A Civil Rights Agenda for the Next Quarter Century

The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the School-Age Population in the U.S.

NOVEMBER 2023

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25 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Suggested citation:

Van Hook, J., Bélanger, A., Sabourin, P., Patoine Hamel, N. (2023). *The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the School-Age Population in the U.S.* Los Angeles, CA: The Civil Rights Project/Proyecto Derechos Civiles, UCLA.

About the Series

A Civil Rights Agenda for the Next Quarter Century

The Civil Rights Project was founded in 1996 at Harvard University, during a period of increasingly conservative courts and political movements that were limiting, and sometimes reversing, major civil rights reforms. In 2007 the Project moved to UCLA. Its goal was—and still is—to bring together researchers, lawyers, civil rights advocates and governmental and educational leaders to create a new generation of civil rights research, and communicate what is learned to those who could use it to address the problems of inequality and discrimination. Created a generation after the civil rights revolution of the 1960s, CRP's vision was to produce new understandings of challenges and research-based evidence on solutions. The Project has always maintained a strong, central focus on equal education and racial change.

We are celebrating our first quarter century by taking a serious look forward—not at the history of the issues, not at the debates over older policies, not at celebrating prior victories but at the needs of the next quarter century. Since the work of civil rights advocates and leaders of color in recent decades has often been about defending threatened, existing rights, we need innovative thinking to address the challenges facing our rapidly changing society. Political leaders often see policy in short two- and four-year election cycles but we decided to look at the upcoming generation. Because researchers are uniquely qualified to think systematically, this series is an attempt to harness the skills of several disciplines, to think deeply about how our society has changed since the civil rights revolution and what the implications are for the future of racial justice.

This effort includes two very large sets of newly commissioned work. This paper is the fifth in the series on the potential for social change and equity policies in the nation. The second set of studies focuses on California, a vast state whose astonishing diversity foretells the future of the U.S.

and whose profound inequality warns that there is much work to be done. All these studies will initially be issued as working papers. They will be brought together in statewide conferences and in the U.S. Capitol and, eventually, as two major books, which we hope will help light the way in the coming decades. At each of the major events, scholars will exchange ideas and address questions from each other, from leaders and from the public.

The Civil Rights Project, like the country, is in a period of transition, identifying leadership for its next chapter. We are fortunate to have collaborated with a remarkable network of important scholars across the U.S., who contributed to our work in the last quarter century and continue to do so in this new work. We are also inspired by the nation's many young people who understand that our future depends on overcoming division. They are committed to constructing new paths to racial justice. We hope these studies open avenues for this critical work, stimulate future scholars and lawyers, and inform policymaking in a society with the unlimited potential of diversity, if it can only figure out how to achieve genuine equality.

Gary Orfield

Patricia Gándara

Acknowledgements

This report is based on research funded, in part, by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation. The findings and conclusions contained within are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the positions or policies of the Civil Rights Project funders.

Foreword

The U.S. has experienced profound demographic change over the last half century and the birth statistics show that it will continue to change. A country with a large white majority and a population surge from the baby boom sixty years ago has become an aging, profoundly multiracial, society with low birth rates. Growth now is overwhelmingly nonwhite and deeply influenced by immigration. This paper is about what is likely to happen in our society over the next quarter century as the demographic transition continues. Much of our civil rights policy was formed long ago around the challenge of opening up opportunity in a white society to Blacks who were concentrated in the South and in some big Northern and Western cities. That has changed dramatically.

A first step in thinking about the future of civil rights is getting systematic information on how our society will be changing and what it is likely to look like in another generation if the dominant trends continue on their current course. Demography cannot predict sudden changes that affect the entire society and cannot rule out totally unexpected new forces, but, compared to other fields it can offer very powerful predictions. The children that will graduate from college in 2050 will be born about 2029, a few years from now. Their parents, except for new immigrants, were born a long time ago and a great many are now in established relationships and homes. The fertility levels of most groups have been on relatively clear decline for generations, sped up by the Great Recession. Immigration is the most policy relevant factor and that policy is far from settled so it is important to examine possible variations as this study does. But, all in all, compared to predictions about the economy, about politics, about international conditions, about attitude changes, and many other factors, demography offers more accuracy.

This study by an excellent group of demographers at Penn State and Montreal offers us the best available projections of what we can expect for the next quarter century. The researchers have

especially focused on the changes in the students who will be coming into U.S. schools and helping shape the future society. For thinking about the future of our social, economic, and civil rights policies these projections offer important findings.

We are on a path, the authors report, for more diversity in much of the nation. For most of U.S. history substantial racial and ethnic diversity has been concentrated in the South, the Southwest, and the great urban centers of the North and West and the outlying states of Alaska and Hawaii. Black and Latino and Asian households are now into a process of dispersing to all parts of the U.S. In the past if you looked at a population distribution map you would see big white spaces with very little diversity in large areas in the Northeast, the Midwest and the West. This will change. This does not mean that people are living or studying in interracial settings, but it does mean that there will be far more racial diversity in many historically isolated white areas and that leaders everywhere will need to observe and consider policies for dealing successfully in a more diverse context. The changes will have impacts on workforces, schools and colleges, politics, language and culture issues, and many other aspects of society. Since the change is most dramatic among the young, schools will be especially affected. In many conservative largely white parts of the U.S. state governments are now considering policies to forbid teaching about racial change and the history of discrimination, even banning books. These are places that need and could benefit from the things some want to ban.

The important basic messages of this paper include projections of continued long-term decline in the share of the white population and enrollments. Whites have been and will continue to be aging significantly and creating families that are too small to sustain the existing population levels. The school enrollments will continue to decline. The great Latino immigration and the tidal wave of young Latino children changed the U.S. in the late 20th century and the first decade of the 21st which made Latinos the largest nonwhite group. There will be very large populations of young Latinos in

the future but numbers will be growing more slowly and there will be fewer children whose home language is not English. Regardless of whether immigration continues on its present pace, declines, or increases substantially, the basic Latino trend will be shaped by families that are U.S. residents, not immigrants. What had been a young population with large families is expected to be getting older on average with considerably smaller families than a generation ago. The Asian population has grown rapidly and is currently the fastest growing immigrant group, but is not expected to account for a rapid increase in the share of school age children because of small family sizes. Overall population changes are predicted to be less rapid than what the country experienced in the late 20th century.

The most important reality we see in the demographic projections is the fact that there will not be enough young people to keep many of our institutions operating in their current model or to support key labor- intense institutions and functions. A large share of the young will be from groups that have consistently had weaker educational preparation and outcomes. The projections suggest problems in producing the number of young people with college educations that the labor market demands. Young people will become more scarce and more valuable, less white. It will be more costly to waste their talents. For generations we have failed to develop the talent of many students of color. As we have a decline of young and an increasing share s nonwhite, changing that pattern will be a central challenge for the communities of the future and the nation.

We are on track to have severe inequality in college completion in mid-century. The projections of long-term educational attainment trends show that the present stratification of groups is likely to persist. As the Latino population becomes more settled and the language challenge declines, the report projects some significant gains and a narrowing of the Latino-white gap. Perhaps the most worrisome projection, however, indicates that if the present trends continue, Blacks will not gain significantly in college completion in the next generation. Other reports in this series will

take up some of the causes and possible remedies for the wide educational gaps. These data say that we will not solve them or change anything fundamental if we just continue on the present path.

A great deal of energy is spent now in discussions of blocking the racial and ethnic transformation of American society by blocking immigration at the border. These data show that that ship sailed a long time ago with the major birth rate and immigration changes that took shape more than a half century ago. Immigration is not the basic cause of our population challenges now nor would changes in immigration policy reverse them. In fact, the aging and small families of the white population and the younger age of nonwhite women mean that our only choice now is to welcome the increasing diversity of our population or have our society age out. In fact, low birth rates and the aging of all race and ethnic groups suggest that if we are to grow or maintain a constant supply of young workers, it will be important to have substantial additional immigration, as will be analyzed in a future report in this series. Supporting the coming great increase in the elderly and dependent population requires young workers and taxpayers. The policy choice is often posed as exclusion of newcomers or acceptance of change. The reality shown in this report is that population change is very well underway and will continue.

As we consider these statistics, the real choice is whether to accept change and assure development of all of our human talent or to resist and decline. From a civil rights viewpoint, the answer is obvious. It is time to recognize and accept the changes coming in our next generation, and to help areas that have not yet experienced much diversity to deal well with it, and to treat diversity as a source of cultural and economic resources. For better or for worse, we are all in this together. This report does not give us the answers but it skillfully analyzes key aspects of the changes we face. Many of the implications and options will be discussed in future reports in this series.

-Gary Orfield

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Executive Summary

The racial and ethnic composition of the U.S. population is rapidly changing in response to decades of sustained large-scale immigration. In 1950, non-Hispanic Whites made up the vast majority of the population (90%). As of 2020, non-Hispanic Whites made up 58 percent of the nation's population, and the Census Bureau projects that they will compose only half by 2044 (Colby & Ortman, 2015). These trends are occurring even more quickly for children and young adults. As early as 2018, non-Hispanic Whites made up less than half (49.9%) of the nation's population under age 15.

What should schools and educators anticipate over the next three decades? How is the school-aged population (ages 5-17) likely to change with respect to its racial and ethnic composition, generational status, home language, and educational attainment? Employing an innovative microsimulation model, we project *both* growing diversity for most places in the country, and reductions in the sociocultural distances between racial and ethnic groups. We project:

A majority-minority patchwork among American school-age youth. By 2050, non-Hispanic White children are projected to compose 42% of the population age 5-17, Hispanics 29%, Blacks 17%, Asians and Pacific Islanders 7%, and children with multiracial or other identities 4%.

Geographic spread of racial and ethnic heterogeneity. Racial and ethnic heterogeneity is projected to increase the most in areas with lower levels of heterogeneity in 2020, such as areas in the New England and the Midwest and cities like Boston, St. Louis, and Minneapolis. Conversely, racial and ethnic heterogeneity is projected to plateau in areas that already have high levels of heterogeneity in 2020, such as Florida, California, and the West Coast regions and cities like San Francisco and Washington, DC. This means that these states and cities have greater diversity within their overall population, but not that the neighborhoods, schools or school districts are actually

integrated. School segregation of Blacks and Hispanics from White, Asian, and middle-class students is very high and has been intensifying since 1990 (Orfield and Pfleger, forthcoming 2023).

Reductions in the number and share of children of immigrants. The number of first- or second-generation school-age children (i.e., foreign-born children and children of immigrant mothers) is projected to decline between 2020 and 2050, dropping from 16.8 million to 11.4 million, and the share of children of immigrant mothers would decline from 29% to 20%. The proportion of children of immigrants among Hispanics is projected to decrease from about 59% in 2020 to 24% in 2050. Among Asians, this proportion could decrease from 92% to 71%.

Declines in non-English Home Language Use. We project substantial declines in the share of children speaking a non-English language at home, particularly among Hispanics (a 14 percentage point drop from 58% to 44%) and Asian/PI children (a 7 percentage point drop from 58% to 51%).

Gains in Educational Attainment for Hispanics. Even in the absence of any improvements in educational opportunities, Hispanic children are projected to experience gains in educational attainment. The percentage of Hispanics with a college degree or more is projected to increase by more than 7 percentage points from 2020 to 2050 (from 30 to 37%). Conversely, the percentage of Hispanics projected to drop out of high school is projected to decline by nearly 3 percentage points (from 14% to 11%). However, these projected improvements are largely confined to Hispanics, and are attributable to the projected declines in the share of Hispanic children who have immigrant parents, who tend to have lower educational attainments. Hispanic children's attainment are projected to remain well below the white level and Asians are projected to remain the highest.

An Enduring Attainment Gap for Blacks. Black students' attainment currently remains substantially lower than the other groups. If the existing trends continue there will be very little increase in college attainment for Black youth.

Reducing Immigration in the Future Will Not Change These Trends. If the number of immigrants admitted to the country were to decrease substantially starting today under current policy frameworks, this would have little impact on the racial and ethnic composition of the child population. The major reason is that the U.S.-born children and young adults are already very heterogeneous, and changing future immigration levels will not alter that fact.

Changes in Ethnic Identity Could Reduce Racial and ethnic Heterogeneity. About one-third of Asians and Hispanics are married to a person of a different race or ethnicity, most often White, and their children may not self-identify as Asian or Hispanic. If all or most children with at least one non-Hispanic White parent identified as non-Hispanic White, this would dramatically change the projected racial and ethnic composition of the school-aged population. Rather than a majority-minority patchwork, non-Hispanic Whites would continue to make up the majority of the population (although many of them would have Asian and Hispanic parents and grandparents). The complex nature of growing multiracialism is the subject of another paper in this series.

Overall, the number and share of children with Latin American and Asian roots will increase in the future. At the same time, the share of Hispanic and Asian children with U.S.-born parents will increase. Under social conditions in which groups are treated equitably, these compositional changes are likely to be accompanied by reduced sociocultural distances between groups, especially with regard to English language usage at home, educational attainment, and ethnic identity.

The Changing Racial and Ethnic Composition of the School-Age Population in the U.S.

Jennifer Van Hook[a], Alain Bélanger[b], Patrick Sabourin[b] and Nicolas Patoine Hamel[b1]

Introduction

The passage of the Hart-Cellar Act of 1965 ushered in new waves of immigrants to the United States from Latin America and Asia. After several decades, these immigrants, along with their children and grandchildren, transformed the population of the United States along racial and ethnic lines. In 1950, non-Hispanic Whites made up the vast majority of the population (90%). By the 2020 Census, non-Hispanic Whites made up 57.8 percent, and the Census Bureau projects that they will compose only half by 2044 (Colby & Ortman, 2015), making the country a "minority-majority" nation. Among children under age 15, the transition to a minority-majority population has already occurred (W. H. Frey, 2018). As early as 2018, non-Hispanic Whites made up less than half (49.9%) of the nation's population under age 15. This transformation has occurred most completely in traditional immigrant destinations, such as in California, Texas, Florida, and New York, where the combined share of Hispanic, Asian, and Black children exceeds 50% (Ruggles, Flood, Goeken, Schouweiler, Megan, & Sobek, 2022). However, some of the most rapid increases in racial and ethnic heterogeneity occurred during the 1990s and the first decade of the 21st century in so-called "new immigrant destinations", such as rural areas and towns in the Southeast and Midwest. During

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the 1990s and 2000s, for example, towns like Worthington, MN or Hazelton, PA went from having few to no racial and ethnic minorities to being around 40% or more Hispanic.

