

Demographic Trends and the Federal Role in Education

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Paper commissioned by the Center on Education Policy, Washington, D.C.
For its project on Rethinking the Federal Role in Elementary and Secondary Education

November 2008

The views expressed in this paper are those of the author.

Executive Summary

Summary of Demographic Trends

The field of demographics deals with changes in human populations, however described. We know that everywhere in the world, women are having fewer babies than their elders did. The developed nations are already having too few babies to maintain their population, meaning that growth will be in the developing nations for about 50 years. About 90 years from now, the world's stock of people will stop growing—more older people, too few young, leading to a population decline. Japan and Italy are already declining in youth to an extreme degree; the United States is better off, because of immigration (young families that have children) and the higher fertility rate in nonwhite populations. We can maintain our population size and even grow—for about 40 years. In the US, we have twice as many births as deaths, plus a million immigrants per year. The death rate will increase as the population ages, causing major pressure for increased programs for the elderly and less pressure for programs for youth.

The US Census Bureau seldom makes predictions, but on August 14, 2008, its web site carried a story that many demographers had already known—minorities, now about a third of the US population, will become the majority in 2042, and 54% by 2050. Children under five are already 48% minority, and by 2025, about 17 years from now, a majority of school-age children will be non-white; the rates will vary enormously by state, as does everything else. In 2025, 39% of school-age students will be Hispanic; non-Hispanic whites will constitute 38% of students, African American 11%, Asians 6%, and mixed race 6% and growing rapidly.

There are some unique aspects to our population—we are a nation of transients, with 40 million of us moving every year. (It's hard for schools to even remember the names of their students in some cases.) Nothing is distributed evenly across the nation—we adjust to these state/local/urban differences easily; in fact the US Census counts the population every decade (since 1790) in order to adjust each state's number of seats in the US House of Representatives. Winners in the 1990 and 2000 Censuses were California, Texas and Florida; losers were New York, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Illinois and Ohio. (Half of our people now live in ten states; soon a third will live in California, Texas and Florida.)

Thirty-six million Americans were born in another country. Their grandchildren have run for the US Senate and have won (40% of the Senate had immigrant grandparents in 1990). The “melting pot” works in part because the children and grandchildren of immigrants often marry someone from a different racial/cultural origin. Europeans have completed this process. Children of immigrants from Asia and Central/South America are marrying outside of their origin about 25% of the time for Hispanics and 35% for Asians. Forty percent of new high-tech companies were founded by an immigrant (usually from India or Korea).

The family has changed radically in the last two decades. Today, about half the children come from married couples (male and female); the rest come from single mothers, unmarried couples, gay male couples (27% have kids) and gay female couples (34% are raising children). Social policy at all levels ignores these changes, as well as the most important factor—we have the highest rate of children raised in poverty of any developed nation, *with no plan for lowering the*

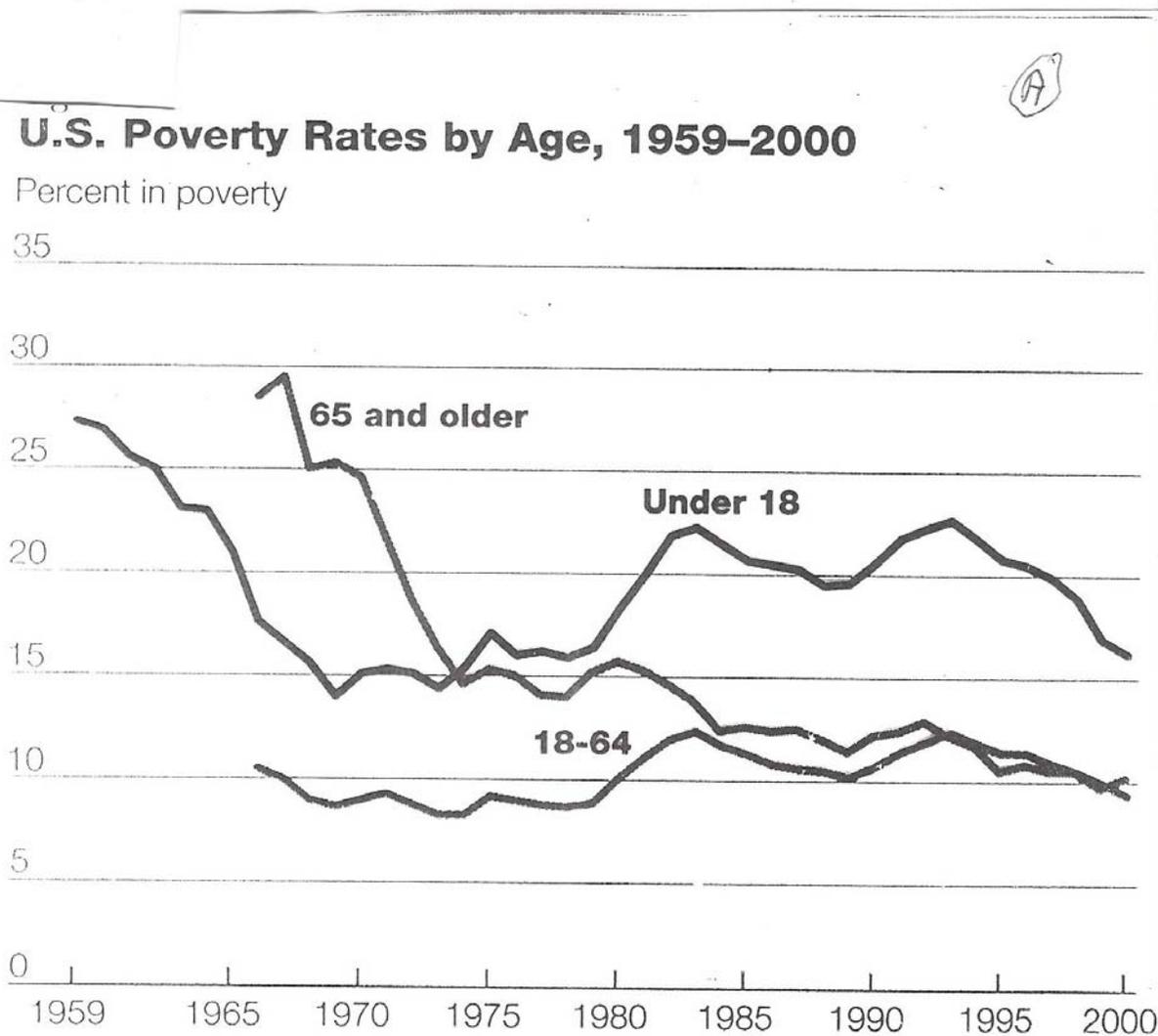
rate. This is an area where federal leadership has completely failed. The top 1%, both in the US and the world, control 40% of the wealth. Related is the job structure in the US—5 million new high-tech jobs will be created by 2010, while 25 million low-skill, minimum wage jobs (janitors, clerks, maids, fast food workers, etc.) requiring several hours of on-the-job training will be created by 2010. What sort of a public school education should *these* workers get? When the average corporate CEO got 25 times the average worker's salary in 1965, why does today's CEO make 250 times the average worker's salary? What, if anything, should be done about the fact that the US has more rich, more poor, and a smaller number in the middle? Will an increasing number of elderly (Baby Boomers) take funds away from programs for youth?

The federal Role

It is very important to understand that the Constitution says virtually nothing about the education of people under 18, except that the federal government will issue annually a report on the condition of education in America. Over the years, we have evolved a system of local, state, and national/federal decision making, described in this paper. At all levels, *autonomy is far more the rule* than is reciprocity. The state and local differences we have described in this paper make a smooth, well-integrated system of policy development and implementation virtually impossible. As one graduate student said to me, "The amazing thing is that it works at all."

But there are some things that can only be done at the federal level—making sure that data are calculated the same way in every state (e.g., dropout rates); assuring that state/localities are providing special programs for students with disabilities, students who don't speak English well, and those in poverty; making sure that federal funds (Title I, school lunch, school construction) are being spent responsively with good accounting for costs; and disseminating promising new practices to the nation. In the paper, we argue that the one thing that would change the country for the better would be to reduce the number of young people in poverty by half, starting with the youngest children. It is shameful that in the richest nation in the world, a higher percentage of youth are in poverty (18%) than in any other developed nation. "Can't be done," say some. Yet, poverty for people over 65 declined from 30% in 1965 to 10% in 2000, while poverty for youth is stuck at 18%, by far the highest poverty level of the three age groups. (See figure A.) Reducing youth poverty would require participation of leaders at all levels. But there is no question that it *could* be done. These are some of the issues we will explore in this paper.

