated neighborhoods. This is the endogenous membership problem that makes separating opportunities from preferences an extraordinarily difficult task.



segregation (i.e., those based on analyses of census tracts in big cities alone) may misrepresent the extent of racial residential segregation and its many causes.

Specifically, racial residential segregation in the future may be increasingly characterized by (1) emerging patterns of *macro-segregation* at higher levels of spatial aggregation (such as places) than the neighborhood; (2) growing segregation *between* and *within* different racial and ethnic groups; and (3) changing “causes” of segregation that may increasingly reflect race-based *residential preferences* rather than income inequality or housing discrimination. I consider each point in turn below.

First, racial segregation may be occurring at different spatial scales than in the past (Fischer et al. 2004; Lichter et al. 2007b; Massey and Fischer 2003; Parisi et al. 2011). Over the recent period of declining neighborhood segregation, most big cities shifted rapidly from being majority-white to becoming majority-minority populations. In fact, most of the 100 largest U.S. primary cities (of metropolitan areas) now have majority-minority populations, increasing from 43 in 2000 to 58 in 2010 (Frey 2011). For example, Detroit today is more than 80 % black, up from 62 % in 1980. Black-white neighborhood segregation, measured by the index of dissimilarity, nonetheless declined from 83.0 to 79.6 between 1980 and 2010 (Logan and Stults 2011). Blacks may increasingly be living in the same neighborhoods as whites (Iceland et al. 2013), but in Detroit, as in many other cities, the population is becoming increasingly composed of racial and ethnic minorities.

Suburban and rural communities with fast-growing Hispanic populations also are being rapidly transformed into majority-minority populations while also experiencing residential segregation that rivals the high level of black-white segregation in cities (Hall 2013; Lichter et al. 2010). As shown in Table 2, U.S. decennial census data reveal remarkable increases—more than a doubling—in the number of majority-minority rural communities over the past two decades, from 757 in 1990 to 1,760 in 2010 (Lichter 2012a). Processes of racial segregation have taken an unexpected turn. The singular focus on declining big-city neighborhood racial segregation as an indicator of changing racial boundaries is incomplete at best and misleading at worst (Lichter et al. 2007b). In the future, big-city neighborhood segregation may persist at high levels but may represent a declining share of overall racial residential differences in America (Parisi et al. 2011). Macro-segregation may be on the rise, especially as a new political economy of *place* more effectively excludes undesirable groups (e.g., the poor) (Lichter et al. 2012; Massey et al. 2009).

A second concern is that conventional approaches, based on pairwise comparisons of the segregation index, also potentially distort evidence of racial integration in our

**Table 2** Majority-minority communities, 1990–2010

	1990		2000		2010	
	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%	<i>N</i>	%
Principal City	89	13.5	155	23.3	214	31.7
Suburb	733	6.9	1,282	11.1	2,061	14.7
Nonmetropolitan Place	757	7.0	1,119	9.7	1,760	12.6
Total	1,579	7.2	2,556	10.7	4,035	14.0

Source: Decennial U.S. censuses, 1990, 2000, and 2010. See Lichter (2012a).



multiracial future. This point is not new but is often forgotten or ignored. Asians, Hispanics, and blacks are separated not only from whites but from each other (Fong and Shibuya 2005; Jimenéz 2010; Parisi et al. 2011); different national-origin groups also live apart from each other, even those who share the same panethnicity (Kim and White 2010). And racial minorities represent diverse populations with their own divisions by ethnicity, national origin, nativity, and social class (Hirschman et al. 2000; Landale and Oropesa 2007).

To better address issues of neighborhood diversity, John Logan and Wenquan Zhang (2011) identified global neighborhoods—census tracts with significant percentages of whites, blacks, Hispanics, and Asians. Global neighborhoods increased in number from 2,998 to 5,085 between 1980 and 2010 while also accounting for a growing percentage of the metropolitan population. But the number of neighborhoods with significant numbers of whites, Hispanics, and Asians declined absolutely from 3,802 in 1980 to 2,027 in 2010, while their percentage of the entire metropolitan population declined from 28.6 % to 15.2 % (Logan and Zhang 2011). More significantly, the number of all-minority tracts also nearly doubled, increasing from 1,763 in 1980 to 3,238 in 2010. Logan and Zhang (2011) found little evidence of whites moving into all-minority neighborhoods. They concluded that “there is no route to a fully integrated metropolis” because “white flight continues to create new all-minority neighborhoods” (p. 12).

