



Family Change in Global Perspective

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Overview



- Try to place the growing diversification of family forms in the U.S. and globally in an historical context.
- Begin with a brief discussion of the sources of the change that we have witnessed over the past 50 years.
- Much will be familiar if you are a family demographer
- Rapid change took social scientists by surprise
- Discuss how and why change took place and its ramifications for growing social inequality.
- End with a brief discussion of public policy approaches to mitigating some of the impact on children.



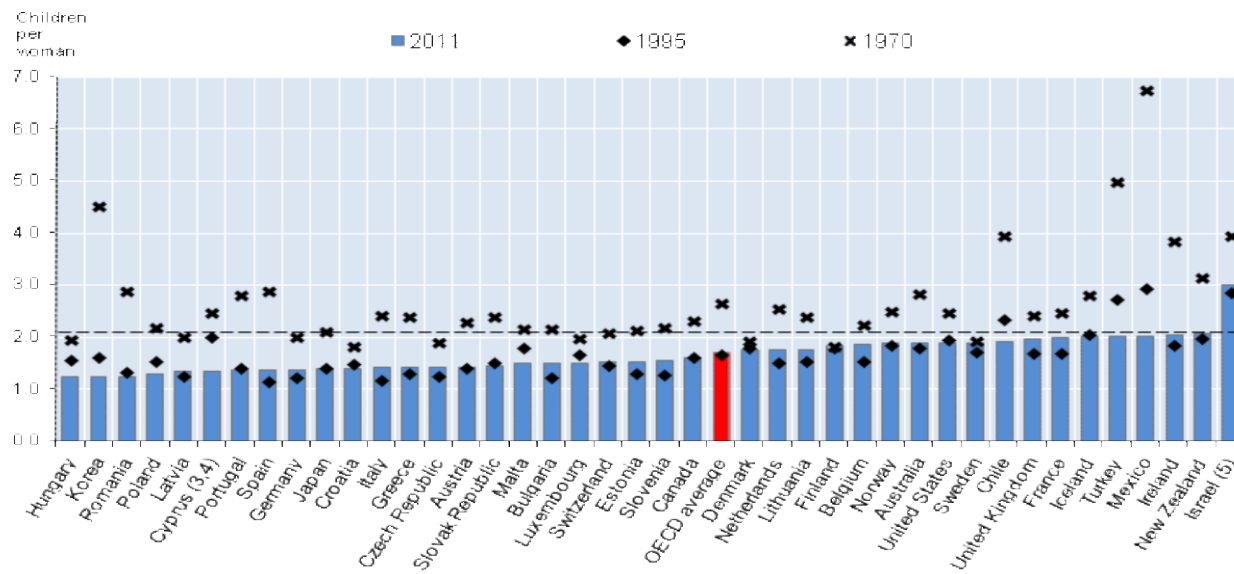






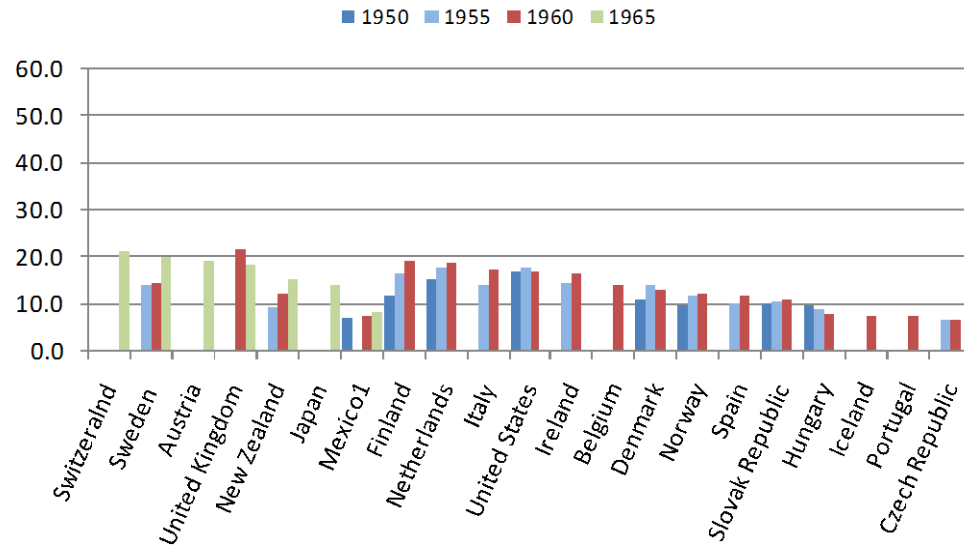


Chart SF2.1.A: Total fertility rates in 1970¹, 1995 and 2011²

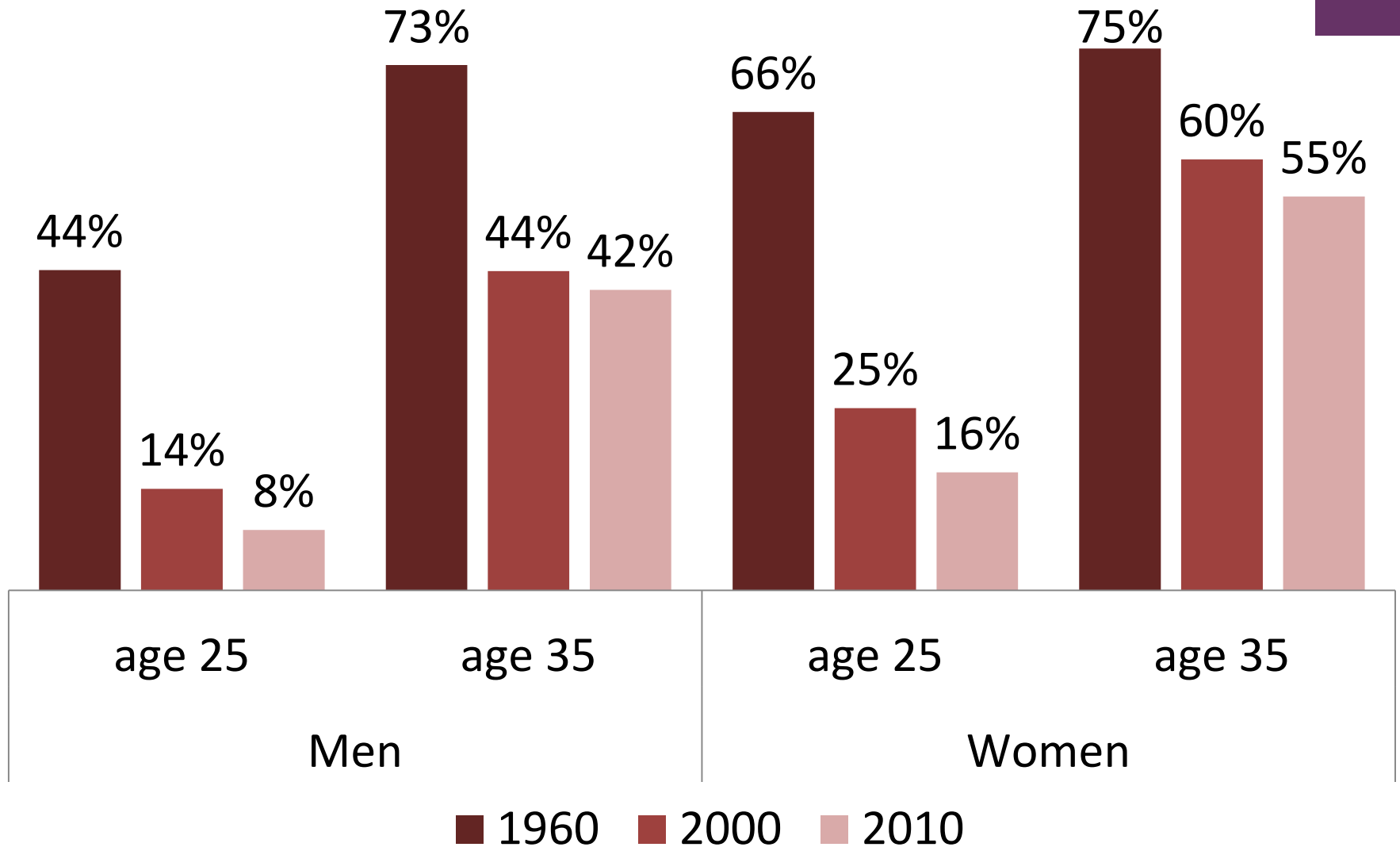




Panel B: The proportion of childless women at age 40



+ Percent completing transition to adulthood in 1960, 2000, and 2010 using traditional benchmarks, ages: 25 and 35, USA (Census)





Major Descriptive Changes



- Link between initiation of sex and marriage broken down
- Postponement of demographic transitions and later adult transitions
- Weakening of marriage institution, permitting more alternative forms (cohabitation in particular)
- Breakdown of gender-based division of labor
- Delay of family formation and lower fertility
- Growth in non-marital childbearing
- At a country level “convergence to divergence (Billari and Liefbroer, 2010)