Figure A



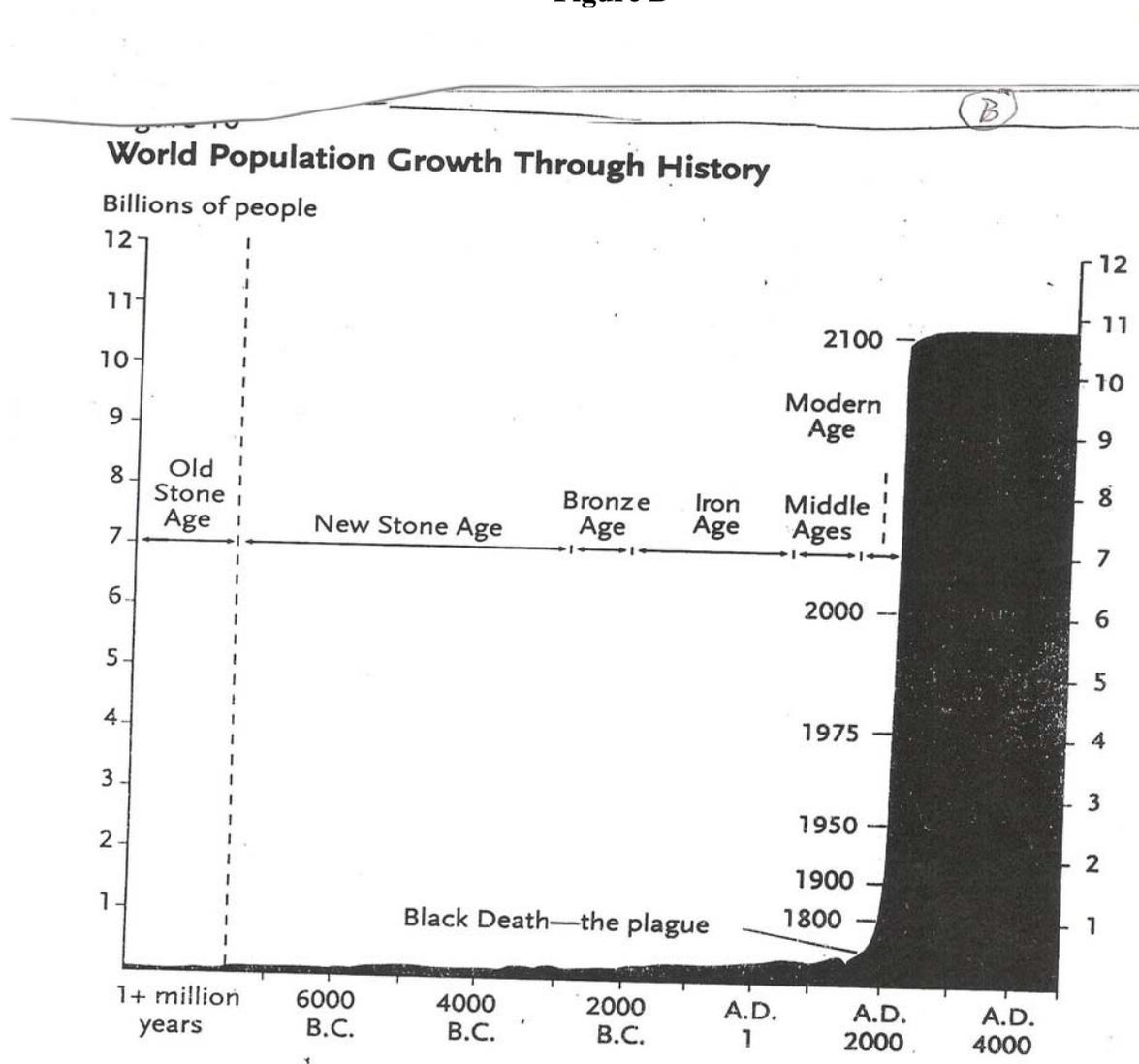
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, "Poverty Status of People by Age, Race, and Hispanic Origin: 1959 to 2000" (www.census.gov/hhes/poverty/histpov/hstpov3.htm, accessed March 29, 2002).

Demographics and the Federal Role in Education

Introduction – A Paragraph History of Humanity

People have been around for over a million years. (See figure B.)

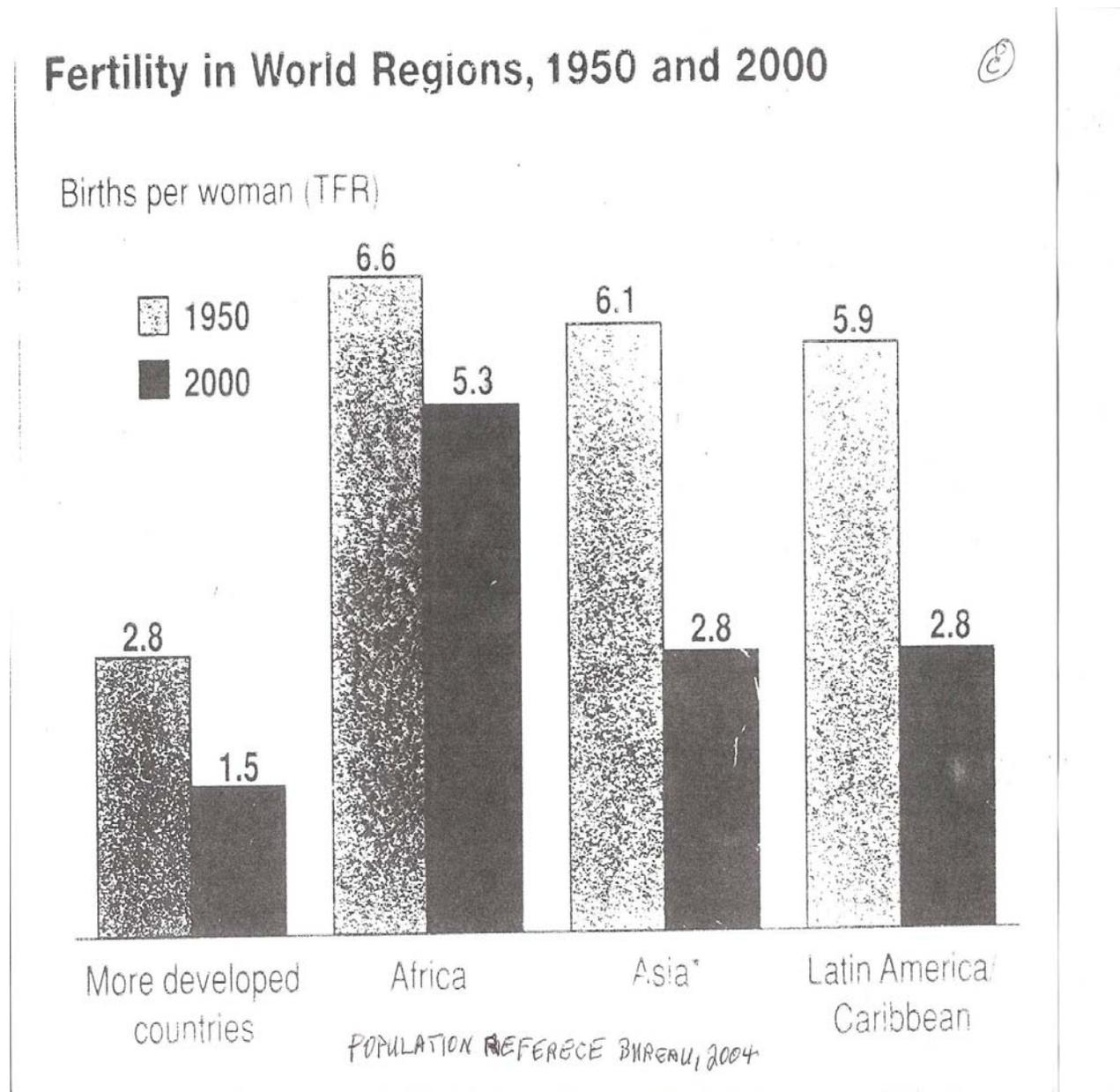
Figure B



Sources: Population Reference Bureau; and United Nations, *World Population Projections to 2100*

Hunter-gatherers have wandered around, probably starting in Africa, in very small population units, with something like a million people on the planet. (The “symbol cities” began very early, but they contained a small percentage of the people. Indeed, 2007 is the first year in *human history* that a majority of humans lived in cities.) It was around 1800 that humans reached the first billion, and today we number 6 billion. However, birth rates are falling all over the globe—all of the developed nations are below the “replacement rate” of 2.1 births per female (the US is almost there), meaning that growth will be in the developing nations. Even though birth rates are dropping in the developing nations as well, dropping from seven births per female to three will still increase the population. (See figure C.)

Figure C



However, there is remarkable agreement that around 2100—your grandchildren will be there—the human *species* will stabilize at 10.5 billion, and then begin getting older and smaller. We are already seeing some of the signs—fewer workers per retiree, more elderly who don't care about programs for youth, more communities where people can “age in place,” more services for older people, more concern about suicide as a “solution,” going broke paying for Social Security and Medicare, etc. All governments will avoid these issues whenever they can.

American Demographics

A simple formula can be very useful in thinking about any country—population equals births minus deaths plus immigrants (those moving in and those moving out). As far as births are concerned, in the US, 6 million women get pregnant every year, but only 4 million births occur, due to 1 million abortions and 1 million miscarriages. There are about 2 million deaths a year, although the death numbers are increasing as the population ages. There are another 1 million immigrants per year, a figure that has been quite constant; although there was a small decline in the two years after 9/11, by 2005, it was back to more than 1 million. Because of this “formula,” it is easy to predict that the US population will continue growing—to 308 million in 2010 and 363 million in 2030. It's also important to realize that in 2042, non-Hispanic whites will become a *minority* in the US! *The Condition of Education, 2008*, reports that school enrollments will hit a record high this year, just under 50 million, with 43% of all students from minority backgrounds. By 2017, enrollment will reach a new high of 54 million. However, race, age, location, wealth, family, work and education will change everything except the totals by 2030—remember, *nothing* is evenly distributed across the US.