Over the last few decades, these demographic trends for children have had an outsized impact on schools and educators. On the one hand, diversity in schools and classrooms brings new perspectives and experiences (Spivak, White, Juvonen, & Graham, 2015; Wells, Fox, & Cordova-Cobo, 2016) and can enhance learning for all students. For example, studies have shown that having friends who are children of immigrants is associated with academic success and lower rates of problematic behaviors such as smoking or drinking (McMillan, 2019). On the other hand, many Black and Hispanic children live in disadvantaged families and neighborhoods and experience higher rates of poverty, violence, and discrimination than other children. They continue to lag behind Asian and White children in multiple indicators of school success, including school readiness, reading and math test scores, grade retention, grades, high school completion, and college attendance (de Brey et al., 2019; Reardon & Portilla, 2016). Additionally, more than half of Hispanic children and roughly 90% of Asian children are immigrants themselves or have immigrant parents. As a consequence, many of these children come from homes where English is not the primary language being spoken, meaning that schools with large shares of children of immigrants have had to divert resources to English language learning. The challenges of teaching low English proficient students are compounded, given that a large share of children of Hispanic immigrants have parents with very low levels of education and, for a variety of reasons, tend to be less engaged in their children's schooling (Liu & White, 2017). Another of the papers commissioned for this project shows severe educational problems for American Indian and Alaska Native children (Faircloth and Culpepper, forthcoming 2023).

In this chapter, we look ahead and ask, what should schools and educators anticipate over the next three decades or so? As noted earlier, the U.S. Census Bureau already produces projections

of the U.S. population that forecast large changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the population over the next few decades. We advance beyond this work by employing an innovative microsimulation model that we designed to explore the ways in which the populations of the United States and other immigrant-receiving countries are likely to change. Like the models employed by the U.S. Census Bureau, our model accounts for demographic trends in fertility, migration, aging, and mortality, but we go further to model how these processes are associated with population characteristics, such as place of residence, generational status, educational attainment, and the language spoken in children's homes.

We make three major contributions. First, we focus on the racial and ethnic composition of school-aged children, namely those ages 5-18. Children differ from adults in that they are currently the most racially and ethnically heterogeneous age group in the country. Children's racial and ethnic composition owes to the timing of their birth in U.S. history. Many are the offspring or grandchildren of the large waves of immigrants who arrived from Latin America, Asia, and Africa in the decades following the 1965 Hart-Cellar Act. Of course, older adults will also become more heterogeneous in future decades as today's children grow older. But here we maintain our focus on children, both those currently living and those yet to be born. We ask whether the racial and ethnic heterogeneity among children has plateaued or whether it is likely to continue to rise. We also explore which parts of the country are likely to see the greatest changes given the current regional patterns and trends in racial and ethnic composition, fertility, and internal migration.

Our second major contribution is to explore the implications of the projected changes in the racial and ethnic composition of children for the schools they attend. Currently, increases in racial and ethnic heterogeneity are associated with the arrival of new immigrant families. Over nine-tenths of current Hispanic students are U.S. citizens though many have at least one immigrant parent. Asian students are far more likely to be immigrants. Consequently, communities experiencing

growth in racial and ethnic heterogeneity have often had to contend with growing demand for ESL instruction, bilingual and translation services, supplemental instruction for young children who never attended preschool before starting public school, and counseling for older adolescents who need career advice and assistance navigating the transition from high school to college. But racial and ethnic heterogeneity may not always be associated with immigration. Over time, today's Hispanic and Asian children will grow up and have their own children. These children are unlikely to have the same experiences of living in an immigrant family as did their parents and grandparents. As we look ahead, we project not just the racial and ethnic composition of America's schoolchildren but also some of their characteristics, including the share who have immigrant parents, the share who speak a language other than English at home, and their completed educational attainment.

Our third major contribution is to explore alternative futures. The results we present here are not predictions, but rather represent extrapolations of current population dynamics. They are the logical outcomes of what would occur if current demographic trends in three core demographic processes—fertility, mortality, and immigration—were to continue. Of these three core demographic processes, immigration may be the most difficult to anticipate since it is heavily dependent on policy. It is possible that immigration to the United States could slow down. Mexican migration has already slowed substantially (Sáenz, 2019). Additionally, the Biden administration aimed to reduce emigration from Central America by addressing the "root causes" of migration from this region related to violence and economic and political instability (U.S National Security Council, 2021), and later, faced with tremendous migration pressure on the Southern border, resorted to measures to restrain or prevent immigration. Yet there are other reasons to expect immigration to increase due to factors such as climate change, political unrest, and labor demand in the United States. For these reasons, we explore how sensitive the projections are to alternative immigration scenarios, wherein we assume high, medium, and low levels of immigration. In this

sense, our approach is similar to that taken by the U.S. Census Bureau in their most-recently released projections of the U.S. population, which account for varying levels of international migration in the future (U.S. Census Bureau 2023).

We also recognize that projections of the racial and ethnic composition of the population could be inaccurate or misleading because racial and ethnic identities and the meanings of those identities could change in the future. Our model projects the racial and ethnic composition of children while assuming that current patterns of intermarriage and identity formation of children with mixed-race parentage were to remain unchanged from what occurs today. But it is possible that today's immigrants could follow the patterns seen among the descendants of industrial-era European immigrants, among whom intermarriage rates increased and the salience of ethnic identity waned across generations. Indeed, studies of later-generation descendants of Hispanic immigrants suggest that large shares no longer identify as Hispanic. For example, about 30 percent of third generation Mexican Americans, the largest Hispanic national origin group, do not self-identify as Hispanic (Duncan & Trejo, 2011). Children with mixed White and Hispanic parentage or mixed White and Asian parentage identify as mixed-race or White alone more so than they identify as Asian alone or Hispanic alone (Lee & Bean, 2010). Moreover, intermarriage rates for Hispanics and Asians are substantial--about 30%, highest for women--(Livingstone & Brown, 2017), and the recent release of the 2020 Census revealed that the largest growing racial and ethnic group was those who identified with more than one race. Drawing upon this evidence, Richard Alba (2020) argues in *The Great Demographic Illusion* that intermarriage and growth of the multiracial population signals the assimilation of immigrant groups into an expanding and ever more inclusive "White" majority. With the important exception of those with at least one Black parent, he demonstrates that people with mixed-race parentage (e.g., White-Hispanic or White-Asian) tend to be more similar to Whites than non-Whites across multiple behaviors, attitudes, and socioeconomic statuses. Given the possibility

that a significant share of children of White-Asian and White-Hispanic parents will increasingly identify as White alone or multiracial, we consider how such changes in racial and ethnic identity could affect the composition of the child population.

This report does not report projections for Native or Indian population. Because of the complexity of more than 500 tribal groups and various definitions from the Census and other sources, those issues are dealt with in another paper to be published in this series (Liebler, 2023 forthcoming).

Methodology

We generate our projections using a microsimulation model that was designed by Bélanger and colleagues to provide prospective analyses of the socio-economic and cultural consequences of population changes in high immigration countries (Bélanger, Sabourin, Marois, Van Hook, & Vézina, 2019). We originally developed the model for Canada and subsequently adapted it for the United States (the "LSD-USA" model) and the 28 member countries of the European Union. We have already used the LSD-USA model to simulate the long-run impact of restrictive immigration policies on the educational attainment of the U.S. labor force (Van Hook, Bélanger, Sabourin, & Morse, 2020).

The LSD-USA model extends beyond typical cohort-component projection models because it projects the population at the individual level, and it accounts for the interconnections of demographic processes (including fertility, mortality, internal migration, labor force participation, and educational attainment) and how these demographic processes are related to a variety of demographic and socioeconomic factors, such as race, ethnicity, generational status, English language proficiency, and education.

A detailed description of LSD-USA is available online (Bélanger, Alain et al., 2019). For this chapter, we use an updated version (LSD-USA 2.0), which differs from the original LSD-USA model in that it further models interracial and interethnic marriage as a function of the racial and ethnic composition of regional marriage markets and a set of individual characteristics. Interracial and interethnic unions, in turn, determine the children's racial and ethnic identity. We briefly describe below the aspects of the model that are most relevant to this chapter.

Base Population

A base population is a database that is used as a point of departure for a microsimulation projection model. In LSD-USA 2.0, we built the base population by extracting relevant variables from the 2015 American Community Survey (ACS) 1% Integrated Public Use Microdata file (ACS-IPUMS).

The variables included in our model are age, sex, region of residence, immigrant status, age at immigration, place of birth, education, language spoken at home, and race/ethnicity. In addition to those variables, we imputed religion and literacy from other data sources. For children living with their parents, we extracted variable values for the mother and added them to their children's characteristics. This allowed us to estimate intergenerational transmission of socio-cultural characteristics such as education, language or ethnicity, as well as to derive useful demographic variables such as generational status.

The geography of the model is derived from census metropolitan area of residence, state, or Census division, with emphasis on metropolitan areas with racial and ethnic heterogeneous populations. The model includes a total of 31 places of residence covering the whole United States territory.

Race and Ethnicity

Because we rely heavily on the ACS for our projection, our baseline projection reflects the current ACS definitions and data collection practices. Of course, these definitions and practices could change, a point we return to later. For now, the ACS treats race and ethnicity as subjective indicators of identity rather than objective indicators of a family's ancestry or parentage, so we employ the same identity-based definition in the projection model. For example, we *do not* classify all children with mixed-racial and ethnic parentage as multiracial, but instead classify only those as identifying with more than one race as multiracial. Clearly, identity-based definitions of race and ethnicity are socially constructed and can shift independently of parentage. In 2013, 6.9% of the U.S. population was of mixed parentage, yet only 2.1% identified as multiracial (Parker, Morin, Horowitz, Lopez, & Rohal, 2015). Moreover, only seven years later, the multiracial category expanded to include nearly 10% of the population in the 2020 Census, a shift that occurred too quickly to be accounted for by changes in parentage.

We combine ACS racial and ethnic categories to help align them with the categories that are recognized under Civil Rights law. The ACS invites respondents to identify themselves and their children as belonging to one or more racial groups, and in a separate question, the ACS asks about Hispanic ethnicity. Thus, ACS respondents can have multiple racial identities, and Hispanics can be identified with any single race or combination. However, a review of case law (Leslie, Gregory & Masuoka, Natalie, 2022) reveals that multiracial individuals are often protected as members of the minority side of their identity rather than as a separate multiracial group. Additionally, multiracial Blacks and Hispanics tend to experience elevated levels of discrimination, similar to monoracial Blacks and Hispanics. We therefore combined Blacks and multiracial Blacks into a single category. Additionally, even though our projection model treats White Hispanics separately from non-White Hispanics, reflecting their unique demographic rates and socioeconomic mobility processes (Alba,

2020), we combined these two Hispanic groups when presenting results. We retained a separate multiracial category for other groups (chiefly those with Asian-White backgrounds) because they tend to have outcomes and behaviors that fall between their two identities (Alba, 2020). In summary, we employ seven categories:

1. "non-Hispanic White alone", non-Hispanic-Whites with no other racial identity;
2. "Hispanic and White";
3. "Hispanic and non-White" (combined with "Hispanic and White" when presenting results);
4. "Black", non-Hispanic Blacks, including those who report another racial and ethnic identity;
5. "Asian/Pacific Islanders alone", non-Hispanic Asian or Pacific Islander with no other racial identity;
6. "White and other race", non-Hispanic Whites with at least one other racial and ethnic identity except Black;
7. "Other", a group composed of American Indians and Alaskan Natives and "other race" individuals.

When projecting the population forward in time, it is necessary for the LSD-USA model to assign a racial and ethnic category to each newborn child. The model uses assignment procedures that are consistent with the patterns observed in the Census Bureau's large American Community Survey (ACS). The ACS collects data on children's race and ethnicity from the person who fills out the household questionnaire, usually one of the children's parents. We therefore do not attempt to project what a child's self-reported racial and ethnic identity is likely to be in adulthood, but instead project them as having the racial and ethnic identity as it is likely to be reported by a parent. This may lead us to project a higher share of multi-racial individuals than there will be once the children

reach adulthood. Indeed, past research suggests that children with mixed-race parentage are more likely to report themselves as multi-racial when interviewed at their parental home than when away from home (Harris & Sim, 2002).

More specifically, the LSD-USA model assigns a child's race and ethnicity at birth based on a set of probabilities that relate the race and ethnicity of both the mother and father to the race and ethnicity reported on behalf of the child. For example, 75% of young children with a non-Hispanic White mother and a Hispanic-White father are classified as Hispanic-White, 24% are classified as non-Hispanic White, and the remaining 1% are distributed across other categories in accordance with the racial and ethnic identities reported for such children in the 2015 ACS. To ascertain the race and ethnicity of the child's father, the model simulates partnering behaviors for women using a multinomial logistic regression stratified by race/ethnicity of the woman. The race and ethnicity of her male partner (i.e., her children's father) is determined stochastically based on regional distribution of racial and ethnic groups as well as her demographic characteristics such as generational status, marital status, birth cohort, and education.

Home Language

Home language is a dichotomous variable indicating whether an individual speaks English versus another language at home. Home language is determined for individuals in the simulation using logistic regression models stratified by immigration status for children and adults. The models relate home language use to race/ethnicity, place of residence, age, duration of U.S. residence, and for children, mother's home language.

Future Educational Attainment

Educational attainment in the model is determined at birth using an ordered logit model based on sex, generation status, race/ethnicity, place of residence and mother education. Individual educational histories then unfold as the simulation advances. Since the focus of this chapter is on

children who have not yet completed their education, their current educational attainment is merely a reflection of their age. To show what the future holds for those children, we instead report their prospective educational attainment, that is their future final education level, as simulated at birth by the microsimulation model. This prospective look on education gives us a better idea of where those cohorts are headed in terms of educational attainment.

Scenarios and Results

For this chapter, we ran five scenarios: one baseline scenario and four counterfactuals.

The baseline scenario depicts the most probable outcome if recently observed trends in immigration, mobility, fertility, mortality, partnering, educational attainment and other relevant behaviors were extended into the future. All parameters for the baseline scenario are derived from the ACS, vital statistics and surveys. Importantly, the results of the baseline scenario are very similar to standard projections produced by the U.S. Census Bureau. As shown in Appendix A, the projected number of school-aged children in the baseline scenario falls within 4 percent of Census Bureau projections, and the racial and ethnic composition is also very similar.

For analytical purposes, we created four additional what-if scenarios. In each scenario, we modified one aspect of the baseline to address a specific research question.

1. Reduced immigration. Flow of immigration is reduced by 50%.
2. Increased immigration. Flow of immigration is increased by 50%.
3. No intergenerational transfer of race/ethnicity. In this scenario, children are assigned the racial and ethnic identity of their mother at birth with no allowances for interracial marriage or for children's identities to differ from their mother's. This simulates what would happen if racial and ethnic identities were perfectly maintained across generations.
4. White expansion. In this scenario, a child is considered non-Hispanic White if either of its parents is non-Hispanic White, Hispanic White or multiracial White. This simulates

what would happen if all racial and ethnic identities were abandoned in favor of non-Hispanic White identities.

