Changing Demographics: Past and Future Demands for Early Childhood Programs

Donald J. Hernandez

Abstract

This article provides a historical analysis of how demographic changes in the organization of American family life from the mid-1800s to the present have shaped the demand for programs to complement the efforts of families to educate and care for their children. The author asserts that the United States is in the midst of a second child care revolution. The first occurred in the late 1800s, when families left farming to enable fathers to take jobs in urban areas and when compulsory free public schooling was established for children age six and above. The second has developed over the past 55 years as the proportion of children under six living in families with two wage earners or a single working parent has escalated and propelled more and more young children into the early childhood care and education programs discussed throughout this journal issue.

Looking to the future, the author sees indications that the demand for early childhood care and education programs will continue to grow while the needs of the children to be served will become increasingly diverse. To meet these dual pressures, the author argues that public funding for early childhood programs—like funding for public schools—is justified by the value such programs have for the broader society.

Today’s children are the adults—the parents, workers, and citizens—of tomorrow. Yet while they learn and develop the abilities they will need later in life, children depend almost entirely upon adults to meet their needs and to make decisions on their behalf. Key among those are decisions about the roles parents and children will take on both inside and outside the home. This article takes a historical look at how changing patterns of employment among parents have been linked to changes in children’s attendance at school and out-of-home child care programs like those discussed throughout this issue.

During the past 150 years, the family economy was revolutionized twice, as fathers and then mothers left the home to spend much of the day away

Donald J. Hernandez, Ph.D., is chief of the Marriage and Family Statistics Branch of the U.S. Bureau of the Census.
at jobs as family breadwinners. With these changes, with instability in fathers’ work, and with increasing divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing, never during the past half century were a majority of children born into “Ozzie and Harriet” families in which the father worked full time year round, the mother was a full-time homemaker, and all of the children were born after the parents’ only marriage. Corresponding revolutions in child care occurred, as children age six and over, and then younger children, began to spend increasing amounts of time in school or in the care of someone other than their parents.

This article reviews each of these revolutions to clarify the factors that lie behind the growing demand for out-of-home programs to serve preschool-age children, drawing on census and survey data charting a wide array of family and economic changes from the mid-1800s to the present. It addresses the following questions:

1. To what extent have young children experienced a decline in parental time potentially available for their care?

2. How have increasing employment among mothers and the rise in one-parent families contributed to the decline in parental availability to care for children at home?

3. What major demographic and family trends are responsible for increasing employment of mothers and for one-parent family living?

4. How may demographic trends influence the demand for child care during the coming decades?

5. What lessons from the first child care revolution—compulsory public schooling—can guide child care policy today?

The focus on historical changes as experienced by children provides a unique vantage point for understanding the child care revolution young children are now experiencing and for speculating about what the future may hold.

The Decline in Parental Availability for Child Care

The daily experiences young children have at home, in school, or in child care depend in important ways on the composition of their families. In the middle of the twentieth century, most children under the age of six lived in breadwinner-homemaker families, that is, in two-parent families where the father worked outside the home to support the family, and the mother could care for the children at home because she was not in the paid labor force. In 1940, 87% of young children (throughout this article, the term “young children” refers to children under the age of six) had a nonemployed parent who could provide full-time care. By 1989, however, the same could be said of only 48% of children under six.

This dramatic decline resulted from the growing prevalence of dual-earner families and one-parent families with an employed head. As Figure 1 shows, between 1940 and 1989, the percentage of young children living in dual-earner families (that is, two-parent families with both parents in the labor force) increased sevenfold, from 5% to 38%. During the same period, the proportion of children living with a lone parent who worked increased fivefold, from 2% to 13%. In about half the families, the parents worked full time; in the others, one or both parents worked part time. Together, the trends toward dual-earner households and one-parent families increased by 43 percent-
age points the proportion of young children who did not have a parent at home who could provide full-time care. From 1940 to 1989, the percentage of children under six who needed alternative child care arrangements rose from 8% to 51%.

