



GETTING TO KNOW DIVERSE KIDS



In May 2012, after years of speculation, estimates and projections, the Census Bureau made it official: White births are no longer a majority in the United States.

— New York Times, May 17, 2012

In 2012, minority births — including Hispanics, blacks, Asians and those of mixed race — reached 50.4 percent, representing a majority for the first time in U.S. history. Because this trend shows no sign of reversing, Dolores Acevedo-Garcia thinks it's time we learned more about these diverse children.

Acevedo-Garcia is director of Heller's Institute for Child, Youth and Family Policy; the Samuel F. and Rose B. Gingold Professor of Human Development and Social Policy; and project director for diversitydata.org, a multiyear indicator project on racial/ethnic equity in U.S. metropolitan areas, supported by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation. Over the past few years, Acevedo-Garcia has worked to enhance diversitydata.org to make it a more comprehensive database of indica-

tors on minority-child well-being. The new site, diversitydatakids.org, will incorporate systematic reviews, indicators and case studies of policies that may help improve the lives of vulnerable children.

"Minority children are literally going to be the future of our country," says Acevedo-Garcia. "We really want to focus on doing a much better job of disseminating our data and findings, which we hope will highlight some of the inequities."

With this new interactive tool, policymakers, advocates, researchers and funders will be able to create customized reports describing over 100 measures of diversity, opportunity and quality of life for 362 metropolitan areas. The data will focus on children, early childhood education, educational achievement and birth outcome data

by geographic location (state, city, county and school district), race and ethnicity, socioeconomic level, and immigrant status.

"The way I always approach my work is to think about issues from a life-course perspective," says Acevedo-Garcia. "It's critical to consider childhood."

In collaboration with the Kirwan Institute for the Study of Race and Ethnicity at the Ohio State University, diversitydatakids.org is scheduled to launch in summer 2013.

BRIGHTER TEEN FUTURES



In 2009, 4.8 percent of blacks and 5.8 percent of Hispanics between 15 and 24 dropped out of grades 10-12, compared with 2.4 percent for white students.

— The Huffington Post, Feb. 14, 2012



In the United States, one in four students drops out of high school — only 75 percent make it to graduation. In 2009, the dropout rate for low-income students was five times greater than their high-income counterparts — 7.4 percent compared with 1.4 percent. Many community-based organizations are tackling the problem with varying degrees of success. **Alexandra Pineros Shields, PhD'07**, is helping these groups improve their results by building their capacity to strengthen alternative education programs for low-income and minority youth.

Pineros Shields and her colleagues at Heller's Center for Youth and Communities has partnered with the Hyams Foundation's Teen Futures Initiative to work with eight community organizations in Boston and Chelsea, Mass., to boost the success of young people — 85 percent of whom are black or Latino — who have dropped out of school and are not employed. The community organizations, many led by minority professionals, help teens gain a high-school credential and move toward higher education or career training.

"We're not only evaluating the success of these programs but also helping these grass-roots and community-based organizations develop their own evaluation tools and instruments," says Pineros Shields. "They help design the surveys and are

involved in the data collection. Then we give one-on-one site-level support to help them analyze the data."

This approach is working — a majority of teens complete these programs and rate them highly.

"It takes a long time for us to finish our research," says Pineros Shields. "In the meantime, people on the ground are still trying to help these young people. We're helping the organizations create their own feedback loop in real time to improve the services they deliver. It's empowering for community groups to have some of the skills we take for granted at the Heller School. With the ability to use more sophisticated measures, assess their own programs and refine their work, we hope they can secure more funding."