

Lane Kenworthy, "It's Hard to Make It in America: How the United States Stopped Being the Land of Opportunity," *Foreign Affairs*, November-December 2012

Sources and reference list

pp. 98-99: "... an American born into a family in the bottom fifth of incomes between the mid-1960s and the mid-1980s has roughly a 30 percent chance of reaching the middle fifth or higher in adulthood, whereas an American born into the top fifth has an 80 percent chance of ending up in the middle fifth or higher."

Economic Mobility Project 2012.

p. 99: "... inequality of opportunity has increased in recent decades. The data do not permit airtight conclusions. Still, available compilations of test scores, years of schooling completed, occupations, and incomes of parents and their children strongly suggest that the opportunity gap, which was narrowing until the 1970s, is now widening."

Test scores: Reardon 2011. Years of schooling completed: Bailey and Dynarski 2011, figure 6.3. Earnings and income: Aaronson and Mazumder 2008, using estimates from Census data; Bloome and Western 2011 and Winship 2012, using data from the National Longitudinal Survey of Young Men and the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth. Note that two earlier studies examining data through the 1990s concluded that there had been no reduction in relative intergenerational mobility: Harding, Jencks, Lopoo, and Mayer 2005, using data from the General Social Survey (GSS) and the Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID); Lee and Solon 2009, using data from the PSID.

p. 99: "... there is now less equality of opportunity in the United States than in most other wealthy democratic nations. Data exist for ten of the United States' peer countries (rich long-standing democracies). The United States has less relative intergenerational mobility than eight of them; Australia, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Germany,

Norway, Sweden, and the United Kingdom all do better. The United States is on par with France and Italy."

Ermisch, Jäntti, and Smeeding 2012, figure 1.1.

p. 99: "Between the mid-1800s and the 1970s, differences in opportunity based on family circumstances declined steadily."

Hauser et al 2000.

p. 100: "The share of poorer children growing up with both biological parents has fallen sharply, whereas there has been less change among the wealthy."

Ellwood and Jencks 2004; Murray 2012a.

p. 100: "About 88 percent of children from high-income homes grow up with married parents. That is down from 96 percent four decades ago. Meanwhile, only 41 percent of poorer children grow up in homes with married parents, down from 77 percent four decades ago."

Parlapiano 2012.

p. 100: "... children who live with both of their parents are more likely, even accounting for income, to fare better in school, stay out of trouble with the law, maintain lasting relationships, and earn higher incomes as adults."

McLanahan and Sandefur 1994; McLanahan 2001.

p. 100: "The modern culture of intensive parenting — a largely middle and upper-class phenomenon — adds to the gap. Low-income parents are not able to spend as much on goods and services aimed at enriching their children, such as music lessons, travel, and summer camp. Low-income parents also tend to read less to their children and provide less help with schoolwork. They are less likely to set and enforce clear rules and routines for their children. And they are less likely to encourage their children to aspire to high achievement in school and at work."

Lareau 2003; Phillips 2011; Kalil, Ryan, and Corey 2012.

p. 100: "Research by the economist James Heckman and others finds that much of the gap in cognitive and noncognitive skills between children from poor homes and those from affluent homes is already present by the time they enter kindergarten."

Heckman 2008; Ermisch, Jäntti, and Smeeding 2012, p. 465; Duncan and Murnane 2011, p. 9.

p. 101: "Funding for public K–12 schools, which used to vary sharply across school districts, has become more even in recent decades. Nevertheless, a large difference remains in the quality of education between the best and the worst schools, and the poorest neighborhoods often have the weakest schools."

Hoxby 2003; DeLuca and Rosenblatt 2010.

pp. 101-02: "According to data compiled by Sean Reardon of Stanford University's School of Education, the gap in average test scores between elementary- and secondary-school children from high-income families and those from low-income families has risen steadily in recent decades. Among children born in 1970, those from high-income homes scored, on average, about three-quarters of a standard deviation higher on math and reading tests than those from low-income homes. Among children born in 2000, the gap has grown to one and a quarter standard deviations. That is much larger than the gap between white and black children."