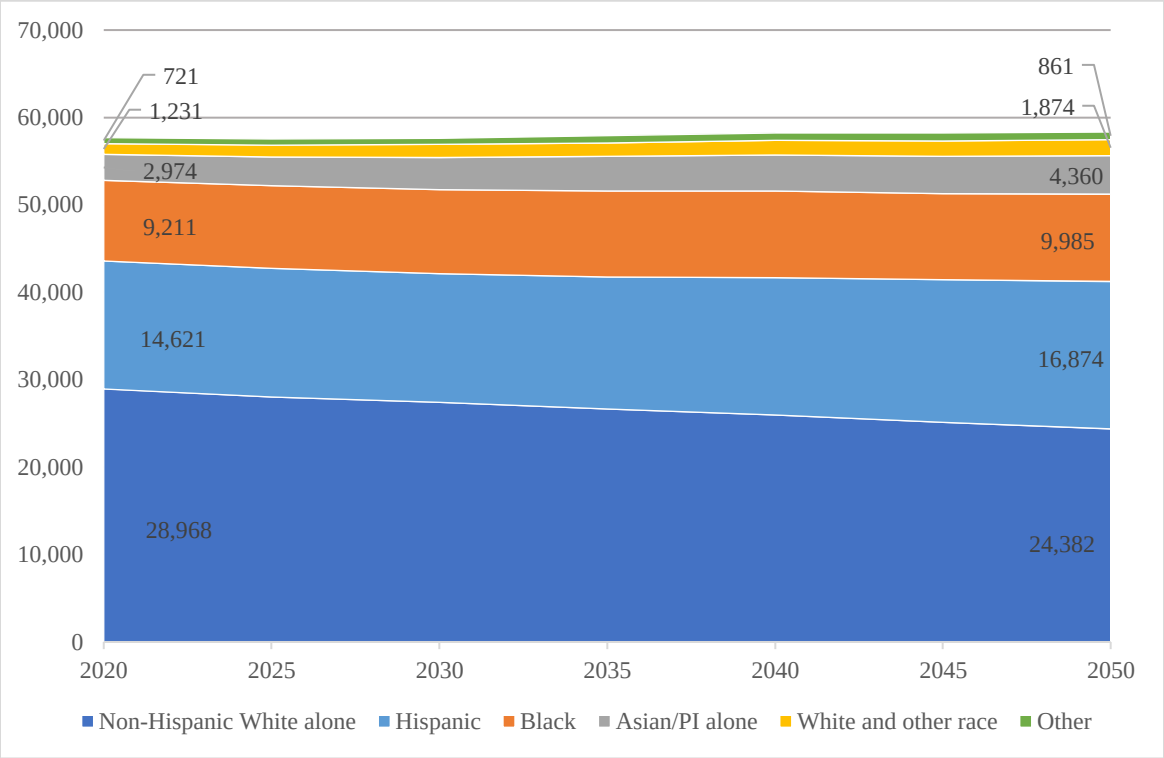
Findings

We provide detailed results of the population projections in the appendix tables, and we highlight some of the key findings below.

Projected Growth in Hispanics and Asians, but Declines in non-Hispanic Whites

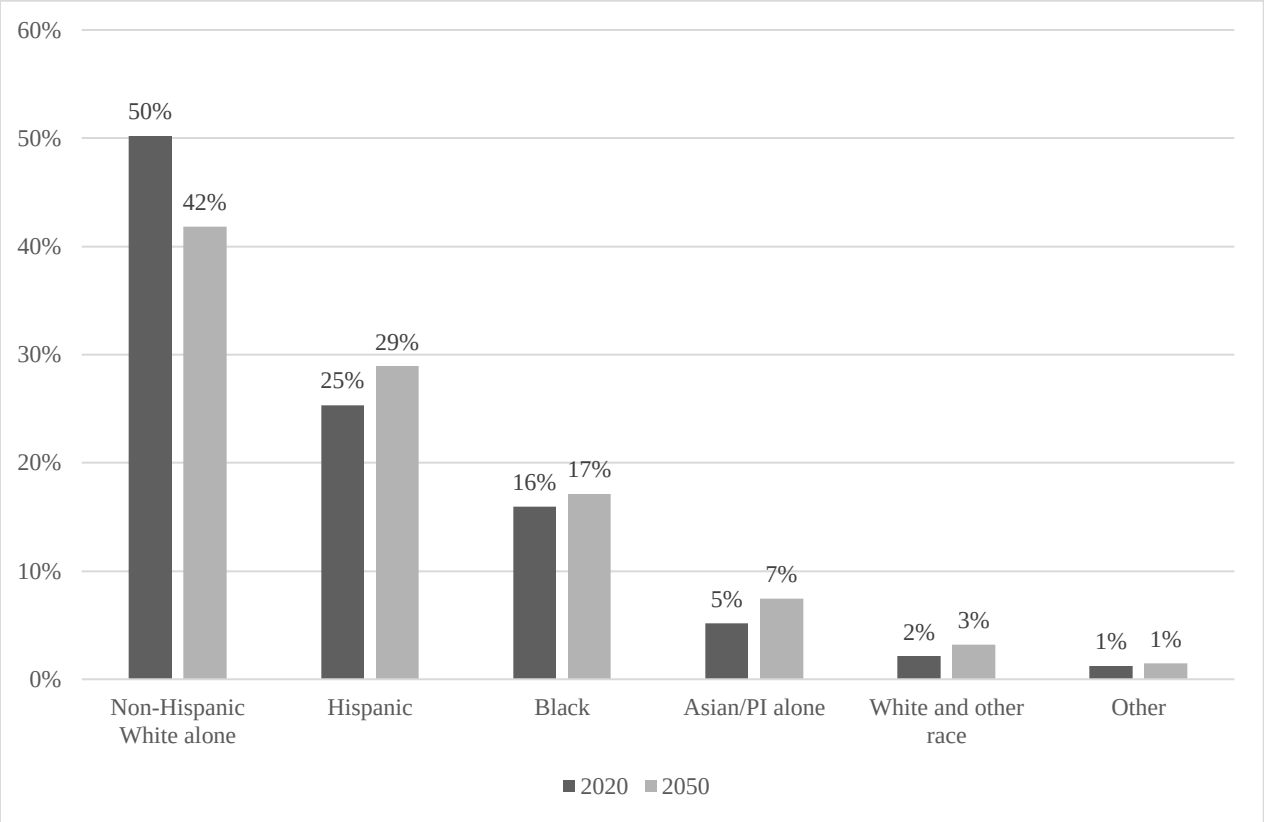
We first focus on trends in the racial and ethnic composition of school-aged children between 2020 and 2050 as projected by our baseline scenario. Recall that this scenario assumes that current social and demographic dynamics continue into the future. Under these circumstances, the country would see a continuation of past trends with steady increases in racial and ethnic heterogeneity among America's school-aged children. As shown in Figure 1, the *absolute number* of children would remain fairly steady; the model projects a slight growth in the number of children from 57.7 million to 58.3 million between 2020 and 2050. However, growth would vary dramatically across racial and ethnic groups owing to group differences in fertility and immigration rates, and to intermarriage between non-Hispanic Whites and other groups. The number of non-Hispanic White children is projected to decline by 16% between 2020 and 2050, dropping from 29 million to 24.4 million. At the same time, other racial and ethnic groups would increase in number. All racial and ethnic minorities combined would see their school-age populations grow by 5.2 million or by 18%.

Figure 1. Projected Youth Population (thousands) by Race and Ethnicity According to the Baseline Scenario



Considering each major racial and ethnic minority group separately, Hispanics are projected to grow from 14.6 million to 16.9 million, an increase of 15% over 30 years. This represents an absolute increase of 2.3 million, which offsets much of the loss of the White population. Similarly, Asian/Pacific Islanders are projected to experience strong growth (47%) from 3 million to 4.4 million. These two racial and ethnic groups are projected to drive much of the growth in the youth population over the next four decades. The number of Black children is also projected to continue to grow—from 9.2 million in 2020 to 10 million in 2050—but at a slower rate (8%) than for Hispanics (15%) or Asians (47%). Finally, the number of multiracial children (White and other races) is projected to increase at the fastest rate of all groups (52%), but will remain relatively marginal, with its population increasing from 1.2 million to 1.9 million. The same could be said of the "Other" group, although their growth rate (19%) and their numbers (around 900 thousand in 2050) are much lower than the mixed group.

Figure 2. Projected Racial and Ethnic Composition (%) of School Age Population 5-18, 2020 and 2050



Overall, these projected demographic shifts would lead to the establishment of a majority-minority patchwork among American school-age youth by 2050, whereby no single group would represent a majority. As shown in Figure 2, non-Hispanic Whites would compose 42% of the population, Hispanics 29%, Blacks 17%, Asians and Pacific Islanders 7%, and children with multiracial or other identities 4%. Of course, these numbers rest on the assumptions of the baseline projection. Outcomes could differ if immigration rates increased or decreased, or if children of mixed parentage were to be more or less likely to identify as White, possibilities that we explore further below.

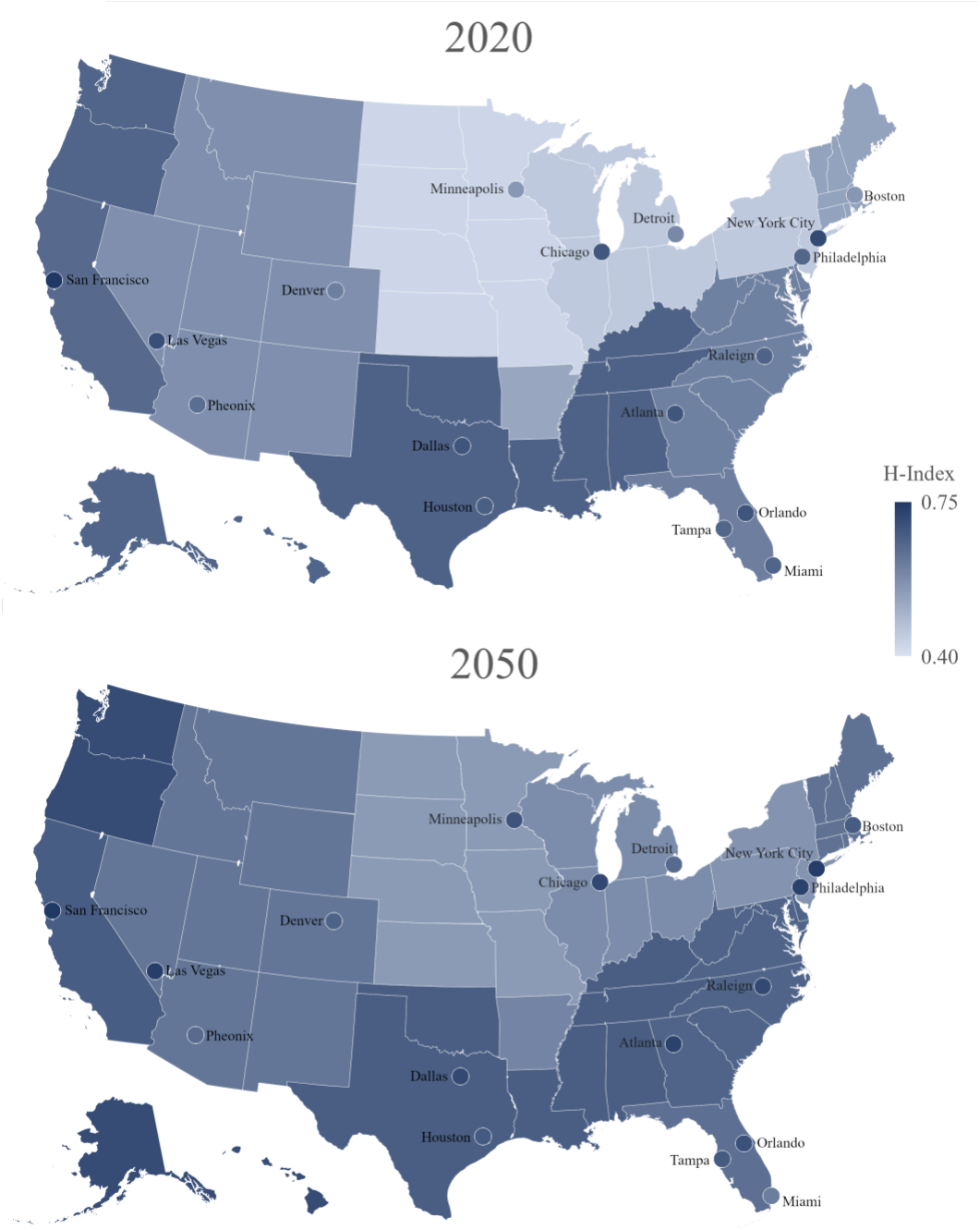
Whitest U.S. Regions Will Gain Diverse Nonwhite Enrollment

Our microsimulation model accounts for geographic variation in population dynamics and internal migration between geographic areas (i.e., selected metropolitan areas and states and

remaining census regions). As such, the model enables us to project the growth and racial and ethnic composition of the school-aged population across these areas *if recent trends were to continue into the future*. Under the baseline scenario, our microsimulation model projects that growth in the school-age population would not be uniform across the country. Some regions are projected to experience a decline in their youth population. Most notably, the Middle Atlantic and North Central regions are projected to see a drop of 1 million and around 700 thousand (or 14% and 9%) respectively, while the South Central region is projected to grow by nearly 1.3 million or 16% by 2050.

To what degree are these changes associated with changes in racial and ethnic heterogeneity? To summarize the racial and ethnic heterogeneity of geographic areas, we use the Simpson H-index. This index is interpreted as the probability that two people taken at random from the population will be from two different groups. The H-Index varies from 0 (fully homogeneous) to 1 (fully heterogeneous). To be clear, it is a measure of the overall racial and ethnic composition of an area and does not indicate anything about the degree of residential integration or segregation within the area. For example, a high H-index value does not mean that Black and Hispanic students, for instance, will be in schools or neighborhoods with more White or Asian students.

Figure 3. Ethnic and Racial Heterogeneity (H-Index) of the School-Age Population 5-18 by Geographic Area, 2020 and 2050



Under the baseline scenario, the H-index is projected to increase from 0.66 in 2020 to 0.71 in 2050 for the United States as a whole. Within the United States, nearly all the geographic areas in our microsimulation model are projected to experience increases in heterogeneity, as is evident by

comparing the two maps in Figure 3. These changes are driven by growth in the share of underrepresented minorities. The projected increases in H-index values are highly correlated with projected increases in the share of Hispanic and Black children (r = .63) and declines in the share of non-Hispanic White children (r = -0.79), but unrelated to changes in the share of Asian children (r = .08).