Most racial and ethnic groups today remain highly segregated from each other. A comparatively small number of neighborhoods, cities, or counties are composed of significant shares of more than one race, even though there are few neighborhoods and places today with all-white populations (Johnson and Lichter 2010; Logan and Stults 2011). Moreover, multiracial neighborhoods are often unstable or “in transition” to becoming racially homogenous neighborhoods (Friedman 2008). And even if different minority populations increasingly live in the same neighborhoods (Farrell and Lee 2011), segregation *within* census tracts (micro-segregation) often remains large across blocks or block groups (Friedman 2012; Lee et al. 2008). Even when occupancy changes at the housing-unit level, the race of the occupant often remains unchanged (Hipp 2012). If racial integration is a public policy goal (and I understand that this point is debatable), recent empirical evidence is not always reassuring. Past and current research on blacks has appropriately focused on neighborhood “tipping points” that spurred white flight; growing diversity led to a white demographic response. Now, Crowder et al. (2011) have shown a new kind of white flight from immigrants who have moved into America’s suburbs over the past decade or two. What is the case for something different in the future as America diversifies racially?

Under the circumstances, it is hard to imagine a demographic, economic, or political scenario that will lead to the return of middle-class whites to “all-minority” neighborhoods in Detroit, Los Angeles, Miami, New York City (e.g., Queens and The Bronx), or other racially diverse cities or suburbs in sufficient numbers to end the ongoing replacement of white populations. The implausibility of such a demographic scenario arguably is heightened by impending white natural decrease and declines in the absolute numbers of geographically mobile white young adults who will be demographically available to buy homes and who are perhaps most receptive to racial residential integration.

Finally, racial segregation may be increasingly shaped by residential preferences and choices (see Bruch and Mare 2006; Clark 2009; Clark and Fossett 2008; Fossett

2006) rather than by income or discrimination only. Income or education disparities currently account for a surprisingly small share of the large racial differences in residence patterns (Iceland 2009), an empirical fact that has shifted the emphasis to past or current racial discrimination in housing markets or to racially insensitive federal housing policy (Massey 1996; Massey and Denton 1993).<sup>15</sup> But, even here, audit studies now indicate that housing discrimination is less blatant (but perhaps less easily detected) than in the past (Roscigno et al. 2009; Ross and Turner 2005). The legacy of past racial housing discrimination and sometimes misguided government housing programs nevertheless persists today in the form of continuing high rates of racial residential segregation (Iceland 2009). In the past, blacks of all income levels were steered into black neighborhoods, where they either stayed or circulated among similar neighborhoods. What will happen when pre-fair-housing black cohorts retire, die, and sell their homes? Who will buy them? If racial income inequality declines and housing discrimination matters less than the past, racial preferences—choice with income constraints—will increasingly dominate patterns of racial residential location among tomorrow's homebuyers (i.e., today's children).

On this question, the current literature on racial preferences again provides cautionary lessons about nascent racial residential integration. For starters, whites often prefer white neighborhoods and avoid minority-dominated neighborhoods; they are influenced by racial stereotypes and other race-based concerns (Krysan et al. 2009). White residential preferences continue to be negatively shaped by rising shares of minorities, both blacks and immigrants, living in the neighborhood (Harris 2001; Krysan 2002). More generally, white Americans hold more negative racial attitudes (the "threat hypothesis") if they live in neighborhoods or communities with larger minority shares (for discussion, see Dixon 2006; Taylor and Mateyka 2011). Like whites, blacks and Hispanics also prefer neighbors with the same ethnoracial backgrounds, although there is some evidence that higher-income blacks increasingly prefer more racially integrated suburban communities (Clark 2007), even as many suburbs have experienced unprecedented increases in poverty (Cooke 2010). Under the circumstances, growing racial diversity nationally is no guarantee that racial and ethnic boundaries will be redrawn in communities and neighborhoods (or schools). In fact, black young adults who escape the segregated neighborhoods of their childhoods often revert to racially segregated neighborhoods as they grow older (Sharkey 2012).