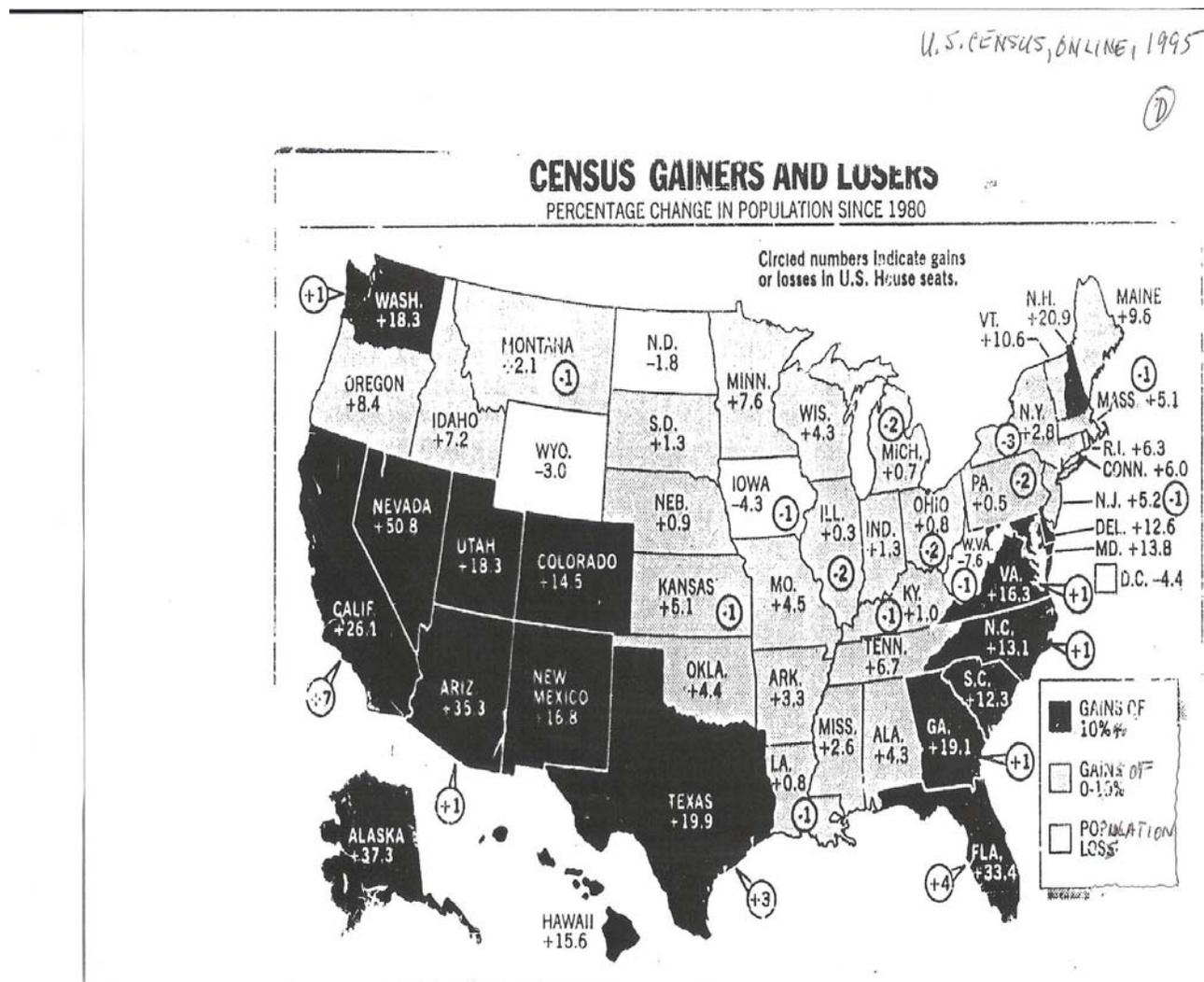
Consider how far we have come since 1900. That year, the average American was 21, lived to 47 years of age, and was born and died in a private home, about 20 miles from his/her birthplace. Ten of every 100 births would not survive the first year. Six years of education was considered too much by many Americans (remember, you had to get *everything* done before you died at 47!). Today, the average American is 39, not 21, white women live into their 80s and white men to 78, and by 2010 (two years away) there will be 114,000 Americans more than *100 years of age*, up to 173,000 by 2015! (This is the first time the upper limit of the “oldest” category in the Census has been increased from 85 to 100, and actuary tables from insurance companies to 120 years.) Today, 99 of every 100 births survives infancy, most of us live in a different state than that of our birth, a majority of our youth complete high school (more on this later), 40 million of us move every year, and America has more cars than people—anywhere in the world we want to get to, it is possible to get there.

The Census and Politics

It was clear to the founding fathers that we needed to have an accurate measure of who was here for voting, taxation, property rights, etc. Thus, in 1790, the first National Census was conducted, under the direction of Thomas Jefferson. (To ensure a good response, Jefferson used armed federal marshals as census-takers). Unlike any other nation, the number of seats apportioned to each state in the US House of Representatives was determined by the size of the state's population, as determined by the Census. Our Census is certainly not an academic exercise, and

has been used heavily every decade since 1790. As a result of the 1990 Census, California, Texas and Florida gained 14 seats in the House, while New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan and Illinois lost 11. (See figure D.)

Figure D



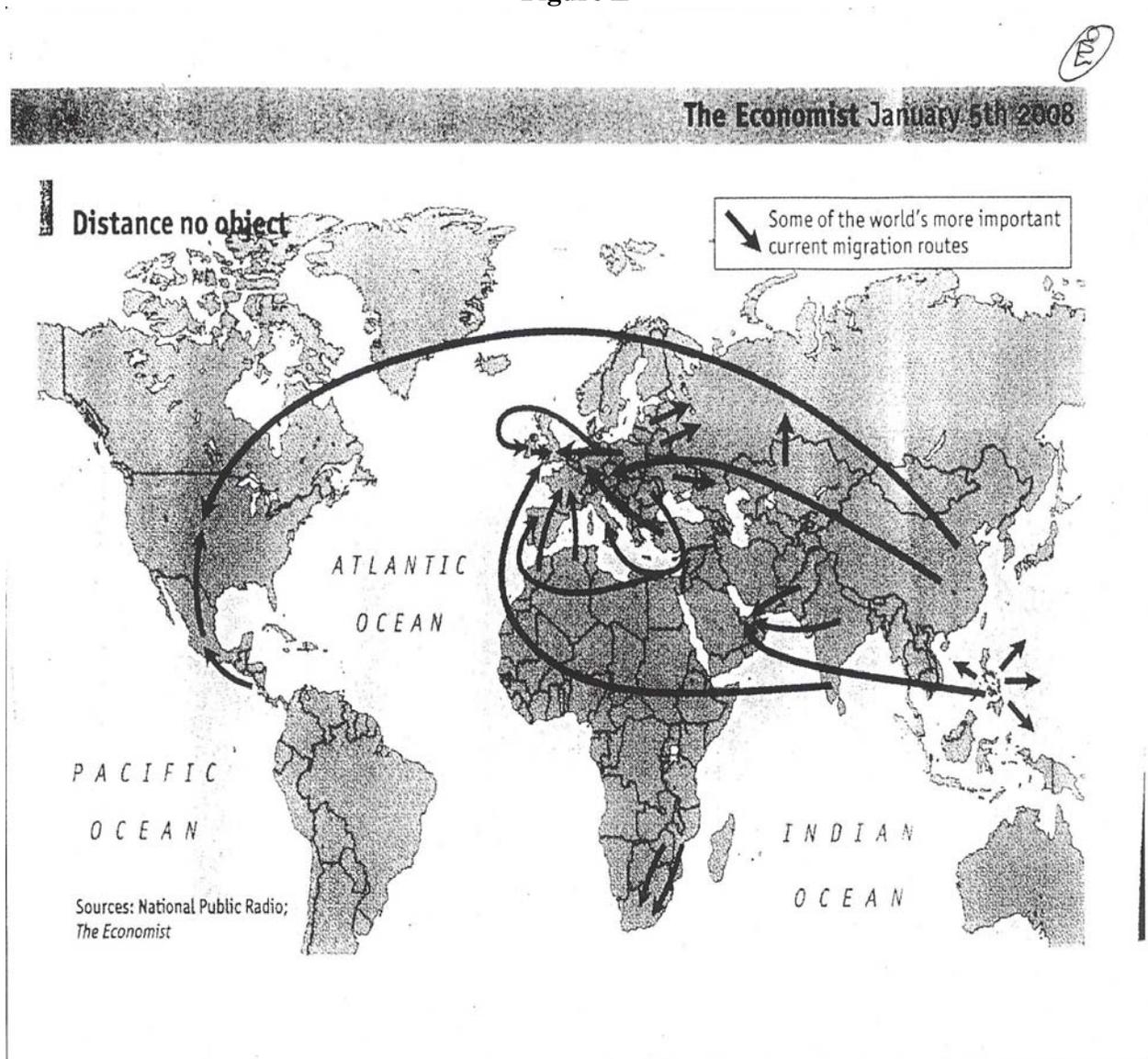
The “winners” had high minority populations with many children plus immigrants (and severe water shortages) while the “losers” had out-migration, low fertility, few minorities (and major access to the Great Lakes, one of the largest fresh water sources.) Water follows money and politics. Some of the losers’ water will start gravitating to the winners, particularly when Census 2000 shows the same trends—two more seats for Texas and Florida, one more for California, two fewer for New York and Pennsylvania, and one fewer for Illinois, Ohio and Michigan. In

addition to water, almost everything can be influenced at the state level by the Census count. (Once a decade is no longer enough, so yearly sampling studies are done on key questions, resulting in the most useful book available, the annual *Statistical Abstract of the United States*, and the source of 90% of the information contained in this report.) But the decennial Census is still the “granddad.”