About three-fourths of the increased demand for child care was accounted for by dual-earner families, and the remaining one-fourth stemmed from one-parent families with working parents. Because the growing demand for child care for preschool-age children is rooted in the new prevalence of dual-earner families and one-parent employed families, an understanding of what the future may hold must rest upon an examination of the earlier historical changes that led to these transformations in the family lives of children.

**The Revolutionary Increase in Mothers’ Employment**

The proportion of young children with employed mothers jumped from about 7% in 1940 to 43% in 1980. Since then it increased again to 51% in 1990, but no further change had occurred as of 1993. The explanation for much of this increase in mothers’ employment after 1940 can be found in earlier historic changes that occurred in fathers’ work and family residence, in family size, and in children’s school attendance and educational attainment. Each of those factors paved the way for the growing participation of mothers in the paid labor force.

**Fathers’ Increasing Nonfarm Work**

For hundreds of years, agriculture and the two-parent farm family were the primary forms of economic production and family organization in Western countries. On the family farm, economic production, parenting, and child care were combined as parents and children worked together to support themselves. This life pattern changed with the Industrial Revolution, however. Families moved to urban areas, and...
childhood was transformed in unprecedented ways. Fathers in urban families spent much of the day away from home working at jobs to earn the income required to support their families, while mothers remained at home to care for their children and to perform other household chores.

The shift away from farming, when it occurred, was very rapid. Figure 2 provides a historical view of the likelihood that children would live in each of four basic family types between 1790 and the present. Between 1830 and 1930, the proportion of children living in two-parent farm families dropped from about 70% to only 30%, while the proportion living in nonfarm families with breadwinner fathers and homemaker mothers jumped from 15% to 55%.

The shift from farming to urban occupations enabled many families to improve their relative economic status because comparatively favorable economic opportunities existed in urban areas. Urban jobs generated incomes higher than many people could earn through farming, and, given the precarious economic situations faced by many rural families, even poorly paid or dangerous jobs in urban areas were attractive.

Falling Family Size
The massive migration to urban areas was accompanied by a dramatic decline in family size. Figure 3 depicts the number of siblings in typical families from 1865 to the present. Among children born in 1865, 82% lived in families with five or more children, but only 30% of those born in 1930 had such

---

**Figure 2**

Children Ages 0 to 17 Years in Farm Families, Father-as-Breadwinner Families, and Dual-Earner Families, 1790-1989

![Graph showing the change in family types from 1790 to 1989.](image)

Estimates are for 10-year intervals to 1980, and for 1989.

large families. The median number of siblings in a typical family dropped from more than seven siblings to only two or three.

Parents may have restricted themselves to a small number of children for reasons of household economics. Moving from the farm to urban areas meant that housing, food, clothing, and other necessities had to be paid for with cash, so the costs of supporting additional children became increasingly apparent. Also, as economic growth led to increases in the quality and quantity of available consumer products and services, expected consumption standards rose. Individuals had to spend more money simply to maintain the standard of living they considered normal, and their rising expectations also increased the costs of supporting each additional child at a “normal” level.

Meanwhile, the economic contribution that children could make to their parents and families was sharply reduced by the passage of laws restricting child labor. More and more parents limited their families to a comparatively small number of children, ensuring that available family income could be spread less thinly and that the family’s expected standard of living could be maintained.

**Increasing Schooling and Educational Attainments**

A third revolutionary change in children’s lives resulted from the enormous increase in school enrollment and educational attainments that took place between 1870 and 1940. As farming was overshadowed by an industrial economy in which fathers worked for pay at jobs located away from home, the
economic role of children also changed with the enactment of compulsory school attendance and child labor laws. School enrollment rates jumped sharply. In 1870, about 50% of children 5 through 19 years old were enrolled in school. By 1940, 95% of children 7 through 13 years old were enrolled, as were 79% of children 14 through 17. The length of the school year also increased over that period. The number of days that enrolled students spent in school doubled from 21% to 42% of the total days in the year, or 39% of the nonweekend days. This represented a dramatic change in how children who were six or over spent much of their waking time.

