



The transition to diversity in western societies: Challenge and opportunity

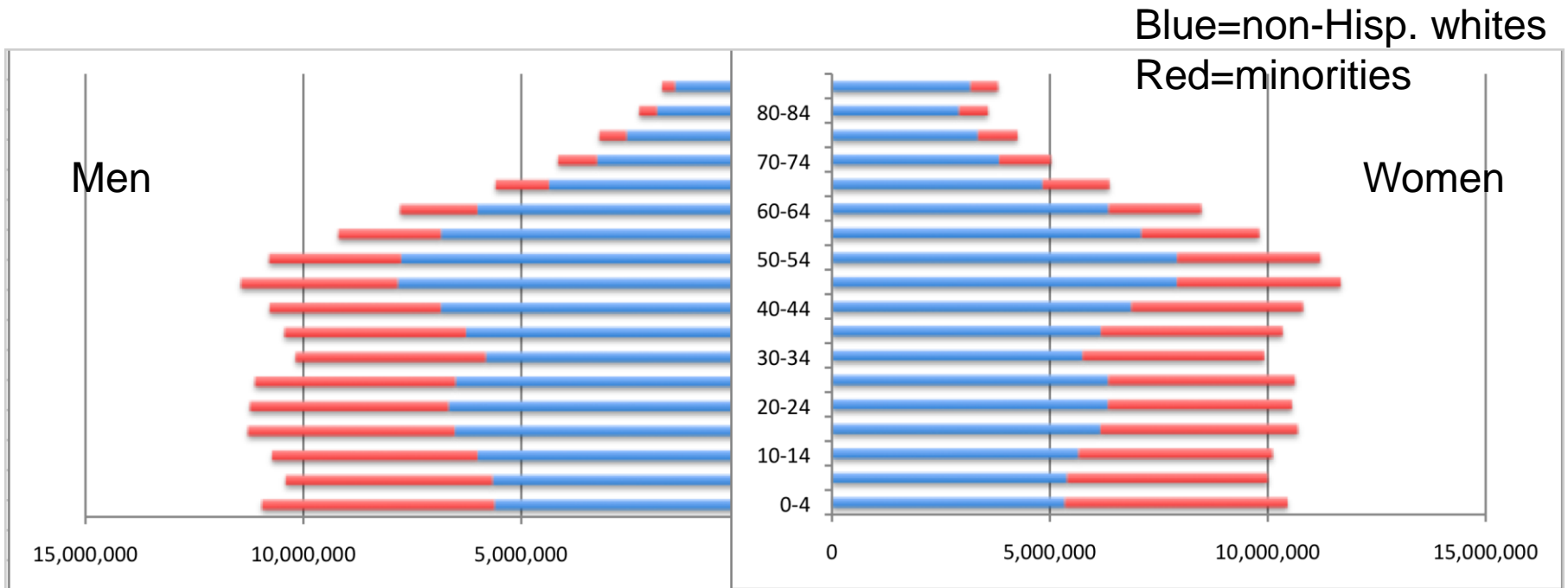
Richard Alba
Graduate Center, CUNY



An historic transition underway

- Because of immigration, all western societies are facing a demographic transition to a much more diverse working-age population.
- During the next quarter century, this transition will result from a conjunction of two forces:
 - The exit from the work force of the large, heavily native, baby-boom cohorts born after World War II.
 - The maturation of very diverse youth cohorts, containing many who have grown up in immigrant homes.