Immigration and the Census

Although we consider ourselves a “nation of immigrants” with some justification, it is better to look first at the entire migration flow in the world, of which only 1 million comes to the US. Twice as many come to Europe, but they are spread across eight or nine nations. (See figure E.)

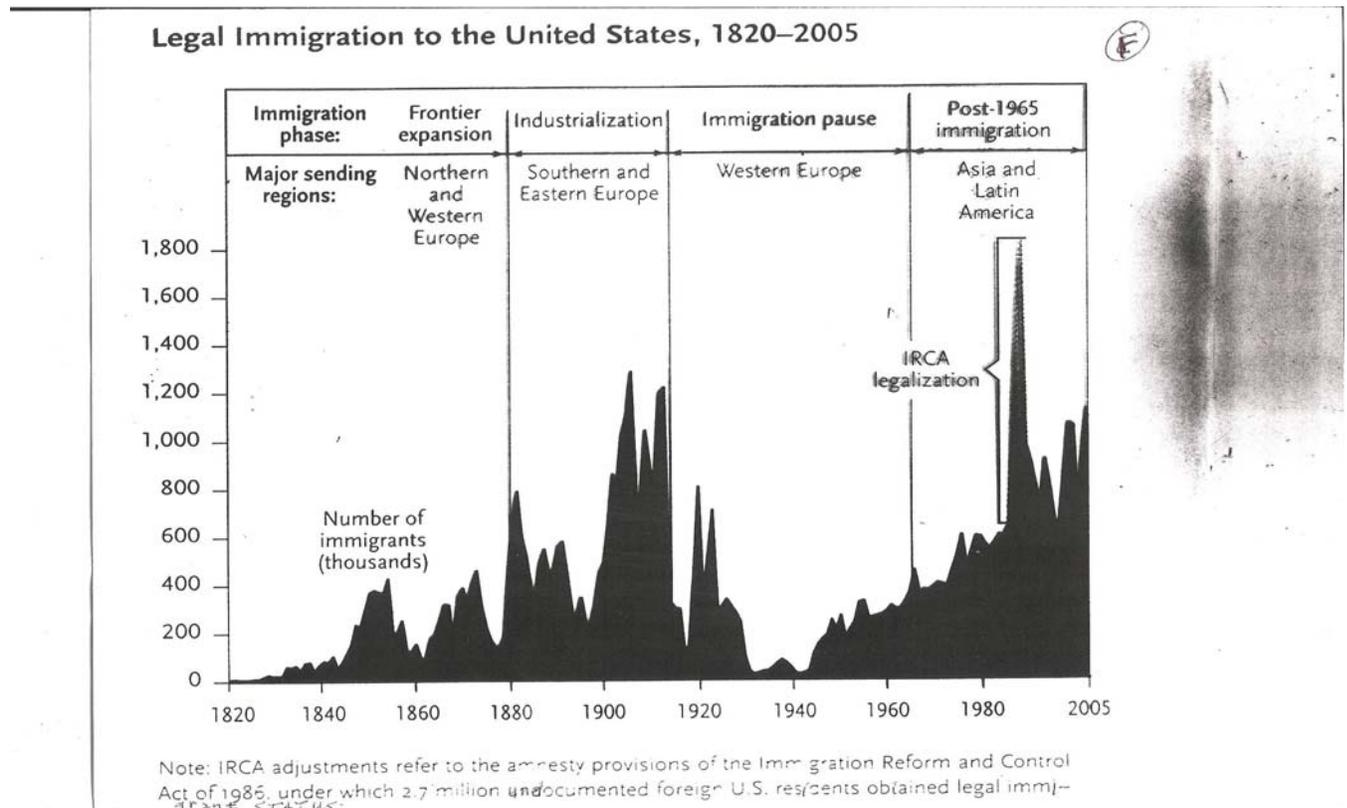
Figure E



Almost no one is moving to Africa, Russia, China or India. Because movers tend to be younger and with more children than “stayers,” it means that the receiving nations will have more children and young adults than the sending nations, more workers and fewer retirees, more taxes from workers and fewer pension checks to elderly citizens.

In all of this, the US had a specific mission to fulfill—we had most of a continent to fill with very little time. There were several tasks to accomplish: expansion of the agrarian frontier populations (to 1880), industrialization of the workforce (to 1915), a pause for several wars (to 1965) and population diversification (new jobs, new populations wanting to come here, more cultural diversity). To paraphrase Benjamin Franklin, everyone who has come to America has said, “Now that my family and I have arrived here, *no one else should be allowed to enter—it will be too crowded, these new people will be inferior, they’ll drink too much, commit crimes and not take care of their children. It will be the ending of the nation.*” One of the major pressure points was the Immigration Reform and Control Act of 1986, through which almost 3 million undocumented US residents became legal immigrants. By 1984, millions of Americans were convinced that if undocumented residents were legalized, crime rates (especially violent crime) would triple, women and children would be raped and murdered, governments would be in chaos, etc. By the end of 1986, it was clear that absolutely nothing dangerous had happened, although immigration rates had increased. (See figure F.)

Figure F



Immigrants are not dispersed evenly across the nation. California had 10 million foreign-born in 2005, New York had almost 4 million, and Texas and Florida had over 3 million each. The “big four” states had 57% of the nation’s 36 million foreign-born, although there were sharp percentage increases in the Midwest and Southeast. About 11 million immigrants (or 31% of all foreign-born) came from Mexico, followed by the Philippines, India, China and Vietnam, with over 1.3 million each. These five nations represented 46% of US immigrants. Latin America was the lead region (53%), followed by South and East Asia with 23%. The biggest earnings gap was Mexican workers, making \$21,000 on average, about half the US average. (However, immigrants from Asia and the Middle East earned more than the US average—\$40,000 and \$45,000, respectively.) About a quarter of the new technology and engineering companies launched in the last decade had at least one foreign-born founder, usually from India or Korea.

The most remarkable thing about our immigrants, from Italians and Swedes to Mexicans and Koreans is how quickly and easily they become Americans. It takes every group three generations, but the grandchildren of US immigrants can usually become anything they wish. (In 1990, 40% of the US Senate had immigrant grandparents.) No other nation is able to “process” immigrants so quickly. While many Senators have European grandparents, we can see the new immigrants booming along. Among the children of immigrants living in Los Angeles, 11% spoke Spanish only, 26% spoke Spanish-English equally, 33% spoke more English than Spanish, and 30% spoke only English in 2004. *Their* children (the immigrant’s grandchildren) will virtually all speak English. In California and Texas, “Jose” has replaced “Michael” as the most popular name for boys.

There is a simple reason for our success in absorbing immigrants—we marry them! Of European immigrant’s grandchildren, only about 15% have married someone from the same nation—Italian to Italian, German to German, etc. Nationally, the children of Hispanic immigrants are marrying someone from another racial/ethnic group 35% of the time, while Asian immigrant’s children are marrying from another racial/ethnic group *half* of the time. Two movies dealing with this theme are “Spanglish” and “My Big Fat Greek Wedding.” Yet, immigrants are seen by some Americans as a danger in two situations: 1) when they become 10% of the US population, and 2) when the economy is sour and unemployment is high. We have already had the “German Menace” (1751), the “Irish Menace” (1856), the “Chinese Menace” (1882), the “Italian Menace” (1896) and the “Mexican Menace” (1956), the last of which we are now revisiting. The worst was unquestionably when Chinese became 1% of the US population—articles appeared with scare titles, calling Chinese “The Yellow Peril” and leading to the passage in Congress of the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. This Act called on all Chinese to leave the US immediately, and if citizenship had been granted, it was revoked. Fortunately, our judicial system said no. We have very short memories of these things, so we do not learn from previous mistakes, like the Chinese Exclusion Act.