Figure 4. Change in H-Index and Change in the Share of Black and Hispanic, School Age Children by Geographic Area, 2020 and 2050

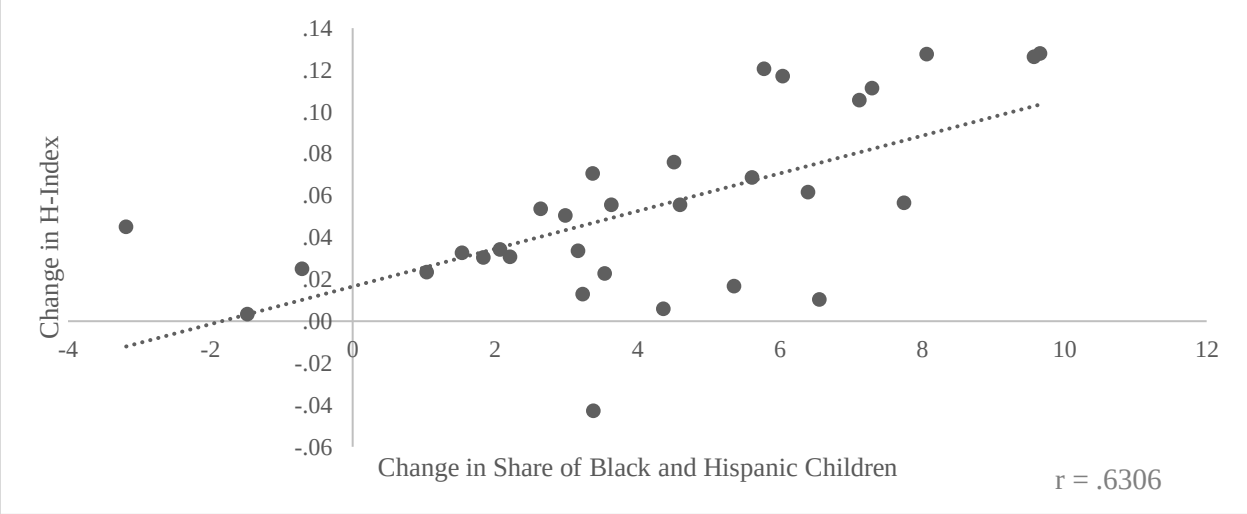


Figure 5. Change in H-Index and Change in Share of Non-Hispanic White School Age Children by Geographic Area, 2020 and 2050

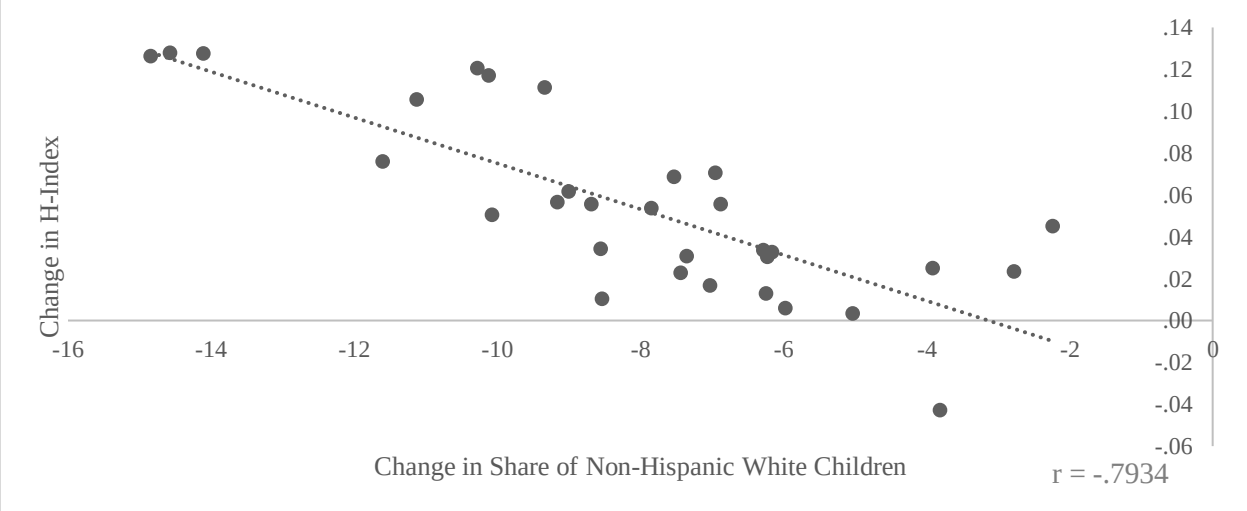


Figure 6. Change in H-Index and Change in Share of Asians School Age Children by Geographic Area, 2020 and 2050

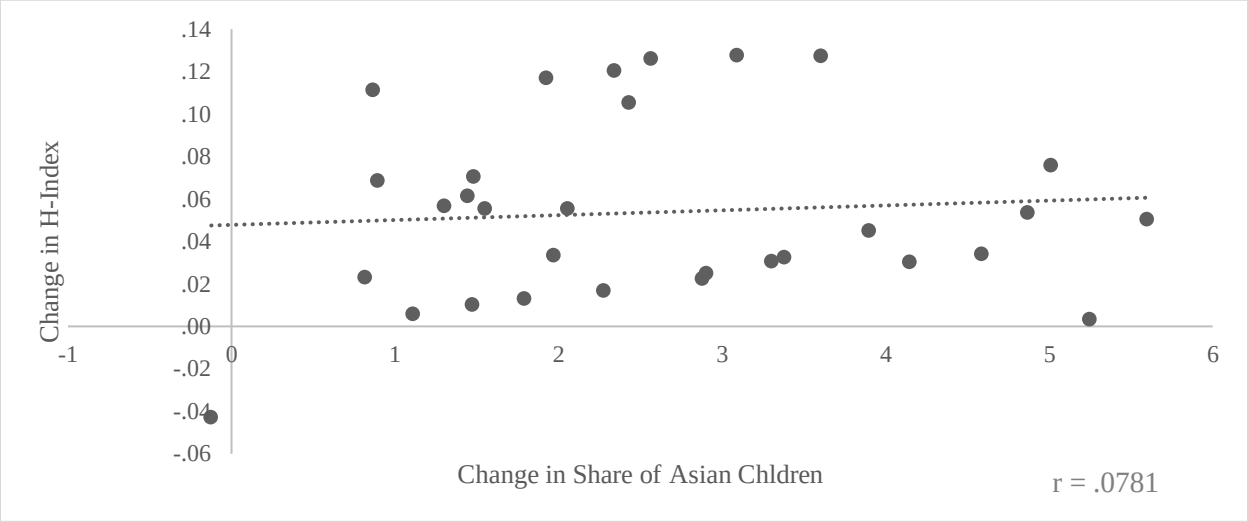
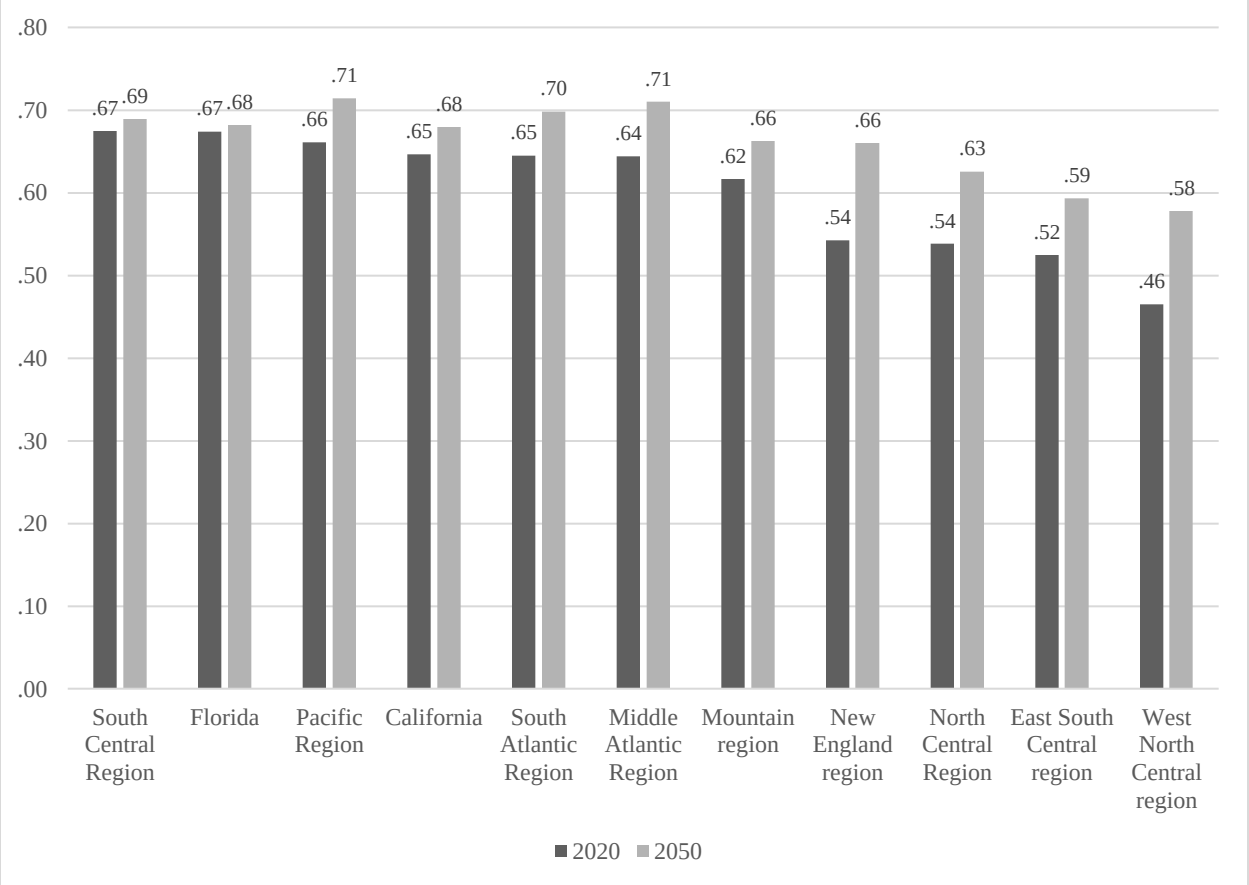


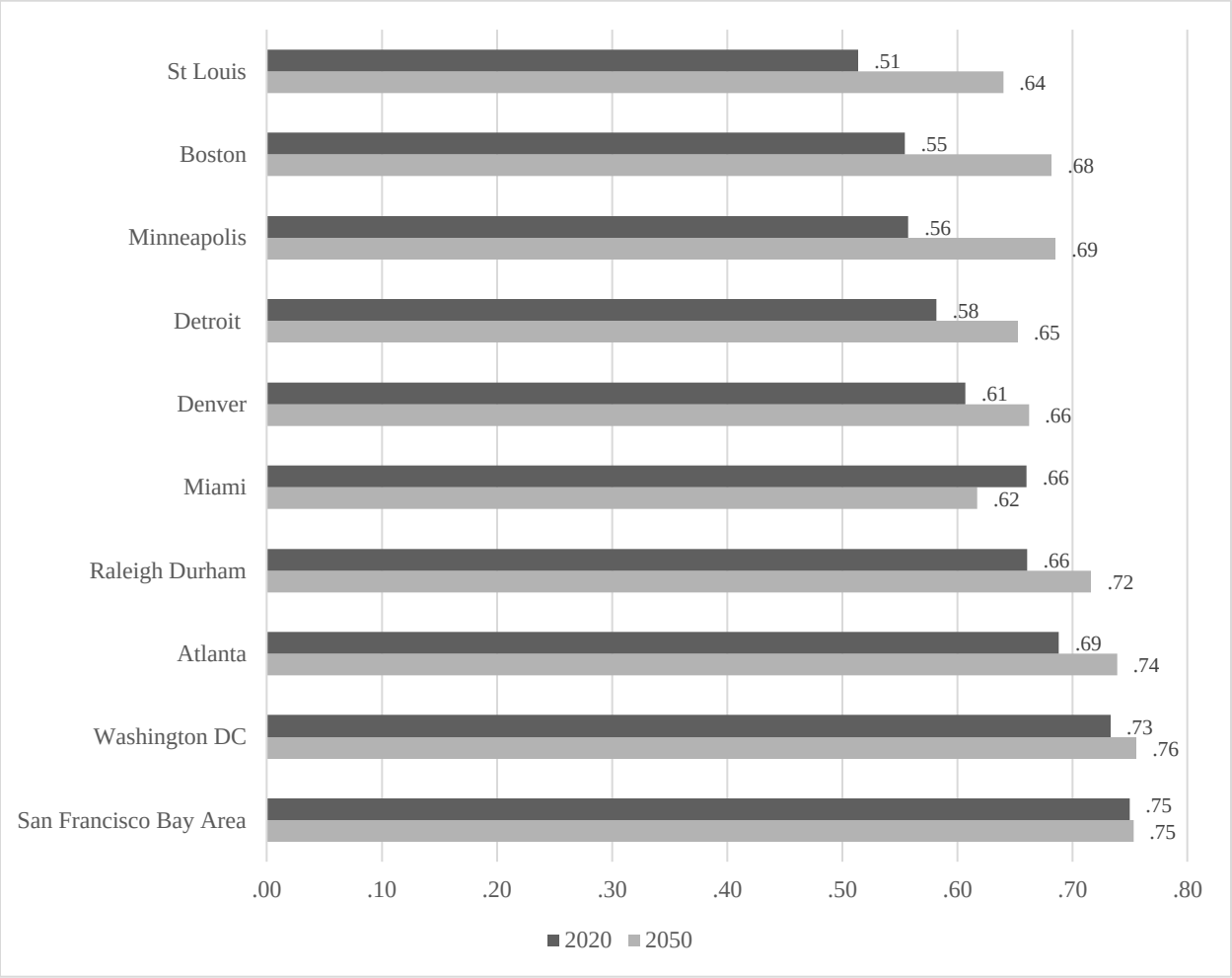
Figure 7. Projected Racial and Ethnic Heterogeneity (H-Index) of School Age Population by State/Region, 2020 and 2050



The model projects a future in which racial and ethnic heterogeneity is spreading geographically across the nation. Racial and ethnic heterogeneity is projected to increase the most in areas with lower levels of heterogeneity in 2020, and it is projected to plateau in areas that already have high levels of heterogeneity in 2020. This pattern is readily apparent in Figure 7, which depicts the 2020 and projected 2050 H-index for each census region. Regions are sorted with those with the highest levels of heterogeneity in 2020 on the left and those with the lowest levels on the right. Clearly, regions with the greatest projected increases in heterogeneity are clustered on the right-hand side of the chart. For example, the West-North-Central region has the lowest heterogeneity in 2020 (0.46). However, the index is projected to increase from 0.46 in 2020 to 0.58 in 2050. This change represents the continuation of the rapid growth of the Hispanic population in "new destinations" in this midwestern region.

In contrast, areas with high levels of racial and ethnic heterogeneity in 2020 are projected to experience the least change in heterogeneity over the next four decades. For example, there is a greater heterogeneity in the cities that are acting as ports of entry for immigrants, as shown in Figure 8. In 2020, the H-index reached 0.61 in Southern California, 0.75 in San Francisco and 0.71 in New York, for example. These cities, where immigrants are already concentrated, are not projected to see much change in their H-indexes by 2050, if at all, with indexes reaching 0.65, 0.75 and 0.75 respectively. Note that this does not necessarily mean that the specific composition of the population will remain stable throughout the period. In San Francisco, for example, although the H-index is projected to remain stable, the White share of the population would decrease by 5 percentage points and the Asian share would increase by 5.2 points.

Figure 8. Projected Racial and Ethnic Heterogeneity (H-Index) of School Age Population, Selected Cities, 2020 and 2050



Of all the geographic areas identified in our microsimulation model, only the state of Florida would show positive non-Hispanic White population growth (8%), a phenomenon that is the result of internal migration and the strong attraction of the Sun Belt to older, non-Hispanic White residents from the North and Northeast (Rust Belt) (W. H. Frey, 2018). Nevertheless, even most of these places are projected to see small increases in racial and ethnic heterogeneity. Miami is the only geographic area that is projected to experience substantial declines in heterogeneity by 2050, dropping from 0.66 to 0.62. This is mainly due to the high numbers of Hispanics already living in

the city in 2020, making it difficult for new immigrants (many of whom are Hispanic) to add to the city's racial and ethnic composition.