Reardon 2011.

p. 102: "Partly because they tend to be far behind at the end of high school, and partly because college has gotten so expensive, children from poor backgrounds are less likely than others to enter and complete college. The economists Martha Bailey and Susan Dynarski have compared the college completion rates of Americans who grew up in the 1960s and 1970s to the rates of those who grew up in the 1980s and 1990s. The share of young adults from high-income homes that got a four-year college degree rose from 36 percent in the first group to 54 percent in the second group. The share from low-income homes, however, stayed almost flat, rising only from five percent to nine percent."

Jencks 2009; Bailey and Dynarski 2011.

p. 102: "Another disadvantage for the lower-income population is that in the 1970s and 1980s, the United States began incarcerating a lot more young men, including many for minor offenses. Having a criminal record makes it all the more difficult to get a stable job with decent pay...."

Western 2006.

p. 102: "A number of developments, including technological advances, globalization, a loss of manufacturing employment, and the decline of unions, have reduced the number of jobs that require limited skills but pay a middle-class wage — the very kind of jobs that once moved poorer Americans into the middle class."

Wilson 1987, 1996; Wright and Dwyer 2003; Autor 2010; Western and Rosenfeld 2012; Blinder 2009.

p. 102: "Not only do those from better-off families tend to end up with more schooling and higher-paying jobs; they are more likely than ever to marry (or cohabit with) others like themselves, according to research by the sociologists Christine Schwartz and Robert Mare."

Schwartz and Mare 2005.

p. 103: "The education policy experts Greg Duncan, Ariel Kalil, and Kathleen Ziol-Guest have found that for children who grew up in the United States in the 1970s and 1980s, an increase in family income of a mere \$3,000 during a person's first five years of life was associated with nearly 20 percent higher earnings later in life."

Duncan, Ziol-Guest, and Kalil 2010. See also Duncan, Morris, and Rodrigues 2011.

p. 103: "In Canada ... a family with two children receives an annual allowance of around \$3,000, and low-income families with two children might receive more than \$6,000."

Waldfogel 2009, p. 52.

p. 103: *"Fewer children in the United States grow up with both biological parents than in any other affluent country for which data are available."*

Ellwood and Jencks 2004, figure 1.2; OECD 2010b, table SF1.3.B.

p. 104: *"To remedy this, some, such as Barbara Dafoe Whitehead and David Popenoe, co-directors of the National Marriage Project at Rutgers, favor efforts to promote marriage. But research by the sociologists Kathryn Edin, Sara McLanahan, and Paula England and others suggests that this strategy is misplaced. Since women today need less from marriage and expect more from it than they used to, those who are better educated and better off tend to take more time to get established in their jobs and find good partners, which enhances the likelihood of a lasting marriage (or cohabitation). They delay childbearing as well. Among poorer and less-educated women, who see little prospect of a fulfilling and lucrative career, having a child in their teens or early 20s remains common. These women are less likely to stay with a partner: they have had less time to mature personally and to find a person with whom they are compatible, their partners are more likely to have weak financial prospects and a preference for traditional gender roles, and the presence of a child heightens financial and interpersonal tensions. Given all this, convincing more young low-income couples who get pregnant to marry is unlikely to produce many lasting relationships."*

Edin and Kefalas 2005; Cherlin 2009; England and Edin 2009, chs. 1, 3, 6; Wilson 2009, ch. 4.

p. 104: *"... an education campaign, as Ron Haskins and Isabel Sawhill, policy experts at the Brookings Institution, have suggested, that focuses on the benefits of the 'success sequence': first education, then a stable job, then marriage, and then children."*

Haskins and Sawhill 2009.

p. 104: *"... parenting practices ... have a clear effect on childhood development"*

Waldfogel and Washbrook 2011.

pp. 104-05: "Although few Americans support extensive government intrusion into home life, one potentially acceptable way that Washington and state governments could try to improve parenting is by paying for home visits by nurses or counselors and providing free or low-cost parenting classes. Getting people to change their behavior and routines is very difficult, so the benefits of such programs are inevitably modest. Nonetheless, in a recent review of existing research, the sociologist Frank Furstenberg found evidence that programs aimed at teaching better practices to parents of children at middle-school age or younger yield some improvements in school readiness and school performance."

Furstenberg 2011.

p. 105: "For all their inadequacies, public schools do help equalize opportunity by improving students' cognitive abilities. During summer vacation, the cognitive abilities of children in low-income families tend to regress, relative to those of their more advantaged peers. In other words, these children would lag even further behind if they never attended school."