US population, 2009



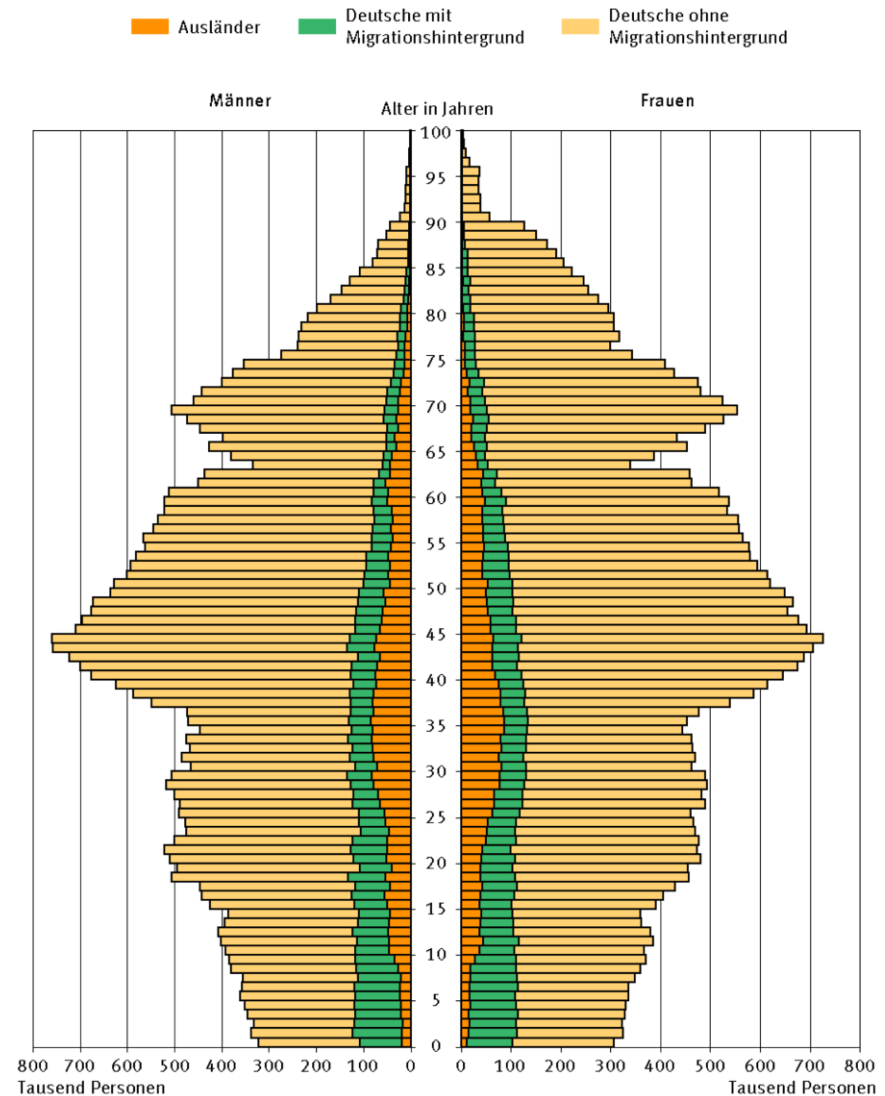
Germany,
2009

Light orange=
Native Germans

Dark orange=
Foreigners

Green=Naturalized &
Second generation

Abb. 1 Alterspyramide 2009 nach Migrationshintergrund
Ergebnisse des Mikrozensus





Immigrant-origin youth elsewhere

- In the Netherlands, young people of immigrant origins account for almost a quarter (22.5 percent) of youth under the age of 21 (Statistics Netherlands, 2009).
- In France, about one-sixth (17 percent) of all children are growing up in immigrant homes.
- In the United Kingdom, the proportion of all children who come from immigrant families is also about a sixth.
- In Spain in 2009, 24 percent of babies had at least one parent who was a foreigner.



Not all immigrations are the same

- Immigration tends to be bi-modal.
- High-status immigrants bring high levels of education and professional qualifications—Indians in GB and US—and their children often excel in western schools.
- Low-status immigrants bring low levels of education and take low-skill jobs. They often come from former colonies and are racially and/or religiously distinct, such as North Africans in France—and their children face difficulties in western schools.



Low-status immigrations & the second generation

- Two-thirds of immigrant-origin children in the Netherlands have non-western origins, most are in families that come from former colonies or Morocco or Turkey.
- Sixty percent of such children in the US have Latin American or Caribbean origins.
- Half of immigrant-origin children in France have African backgrounds.