Why did parents send their children to school in greater numbers and for longer periods? There are several plausible explanations. School enrollments increased during the period when laws limiting child labor were passed. Labor unions sought these laws to ensure that jobs would be available for adults (mainly fathers), while the child welfare movement sought them to protect children from unsafe and unfair working conditions. Compulsory education laws supported by the same movements led to universal schooling that was mandated and paid for by local governments.

In addition, as time passed, higher educational attainments were needed to obtain jobs with higher incomes and greater prestige. Hence, parents encouraged their children’s educational attainments as a path to achieving economic success in adulthood. Because the children of today are the parents of tomorrow, this enormous increase in schooling led to significant later increases in the education levels of parents. For example, as Figure 4 shows, only 15% of children born in 1920 had fathers who had completed four years of high school, compared with 39% of
those born in 1940. Levels of education among mothers increased as well. By 1940, fully 44% of young children had mothers with four years of high school education. Today, more than 80% of adolescents have parents who completed at least four years of high school.

**Explaining the Increasing Employment of Mothers**

How did the historic shifts toward nonfarm work, urban residence, smaller families, and increased educational attainments that took place between the Industrial Revolution and about 1940 lead to increased employment by mothers? One explanation focuses on efforts parents made to maintain, improve, or regain their economic standing relative to other families.

Until about 1940, three major avenues were open to parents who wanted to improve their economic standing. First, they could move off the farm to allow the husband to work in a better-paid job in the growing urban-industrial economy. Second, they could limit themselves to a smaller number of children so that available family income could be spread less thinly. Third, they could increase their educational attainments so as to be qualified to enter well-paid occupations. By 1940, however, most families had already taken these steps. Only 23% of Americans still lived on farms; 70% of parents had only one or two dependent children in the home; and adults beyond age 25 often found it difficult or impractical to pursue additional schooling. Consequently, for many parents, these historical avenues for improving their economic standing had run their course.

A fourth major avenue to increasing family income emerged between 1940 and 1960, namely, paid work by wives and mothers. The traditional supply of female nonfarm labor—unmarried women—was limited, while the war effort and the economic boom created an escalating demand for additional female workers. Meanwhile, mothers also were becoming more available and qualified for work outside the home. By 1940, the enrollment of children over six in school had released mothers with school-age children from child care responsibilities for about two-thirds of a full-time workday, and for about two-thirds of a full-time work year. In addition, many
women were highly educated because compulsory, free schooling applied to girls as well as boys and the educational attainments of women had increased along with those of men. By 1940, young women were more likely than young men to graduate from high school, and they were about two-thirds as likely to graduate from college.\footnote{Economic insecurity among families in which the fathers faced low wages or joblessness made mothers’ work virtually essential. Many families experienced economic insecurity and need when widespread unemployment prevailed during the Great Depression. In 1940, 40% of children lived with fathers who did not work full time year round. While this proportion declined after the Great Depression, it has continued at high levels. Throughout the past 50 years, at least one-fifth of children have lived with fathers who, during any given year, experienced part-time work or joblessness. This has been a powerful incentive for many mothers to work for pay.}

Paid work for mothers was becoming increasingly attractive both as an economic advantage in a competitive, consumption-oriented society and as a hedge against possible economic disaster. Families with two earners could jump ahead economically of many families with only a single earner.\footnote{Economic insecurity among families in which the fathers faced low wages or joblessness made mothers’ work virtually essential. Many families experienced economic insecurity and need when widespread unemployment prevailed during the Great Depression. In 1940, 40% of children lived with fathers who did not work full time year round. While this proportion declined after the Great Depression, it has continued at high levels. Throughout the past 50 years, at least one-fifth of children have lived with fathers who, during any given year, experienced part-time work or joblessness. This has been a powerful incentive for many mothers to work for pay.} Moreover, a woman of 24 could look forward to about 40 years during which she could work for pay to help support her family. Additional motivations that drew many wives and mothers into the labor force included the personal nonfinancial rewards of working, the opportunity to be productively involved with other adults, and career satisfactions for those who entered a high-prestige occupation. In addition, the historic rise in divorce (discussed below) made paid work attractive to mothers who feared they might lose most or all of their husband’s income through divorce.