Although there has been little funding, or public reward, America’s public schools have played a major role in “Americanizing” millions of Europeans and their children and grandchildren, now new populations from South/Central America and Asia. We have even taught the immigrants themselves to read, write, and speak English, in huge numbers. Because people from different countries immigrated to different places in the US, the issue was basically handled locally, which is probably much more efficient than waiting for federal policy to tell local communities what to

do. Now bilingual education and English as a second language programs are providing additional funding and expertise to reduce the time needed to become literate in English, although evidence of their effectiveness is still coming in.

The Census and the Concept of “Race”

When immigrants have arrived, one of the most difficult problems for the Census has been to classify them by race, starting with Jefferson’s first classification for the first Census (free white males, free white females and slaves, with three slaves counted as one person). “Free” meant that you owned property. (Jefferson toyed with adding a fourth category for “mulatto” because so many slaves had lighter skin color than their owners.) Since then, no two Censuses have used exactly the same racial categories. In 1860 the categories were white, black, and mulatto; in 1890, they were white, black, mulatto, quadroon (one-fourth black), octoroon (one-eighth black), Chinese, Japanese, and Indian. The 1990 Census had 19 categories.

For the first time, Census 2000 allowed people to use as many categories as they needed to describe their racial identity. Thus, Tiger Woods said that he was a “Cablinasian,” Soledad O’Brien is a “Cuban-Australian,” and by 2005, the Census annual sample survey found 4.5 million Americans who said they were of “two or more races.” (Since “Hispanics” are not a race but an ethnic group, every Hispanic has to choose a race.) Most of us know our grandparents but very few know our *great*-grandparents. Given that with mitochondrial DNA we can now go back eight or more generations for anybody—Oprah Winfrey was totally amazed to find out her real origins, as everyone will be in a few years. This makes a farce out of the assumption that race is a scientific concept. The Census even says “racial categories should not be interpreted as being scientific or anthropological in nature.” You are what you *say* you are. “Hispanics” exist only in the US—almost half the populations of South and Central America call themselves “Mestizo” or mixed. There is no debate about the fact that 31 million of us were born outside the US.

However, we are stuck with the “white-minority” distinction for awhile, even though in 2042 whites become a minority! As of 2005, 33% of the US population are “minorities,” while 45% of the population age five and younger are minority. In looking at the preschool population of 20 million, 10 million are white, 3 million are black, 5 million are Hispanic, 861,000 are Asian, and 640,000 are “two or more races.” This is why 61% of the US population growth to 2025 will be among Hispanics and Asians, and another 2 million will be “combinations.” In 2013, a *majority* of the under five population will be “minority.” They will become our students, workers and voters. (And what will we call “minorities” when they are more than half, as our students will be in 2023, and *all of us* in 2042? And how do we count 2 million Tiger Woods?)

Much of this increase will come to California, Texas, New York and Florida, but every state by 2025 will have a more diverse population, although the racial/national origin categories change constantly. (Few companies market to “Hispanics,” they market to Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Argentineans, etc.) Remember that *The Condition of Education 2008* says that already, 43% of the nation’s school students are “minority,” as are 47% of today’s preschoolers.

The Census and Families in Transition

The Census is quite traditional in describing families, although since Census 2000 things have changed. Married couple households made up 74% of households in 1973 but 51% in 2003, a huge drop. Single parent households were 23% of the total in 2004, married with kids was only 24%, singles living alone was 26%, and married couples without kids was 27%. By 2005, new categories had been added—46% of male-female married couples had children, 43% of male-female *unmarried* couples had kids, 27% of male gay couples had children and 34% of female gay couples had children, and obviously, 100% of single parent households had children (A million children are the sole responsibility of their *grandparents*.)

The Census decided in 2008 that, even in the two states that allow same-sex marriages, there would be no category for children raised by a same-sex couple who were married—one of the two would have to be listed as a “single parent” due to the Defense of Marriage Act passed in 1996, which stated that marriage could only involve a man and a woman. A Census representative in 2008 said, “All federal programs must recognize only opposite-sex marriages in administering federal programs.” Given that 22% of male gay couples and 34% of lesbian couples (Census figures) are raising children, there will be enough work for a million lawyers to figure this out, although the Census may allow “unmarried single sex couples” to be parents.

However, married couples with kids have more children per household than the others, who tend to have only one or two kids. As a result, about half of today’s youth are being raised in a married couple household, and they are more likely to have both higher incomes and a brother or sister. (In 2005, over 14 million children had no brother or sister.) It is much too early to make generalizations about the quality of child rearing in households without a married couple, but gay and lesbian couples with kids stay together at least as long as married couples do (based on data from only two states reporting). Every organization with the word “family” in its title will have to rethink its mission and program to think how it can be helpful to *all* the individuals and groups involved in the raising of America’s children, as well as what role the Department of Education wishes to take in describing the home circumstances of students involved in USDOE programs. Once again, the Census decides who we are.

Poverty—the Universal Handicap in the Census

Although America’s students do not always score at the top in international comparisons, there is one are in which we have no peer among the developed nations—a higher percentage of American students are being raised below the poverty line than in any other nation. This “rich-poor” range is a major cause of some lower US test scores. Since 1995, every international study (starting with the 1995 Luxembourg analysis from Syracuse University and annual data from *Kids Count*, sponsored by the Casey Foundation), has shown that America is #1—12 million US kids below the poverty line in 1985, 13 million kids in poverty in 2004. It is very important to note the difference between the *percentage* of children in poverty (33% of black children were poor in 2004, while only 14% of white kids were) and the *number* of children in poverty (only 3.6 million black kids were in poverty that year, while 7.8 million white kids were poor). Hispanics had a 28% poverty level, which amounted to 3.9 million children. Which is the “correct” form, the number of poor kids or the percentage? Answer: both are correct, but they

present very different viewpoints for federal policy and action. In 2008, *Kids Count* reported the youth poverty rate at 18% (based on data from 2006 due to a two-year delay in reporting).¹

This report assumes that race is not a universally handicapping condition. If your parents are college graduates (20% of black adults now possess a BA degree or higher), if you live in a stable household with people who love you, if there is enough money for your needs, and if you can travel, visit museums, and stay healthy, your race does not need to hold you back. But if your mother is a single parent and high school dropout who works two 47% time jobs (no benefits) and can't read to you because she can't read, you are truly disadvantaged, again regardless of race. No one has ever explained why, in the richest nation in the world, 18% of children should be living in poverty. In the US, the number of children being raised in a low-income household in which no adult worked actually *increased* from 2.9 million in 2000 to 3.9 million in 2004. According to the Casey Foundation's *Kids Count 2007*, 1 million of these children live in suburbs and 600,000 live in rural America. Rural poverty issues among youth are often seriously neglected.

Unlike Britain, America has never developed a plan for reduced poverty among youth. Head Start and preschools are good programs, but they are not a *plan*. Tony Blair developed, with Parliament, a British comprehensive system which in ten years would boost the incomes of working parents, raising the minimum wage, and helping parents to gain access to affordable, excellent day care, better housing, better health care for children, more marketable skills for adults, etc. There is a cabinet-level agency to ensure that every unit of government is doing its part. Since 2000, 700,000 youth have left poverty in England, while in America the number has been stuck at 12.5 million, or 17%. (According to *Kids Count*, it was 17% in 1980.) Former Governor James Hunt of North Carolina certainly understood that any serious educational improvement would take at least a decade's commitment from educational, governmental and business leaders. But no US president has seriously proposed that we cut the percentage of youth in poverty in half, something which England almost achieved, but is now stuck. (LBJ's War on Poverty was not focused on youth, except for Head Start.)

A study released in spring 2008 from the Southern Education Foundation indicated that a *majority* of students in 10 southern states came from low-income families, based on their eligibility for free or reduced-price school lunches, with four other states a point or two away. The rest of the states also had higher student poverty rates than expected. There are obviously more *children* in poverty than there are *students* in poverty because children from birth to age 3 are included in the child count, but the percentage in poverty should not change. Most educational studies use eligibility for free and reduced price lunch as the poverty indicator. Although the "American Dream" includes getting out of poverty, the chances are better for kids to get out of poverty in Norway, Finland and Denmark than in the US.² The "middle" is declining in the US; rich and poor are increasing. The poorest people in the US get sick more often and die faster; America doesn't even make the top 40 in life expectancy.³

¹ Annie Casey Foundation, *2008 Kids Count*, <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/PublicationsSeries/KCDataBookProds.aspx>.

² Elizabeth Gudrais, Unequal America, *Harvard Magazine*, July/August 2008, pp. 22-29.

³ Ibid.

The most important reason for this is that for several decades, income has been shifting toward the upper 1% of the population, both in the US and the world. Imagine the world's wealth, with only 100 people representing the world's 6+ billion people who share the wealth. Of the 100, *one person* would have 40% of the world's wealth, nine people would have another 45%, leaving 90 people to fight over the remaining 15%. *This is real inequality. Forbes Magazine* counted 946 billionaires in the world in 2007, worth \$3.5 trillion. Although Americans were 44% of the total, they were only five of the richest 20 in the world (Gates at \$56 billion, Buffett at \$52 billion, were two of the five Americans.) America's richest 1% would parallel the world's top 1% in wealth.

