

of structural conditions that have isolated the urban poor, he emphasized that "the disappearance of work and the consequences of that disappearance for both social and cultural life are the central problems in the inner-city ghetto." Wilson's model requires both economic and social service strategies to reverse the factors that have generated an urban underclass. If macroeconomic policies can provide jobs, and social services policies can combat the effects of social isolation, then reductions in negative attitudes and behaviors will result. Wilson's model also implies that time limits on welfare reciprocity will be counterproductive unless accompanied by programs that provide jobs to poor women and provide the social services (e.g., day care, transportation) that will enable them to keep those jobs.

These models identify many factors that may cause poverty to persist within and across generations: lack of economic resources; inadequate education and skills; teen parenthood, nonmarital childbearing, growing up in a female-headed family; a welfare culture and perverse welfare incentives; underclass neighborhoods; and risky behaviors such as crime. The following summarizes the research evidence on how these factors affect poverty.

#### **Lack of Economic Resources**

Do children from poor families escape poverty as adults? *Intergenerational* poverty looks much like *intragenerational* poverty. There is considerable mobility: More than half of all Black children raised in long-term poor families (defined as poor during 50% of the years the child lived at home) and more than three fourths of White children raised in long-term poor families escape poverty in their 20s and 30s. But children raised in long-term poverty are more likely to be poor as adults than are nonpoor children. Almost half of all Black children (46.3%) raised in long-term poverty are poor as adults; this compares to 26.2% for nonpoor Black children. Almost one fourth of all White children (24.1%) raised in long-term poverty are poor as adults; this compares to 10.2% for nonpoor White children.

Even in a multivariate context, growing up poor is associated with large reductions in men's incomes. Men who grow up in middle-income families have incomes that are 40 to 60% higher than those of men raised in poor families, even after controlling for family structure, parental work hours, parental disability, parents' and neighbors' welfare use, mother's schooling, growing up in a poor neighborhood, level of state welfare benefits, labor market unemployment rates, and men's own schooling.

#### **Skills: Schooling and Test Scores**

Schooling is the strongest single predictor of earnings for both men and women, and returns to schooling

have increased over time. In 1979, college-educated men earned about 33% more than men who stopped schooling after high school graduation; by 1989, college graduates earned 53% more than high school graduates. Test scores also matter. Cognitive test scores are strongly associated with earnings, even after controlling for years of schooling. Programs focused on increasing completed schooling and skills are an important part of any antipoverty strategy.

#### **Growing up in a Female-Headed Family**

Being raised in a nonintact family doubles the risk that a child will drop out of high school, more than doubles the risk that a child will have a teenage out-of-wedlock birth, and raises children's risks of being idle in their young adult years by 40% (McLanahan & Sandefur, 1994). A major cause of these increased risks is that children in nonintact families have fewer resources than do children in intact families: lower incomes, fewer parental noneconomic resources (measured by time spent with fathers, time spent with mothers, parental help with schoolwork, parental supervision, and parental aspirations), and fewer community resources (measured by census tract characteristics, school characteristics, and residential mobility) than do children in married-couple families. These resource differences account for much, but not all, of the risks of dropping out of high school, teenage premarital births, and idleness. Controlling for parental noneconomic resources alone reduces negative effects of family structure on the risk of dropping out of high school by 40%, the risk of a teenage out-of-wedlock birth by 40%, and the risk of being idle by over 67%. Controlling for both parental income and residential mobility (a proxy for change in community resources) lowers these risks by 76%, 75%, and over 90%, respectively.

Adults raised as children in nonintact families show diminished adult outcomes primarily because as children, they had less access to parental economic resources, parental noneconomic resources, and community resources. This is consistent with the resources/skills argument. But being raised in nonintact families significantly affects high school graduation and teenage fertility even after resources are controlled, suggesting support for sociological or psychological theories related to distress, socialization effects, role models, and so on.

#### **Teen Parenthood**

Despite the negative publicity about teen birth rates, the teen birth rate (i.e., the number of births per 1,000 females aged 15-19) declined steadily from 89.1 in 1960 to 50.2 in 1986. Between 1986 and 1991, the teen birth rate rose to 62.1 and then slowly declined to 54.7 in 1996. Until the 1990s, academics and policy makers agreed that teenage births damaged the future economic prospects of young women. This consensus was