Economic insecurity among families in which the fathers faced low wages or joblessness made mothers’ work virtually essential. Many families experienced economic insecurity and need when widespread unemployment prevailed during the Great Depression. In 1940, 40% of children lived with fathers who did not work full time year round. While this proportion declined after the Great Depression, it has continued at high levels. Throughout the past 50 years, at least one-fifth of children have lived with fathers who, during any given year, experienced part-time work or joblessness. This has been a powerful incentive for many mothers to work for pay.
The Rising Number of Mother-Only Families

In addition to increasing employment among mothers, a second reason for the decline in parental availability to provide full-time child care lies in the new prevalence of one-parent, working-parent families that became evident after 1960, 20 years after the rise in dual-earner families began. Most one-parent families are mother-child families, created through separation, divorce, or out-of-wedlock childbearing. By 1993, about 24% of young children lived in mother-child families (another 4% lived with their fathers only). In about half those families, the parent worked: 12% of young children lived with a lone working mother, and an added 3% lived with a lone working father. A number of earlier changes in family life help explain these revolutionary changes in family structure.

High Rates of Divorce

As Figure 5 shows, a remarkably steady rise in rates of divorce is evident between the 1860s and the 1960s, resulting in an eightfold increase during the century. (See also the Spring 1994 issue of *The Future of Children*, which focused on Children and Divorce).\(^5\) One way of explaining this long-term increase focuses on the role the family plays as an economic unit. On preindustrial farms, fathers and mothers had to work together to sustain the family, but with a nonfarm job, the father could depend on his own work alone for his income. He could leave his family but keep his income. And, at the same time as urban employment weakened the economic interdependence of husbands and wives, by moving to urban areas families also left behind the rural small-town social controls that once censured divorce.

In addition, recent research suggests that the economic insecurity and need that result from erratic or limited employment prospects for men can also increase hostility between husbands and wives, decrease marital quality, and increase the risk of divorce.\(^6\)–\(^8\)

In fact, during each of the three economic recessions that occurred between 1970 and 1982, the proportion of mother-only families increased substantially more than during the preceding nonrecessionary period. Those recessions can account for about 30% of the overall increase in mother-child families between 1968 and 1988 or for about 50% of the increase in families headed by separated or divorced mothers.\(^1\)

Stresses on Black Families

Between 1940 and 1960, black children experienced much larger increases than white children in the proportion who lived in a mother-child family with a divorced or separated mother. The factors that led to increased separation and divorce were similar among whites and among blacks—movement off the farm and exposure to economic insecurity. Those forces affected black families with special intensity, however. The proportion of blacks living on farms dropped precipitously during the 20-year period between 1940 and 1960. In 1940, 44% of black children lived on farms, while by 1960, this figure had plummeted to only 11%. This startling drop and the extraordinary economic pressures and hardships faced by black families may account for the fact that a much higher proportion of black children than white children came to live in mother-child families.\(^1\)

By 1993, about 24% of young children lived in mother-child families; in about half those families, the parent worked.
Summary
In short, the growing reliance of American families on nonparental child care is rooted in several historical changes. First was the revolutionary increase in mothers’ labor force participation that occurred during the past half-century. By 1940, many mothers were potentially available for work, and mothers’ work had become the only major avenue available to most couples over age 25 who sought to improve their relative social and economic status. Parents had earlier limited themselves to smaller families and moved off the farm so that fathers could work at better-paid jobs in urban areas. Increasing rates of school attendance by children six years old and over freed many mothers from the need to stay home, and, over time, public schooling increased the educational attainments of young women and made them better qualified as employees. After 1940, not only was there an increasing economic demand for married women to enter the labor force, they also faced the need to work and experienced the attractions of work.