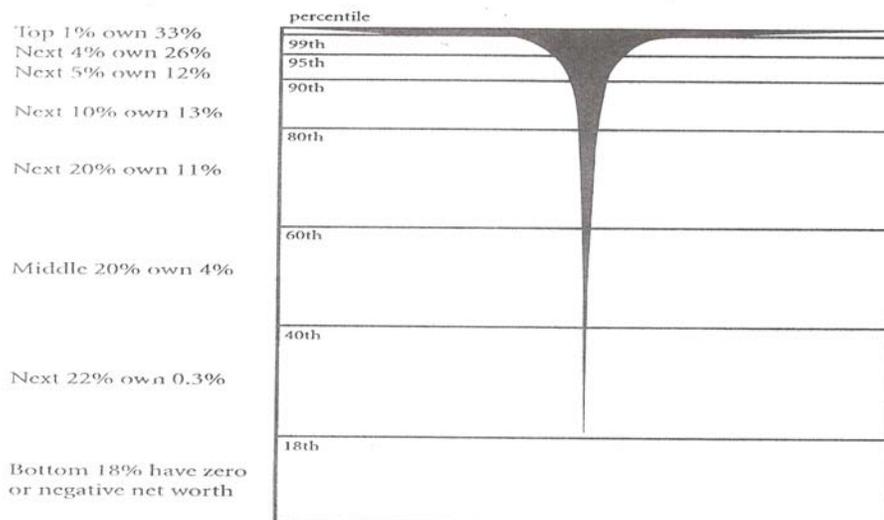
Looking at the poorest people in the world, the "bottom billion," of 6 billion, it is crystal clear that they have *nothing*—no health care, sanitation, education, electricity, protection against epidemics, transportation, communication, money, etc. It is difficult to know where to start helping them, as they have nothing to build on. The bottom billion are primarily located in small nations in Africa, but poor small countries in Latin America (Bolivia and Haiti), Yemen in the Middle East, Laos and Timor in East Asia, and some nations in Central Asia also fit. The UN indicates that the "bottom half" (3 billion people) share only 1% of the world's wealth. Thus, the US really represents the world in terms of inequality, but we are about the only "developed" nation that does. Figure G shows the distribution of assets in the US (not income, but everything one owns).

Figure G

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AMERICA IN PROFILE

Distribution of Wealth in the U.S., 2001

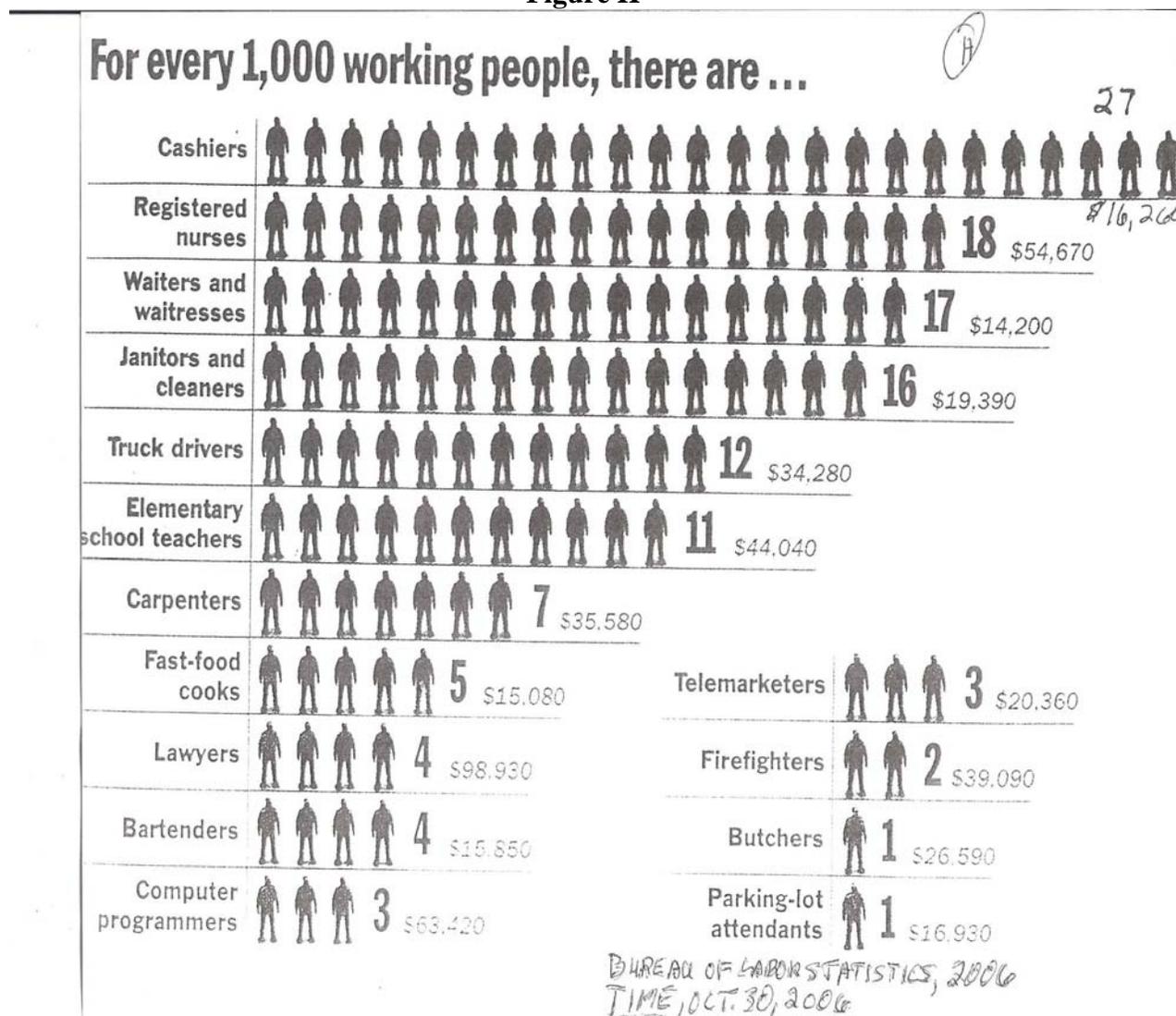


Source: Edward N. Wolff, "Changes in Household Wealth in the 1980s and 1990s in the U.S." (April 27, 2004, draft), in *International Perspectives on Household Wealth*, ed. Edward N. Wolff (Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing Ltd., forthcoming).

The Job Paradox

People from the Secretary of Education down have said publicly that the most rapidly increasing jobs require a college degree. While this is partially true, it is mainly false. The fastest-growing jobs (computer software, network administrators and systems, desktop publishing) will grow from 2.9 million in 2000 to 5.1 million in 2010. The *largest number of new jobs* will be in low income service jobs (food prep and serving, fast food, customer service reps, nurses, retail sales, cashiers, security guards) growing from 20.9 million in 2000 to 25.3 million in 2010. There are *ten* of these new jobs for every one of the fastest growing jobs, and virtually none of these (except nursing) require any degree at all, according to 2002 data from the US Bureau of Labor Statistics. What sort of education should the future cashier or waiter receive? These non-college jobs are a very large part of our 133 million workers, as figure H makes clear:

Figure H



What sort of education *should* the future waiter, retail salesperson or fast food worker receive from the public schools? The question is seldom raised, as the expectation is often assumed that *everyone* should graduate with a B.A. Perhaps, but not in order to get a job. But this helps to explain the lack of increase in the average wage in the US workforce over the past several decades. Still, if you want to buy a house, live in a suburb, and retire successfully with financial security, increased education is still the fastest way to get there. There is no federal policy in this vital area.

If we look at the *new* jobs produced from 2000-2004 (see figure I), you can see the large number of new service jobs that don't pay well and smaller increases in professional, management and construction/mining jobs that pay well with few education requirements. School leaders seldom look at these numbers, but they represent the future of the work force.

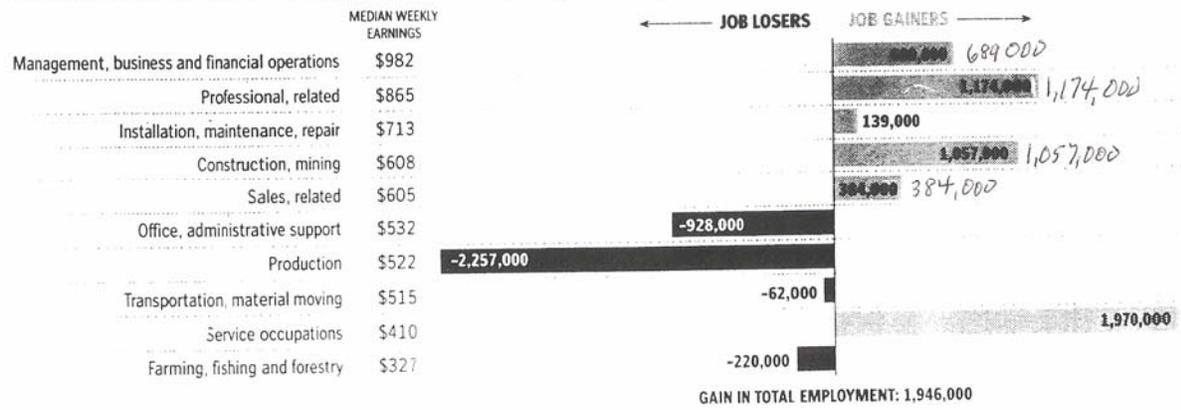
Figure I

CHART I.