- Widening of social class differences in the family in the U.S., Europe, and the Anglo-speaking nations: **Emergence of Two-tier Family**



Why and How the Change Occurred



- Family adapts to changing environmental and economic circumstances
- Changes occur where there are cultural contradictions and paradoxical: “time honored traditions can no longer be honored” (Mills, 1962)
- Very early marriage pattern was riddled with contradictions
- I had a ringside seat to the changes in my ongoing study of teenage childbearing in Baltimore beginning in the mid-1960s
- The logic of “early marriage” no longer made sense by the late 1970s and early 1980s
- Different responses by affluent and disadvantaged families.



Change Occurred Differently Among Privileged and Disadvantaged



- The widening of social class differences in family types
- Breakdown of gender-based division of labor was experienced differently among low and high income families
 - Marriage unattainable for poor
 - Marriage delayed for well-off
- Development of a two-tiered family system with different family formation patterns
- Was this a cultural or structural change? A mindless debate!
- Reciprocal relationship between economic inequality and family change.



#1 Impending cultural contradictions



- Sex and Marriage

- Rising marriage age increases pressures for premarital sex, but only modest evidence of behavioral changes (Zenos et. al., 2006)
- Cohabitation as adaptation, not much in evidence

- Home leaving, (Pre-marital Sex) and Marriage