Downey, von Hippel, and Broh 2004; Alexander, Entwisle, and Olson 2007.

p. 105: "A universal system of affordable, educational child care and preschool could help close the capability gap that opens up during the early years of life. Additionally, it would facilitate parents' employment and thereby boost household incomes, making it doubly helpful for children in low-income families."

Esping-Andersen 2004, 2009, 2011; Heckman 2008; Bingley and Westergaard-Nielsen 2012; Dumas and Lefranc 2012; Duncan et al 2012; Isaacs 2012.

p. 105: "The Nordic countries offer some lessons: in the 1960s and 1970s, these countries introduced paid maternity leave and publicly funded child care. Today, early education teachers there have training and pay comparable to those of elementary school teachers. The cost of early education is capped at around ten percent of household income. In all these countries, a person's cognitive abilities, likelihood of completing high school and college, and eventual success in

the job market tend to be less heavily determined by his or her family's wealth and makeup than in the United States."

Gornick and Meyers 2003; OECD 2006; Esping-Andersen 2004, 2009, 2011; Smeeding, Erickson, and Jäntti 2011; Ermisch, Jäntti, and Smeeding 2012.

p. 105: "There has been some movement to expand the United States' child-care and educational systems at the state level in the past two decades. Most states now have full-day public kindergarten, and some have added public preschool for four-year-olds. But the progress has been very slow, and in recent years, it has been set back by state revenue shortfalls."

Bartik 2011.

pp. 105-06: "Among Americans whose family incomes at birth are in the bottom fifth but who get four-year college degrees, 53 percent end up in the middle fifth or higher."

Economic Mobility Project 2012.

p. 106: "The average in-state tuition at an American four-year public university exceeds \$8,000. In Norway, Sweden, Denmark, and Finland, attending four-year public universities is free."

National Center for Education Statistics 2011, table 349; OECD 2010a, table B5.1.

p. 106: "According to data from the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, in those nations, the odds that a person whose parents did not complete high school will attend college are between 40 and 60 percent, compared with just 30 percent in the United States."

OECD 2012.

p. 106: "... since a prison record impedes labor-market success, the United States should rethink its approach to punishment for nonviolent drug offenders. According to the sociologist Bruce Western, states that have reduced imprisonment over the past decade, instead turning to alternative punishments, such as fines and community

corrections programs, have experienced drops in crime similar to states that have increased imprisonment."

Western 2012.

p. 106: "Broader trends in the labor market since the 1970s present a stickier problem. Hourly wages at the median and below have not budged in inflation-adjusted terms. In the 1980s and 1990s, the United States created a lot of new jobs. These facilitated the movement of women into the work force and thereby helped many households enjoy rising incomes despite the stagnation in wages. But in the early years of this century, employment growth stopped, and the subsequent recession and slow recovery have dealt a crushing blow to the less skilled. The employment rate among men aged 25–54 who did not finish high school dropped by ten percentage points between 2007 and 2010."

Mishel et al 2012; Economist 2011.

pp. 106-07: "The lone period of sustained wage growth at the middle rung and below occurred in the late 1990s. What distinguishes that period is that the Federal Reserve allowed the unemployment rate to drop to four percent, well below what many economists believed to be the level at which inflation would accelerate."

Bernstein and Baker 2003.

p. 107: "... among the countries for which there are comparable data, those with less income inequality tend to have higher relative inter-generational mobility."

Corak 2011; Krueger 2012.

p. 107: "A reduction in income inequality ... is neither necessary nor sufficient for achieving a reduction in inequality of opportunity."

Nolan et al 2011; Kenworthy 2012.

p. 108: "Since the late 1960s, affirmative action programs for college admissions and for hiring have expanded opportunities for women and various minority groups."

Bowen and Bok 1998; Reskin 1998.

p. 108: "Now, a number of observers from across the partisan spectrum, from Richard Kahlenberg, a senior fellow at the left-leaning Century Foundation, to Charles Murray, a fellow at the right-leaning American Enterprise Institute, favor shifting the focus of affirmative action efforts from race and gender to family background."

Kahlenberg 1995; Murray 2012b.

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