Winners and Losers

While the number of jobs in the United States is greater now than four years ago, the largest growth has been concentrated at the top and bottom of the earnings spectrum— in highly skilled jobs and in service occupations. Meanwhile, significant declines have occurred in the number of lower-paying production and clerical jobs.

Job growth, June 2000 vs. June 2004 Ranked by median weekly earnings, 2004 first quarter.



SOURCES: U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, Current Population Survey.

Mobility and Transience in America

The most unusual thing about Americans is that *40 million of us move each year*, the highest rate of any developed nation, and one of the highest rates among the 200 or so nations in the world. (Thirty million moves are made in the same state; 10 million are moves to another state.) The reasons for moving are as many and complex as you can imagine. But one result is a feeling of transience—there’s no reason to get to know your neighbors; they may be gone next year. In a state like Florida with a lot of transience, teachers will tell you that they started the school year with 24 students and ended the year with 24 students, but *22 of the 24 were different students than they started out with!* Hospitals take case histories on patients they will never see again, and pastors look at the congregation on Sunday, and a third are complete strangers.

At a meeting of sheriffs, one Florida officer said to this author, “If you don’t *know* your neighbor, you might as well steal his lawnmower.” Neighborhood cohesion is one of the best crime prevention tools ever. These same police leaders told me that if you were from Chicago and got caught speeding in Denver, the Denver officer could have your complete criminal record in his/her squad car in 30 seconds. I told *them* that if their family moved from Chicago to Denver, their children’s Chicago school records would probably *never* get to the Denver Schools. As we will see, a major problem in education is that we need a motion picture camera but all we have is a snapshot camera. (A good number of “dropouts” are simply young people who moved to another school district but no one knew about the move.)

The Demographics of Education and the Federal Role in America

Determining the impact of demographics on the federal role is a unique problem for the US, as our Constitution says nothing about who runs the schools except to say that the federal Government shall issue a report to Congress yearly describing the condition of public education in America. So who *does* run America’s schools? For starters, over 13,000 locally elected school boards, 50 state boards of education, 50 chief state school officers, 13,000 school superintendents, 50 governors and state legislatures, one President, one US Congress, one US Department of Education, numerous accrediting bodies, and so on. There is no hall large enough to contain all of them, but there is no need, no cry for them to all get together. In Germany, England, Italy it’s simple—one Minister of Education.

The US federal government has provided only about 9% of the funding for public schools, unique among the developed nations, but in the current Bush administration, the Department of Education has been transformed into something like a Roman Legion, only partially because of implementing the No Child Left Behind Act. There is general agreement that the areas of special concern in NCLB are real—children in poverty, those with disabilities, those who don’t speak English, and those who are “racial minorities”—but the data collection efforts are mainly state comparisons by grade level (grades 4 and 8) in only a few subject areas (reading and math), and so far, there is little evidence that the four classes listed above are doing better because of NCLB.

One of the key problems is related to our previous discussion—a school involved in NCLB will do an assessment of its 4th graders in math, then return four years later to test them for 8th grade math, assuming *the 8th grade group is the 4th graders four years later*. In many schools a third of the 8th graders may have come from a different school and were not there for 4th grade. What we want to know is: how are Billy and Susie doing in the 8th grade compared to *their* scores in 4th grade? At the moment, the question cannot be answered. Similarly, a dropout from one school may well have transferred to another school/school district and graduated, while being recorded as a dropout by the first school attended, especially if the student changed states as well as schools.

The biggest governance problem is the huge difference *between* the states on almost any dimension, from poverty (8% of kids in New Hampshire to 30% of kids in Louisiana, or 84% poor in Louisiana according to the new Southern Education Foundation study) to dropouts (4% in New Jersey, 12% in Arizona and Louisiana). To make matters worse, every state can calculate almost anything any way it wishes, making the apparent precision of dropout rates, for example, very misleading. (Why should each state decide what “competent” levels of 4th grade reading and math are? In the states that have developed their own reading and math tests, the state scores are almost always higher than scores for the same students on the National Assessment of Educational Progress, the “nation’s report card.” And if there’s a national standard for “competent 4th grade math,” shouldn’t we have a national curriculum based on this test? That’s where things get sticky.) The amount spent per student varies greatly by state, and even *within* a state, from wealthy suburbs to inner cities and rural areas. Knowing that poverty is one of the most consistent preventers of school achievement, how do you compare test scores from New Hampshire (9% poverty) with those of Mississippi (31%)? According to the Center on Education Policy report, *State High School Exit Exams: A Move Toward End-of-Course Exams*, 23 states now require students to pass an exit exam as well as course requirements to earn a diploma. What if a student transfers into such a state in his/her junior year, thus missing some of the content that will be on the “high stakes” exam? Why are so many students in poverty failing these tests?

From our analysis thus far, there are several areas that cry out for federal leadership.

- First, if we can catch a speeder out of state and have his/her driving record in 60 seconds at the patrol car, there is absolutely no reason why we cannot track *nationally* every one of the 8 million or so students who change addresses every year. There are many existing national data bases that all originate from data passed up from every school in the nation.
- “Race” is becoming a questionable item for the Census and education—we know that in 2023, a *majority* of US students will be “minority.” This makes no sense. No federal policy or legislation was conceived with whites as a “minority group.” We have only a few years to decide how to deal with this major issue.
- We are going through another of our regular rants about the evils of immigration, even though it’s obvious that, except for Native Americans, all of us had ancestors who came from someplace else. It takes every group three generations to become totally

“Americanized” in culture and language, which is an incredibly short time. Without immigration, our population would *already* be getting older and smaller. Our schools taught Italian-speaking kids to speak and write English, now we’re doing the same thing with Spanish-speaking kids. We’re very good at assimilating people from other nations, especially in our schools, and we need to keep it up, especially with local support from the federal government.

- As the Baby Boom starts to turn 65 in 2011, *70 million* people will do the same thing in only 17 years. They will be pushing for programs for the elderly, as their children will also have completed their education. How do we convince 70 million voters that supporting public schools is in their best interest, as the schools will produce the workers who will pay the taxes that will fund their Social Security and Medicare? What’s the federal role?
- *The Condition of Education* won’t tell you, but one look at the *Statistical Abstract of the US*⁴ will reveal the astonishing differences between the states, in almost every area, including education. No Child Left Behind assumes that states are identical, for political purposes. How can we develop federal policy and programs that are *fair* to states with 10% low-income students and those with 30%?
- How can we help students understand what the work force really looks like, with the large increase in minimum wage jobs that require two hours to learn? We may have a “green” component to the work force, but the vast majority of jobs now being created will *not* require a college degree, whatever the current Secretary of Education says. (Very few jobs are “outsourced”; most are eliminated through automation.) Can the Bureau of Labor Statistics work productively with the US Department of Education?

We will conclude with three questions:

1. Which decisions should be made at local, state and federal (national) levels?
2. How can we build a data base that assesses the performance of every student in the nation, using the same measuring stick for everyone, even if they move?
3. Although we have a very diverse student body in our public schools, the percentage in poverty (18% in Kids Count, 2007) is inexcusable, even given the huge concentrations of wealth in the top 1%. We need a national/federal strategy to cut the rate in half. If the British could do it, the US can do it.

There are several ways to deal with issue 1: one is the “Golden Rule”—he who has the gold makes the rule. This would leave the federal Government almost out of the picture, at 9% of the money. But federal court decisions must be enforced by the federal government, from desegregation court orders to disability programs. There are some important questions that

⁴ US Census Bureau, *Statistical Abstract of the United States, 2007*, Washington, DC: Author, 2006. Ninety percent of the statistics used in this report are contained in this annual publication of 999 pages with 1,376 tables, covering virtually all aspects of American life. For some reason, it is usually ignored (or unknown) by educators.

only a national perspective can answer—for example, how’s the nation doing in education? Someone needs to gather competent information about every school, every school district, and every student in the nation. This could be the federal government (although it often has a political agenda on data collection and well as interpretation) or an assortment of independent organizations like the Center on Education Policy, or both. But if we as a nation were to take on the task of cutting youth poverty in half, it would require our best efforts at all three levels, working together (that’s the hard part). States are amazingly different in their level of effort in funding public education—some states with a large Gross State Product produce a small amount of funding per student. (See the Appendix accompanying this report for a few examples of the striking differences between the states.) “Local” includes counties, school districts, and individual schools.

This division seems odd to people from other nations, but it is a vital part of our heritage, and just as states are very different from each other, school districts *within* a state can be very different. Two identical suburbs can differ by per capita spending per student by 50%. Although our system seems almost unworkable as a unit, it works better at the local, state and federal (national) levels. What we need is more *reciprocity* between the levels and less preoccupation with *autonomy*. Education, health, housing, and welfare need to work together at all levels if we are to cut youth poverty in half.