In addition, the proportion of young children living in one-parent, working-parent families has increased substantially since 1960. Underlying this increase are sharply rising rates of divorce and out-of-wedlock childbearing. The incomes of working women helped to weaken the economic interdependence between husbands and wives, setting the stage for a historic rise in rates of separation and divorce. The experience of economic insecurity associated with fathers’ part-time work, joblessness, or difficulties finding employment also made marriage less attractive and less sustainable for many families.

The consequence of all these trends is the fact that today most children live either in dual-earner families in which both parents work at jobs away from home or in one-parent families. As a result, a growing proportion of children under six need care by people other than their parents for a significant portion of the day.

Demographic Trends: Implications for Child Care
The family and economic circumstances in which children live have important implications for the development of early childhood programs. By 1989, although about 12% of children lived in dual-earner families in which the parents worked different hours or days and could personally care for their children, about 40% of preschoolers spent considerable time in the care of someone other than their parents while the parents worked. If mothers’ labor force participation continues to rise, the demand for nonparental child care will rise with it.

Continued Growth in the Demand for Child Care
The revolutionary increase in mothers’ labor force participation during the past half-century led to enormous increases in nonparental care of young children. Looking to the future, between 1992 and 2005, the labor force participation rate for women between the ages of 25 and 54 is projected to increase from 75% to 83%.10 Continued increases in rates of employment among women are likely to lead to a further decline in the availability of mothers who can be home to provide full-time care for their children.

The rising prevalence of one-parent families also is likely to continue. The divorce rate reached a peak in 1979 and declined slightly thereafter, but the graph in Figure 5 shows that the divorce rate remains extremely high by historical standards. Meanwhile, the proportion of births occurring out of wedlock continues to increase at a steady pace. If this trend persists, the proportion of children in one-parent families with working parents will rise even further.

Some families headed by single mothers with limited labor force participation have been able to rely financially on public assistance through the Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) program.
Most current welfare reform proposals, however, aim to increase labor force participation among AFDC recipients. If such reforms are enacted and if they successfully increase employment rates, there will be a corresponding increase in the need for nonparental child care for children of these mothers.11

As a result of all these demographic and policy changes, the need for nonparental child care for children in one-parent, working-parent families is likely to continue to rise.

**Characteristics of the Children Who Will Need Child Care**

This article has focused thus far on how family and economic change is increasing the demand for nonparental child care. But the changing family life of children can also influence the nature and content of the care that children will need. Ongoing demographic trends suggest that, in the coming decades, early childhood programs will be serving a population of children which is increasingly diverse in economic resources, racial and ethnic background, and family structure.

**Increasing Economic Inequality**

Economic well-being can be viewed in terms of absolute levels of family income or in terms of relative economic standing compared with other families. Economists from Adam Smith to John Kenneth Galbraith have argued that poverty must be defined in...
In Galbraith’s words, “... people are poverty-stricken when their income, even if adequate for survival, falls markedly behind that of the community.”

In an absolute sense, real income levels and living standards rose dramatically between 1940 and 1973, as median family income more than doubled, although it has changed comparatively little since then. Since 1959, however, economic expansion has done little to reduce the uneven distribution of income across families, and since 1969, economic inequality has increased. To examine the income distribution, families can be classified as living in relative poverty, near-poor frugality, middle-class comfort, or luxury, based on income thresholds set at 50%, 75%, and 150% of median family income in specific years and adjusted for family size.