To sum up, the pace of decline in segregation, at least as traditionally defined, has slowed over the past decade or two. At the same time, we have seen little if any decline in majority-minority segregation among Hispanics or Asians, while other dimensions of segregation (e.g., macro-segregation, multiracial segregation, and residential preferences) have become more salient. Significantly, America's children, who are increasingly minority children, often live in neighborhoods and communities that are more segregated and poorer than the general or adult population (Iceland et al. 2010; Johnson and Lichter 2010). The implications of residential segregation among children and youth will surely be played out in patterns of social interaction

<sup>15</sup> Preferences are not easily separated from structural conditions. Blacks may prefer to live in predominantly black neighborhoods precisely because they believe that they are unwelcome in white neighborhoods. The endogenous membership problem—people choose their neighborhoods—makes the study of segregation difficult (Mouw and Entwisle 2006). Not surprisingly, a frequent goal of recent research is to separate opportunity from preference (Wimmer and Lewis 2010).

(e.g., in schools and friendship networks) and in interracial dating, cohabiting, and marriage (Joyner and Kao 2005; McClintock 2010; Mouw and Entwisle 2006).

### Preferences: Changing Patterns of Homophily

*Homophily* is the tendency for individuals to affiliate socially with similar others (McPherson et al. 2001). Homophily reflects selection into associations (i.e., similar people are attracted to each other), socialization (i.e., peer influences on malleable characteristics, such attitudes), and attrition (i.e., dissimilar people disengage from each other over time). In the case of race, as with other characteristics, homophily reinforces racial identity and group boundaries (Wimmer and Lewis 2010). Cross-race social contacts in friendship networks, work settings, and marriage have the potential to reduce racial prejudice (i.e., the contact hypothesis; see Allport 1954), promote greater access of minorities to majority resources and social capital, and function as “bridging ties” that promote greater cohesion between racial groups (Rude and Herda 2010).

McPherson et al. (2001) claimed that “[r]ace and ethnicity are clearly the biggest divide in social networks today in the United States” (p. 420). More importantly, they argued that homophily ultimately is influenced most by structural opportunities for interracial contact, which they label as *baseline homophily*. Racial homophily is positively associated with the relative population size of groups, which, perhaps paradoxically, implies that increases in the relative size of minority populations in the future may promote more (baseline) homophily among racial minorities rather than less (see Blau 1977; Laumann 1973). Of course, relative group size is played out differently across geographic and organizational space. Opportunities for interaction do not ensure affiliation; in-group preferences for interaction also matter.

Baseline homophily is often reinforced by so-called *inbreeding homophily* (McPherson et al. 2001), which occurs when demographic groups, including racial groups, share the same social and economic characteristics (e.g., values, class, education, income) that are themselves a basis for social homophily. Inbreeding homophily reduces the likelihood of cross-cutting social circles between (racial) groups; the cross-cutting social circles can promote cohesion and the breakdown of intergroup barriers. To illustrate, whites and blacks with similar educational levels are more likely to interact with one another than are those with dissimilar schooling. The implication is straightforward: as long as racial stratification or other salient characteristics continue to sort whites and racial minorities into different social groups, racial homophily will persist. Racial homophily also is amplified by “balancing mechanisms”; friendships are reciprocated, and friends of friends befriend one another (Mouw and Entwisle 2006; Wimmer and Lewis 2010).

One view is that inbreeding racial homophily will decline in the future with declining social, economic, and political inequality and more acculturation (i.e., groups share the same cultural values). Cross-cutting social circles among racial groups presumably will proliferate while engendering greater social cohesion and mutual understanding (Blau 1977; Blau et al. 1984). Many empirical studies, however, have shown that racially different friends and coworkers may form weaker

rather than stronger social bonds, and generate less trust and lower attachment to the group or network. For example, Stainback and Irvin (2012) found that racial minorities were less attached to organizations with fewer coethnics; they also perceived more discrimination against them, which mediated the relationship between minority group size and organizational attachment. Other studies show that racial similarity in friendship dyads are linked to stability. Mixed-race friendships are more likely than same-race friendships to break up, a process that reinforces racial homophily (Rude and Herda 2010).

It is difficult to forecast future patterns of racial homophily. A well-documented literature on cross-race friendship dyads and networks among adolescents and the school-aged population (Goodreau et al. 2009; Wimmer and Lewis 2010) provides little hard evidence on temporal or life cycle changes in racial homophily. Racial differences in homophily are nevertheless large. For example, McPherson et al. (2001) showed that whites have more racially homogeneous networks than do other racial and ethnic groups. Smith (1999) similarly reported that only 6 % of whites and 15 % of blacks had a close friend of another race. More recently, Mouw and Entwisle (2006) found, using Add Health data, that 85.1 % of the friends of whites were white. For blacks, 71.4 % of their self-nominated friends were black. Smaller shares of same-race friends were reported by Asians (42.3 %) and Hispanics (33.5 %). The low rates among Asians and Hispanics seemingly had less to do with preferences than with limited opportunities for same-race interaction within schools and neighborhoods (i.e., baseline homophily).

