

## **The Family Gap: How Inequality in Family Structure is Contributing to Class Gaps in Society**

### *Abstract*

This book draws on mounds of data and social science evidence to put a conversation about family and household structure at the center of our policy discussions around economic opportunity and class gaps. The share of US children growing up with the benefits of a two-parent household has declined sharply in the past 40 years, driven by changes in household structure among parents without a four-year college degree. There is now a large “family gap” between children of college-educated parents and everyone else. The shift away from the two-parent family among non-college educated parents reflects a reduction in marriage among these adults and the decoupling of marriage from childbearing. The erosion of the two-parent family outside the college-educated class has exacerbated class gaps in childhood resources – and consequently, opportunities and outcomes. This new reality undermines the promise of equal opportunity and social mobility. Improving the lives of our nation’s children and closing class gaps in children’s economic outcomes will require that we confront the critical role that family plays in shaping the trajectory of children’s lives, address the factors that have driven these seismic societal changes, and do much more to curtail the widening class divergence in childhood environments.