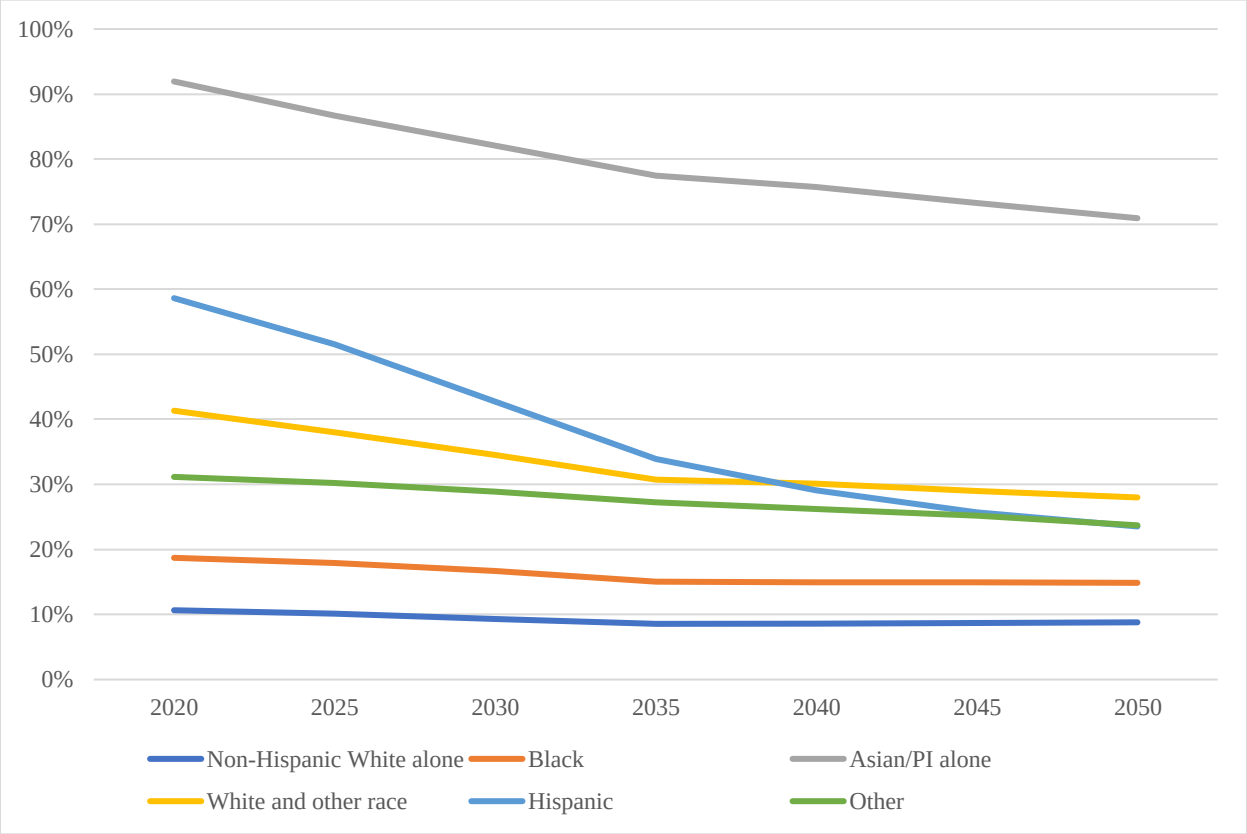
Fewer Children of Immigrants

What are the implications of these projected increases in racial and ethnic heterogeneity? One concern is related to the provision of social and educational services for children of immigrants. First and second-generation children are, for many minority groups, the most likely to experience academic difficulties and may impose costs on schools because they need to provide special services for them. However, even though our microsimulation model projects large increases in the racial and ethnic heterogeneity of America's schoolchildren, this change is not projected to be accompanied by greater numbers or shares of children of immigrants. Rather, the number of first- or second-generation school-age children (i.e., foreign-born children and children of immigrant mothers) is projected to decline between 2020 and 2050, dropping from 16.8 million to 11.4 million, and the share of children of immigrant mothers would decline from 29% to 20%.

The decline in the share of children with immigrant mothers is projected to be steepest among Hispanics, as shown in Figure 9. The proportion among Hispanics is projected to decrease dramatically from about 59% in 2020 to 24% in 2050. Similarly, among Asians, this proportion could decrease from 92% to 71%. These changes owe largely to the fact that by 2050, decades will have elapsed since the large waves of immigration from Latin America and Asia arrived during the latter half of the 20th century. By 2050, the grandchildren and great-grandchildren of these immigrants will have been born, leading to an increase the share of children who are third-or-greater generation. Of course, the share of children who have immigrant mothers will not vary much over time for the two groups less affected by recent immigration, Whites and Blacks. For the baseline projection scenario, the proportion of first- and second-generation youth would remain constant

and low throughout the projection period at about 10% for Whites and it would decline slightly from 19% to 15% for Blacks.

Figure 9. Share of School Age Children Who are First or Second Generation by Race/Ethnicity



Reductions in the Share of Non-English-Speaking Students

Another potential concern about projected increases in racial and ethnic heterogeneity is that schools may need to accommodate more children with limited English proficiency. We do not report on the share of children with limited English proficiency here because of the mismatch between census measures, which are based on parental report, and school-based assessments. However, we are able to estimate the share of children living in homes where a non-English language is spoken. Although many children who speak a language other than English at home are fully bilingual, a large share either have limited English proficiency or had limited English proficiency when they first started formal schooling.

Unsurprisingly, the share of children who speak a non-English language at home is much higher among children with immigrant mothers than children with U.S.-born mothers. In 2020, for example, nearly 70% of children of immigrant mothers spoke a non-English language at home compared with only 8% of children with U.S.-born mothers. Among children of immigrant mothers, 87% of Hispanic children spoke a non-English language at home in 2020, as did about 65% Asian/PI and 54% of non-Hispanic White children. In contrast, fewer than half of Black, White multiracial, and other children of immigrant mothers spoke a non-English language at home (Figure 10). We see a similar ordering across groups among children of U.S.-born parent mothers (Figure 11). Looking ahead, we project modest declines among Hispanic and "other" race children of immigrant mothers, but other than that, the levels of non-English usage and relative ordering across groups are projected to remain unchanged over time.

Figure 10. Percentage of Children of Immigrant Mothers Speaking a Language other than English at Home

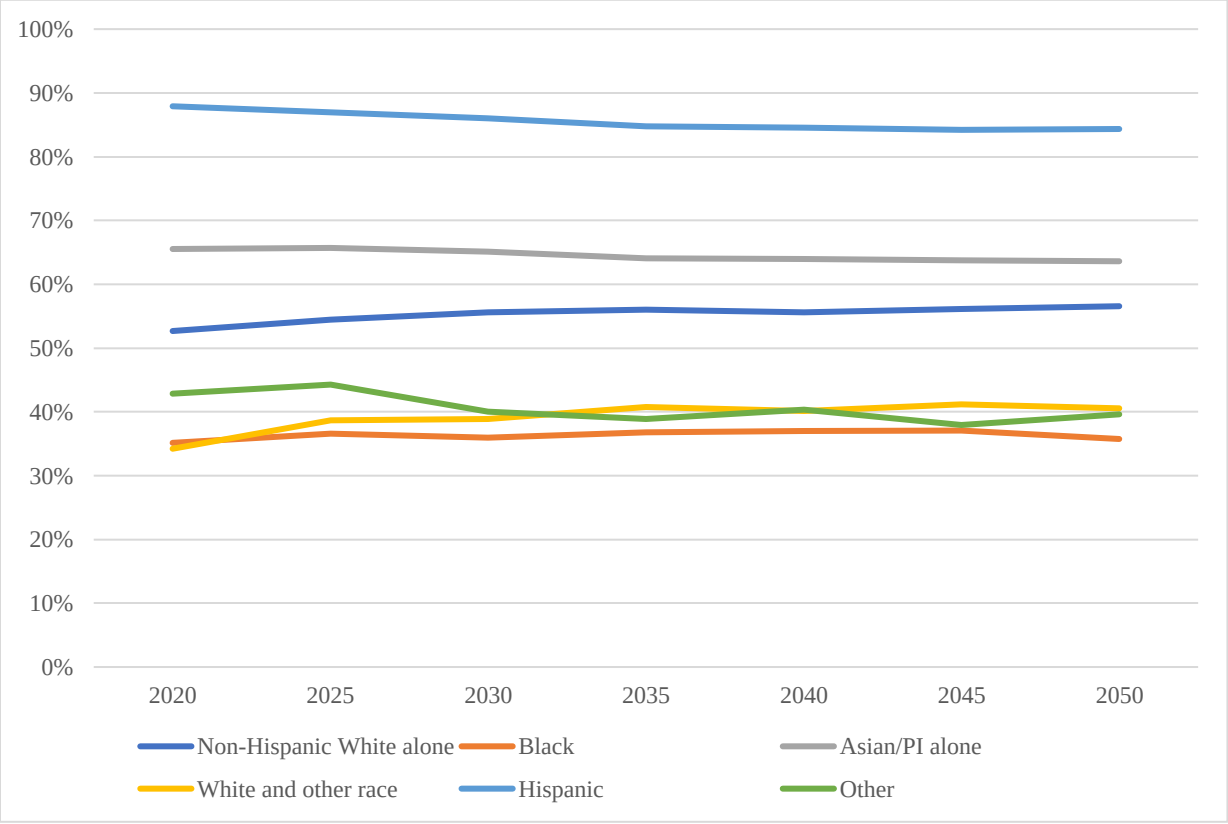


Figure 11. Percentage of Children of U.S.-Born Mothers Speaking a Language other than English at Home

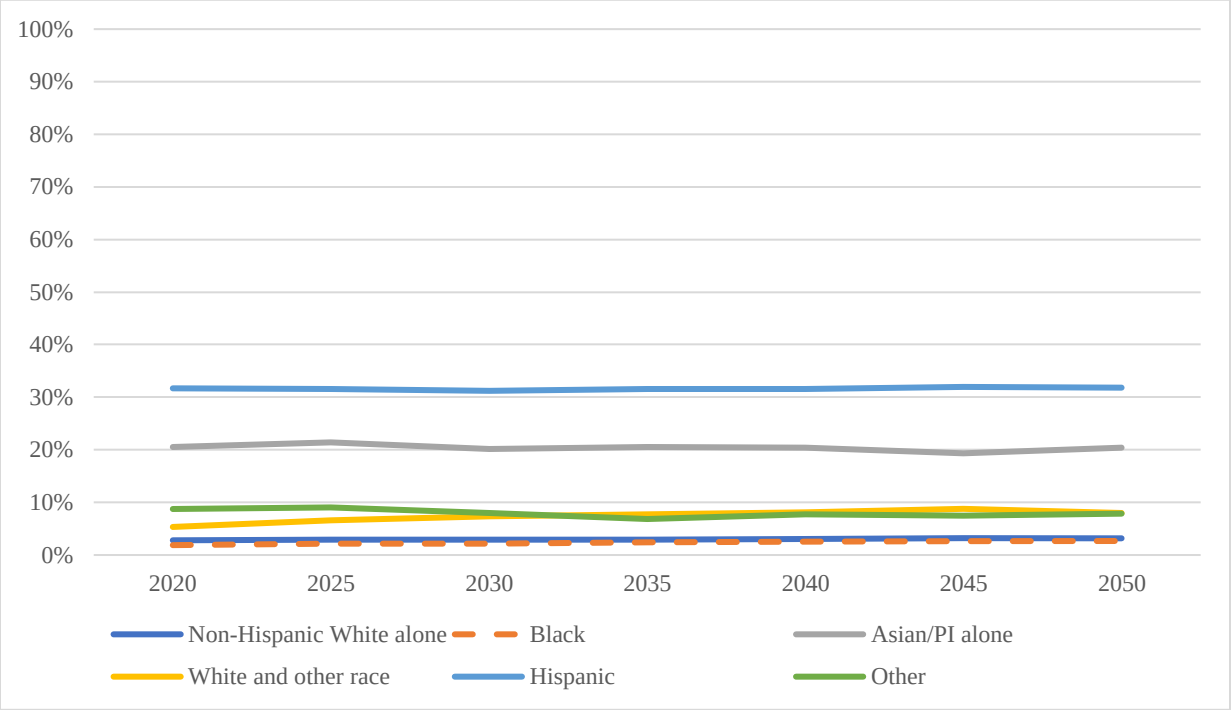
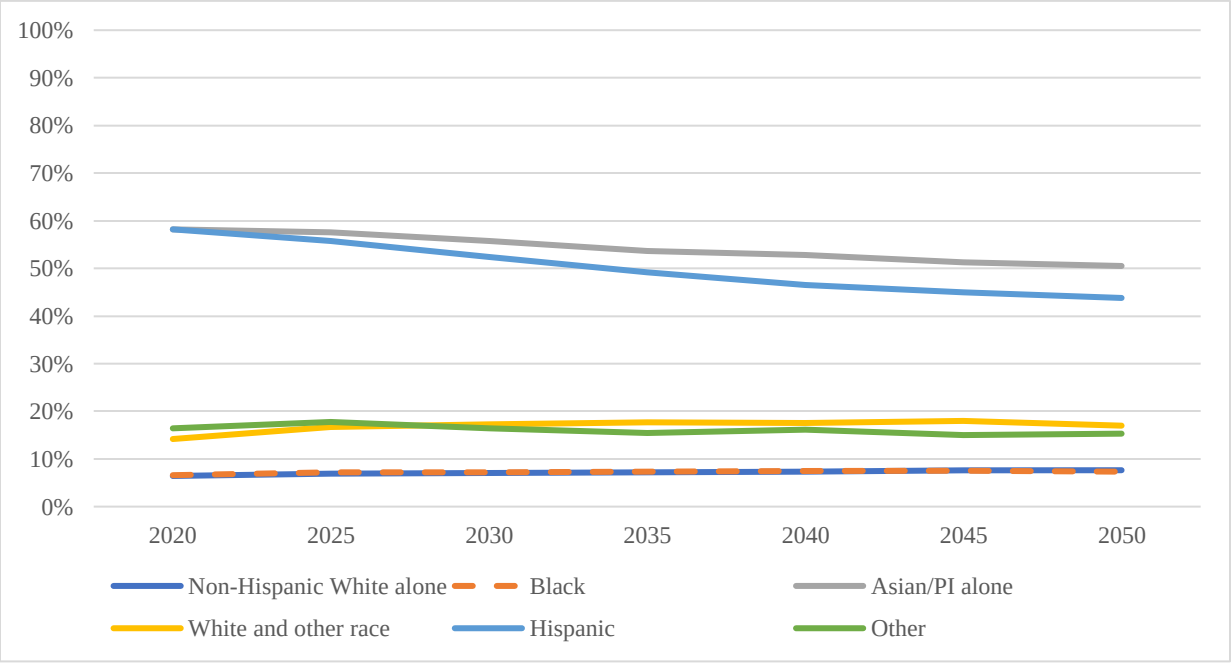


Figure 12. Percentage of All Children Speaking a Language other than English at Home



When we examine all children together regardless of mother's place of birth, however, we see some important trends. First, we see substantial declines in the share of children speaking a non-

English language at home among Hispanic and Asian/PI children (Figure 12). This is attributable to the dramatic declines in the share of Hispanic and Asian/PI children with immigrant mothers, a group that has extremely high rates of non-English language use. These declines in non-English home language use are projected to occur across most regions of the country, and are projected to drop the most in traditional immigrant destinations, like California (8 percentage point from 43% to 35%). Interestingly, the New England Region is projected to have an increase of Non-Hispanic White and Multiracial White Children speaking another language than English at home. This makes it the only region that could see a net increase of the share of children speaking a non-English language at home (an increase of 4 percentage points from 20% to 24%).