Kao and Joyner (2006:972), in fact, provided evidence of “an overwhelming preference for same-ethnic peers over same-race (different-ethnic) and different-race peers.” They also demonstrated that interracial friendships increase in number when opportunities for same-race friendships at school decline (Joyner and Kao 2000); or, stated differently, more opportunities for same-race friends led to more same-race friends (see Moody 2001). This is consistent with Mouw and Entwisle’s (2006) finding that the probability of interracial dyads being friends was lowest in the most diverse schools. In one racially diverse school included in their study, the overwhelming share of the friends of blacks (75 %), Asians (86 %), and Hispanics (84 %) were of the same race. The white students, who were in the minority, were far more likely to have friends of another race. Mouw and Entwisle (2006) found that interracial friendship was heavily shaped by racial segregation or proximity; overall, about one-third of friendship segregation was attributable to neighborhood segregation. Recent evidence of resegregating schools (and their children) does not bode well for achieving greater social interaction (and perhaps mutual understanding) among young people of different races and ethnicities (Reardon et al. 2012; Zhang 2011).

With greater opportunity, minorities seemingly choose friends disproportionately from their own racial group. Racially based social segregation—measured by friendship patterns—may thus be reinforced by high (and perhaps increasing) levels of spatial segregation (as discussed earlier), which is played out locally in schools and work settings. America’s growing minority population is likely to reinforce racial and ethnic boundaries quite mechanically. Moreover, there is little evidence that the share of racially homophilious friendships declines from generation to generation among Hispanics and Asians (Quillian and Campbell 2003). This raises questions about whether intergenerational succession will lead inexorably to a breakdown in racial boundaries in the future.

In the population sciences, racial homophily is most often addressed in studies of interracial sexual intimacy, dating and cohabitation, and marriage (Blackwell and Lichter 2004; Gullickson 2006; Sassler and Joyner 2011). Interracial marriage is typically viewed as the final step in the assimilation process (Gordon 1964) and, as such, is used as an indirect indicator of improving racial relations. A new Pew Report (Taylor et al. 2010), for example, showed that 6.7 % of all newly contracted marriages in 1980 involved interracial couples, increasing to 15.1 % in 2010. However, a much lower percentage (8.4 %) of all married couples were interracial in 2010, a fact that reflects low rates of interracial marriage among older couples and the selection effects of higher divorce rates among racially mixed marriages (Zhang and Van Hook 2009). From a strictly demographic standpoint, the upward trend in interracial marriages is a result of growing racial diversity, especially among racial and ethnic groups that historically have had the highest rates of out-marriage with whites (i.e., Hispanics and Asians).<sup>16</sup>

The continuing growth of interracial marriage among America's minority populations, however, is not self-evident for three reasons. First, as the size of America's minority population increases in the future, rates of racial marital endogamy among the nation's minorities may increase rather than decrease (Harris and Ono 2005; Lichter et al. 2007a). As with mixed-race friendship patterns, out-marriage is a negative function of relative group size (Qian and Lichter 2011); small minority populations are most likely (quite mechanically) to out-marry because the pool of potential partners is dominated by whites and other larger minority populations. My work with Zhenchao Qian has documented a recent slowdown or even a "retreat from intermarriage" among America's largest immigrant groups: Asians and Hispanics (e.g., Lichter et al. 2011; Qian and Lichter 2007, 2011). The rapid growth of America's immigrant minority population, especially from Asia and Latin America, has expanded the marriage pool among U.S.-born minority coethnics while potentially reinforcing distinctive cultural traditions and ancestral identity (Jiménez 2010; Qian and Lichter 2011). At the same time, black exceptionalism continues to be revealed in low rates of intermarriage with whites; this is especially true for black women.