The challenge of integration

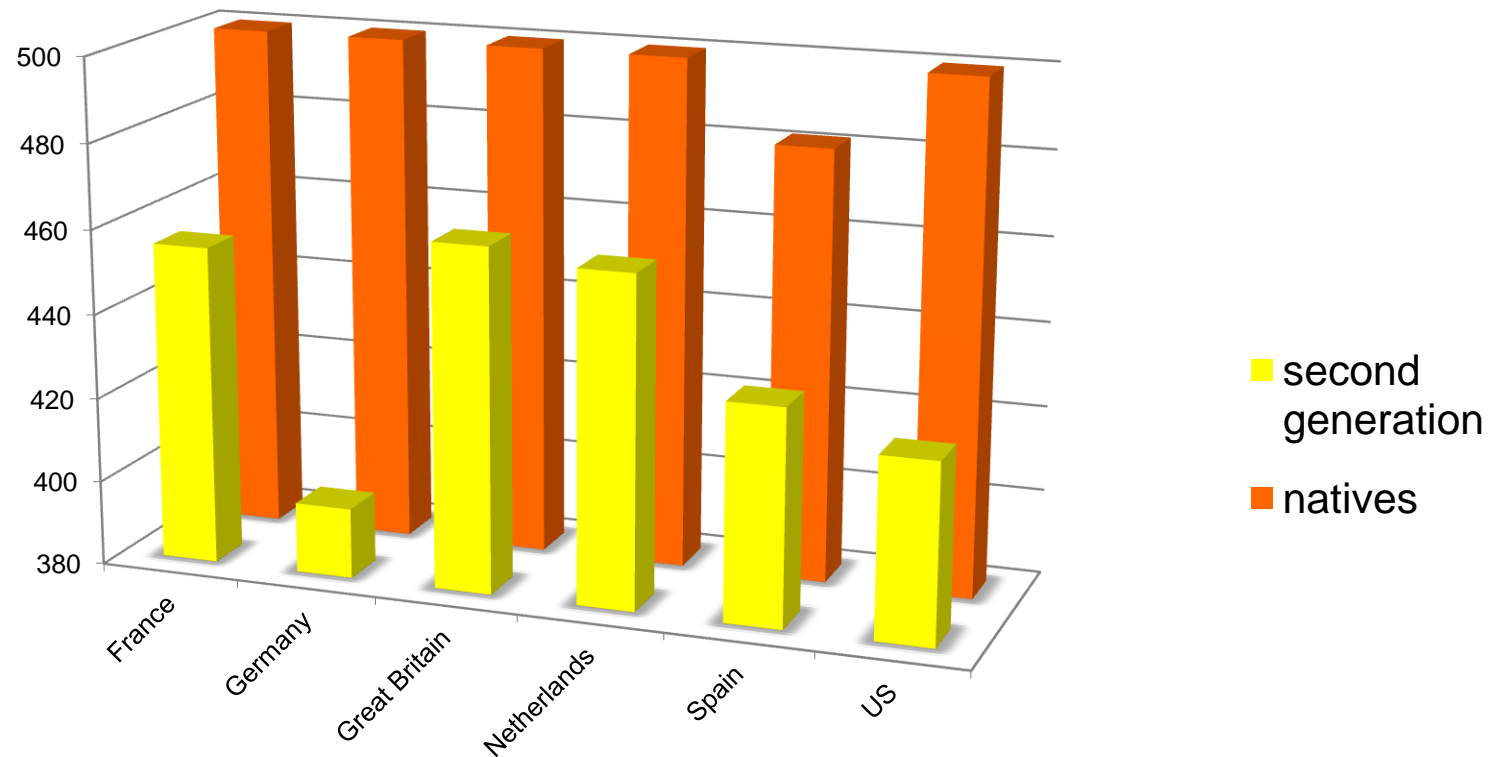
- Meaning of “integration” in this context: Young people of minority origins are prepared to function in the work force in ways that are similar to those of well-trained natives.
- Without integration, the economic, social and political vitality of western societies are at risk, as mainstream populations shrink.



Rough similarity of educational outcomes

- Consistent differences across societies on skills tests between native students and the children of low-wage immigrants
- Broad similarity across systems in credential differences
 - The British exception
- However, the U.S. does not come out well in these comparisons (despite its history as an immigration society)—it is found at the bottom margin of the range of outcomes observed.

PISA reading, 2000-06



Note: Second generation is limited to children of parents without secondary-school credentials

Credentials of native and second-generation youth in selected countries

	no secondary credential	basic secondary credential	some post- secondary	university degree
Great Britain				
white British	6.9	57.3	9.2	26.6
Afro-Caribbean	7.8	67.4	10.6	14.2
Pakistanis/Bangladeshis	14.1	47.0	7.6	31.3
Netherlands (Amsterdam/Rotterdam)				
native Dutch	9.5	10.0	14.7	65.8
Moroccans	29.1	15.5	24.3	31.1
United States				
males				
Anglo natives	8.4	28.6	28.2	31.3
U.S.-born Mexicans	21.1	35.6	31.0	12.3
females				
Anglos	6.0	21.0	33.2	39.8
U.S.-born Mexicans	16.0	29.7	37.0	17.4



Mass assimilation, 1945-70

- Young ethnics caught up socio-economically to white Protestant counterparts.
 - Southern Italians erased the education gap.
 - Quotas limiting Jewish presence in Ivy League were dropped.
- Marriage across ethnic and religious lines rose sharply.
- Ethnics accepted as white, entered mainstream.
- Catholicism and Judaism became charter religions.



An explanation

- Non-zero-sum mobility
 - Rapid emergence of mass higher education
 - Transformations of occupational structure
- Socioeconomic mobility → Social proximity to mainstream whites
 - Post-war suburbanization
- Ideological change promoting moral parity of ethnics
 - Wartime journalism and post-war novels and films focus on military “melting pot” for whites



Similarities and differences between past and present

- Demographic changes brighten prospects for non-zero-sum mobility, but not on the scale of the post-war period.
- The present is a period of far greater inequality than were the post-war decades.
- The educational system has changed between then and now—e.g., greater inequality, decline in teacher “quality.”