Second, the decline in non-English home language use is especially steep among Hispanics (a 14 percentage-point drop from 58% to 44%) compared with Asian/PI children (a 7 percentage point drop from 58% to 51%). This is because the share of children with immigrant mothers is projected to decline more rapidly for Hispanics than Asians; the increase in immigration from Asia being more recent than that from Latin America. Third, even though Hispanic children of immigrant mothers are more likely to use a non-English language at home than Asian/PI children of immigrant mothers, the reverse is true among all children. Again, this is the consequence of compositional differences between these two groups. Hispanic children are much less likely than Asian/PI children to have an immigrant mother, so overall, they are less likely to speak a non-English language at home.

Increases in Educational Attainment for Hispanics, but Little Improvement for Blacks as Asian and Whites Remain at the Top.

Still another concern about the changing racial and ethnic composition of America's schoolchildren is that Hispanic and Black children have historically lagged behind their peers in multiple indicators of educational success, ultimately leading to much lower levels of educational

attainment. If these trends continued into the future whereby some of the fastest-growing segments of the population are also the most poorly educated, this would bode poorly for vitality of the American workforce, which depends heavily on skills and education, and would further serve to perpetuate inequality along the lines of race and ethnicity. Therefore, a key question facing the nation is whether the current racial and ethnic disparities in educational attainment are likely to continue into the future.

Our microsimulation model can speak partially to this question. It projects the completed educational attainment of children based on the child's race and ethnicity, sex, place of residence, and generational status and mother's education. Over the course of the projection period, from 2020 to 2050, children's completed educational attainment would be projected to increase only if their structural opportunites change. For example, children's average educational attainment might increase if more children live in a region of the country with better opportunties, if more children have mothers with higher levels of education, or if more children (especially Hispanic children) had U.S.-born parents. Importantly, the model does not account for any policy changes that could be made over the next several decades, such as greater investment in public education (such as universal pre-kindergarten programs or free community college) or changes in teaching practices. Thus the model projects the educational attainment of children *if nothing were done to change the status quo,* in a sense serving as a warning to policy makers and educators today.

The results of the baseline scenario are shown in Figure 13, which depicts the percentage projected to not complete high school, and Figure 14, which shows the percentage projected to complete college. Most groups are projected to experience little change in educational attainment. Asians and Pacific Islanders are consistently projected as the group that is least likely to drop out of high school and most likely to complete college. Though Asians are projected to remain at the highest level of educational attainment the gap between Asians and Whites is expected to narrow as

average Asian attainment declines modestly and White attainment grows somewhat. On the other end of the spectrum, Blacks are consistently projected as the group most likely to drop out of high school and least likely to complete college. Absence improvements in this group's intergenerational educational mobility, this means that Black children could remain in lower status positions in the United States over the next several decades. The remaining groups would continue to fall in the middle.

Figure 13. Projected Share of School Age Children Expected to Have Less than a High School Degree by Race/Ethnicity

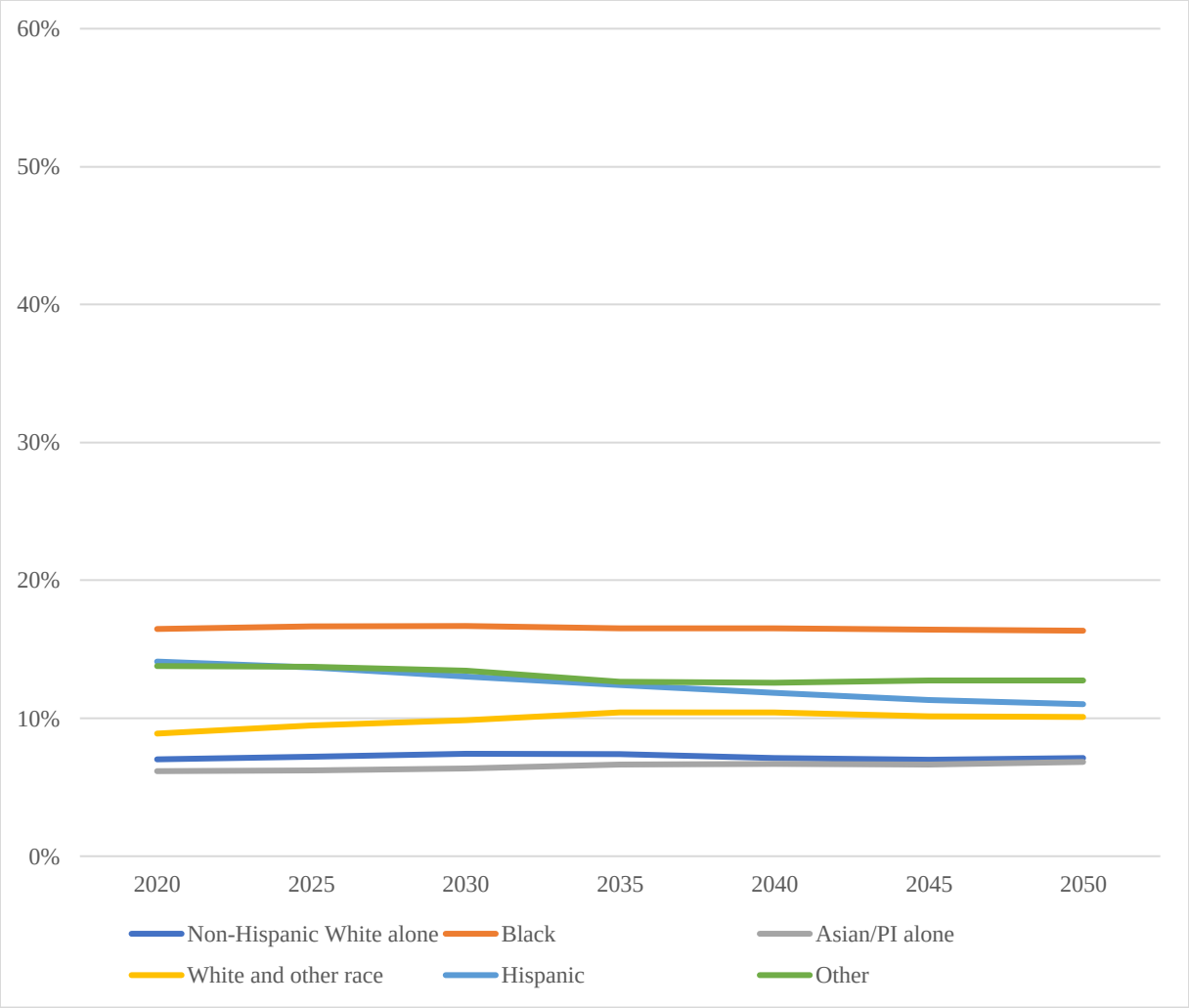
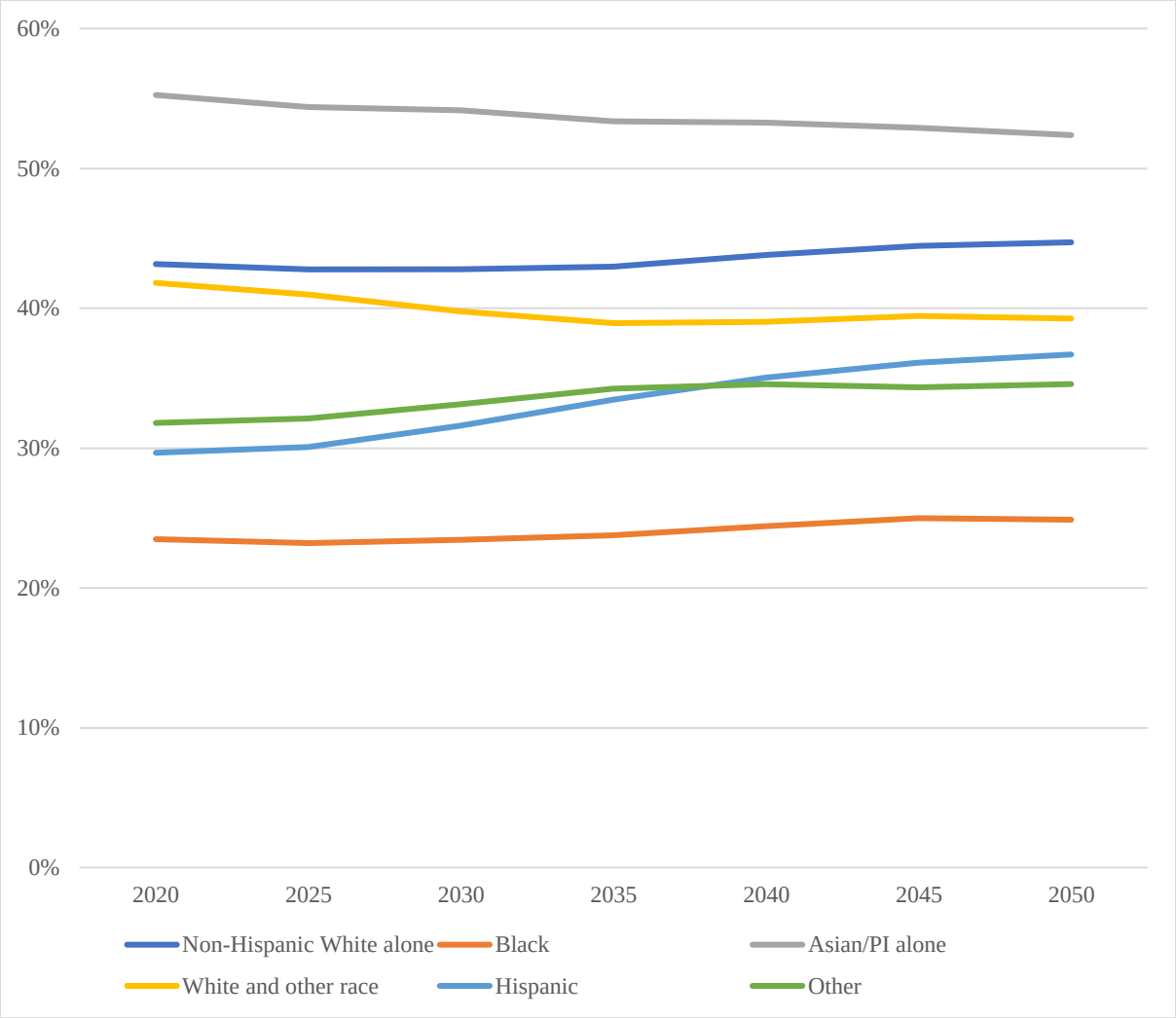


Figure 14. Projected Share of School Age Children Expected to Have a College Degree or More by Race/Ethnicity



However, one group departs from this pattern. Hispanics are projected to experience gains in educational attainment. The percentage of Hispanics with a college degree or more is projected to increase by more than 7 percentage points from 2020 to 2050 (from 30 to 37%). Conversely, the percentage of Hispanics projected to drop out of high school declines by nearly 3 percentage points (from 14% to 11%). No other racial and ethnic group is projected to change as much. The projected changes for Hispanics are attributable to the projected declines in the share of Hispanic children who have immigrant parents and the associated rising levels of education among Hispanic mothers.

Of note, the baseline scenario also projects large regional differences in the educational attainment of racial and ethnic minorities. Hispanics and Blacks are likely to experience the highest attainments in regions such as the Middle Atlantic and New England regions.

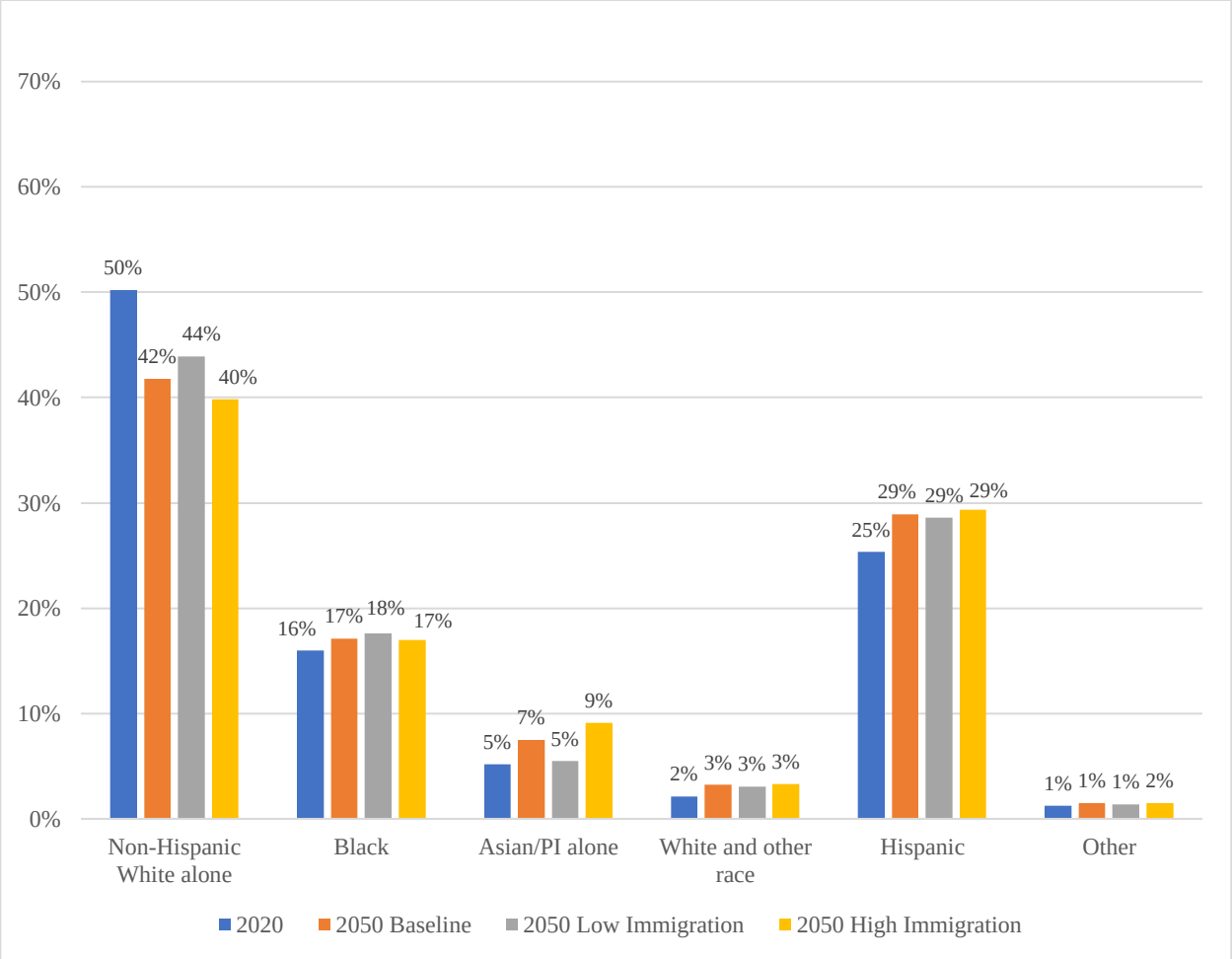
Overall, given the current patterns in educational attainment and intergenerational mobility, the United States is likely to continue to see racial and ethnic inequality in educational attainment, with Blacks having the lowest attainments, non-Hispanic Whites and Asians the highest, and the remaining groups falling in between. Of course, further increases in educational attainment for Hispanics and Blacks could occur if opportunities for educational mobility were to increase for these disadvantaged groups.