Second, patterns of intermarriage with whites and other minorities vary widely between and within major racial and ethnic groups. A recent study by Qian et al. (2012), for example, showed that patterns of intergroup and intragroup marriage vary widely among America's Puerto Ricans, Mexicans, Chinese, and Filipinos. Because of shared religion and language (i.e., inbreeding homophily), Puerto Ricans and Mexicans are much more likely to marry other U.S. Hispanics than Chinese and Filipinos are to marry other Asians. Other studies have shown that different black populations (e.g., African-born blacks and West Indians) have exceptionally low rates of marriage with each other (Batson et al. 2006). Generational patterns in marriage and marital endogamy also are changing. For example, native-born Asians are five times more likely today to marry a foreign-born Asian than in 1980 (Qian and Lichter

<sup>16</sup> The Pew study, for example, reported that 63 % of all Americans said they "would be fine" if a family member married outside their race. This high percentage is not being driven by minorities alone. Among whites, the percentage was nearly as high (at 61 %) as the national percentage. Of course, these figures are far in excess of observed rates of intermarriage, which raises questions about the mismatch between attitudes and behavior (Herman and Campbell 2012). Although intermarriage may not be experienced directly, it is often experienced indirectly. Goldstein (1999) showed that roughly 20 % of all Americans have a close relative who is of another race.

2011). Yet, compared with the foreign-stock population, later generations (3+) are more likely than in the past to out-marry to whites (Lichter et al. 2011), a pattern that provides evidence of marital assimilation (Choi et al. 2011). On the other hand, second-generation Hispanics are more likely to marry first-generation Hispanics and less likely to marry third-generation Hispanics or whites than in the past (Lichter et al. 2011). This suggests a possible “return” to one’s ancestral identity among some immigrant populations. One interpretation is that continuing immigration may promote in-group solidarity at the expense of promoting integration and cohesion more broadly across society. An alternative interpretation is that the new generation, through marriage, is offering a “hand up” in the incorporation process (see Stevens et al. 2012).

Third, although most demographers studying interracial marriage have emphasized the implications of population structure (Kalmijn and van Tubergen 2010; Rosenfeld 2008), especially changing marriage-market conditions, other studies have emphasized racial preferences, mostly as revealed through online dating services. For example, recent studies of Internet daters reveal that white men were more likely to exclude black women than other minority women as possible dating partners (Feliciano et al. 2009; Yancey 2009). On some university campuses, black students are often socially isolated and excluded from interracial dating (McClintock 2010). The happenstance of local marriage-market conditions (in neighborhoods, school, or workplace) may be increasingly replaced by a new rationalization of mate-selection processes through Internet dating services that reinforce racial endogamy by optimizing the matching of preferences and behavior. The Internet may be the new intermediary in the marriage market for spouses and partners (Rosenfeld and Thomas 2012).

Like segregation, racial homophily of all kinds is deeply entrenched in American society and is slow to change, for both benign and less-than-benign reasons. Growing minority population size in the future may reinforce (or brighten) racial and ethnic boundaries and promote in-group solidarity among today’s young minority populations. This can happen quite mechanically by changing relative group size, even as racial preferences change (Qian and Lichter 2011). In-group solidarity also may be reinforced by external threats, such as anti-immigrant sentiment (Massey and Sánchez 2010), and by cultural replenishment from new immigration (Jiménez 2010). Reductions in racial homophily in friendship networks and marriage may ultimately require additional large reductions in racial inequality on those characteristics that allow more interaction as social equals (e.g., education, income, and occupation, the so-called inbreeding component of homophily). However, as I describe below, future declines in racial inequality are threatened, perhaps as never before.

## **Toward a More Inclusive Society**

### **Threats to Children’s Success**

As America diversifies, the growth of new opportunities for harmonious race relations (revealed in less segregation or more intermarriage over the past half-century) and the spread of race-neutral preferences for intergroup interaction are not assured.



Racial diversity unfolds most rapidly among America's children and, more troubling, among those at the bottom of the income distribution, where competition and minority group threats are most intense. Cohort succession and the impending retirement of the baby boom generation may produce a demographic dividend for America's minority children and young people (Alba 2009; Lee and Bean 2010). But it remains far from certain that today's minority populations—especially blacks and dark-skinned Hispanics—will be especially well positioned in the current political and economic environment to take full advantage of new opportunities without significant policy interventions that elevate America's values for inclusion (Alba and Waters 2012; Telles and Ortiz 2008).

Minority children face several threats that distinguish the present from the past and that highlight the policy imperative to better prepare children *now* for productive adult roles in the future.<sup>17</sup>

### *Education Achievement Gap*

The education achievement gap between racial minorities and whites is increasing, even with absolute gains in educational achievement among blacks and Hispanics. Racial differences in average reading and math scores in elementary, middle, and high school are large, and they affect admissions into colleges and universities, including elite ones (for discussion, see Alon and Tienda 2007; Espenshade and Radford 2009). Calculations from the 2010 March Current Population Survey, for example, show that only 61.9 % of Hispanics aged 25–29 had completed high school, compared with 86.7 % for the population (data not shown). Among whites, this percentage was 91.6 %. College graduation was especially low among blacks (19.4 %) and Hispanics (13.2 %). Percentage-point increases since 1989 were smaller among blacks (7.7) and Hispanics (3.3) than among whites (10.1) or Asians (11.3), which means that the absolute educational gaps increased over the period.