- Will the delay of marriage and the cost of home leaving become intolerable to parents and children?
- If children move out before marriage, will this in turn increase the likelihood of pre-marital sex?



#2 Gender Role Inflexibilities



- There is Uneven Decline of Patriarchy
 - Patriarchy and Marriage
 - Work and Family Roles have become increasingly incompatible for Women
 - The growth of singlehood in many parts of Asia and the Rapidly Developing world
- Resulting Pressures on Fertility
 - The demands for investment in children are growing, making larger family size more problematic



#3 Growing Demands on Parents and the Intergeneration bargain



- Extension of early adulthood with resulting economic pressures on parents
- Asian families may be well positioned to absorb the changes
- Extended burdens on parents may not be easily repaid in the next generation
- Squeeze on parent-generation is high and
- The squeeze on next generation may be even higher
- More grandparents; fewer grandchildren
- Will educational differences between the generation undercut parental authority?



Policy Choices for New Futures



- Value Dilemmas in future policy decisions
 - What kind of society we shape is a political decision though I would argue that certain choices are likely to promote economic and social well-being
 - Gender equality policies have been generally higher fertility in the West.
 - The extension of free or relatively inexpensive access to tertiary education.
 - Taxing and redistributive policies.

+ Thank You



- Questions and Comments are Welcome