Figure 6 is a graph showing the distribution of children into these income categories from 1939 to 1988. This measure shows that the proportion of young children from birth to five years living in relative poverty dropped from a high of 38% after the Great Depression to remain at less than 25% from 1949 through 1979, before it jumped to 30% in 1988 and 33% in 1993. Another 15% of children in 1988 and 1993 lived in near-poor frugality. At the opposite extreme, the proportion of young children in families with luxury level incomes declined from 23% in 1939 to about 12% in the 1950s, before increasing to 20% in 1988 and to 23% in 1993. The years from 1969 to 1993 saw a significant decline in middle-class comfort, as more and more children lived at the extremes of luxury and poverty.

In other words, the past 25 years—when the demand for nonparental care was growing fastest—also brought a substantial expansion in economic inequality among families. As a result, the quantitative increases in the total need for nonparental care during the past quarter-century have been accompanied by increased qualitative differences in the educational needs of the children who enter child care.

In families with higher incomes, parents can usually afford to provide resources and educational experiences that foster the development of their children, while children from poor homes rely more on child care and preschool programs to provide those experiences. As a result, children from families at different income levels may enter child care situations with different needs. In recognition of the unmet developmental needs of many children who live in poverty, for example, the Head Start program adds to its preschool educational activities a comprehensive set of nutritional, health, and social services that are not typically offered to children from more advantaged families.

Research, policies, and programs that explicitly address these differences are sorely needed.

Growing Racial and Ethnic Diversity

Race and ethnic origin define another dimension along which it seems likely that educational needs of young children may differ. American children were already quite racially and ethnically diverse as of 1990, when 69% of children under age 18 were white (and not of Hispanic origin), 15% were black, 12% were Hispanic, and 4% were from another racial or ethnic group.

Immigration and differential birthrates across ethnic groups will likely increase that diversity in the coming years. Looking to the future, Figure 7 shows that the proportion of children under age 18 who are white is projected to decline steadily and rapidly, from 69% in 1990 to only 50% in 2030. Conversely, the proportion of all children who are Hispanic or who are black or of another nonwhite race is expected to climb from 31% to 50%.

Poverty, language barriers, and cultural isolation are important factors that influence many nonwhite or Hispanic children, who may have educational needs (and related social needs) that differ from those of white children. As a result, these projections highlight an increasing need to understand these differences through research and to plan...
Figure 7

Percentage of Children Who Are Non-Hispanic White, Black, and Hispanic, 1980, 1990, and Projected Through 2050

new child care policies and programs appropriate to a diverse population of children.16

**Diverse Family Living Arrangements**

Children also vary greatly in their family living arrangements, and this is true separately for children within specific racial and ethnic groups. Even among children under age one, historical data show that, in 1940, 7% of white infants and 25% of black infants lived in a one-parent family or were separated from their parents. By 1980, these rates had doubled to 13% for whites and 54% for blacks. In 1993, the proportion of children under age six with one parent in the home was 21% for whites, 66% for blacks, and 34% for Hispanics.

Recent evidence indicates that, compared with children in two-parent families, children in one-parent families have higher risks of dropping out of high school, bearing children as teenagers, and not being employed by their early twenties. The low incomes and sudden declines in income experienced by children in these families are the most important reason for their disadvantaged outcomes, although research suggests that other differences in family life also play a significant role.17 Children in one-parent families are therefore likely to have educational needs that differ from children in two-parent families and that should be understood and addressed.

**Summary**

In short, the United States is in the midst of a child care revolution, as more and more young children under the age of six are cared for by someone other than their parents. Broad demographic trends as well as efforts to reform the welfare system are likely to increase rates of labor force participation by mothers with young children, further expanding the demand for nonparental child care. At the same time, the diversity in the characteristics and needs of the nation’s children has also increased, particularly in terms of their economic circumstances, their racial and ethnic backgrounds, and their family living arrangements. Child care policies and programs must be designed to respond to the differing needs of the many children who use them.