Blacks, Hispanics, and Native Americans today attend the worst-performing schools (Logan 2011). At the same time, per capita funding of public schools (K–12) has declined, disparities in public school funding have grown, and schools have begun to resegregate. Public education at all levels is under financial assault at a time when America arguably needs to invest in the future as never before. Current racial and ethnic differences in educational attainment (and the quality of education) portend continuing inequality in the future, especially as today's historically disadvantaged minority children assume adult roles.

### *Family Instability*

Changing family structure imposes large costs on children and society (Hoffman 2006; McLanahan and Percheski 2008). Sara McLanahan's (2004) influential PAA presidential address raised the specter of "diverging destinies" among America's

<sup>17</sup> Lest we despair, Gunnar Myrdal (1944:51), in *An American Dilemma*, reminds us that the "children and grandchildren of [previous] unassimilated foreigners are well-adjusted Americans," despite receiving "their first course in Americanization in the squalid and congested quarters of New York's East Side and similar surroundings."

children. Diverging destinies are rooted in family disruption and nonmarital fertility, which are observed unevenly across racial and ethnic groups. Roughly 70 % of African American children today are born to single or unmarried cohabiting mothers. At the same time, America's fastest growing population, Hispanics, may be the new fragile families (Hummer and Hamilton 2010; Lichter 2012b). One-half of all Hispanic children are born outside of marriage, which affects their developmental trajectories and their prospects for productive adult lives.

America's racial minority and immigrant children are located disproportionately on one track, and white middle-class children (growing up in two-parent families) are on the other (McLanahan 2004; Thomas 2011). These family patterns are often reproduced from generation to generation (McLanahan and Percheski 2008; Sassler et al. 2009). Current racial and ethnic differences in family structure thus undermine racial equality both now and in the future and potentially thwart positive race relations in a diversifying society.

### *Unauthorized Immigration*

Since 1990, the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the United States has accelerated, reaching a peak of roughly 12 million in 2010 (Passel and Cohn 2010). However, recent reports now indicate that the rate of net unauthorized immigration is effectively zero (Passel et al. 2012). The Great Recession and the militarization of the U.S.-Mexico border have strangled the flow of new immigration from Mexico, while growing anti-immigrant sentiment has encouraged "self-deportation." Still, roughly 5 million children today live in households with at least one unauthorized immigrant parent, and about one in five of these children are undocumented themselves (Donato and Armenta 2011).

Among (mostly) Hispanics, the primary barrier to cultural and economic incorporation and upward intra- and intergenerational mobility arguably is located in undocumented immigration, which may lead to downward mobility into perhaps a permanent minority underclass (Flippen 2012; Hall et al. 2010). In the current political environment, there is no clear route to integration among today's unauthorized workers or their children. Menjívar and Abrego (2012) characterized the current situation as "legal violence."

### *Minority Incarceration*

The prison population in America has exploded over the past two decades (Pettit 2012). Becky Pettit and Bruce Western (2004) showed that 20 % of black men born between 1965 and 1969 had served time in prison; this percentage was even higher among the least-educated black men (nearly 60 %). High rates of incarceration among disadvantaged minorities, especially among African American men, have undermined the social fabric of many minority communities, upset the stability of marriage and family life (including effective parenting and supervision), and impeded success in the labor market (i.e., finding good jobs that provide footholds in the new economy) (Geller et al. 2012; Waller and Swisher 2006; Wildeman 2010).

Black incarceration has been likened to a new kind of Jim Crow: physical isolation from the mainstream and political disenfranchisement. Alexander and West (2012)



argued that mass incarceration is a pernicious new system of social control that has replaced Jim Crow. The intergenerational effects on today's minority children are potentially large but unknown as they make their way to adulthood.