Alternative Futures Regarding the Level of Immigration

Thus far, we have presented the results of our baseline scenario, a model that uses as its key inputs the conditions that were observed during the 2010-decade. This includes fertility, mortality, and migration rates and the association of these demographic processes with a host of socioeconomic and demographic variables such as age, place of residence, race and ethnicity, generational status, education, and English language use. We use these inputs for the baseline model primarily because the recent past is usually the best prediction of the near future. Indeed, many of the inputs in our microsimulation model are not easily changed through public policy or other types of interventions. It is virtually a fact of life that people get older with the passage of time, mortality risks increase dramatically with age, fertility rates decline with women's age and education, and immigrants are more likely than the U.S.-born to use a non-English language at home.

However, one of the inputs to our microsimulation model is subject to policy changes: immigration. Questions over how many immigrants should be allowed to come to the U.S. continue to spark political debates, and the U.S. government can and has severely restricted immigration in the past, such as occurred in 2020 in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. On the other hand, demand for foreign labor is likely to intensify as the Baby Boomer generation retires and the need for both high tech and service sector workers (e.g., health care, cleaning, and food services) increases (Gullo, Orrenius, & Zavodny, 2020). Considering the uncertainty about the amount of immigration that could occur in the future, we model alternative immigration scenarios, projecting a 50% lower or a 50% higher number of new immigrants each year between 2020 and 2050.

Figure 15. Projected Composition of School Age Population by Race and Ethnicity Under different Immigration Scenarios, 2020 and 2050



The results of these alternative scenarios show that changes in the number of immigrants entering the country each year would exert a significant impact on the number of school-age children in the United States. Under the baseline scenario, the projected number of children would increase by 1% in 2050 and result in a population of 58.3 million children. However, in the low immigration scenario, in which immigration is cut in half, the number of children age 5-18 is projected to decline by 7%, dropping to 53.5 million by 2050. Finally, in the high immigration scenario, in which immigration is increased by 50%, the number of children is projected to increase by 9%, reaching 63.2 million. Obviously, increases in immigration would increase the overall number of children in the coming decades.

However, immigration has little impact on the racial and ethnic composition of the child population. The blue bars in Figure 15 depict the share of each racial and ethnic group as of 2020, while the orange, grey, and yellow bars depict the share under the baseline, low, and high immigration scenarios, respectively. When we compare the 2020 figures (blue bar) with the three projected figures for 2050 (the yellow, grey, and orange bars), we see that the child population is projected to have lower shares of non-Hispanic Whites and greater shares of each of the other racial and ethnic groups regardless of the immigration scenario. Additionally, the country's overall H-Index would grow under any scenario. From 0.66 in 2020, it would reach 0.71 in 2050 under the baseline scenario, 0.69 under the low immigration scenario and 0.72 under the increased immigration scenario. Finally, the share of White and Other Race, Hispanic, and Other children would not vary more than one percentage point under the different immigration scenarios. Overall, immigration is unlikely to change the multiracial, multiethnic patchwork that is projected for America's schoolchildren.

That said, the level of immigration would impact the size and share of some groups around the margins. In 2050, the share of non-Hispanic Whites would be greater in the low immigration scenario (44%) than in the baseline scenario (42%), while the high immigration scenario would generate a lower share (40%). The higher the immigration, the lower the proportion of non-Hispanic Whites because of the greater racial and ethnic heterogeneity of the immigrant population. (However, it is also notable that the higher the immigration, the greater the *absolute number* of non-Hispanic Whites, as well as of all ethnic groups. In the low immigration scenario, the number of non-Hispanic Whites would reach 23.5 million in 2050, compared to 24.4 million in the baseline scenario and 25.2 million in the high immigration scenario.) The share of Black children would be similarly impacted by immigration as non-Hispanic Whites, in that higher levels of immigration would lead to a lower projected share of Black children.

In contrast to non-Hispanic White and Black children, the share of Asian/PI children would increase with more immigration. Relative to the baseline scenario, a fifty percent increase in immigration would increase the share of Asian/PI children by 2 percentage points, while reducing immigration in half would reduce the share by 2 percentage points. Overall, Asian/PIs are more impacted by immigration than any other group. This is not surprising considering that in 2020, 92% were of the first or second-generation. This also reflects a recent shift in the composition of immigration flows toward higher levels of Asian migration and lower levels of immigration from Latin America (W. H. Frey, 2018). Accordingly, the number of Asian/PI children is projected to depend heavily on the level of immigration going forward, ranging from 2.9 million under the low immigration scenario to 5.8 million under the high immigration scenario.

Unsurprisingly, rates of non-English language use would mirror immigration patterns. Higher immigration is projected to lead to higher rates of non-English language use for all racial and ethnic groups, including Black and Whites. The percentage using a non-English language at home

for all school-age children would vary between 18% for the low immigration scenario, and 25% for the high immigration scenario. However, even for the high immigration scenario, the same trend as in the baseline scenario appears: a rather slow decline in non-English language use for both Asians and Hispanics.

The overwhelming conclusion of this exercise is that most of the growth in racial and ethnic heterogeneity would occur even if immigration were reduced substantially. The major reason is that children and young adults are currently much more heterogeneous than older generations. As time passes, the older generations, who are predominately White, will die and be replaced by the more heterogeneous younger generations, and these young adults will have their own (non-White) children and grandchildren even in the absence of future immigration. In short, the country is entering a new era in which the descendants of the "new" minority groups that arrived as immigrants during last few decades of the 20th century will soon be self-sustained by natural increase—births over deaths.

Alternative Futures Regarding Ethnic and Racial Identity

Besides immigration, another important factor that could impact the racial and ethnic composition of the population is racial and ethnic identity. We are particularly interested in the intergenerational transfer of identity, which refers to the likelihood that a child born to a mother of a given group will have the same racial and ethnic identity as the mother. There is some debate about the racial and ethnic classification of children in U.S. Census Bureau projections, particularly for children born to interethnic couples. Alba (2020), for example, shows that most individuals of mixed parentage exhibit a high level of integration into social settings that were previously dominated by non-Hispanic Whites. He argues, based on the history of assimilation of immigrant groups as well as the integration of individuals of mixed parentage, that American society is naturally becoming more inclusive as the American mainstream expands, encompassing former minority groups. This view

contrasts with the contemporary perception of a coming majority-minority population, which tends to reinforce zero-sum notions of race relations in the United States. For Alba, this perception is caused, among other things, by the U.S. Census data, which exaggerates the minority/majority dualistic view, and takes too little account of the identity of mixed individuals and their transitions to the American mainstream.

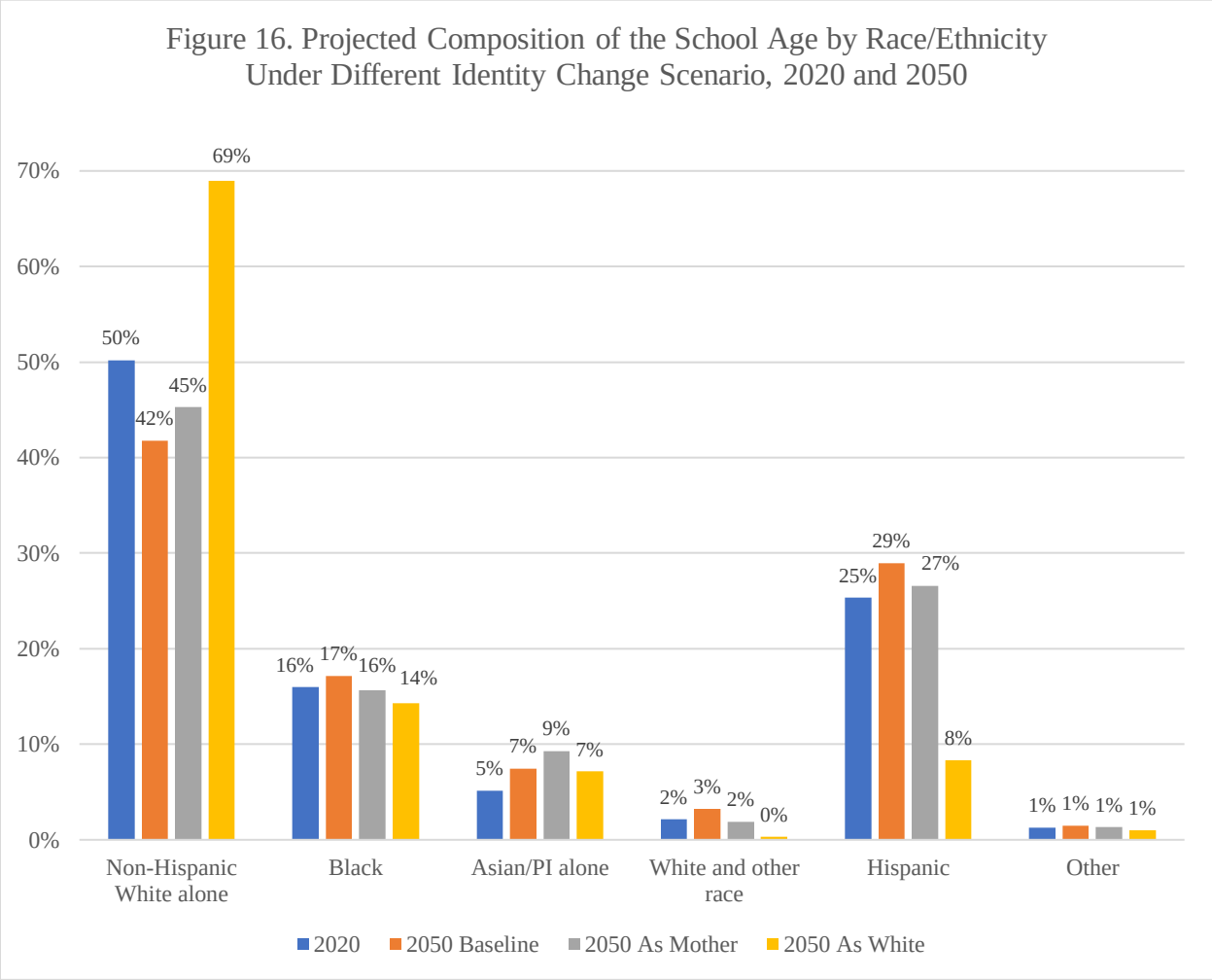
Our projection model is explicitly built on Census Bureau data and thus uses the racial and ethnic categories prescribed by the Census Bureau. Although our baseline scenario already accounts for trends in mixed unions among parents and the possibility that a child may identify with a different ethnic group than their mother and father, the transition matrix used for this scenario reflects the observed probabilities of intergenerational transfer in the recent past. It would be difficult to justify the use of other assumptions for the baseline scenario in the absence of alternative data.

However, it is possible to propose alternative assumptions for a hypothetical scenario just as we have done with respect to immigration levels. Specifically, we contrast the results of the baseline scenario with the results of simulations in which, on the one hand, all children are given the same racial and ethnic identity as their mother (the "no intergenerational transfer" scenario) and, on the other hand, all children with at least one non-Hispanic White, multiracial White, or Hispanic-White parent identify as non-Hispanic White (the "White expansion" scenario). The "no intergenerational transfer" scenario represents what would occur if all children simply inherited the racial and ethnic identity of their mothers. The "White expansion" scenario represents the other extreme, whereby the "White" category is expanded so broadly that it includes anyone with a parent who identifies as White, regardless of whether they identify as Hispanic or have any other racial and ethnic origins.

The projected composition of America's schoolchildren for each of these scenarios is shown in Figure 16. Since it is only the race and ethnicity of the children to be born during the projection

and not their number that is changed, the total population of these two scenarios is about the same as that projected by the baseline scenario. However, the projected distribution in 2050 of the school-age population varies significantly.

Figure 16. Projected Composition of the School Age by Race/Ethnicity Under Different Identity Change Scenario, 2020 and 2050



Both alternative scenarios would generate a greater number and share of non-Hispanic Whites than the baseline scenario. This is obviously expected in the "White expansion" scenario wherein all children identify as non-Hispanic White if they have at least one White parent. Under the "White expansion" scenario, the proportion of children in the non-Hispanic White category is projected to reach 69% by 2050, which is dramatically higher than under the baseline scenario (42%)

and would be consistent with Richard Alba's argument that the "minority-majority" population projected by the U.S. Census Bureau is a "demographic illusion".

However, it is somewhat surprising that the share of non-Hispanic White children would also increase in the case of the "no intergenerational transfer" scenario. This scenario results in greater shares of non-Hispanic White children in 2050 (45%) compared with the baseline scenario (42%). But this makes sense when one considers the increasing prevalence of interracial and interethnic marriage. The "no intergenerational transfer" scenario assumes that all children of all ethnic groups would retain their mother's identity. Under this scenario (and relative to the baseline scenario), the share of non-Hispanic White children would increase, while the share of Hispanics, Blacks, Mixed, and Other children would decline. This is due to projected growth in mixed race/ethnic couples in which the mother is non-Hispanic White. The only minority group that is projected to increase its share under the "no intergenerational transfer" scenario is Asian/PIs, most likely because the majority of mixed Asian couples involve an Asian mother and a non-Hispanic White father (Livingstone & Brown, 2017).

Alternative assumptions of intergenerational transfers would also have a considerable impact on the share of Hispanics. While this fast-growing group accounts for 25% of youth in 2020 and would account for 29% in 2050 under the baseline scenario, this proportion would remain virtually unchanged (27%) under the scenario in which children adopt their mother's identity. But the share of Hispanics would decline dramatically to 8% if all children with both White and Hispanic identities or parentage were to identify as non-Hispanic White. This sharp drop would owe partly to the high prevalence of inter-ethnic marriages among Hispanics, but also would occur because the model explicitly assumes that dramatic reductions in the salience of children's Hispanic identities would occur. In our opinion, this scenario is extreme. Research on ethnic identity among those with Hispanic ancestry suggests that a non-negligible percentage of these children are likely to identify as

White alone and drop their Hispanic identity. But some Hispanics will no doubt continue to identify as Hispanic, and if the past is instructive of the future, as many as two-thirds could do so (Duncan & Trejo, 2011). It therefore seems that the most likely outcome would fall somewhere between the baseline and "White expansion" scenarios. Nevertheless, even if the "White expansion" scenario only partially came true, the impact on the racial and ethnic composition of children could be substantial, leading to much less growth in heterogeneity than is projected by the baseline scenario.