**Lessons to Guide Child Care Policy**

The first child care revolution began more than 100 years ago, and it affected children over age five. Through compulsory education laws, government both mandated and paid for universal schooling for all children age six and over. As time passed, the upper age limit for compulsory schooling was raised, and public funding for schooling increased. This led to enormous improvements in the skills and knowledge of the labor force, thereby contributing to economic development and rising real incomes.

Today, as global economic competition becomes an increasing concern, the United States is in the midst of a second child care revolution, one affecting children under age six whose parent or parents work. From this perspective, one can see child care as valuable or essential to society at large. It facilitates the work of mothers and their contribution both to their family income and to the economy. The quality of child care may also influence the future international competitiveness of the U.S. economy by fostering the development of productive workers who will support the baby boom generation as it reaches retirement.

When high-quality child care, like the preschool programs that are the subject of this journal issue, leads to improved educational and developmental outcomes for children, it has value not only for the child and the parents, but also for the broader society. Child care is expensive, however. Overall, families with a preschool child who pay for child care devote about 10% of their incomes to child care, but this figure ranges from only 6% for families with annual incomes of $50,000 or more to 23% for families with annual incomes under $15,000.18 The relative cost of child care as an expense associated with having a job is quite high for low-income families. The question then arises: Should the cost of that care be borne...
mainly or solely by parents? (Editors’ note: This topic will be addressed in depth in an upcoming issue of The Future of Children, scheduled to be published in Summer/Fall 1996.)

The first child care revolution was mandated and paid for by government as a social good in the public interest. Today, evolving economic conditions effectively require that an increasing proportion of mothers work, and proposed welfare reforms will mandate that other mothers of young children find employment to support their families. In this context, it is important that new research inform the public policy debate about the kinds, the costs, and the quality of child care available to the youngest members of American society. Research about the value of child care to children, parents, and society at large may also help inform policy debate about the appropriate role of government in fostering and funding quality care for American children.

The author is indebted to Arthur J. Norton for institutional leadership, scholarly counsel, and personal enthusiasm and encouragement which created an indispensable and nurturing home in the U.S. Bureau of the Census for writing the book which provides the foundation for this article. Thanks are due also to Edith Reeves and Catherine O’Brien for statistical support, and to Stephanie Kennedy for secretarial support. The author bears sole responsibility for the results and opinions presented here.

1. This article draws especially on research reported in the author’s recent book which used census and survey data for 1940, 1950, 1960, 1970, 1980, and 1989 to develop the first-ever statistics using children as the unit of analysis. These data chart a wide array of family and economic changes that affected children from the Great Depression through the 1980s. Additional analyses of previously published data extend the investigation back an additional 150 years. Hernandez, D.J. America’s children: Resources from government, family, and the economy. New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1993. This research was also reported in Hernandez, D.J. Children’s changing access to resources: A historical perspective. Social Policy Report (1993) 8,1:1-23.

2. The precise estimate of 6% to 8% is obtained from note no. 1, Hernandez, America’s children, Table 5.2. The estimates for 1980, 1990, and 1993 were provided by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Howard Hayghe.


11. Another important goal of many welfare reform proposals is to reduce out-of-wedlock childbearing, but available evidence suggests that the effect of welfare on out-of-wedlock childbearing is small. For a discussion of the extent to which welfare programs have contributed to the increase in mother-only families, see note no. 1, Hernandez, America’s children, pp. 291–300.


13. For recent studies on the effects for children of poverty and economic inequality, see papers from the Consequences of Growing Up Poor conference, held February 2–3, 1995, at the National Academy of Sciences, organized by the National Institute of Child Health and Development (NICHD) Family and Child Well-Being Network, the Russell Sage Foundation, and the National Academy of Sciences Board on Children and Families.

15. For additional discussions of child indicators pertaining to race, ethnicity, and educational needs, see Levit, E.M., and Baker, L.G. *Race and ethnicity—changes for children.* The Future of Children (Winter 1994) 4.3:134–44.