### *Growing Inequality*

Income inequality has grown, a trend that Jacob Hacker and Paul Pierson (2010) characterized as the result of a new “winner-take-all politics,” although politics is hardly the only explanation for growing inequality (Jacobs and Soss 2010; McCall and Percheski 2010; Western et al. 2012). The American class structure seemingly has become less open, and the American Dream has faded for some. Intergenerational mobility rates have declined recently (Dunifon 2010; Kearney 2006), and they have declined most rapidly among African Americans. Upward mobility—both absolute and relative—is lower among minorities (especially black women) than among whites. And, compared with mid-century statistics, opportunities for upward mobility have stagnated, a fact that suggests increasing rigidity in America's class structure (for discussion, see Smeeding et al. 2012).

Today's children are on the front line of the new mobility regime. Isabelle Sawhill (2012) recently concluded that “[a] growing body of evidence suggests that the United States, far from being the land of opportunity celebrated in our history and our literature, is instead a country where class matters after all, where upward mobility is constrained, especially among those born into the bottom ranks.” Such pronouncements hardly suggest an optimistic forecast for today's poor minority children or for a more racially integrated and harmonious future.

### *Residential Segregation by Class*

The past decade brought a return to 1980s patterns of concentrated poverty (Lichter et al. 2012; Reardon and Bischoff 2011). From 2000 to 2007, the segregation of family income groups increased in the large majority of metropolitan areas, especially among blacks and Hispanics (Reardon and Bischoff 2011). Poverty is especially concentrated among the nation's children (Lichter and Johnson 2007). At the same time, we have seen a new geography of exclusion marked by privatized, affluent, and gated (mostly white) communities (Dwyer 2010; Lee and Marlay 2007). The poor and working classes are increasingly cordoned off from the affluent.

Place clearly matters (Dreier et al. 2001; Sampson et al. 2002). In *Taxing the Poor*, for example, Katherine Newman and Rourke O'Brien (2011) chronicled the evolution of southern state tax codes, which are rooted in class politics and racism and have served mostly white landowners and small-business owners with low property taxes and little or no state income or corporate taxes. Tax inequities are reinforced by legislative inertia and statutory limitations that make change nearly impossible. The only politically viable option to generate new revenues in many southern states is to raise sales taxes, even on necessities. Those at the bottom of the income distribution pay the price. Rightly or not, it is easy to extrapolate patterns in the South historically to the current anti-tax sentiment, especially among older whites (e.g., who dominate the Tea Party), and to the current resistance to invest in public education and (minority) children.

## Translating Research Into Public Policy

Each of the aforementioned “threats” deserves an extended treatment (which page limitations prevent); each threat also represents a point of entry for policy intervention and evaluation. For example, the interest in new investments in early childhood education has perhaps never been greater (Heckman 2006). These programs cost money but may help prepare minority and poor children for educational success and a better future (Magnuson and Waldfogel 2005). Results of the 2012 presidential election also have again put immigration reform up for congressional debate. Citizenship provides a pathway to greater economic and political incorporation for minority immigrants. Some legislative version of the DREAM Act will surely help children who came here illegally with their parents achieve their aspirations for a better life. Evidence of growing macro-segregation may mean that programs such as Moving to Opportunity (see Ludwig et al. 2008) may require a broader spatial perspective (e.g., targeting minority families in the rural southern “black belt”) in the colonias along the borderland, and on Indian reservations. And how do we support and strengthen America’s fragile families without creating perverse incentives for single parenthood or divorce? So far, the federal government’s support of abstinence-only education and “Healthy Marriage Initiatives” have met with only limited success (Dion 2005; Kohler et al. 2008; Wood et al. 2012).

More generally, current “threats” point to the real need to invest now in children, especially minority children who are “at risk” and who have sometimes been left behind with growing diversity in bad neighborhoods and schools. It takes political will of the kind that Jane Waldfogel (2010) has described in Great Britain, where the stated goal is to eliminate child poverty altogether. Yet, in America, federal investments in the nation’s children are expected to decline by \$35 billion between 2010 and 2015 (Isaacs et al. 2011).

In the end, of course, persistent racial boundaries are not rooted entirely in current class or economic disparities. They are also located in systems of racial ideology that operate independently of class structure and mobility patterns (Burk and Espinoza 2012; Burton et al. 2010). Economic mobility alone is no panacea. This point is made abundantly clear in Edward Telles’ (2004) comparative analysis of Brazil and the United States. Brazil is much less segregated than the United States and has much higher interracial marriage rates (Heaton and Mitchell 2012). Racial boundaries are considerably more fluid. Yet, racial and class inequality is greater than in the United States; in Brazil, the top of the income distribution is overwhelmingly identified as “white.” In America, improvements in minority socioeconomic status may likewise be necessary but insufficient to ensure greater interracial interaction and cultural cohesion.