Conclusion

Race and ethnicity strongly shape virtually all aspects of children's lives, including their school experiences, opportunities for advancement, and the risks they are exposed to. Given the historical salience of race and ethnicity in the United States, projections by race and ethnicity have been greeted with great interest by scholars, educators, and policy makers. These projections can help redirect priorities for Americans as they plan for the country's changing racial and ethnic composition, particularly among children and youth, a group that will require renewed investment for the continued vitality of the U.S. economy and labor force. Pointing out that half of today's children are *already* members of a racial or ethnic minority group, William Frey (2019) at the Brookings Institute concludes that "This phenomenon, which is projected to continue, emphasizes the need for institutions that focus on children and young families to proactively accommodate the interests of more racially diverse populations, as the latter will be key players in the country's demographic and economic future."

We enter into this arena by seeking to understand the implications of growing racial and ethnic heterogeneity among American schoolchildren. The U.S. Census Bureau already produces population projections by age, race, and Hispanic ethnicity, and these projections foretell steady increases in racial and ethnic heterogeneity among Americans. But as Alba (2020) and other critics

point out, the problem with these projections is that the meaning of racial and ethnic categories could change in the future. For example, it is not a foregone conclusion that growth in the number of Hispanic children would be accompanied by increases in the number of non-English speakers. The characteristics of Hispanic children are likely to change as Hispanic families become more integrated into U.S. society. We attempt to move beyond this limitation by employing a dynamic microsimulation model. This model enables us to explore the implications of the projected changes in the racial and ethnic composition of children for key social characteristics, including children's generational status, English language usage, and their eventual educational attainment. Additionally, our model is highly flexible. It enables us to explore "what-if" scenarios wherein we consider how the future could differ depending on future levels of immigration and possible changes in the meaning and salience of racial and ethnic categories.

Our main finding is that if the demographic rates and socioeconomic trends from the recent past were to continue, racial and ethnic heterogeneity among the youth population age 5-18 would steadily increase. Already, non-Hispanic White children compose less than half of children ages 5-18. By 2050, our baseline model projects a majority-minority patchwork among American school-age youth, whereby no single group would represent a majority. Non-Hispanic Whites would compose 42% of the population, Hispanics 29%, Blacks 17%, Asians and Pacific Islanders 7%, and children with other identities 4%. Interestingly, the model projects racial and ethnic heterogeneity to increase the most in cities and regions that are currently the least heterogeneous in the nation, such as Minneapolis and St. Louis, thus continuing the trend toward greater heterogeneity in new immigrant destinations. Finally, heterogeneity is projected to increase regardless of the level of new immigration after 2020. Although increases or decreases in immigration would impact the absolute size of the child population, it would change racial and ethnic composition only at the margins. More

immigration would lead to a somewhat lower share of non-Hispanic Whites and a greater share of Asians, but it would have a very small impact on the share of other groups, including Hispanics.

These results are important yet also unsurprising and consistent with the Census Bureau's projections. However, the findings concerning the implications of changes in racial and ethnic composition are novel and noteworthy. Even though Hispanic and Asian children today are more likely to live in immigrant families, the share of children of immigrants, both overall and among Hispanics and Asians, is projected to decline over the next four decades. The reason is that more time will have elapsed since the advent of mass migration from Latin America and Asia in the latter half of the 20th century. By 2050, Asian and Latin American immigrants' grandchildren and great-grandchildren will have been born. Perhaps even more importantly, growth in the share of third-or-higher generation children is likely to be associated with reductions in non-English language usage for all groups and increases in educational attainment among Hispanics.

It is important to emphasize that these projections are not predictions of the future, but instead are extrapolations of the recent past. For example, the projections do not account for sudden events such as pandemics or natural disasters, which could have temporary (or sustained) impact on fertility, mortality, and migration. Similarly, the projections in educational attainment among Hispanics are based on educational intergenerational mobility matrices[2] among first, second, and third-or-higher generation Hispanics who were born in the 1980s or later. The baseline scenario assumes that these patterns will continue. As more Hispanic children have U.S.-born mothers (who tend to have much higher levels of education than Hispanic foreign-born mothers), their probability of finishing high school and going on to college is likely to increase in coming decades. Conversely, if Black children's educational opportunities do not change, they would remain far behind other

[2] the probability of a person attaining a certain level of education given his/her mother's educational attainment

groups with respect to high school and college completion. In other words, Blacks' structural disadvantages would persist. Overall, these projections help illustrate the implications of the status quo, and serve as a call to action for those seeking to reduce inequality in children's educational opportunities.

Finally, it is important to note that projections of race and ethnicity have been met with skepticism by demographers and immigration scholars. For example, in op-eds published in the New York Times, Richard Alba (2015) and Herbert Gans (2017) separately argued that by assuming that today's racial and ethnic categories will remain fixed and socially salient in the future, such projections reinforce a "myth" of the declining non-Hispanic White population. Indeed, our alternative "White expansion" scenario provides an extreme illustration of what would occur if all children with a White parent (regardless of other identities) were to identify as non-Hispanic White. Under this scenario, the child population would remain majority non-Hispanic White and the share of Hispanics would drop substantially. We view this scenario as extreme, however, because research suggests that only a portion of those with Hispanic ancestry no longer self-identify as Hispanic (Duncan & Trejo, 2011). Regardless, these results illustrate the challenges in projecting the size of racial and ethnic groups when the very definition and social significance of these groups could change. As discussed by Waters and Kasinitz (2021), the salience of racial and ethnic identities for Hispanics could fade over time if these groups are granted pathways for inclusion and advancement, but racial and ethnic boundaries could also strengthen if these groups continue to experience structural and interpersonal discrimination. It seems that the path ahead is less dependent on changes in the racial and ethnic composition of the population than it is on our collective response to such changes. Additionally, measures of race and ethnicity have changed in the recent past and could change in the future, which could alter the numbers of people who identify in each category even in the absence of any social change in identification or in the treatment of groups. For example,

if the Census Bureau stopped including a response category for "Cuban", we would likely to see large declines in the number of people identifying as Cuban in the population. Our projection model is not capable of anticipating these kinds of changes.

Despite these uncertainties, we have great confidence that the child population in the United States is likely to change. While we are uncertain how these children will self-identify or how they will be treated, the number and share of children with Latin American and Asian roots will increase. Additionally, simply due to the passage of time, the share of Hispanic and Asian children with U.S.-born parents will increase, and past research strongly suggests that this is likely to have important consequences for social and economic characteristics that are associated with immigration status, such as English language usage and their eventual educational attainment.

Appendix A. Comparison of Results of Microsimulation (LSD-USA) Baseline Projection with the U.S. Census Bureau Projection

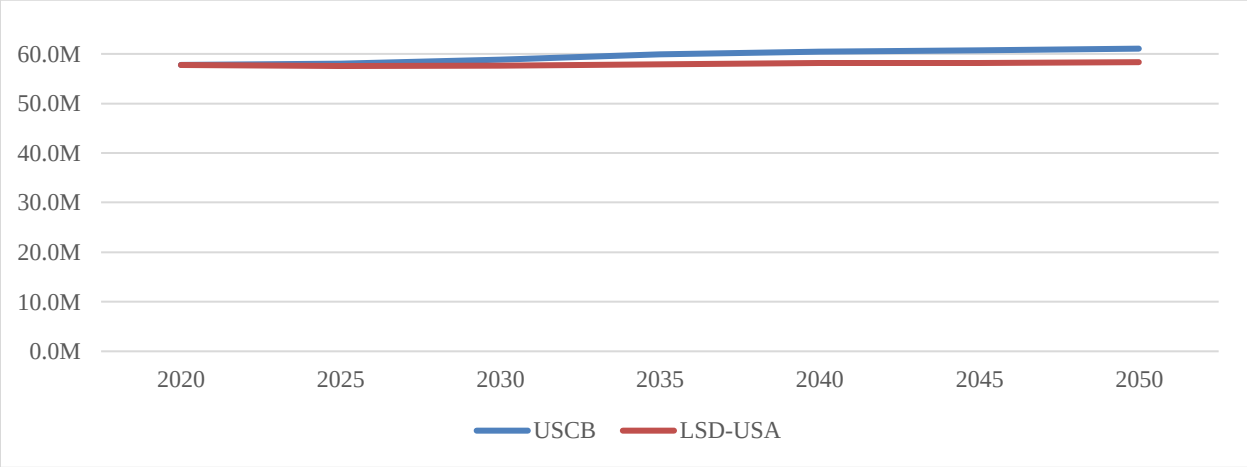
The U.S. Census Bureau routinely produces population projections and has produced a population projection for 2050 by age group and racial and ethnic characteristics. For reasons discussed below, we used an alternative projection model (LSD-USA). Although our methodology differs, it is reassuring that the results of our microsimulation model for the baseline scenario are similar to those produced by the U.S. Census Bureau.

The Census Bureau uses a cohort-component method and historical trends in births, deaths, and international migration to project the future size and composition of the national population at the group level (e.g., birth cohorts for various racial and ethnic groups). Rather than relying on the Census Bureau's projections, however, we employed a microsimulation model (i.e., our "LSD-USA" model). The LSD-USA offers two major advantages beyond those offered by the Census Bureua's cohort-component approach. First, because it operates at the individual level, the LSD-USA model can account for a variety of demographic and socioeconomic factors when modeling an individual's risk of having children, migrating or dying. This also enables us to account for family context when modelling complex processes, such as racial and ethnic identification. Second, because microsimulation enables us to account for socioeconomic factors of the individuals, we can use the LSD-USA model to report on these variables, such as the expected level of education, language spoken at home, and place of residence. Providing an estimate of many socioeconomic variables, as well as geographical data, delivers valuable information when tackling upcoming education challenges that the country and states might face in the upcoming decades.

Figure A1 compares the projected population aged 5-18 in the LSD-USA baseline scenario to the Census's Bureau mainline series (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). The future size of this population depends mainly on the fertility assumptions (both models assume little change in

immigration, the other growth component). In both cases, fertility patterns and trends are based on recent observations, although the microsimulation model also accounts for changes in parents' socioeconomic characteristics. Both models project an increase of the school-age (5-18) population. By 2050, the Census Bureau projects around 61.1 million school-age children in the United States while the LSD-USA projects 58.3 million, a 4% difference in relative terms. This discrepancy owes to higher birth rates projected by the Census Bureau than what is expected by the microsimulation model. The microsimulation model projects somewhat lower birth rates because it accounts for the likely increases in the educational level of future parents, which is likely to reduce fertility in the future.

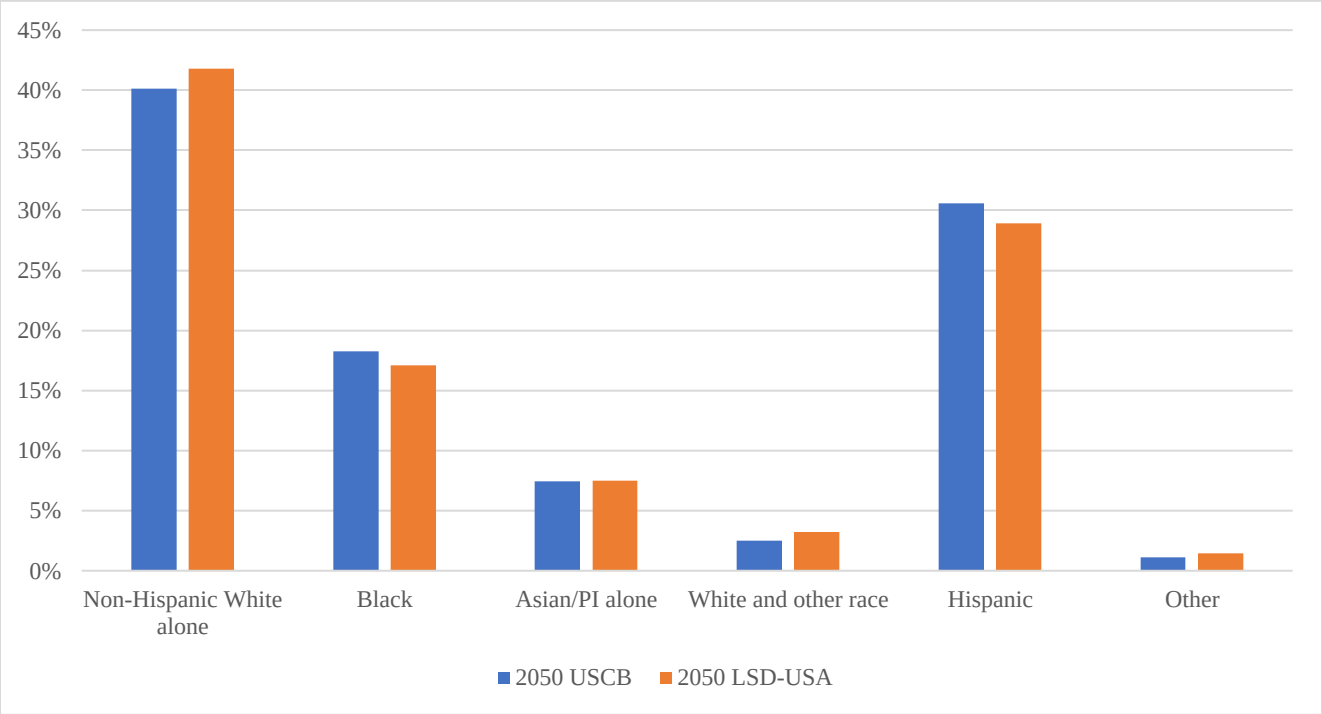
Figure A1: Population Age 5-18 Projected by the U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) and LSD-USA Microsimulation Model, 2020-2050



The U.S. Census Bureau does not report the same racial and ethnic categories as in this paper, but we can still compare their results to ours by collapsing the Census Bureau categories as described previously (p. 8). When we do this, we see that the racial and ethnic composition of the school-aged population is very similar across models, as shown in Figure A2. Despite the similarities, there are some small differences in the share of non-Hispanic White and Hispanic children. White school age children are projected to represent a slightly higher share of the population by 2050 in the

LSD-USA model than in the Census Bureau's projections (42% rather than 40%). Conversely Hispanics are projected to compose 2 percentage point less of the 5-18 population in the LSD-USA projections (29%) compared to the Census Bureau estimates (31%). This difference may be due to the way that the microsimulation model models intergenerational transfers of racial identity between parents and children.

Figure A2: Racial and Ethnic Composition of the Population Age 5-18, Projected by the U.S. Census Bureau (USCB) and LSD-USA Microsimulation Model, 2020-2050



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