## Conclusion

No one can predict America’s racial future with certainty. Yet, there can be little disagreement that America’s ongoing racial transformation—a Third Demographic Transition—will continue well into the foreseeable future, even if restrictive immigration legislation slows the flow of legal immigrants and effectively ends the influx of new unauthorized workers. As racial and ethnic diversity unfolds from the bottom up—beginning with children—America may be challenged as never before. Racial

inclusion, which has been reflected in past declines in racial residential segregation and racial homophily, is hardly guaranteed. Indeed, past progress may be lost.

Here, I have emphasized the implications of America's movement to a majority-minority society and of changing racial boundaries, mostly from a perspective that emphasizes minority demographic and economic processes (e.g., marriage and fertility, immigration and segregation, and poverty and inequality). But America's current demographic majority, non-Hispanics whites, also will play a large and active role in the maintenance (or not) of current racial and ethnic boundaries, in the contestation of space, and in racial politics (i.e., in either welcoming or resisting growing racial diversity and fairness). How an older, largely white population of elected officials and taxpayers responds *now* to America's increasingly diverse population provides a window to the future, when today's children successfully transition (or not) into productive adult roles.

To be sure, some optimism about the future can be found in laissez-faire solutions—those that rely heavily on “the market” or on “naturally occurring” demographic processes (e.g., cohort replacement or generational shifts). But these processes may yield fewer salutary benefits than expected. As I have argued here, past and current empirical literature on the effects of growing diversity provide important but complicated lessons for the future. Segregation may be increasing at the macro or community levels while simultaneously becoming more fine-grained at the subnational level. Growing shares of racial and ethnic minorities also create built-in pressure for more racial homophily in friendship and marriage patterns. This does not necessarily mean that America will see a rise in racial animus or hostility. In the future, there may be a new accommodation, such that different groups maintain their racial and ancestral identities (if we embrace multiculturalism) but interact with each other harmoniously—a kind of organic solidarity born of racial heterogeneity rather than a mechanical solidarity based on racial and ethnic homogeneity (for policy discussion, see Kesler and Bloemraad 2010). More troubling for the long term, however, is a 2011 Associated Press poll indicating that racial prejudice against African Americans and Hispanics has increased since 2008 (Junius 2012).

At a minimum, my reading of the empirical evidence provides cautionary lessons about America's majority-minority future and makes the question of racial relations and boundaries fraught with uncertainty. My observations, in the end, are a call for a new scholarly commitment to research on race and ethnicity in the population sciences and demography. Children today face serious threats to inclusion as they make their way to adulthood, productive adult roles, and good citizenship. As I have argued here, America arguably will need substantial new public and private investments in today's children (and their families) at a time when a disproportionately white elderly population holds the purse strings, when government is often viewed as a problem rather than solution, when anti-immigrant and anti-minority sentiment is high, and when a workable political consensus about how best to solve America's problems is hard to reach. Current demographic conditions and projections for the future nonetheless suggest the need for much greater societal commitment to racial inclusion—and to children—than we have seen recently.

Finally, the field of demography is not immune to impending racial change or to these demographic pipeline issues. As demographers, what is our collective role or responsibility in creating new structural opportunities for positive interracial

interaction and for breaking down existing racial and ethnic boundaries in our own profession?<sup>18</sup> Faculty in most American universities presumably will be replaced over the next decade by a new generation of educators and administrators with a much different racial and ethnic mix and perspective. Demography as a profession will (and arguably must) diversify in terms of its practitioners, its subject matter, and its methodological approaches (Zuberi and Bonilla-Silva 2008). The topics and approaches that have occupied demographers in the past will be redefined in the future by today's children. It is time to get to work on these issues and to pave the way for a new generation of population scientists.

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<sup>18</sup> Data from the National Center for Educational Statistics show that 75 % of the full-time college and university faculty (Fall 2009) are white; only 5.4 % and 3.8 %, respectively, are blacks and Hispanics (National Center for Education Statistics 2013:Table 264). Yet, for 2009, data from the Current Population Survey show that 18.4 % of the U.S. population aged 15–24 was black, and 15.5 % was Hispanic. In 2009, only 13.2 % of all doctorates awarded in 2009 went to underrepresented groups (American Indian, black, or Hispanic) (see The Chronicle of Higher Education 2011:B44).

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