As for issue 2, we badly need a system that allows everyone to know something about how well a student, a school, a district, a state and the nation are performing in a variety of areas—4th grade math and 8th grade English, as well as graduation rates and access to the “afterlife” of higher education and/or work. We have no such tool at present. Although the National Assessment of Educational Progress (the “Nation’s Report Card”) has the potential to do this, we’ll need more than a standardized multiple choice test, such as the SAT, which is seldom a good predictor of college success. One reason why Head Start is still around is that, although it’s a program for preschool kids, the students, plus the control group, has been followed until now, at age 40, when we can see some exceptional results without standardized tests. The questions are truly useful—compared with the control group (identical except that they didn’t have the Head Start program -) who has graduated from high school? From college? Who has owned their own home? Made \$2,000 a month? Gone to jail? Who is on welfare? A high school dropout? Unemployed? On drugs? The Head Start kids were much better than the controls even though the only difference was whether or not they had Head Start. *These* criteria make sense to anyone. When you tell adults that a dollar invested in Head Start will save \$7 in taxpayer money for services the Head Start kids don’t need, from jails to drug detox centers, people can immediately see what a good “investment” Head Start is. At the moment, states can use a variety of ways to figure dropouts, and all are put together in Washington to figure the dropout rate for the nation, even though it’s comparing apples and oranges because each state can use its own method for computing dropouts.

Twenty-three states now use “high stakes” tests for high school graduation, but generally, way more than half of the students in those states will live in another state where much of that knowledge may not be valued. Teachers have almost been written out of the assessment business, even though they can usually predict student success in college or jobs very well. Do young

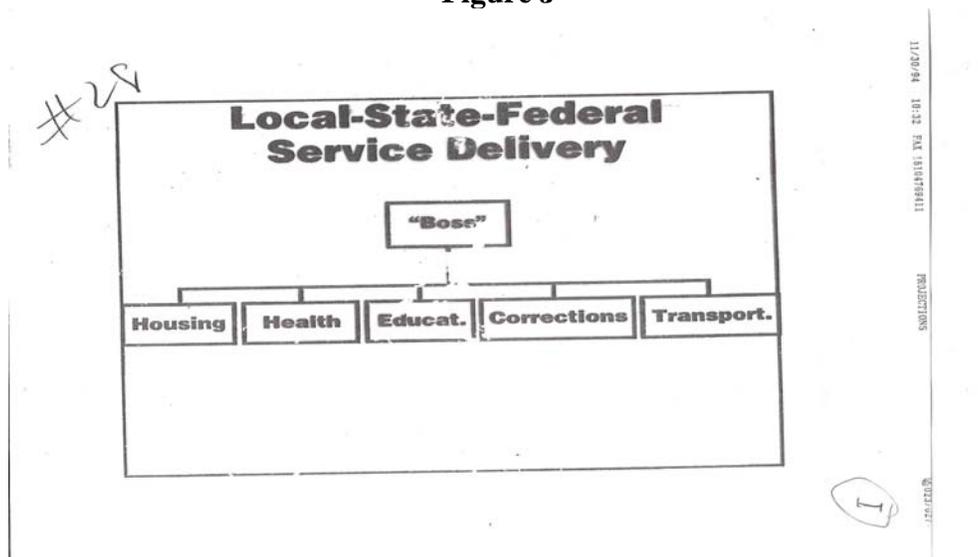
people who pass the high-stakes test do any better in life than those who don't? (Look at states without a test requirement for graduation and you can answer the question.)

Turning to question 3, we must ask why is the level of youth poverty so high in the US? Partly because the difference between rich and poor in the US is very large and increasing. A thousand low-income women making \$10,000 a year will have more babies than 1,000 women who are college graduates making \$70,000 a year. People don't realize that as they get older, they will be more dependent on young workers who will generate the taxes the elderly will need for their Social Security and Medicare payments! Gifted speakers (Marion Wright Edelman for starters) have spent their lives trying to get people to care about youth poverty, to feel guilty, angry—anything. The general response: “Why should I feel responsible about *someone else's* children?” The Baby Boomers—well educated, reasonably well off—are now moving into their 60s and soon will be in need of social services that will require *someone else's* tax dollars. (Your taxes are not held in escrow for you—everyone pays for the generation older than you.) It is absolutely in the Baby Boomers' self-interest that young people get a good education and a terrific job. But for years, we have seen 18% of young people in poverty.

How could we develop a *plan* to cut youth poverty in half? We could learn from the British—you need a national leader who will commit the nation for a decade, a legislature willing to commit for a decade, a business leadership that can provide finance and training, an excellent program of day care for working low income mothers, plus training so they can increase their income, getting every four-year-old to know their letters and numbers and start reading, The British learned that you can't just wait for the children to graduate from college; you have to help parents, virtually from the child's birth. But while they got three quarters of a million children out of poverty, we have seen no change, as we have no national strategy.

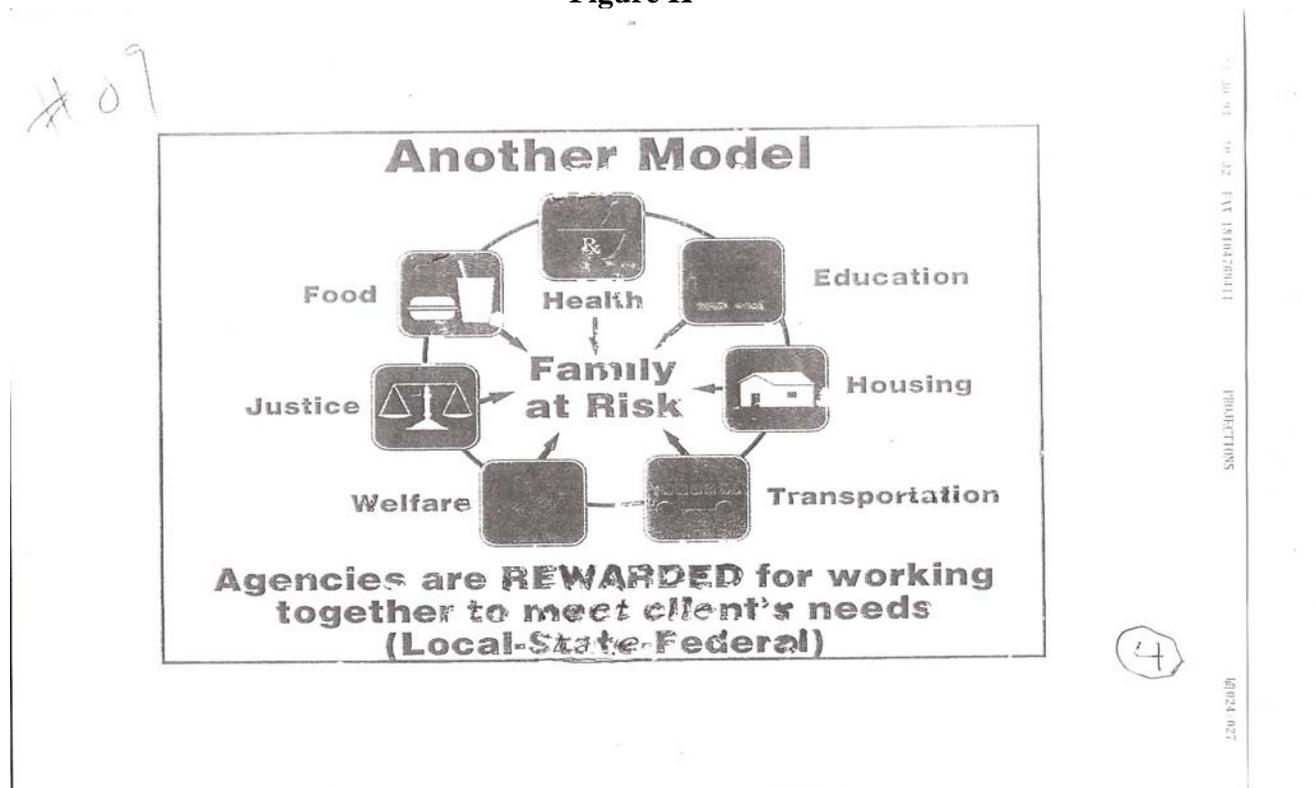
Part of it is how we do things at the local, state and federal level. For the most part, each level consists of a “boss”—the mayor, governor, and US President, plus the department heads who report directly to the boss. (See figure J.)

Figure J



The Heads compete with each other for the Boss's rewards—staff positions, visibility and budget increases. Departmental collaboration is seldom rewarded, as the Boss can no longer hold each Head responsible. (Bosses are often paranoid when they don't know who is doing what—they all read Julius Caesar in high school.) There is another way to do it—*put the citizen in the center of the organizational chart.* (See figure K.)

Figure K



Looked at in this way, it's obvious that we in education can't teach sick or hungry children—we *need* the other departments to do well in order for education to shine. Legislators can conduct joint hearings with the relevant heads in the same room. (This author remembers how fine the agency heads meetings were when we had a federal Department of Health, Education and Welfare!) Joint projects can be done easily, if the work is cooperative but divisible for accountability purposes. Budgeters may complain, but federal programs are not done for the ease of budget officers! If we wish to cut youth poverty in half (health care, day care, job training for parents, housing, tutoring, recreation), this is the only way it can be done. That's how England made progress.

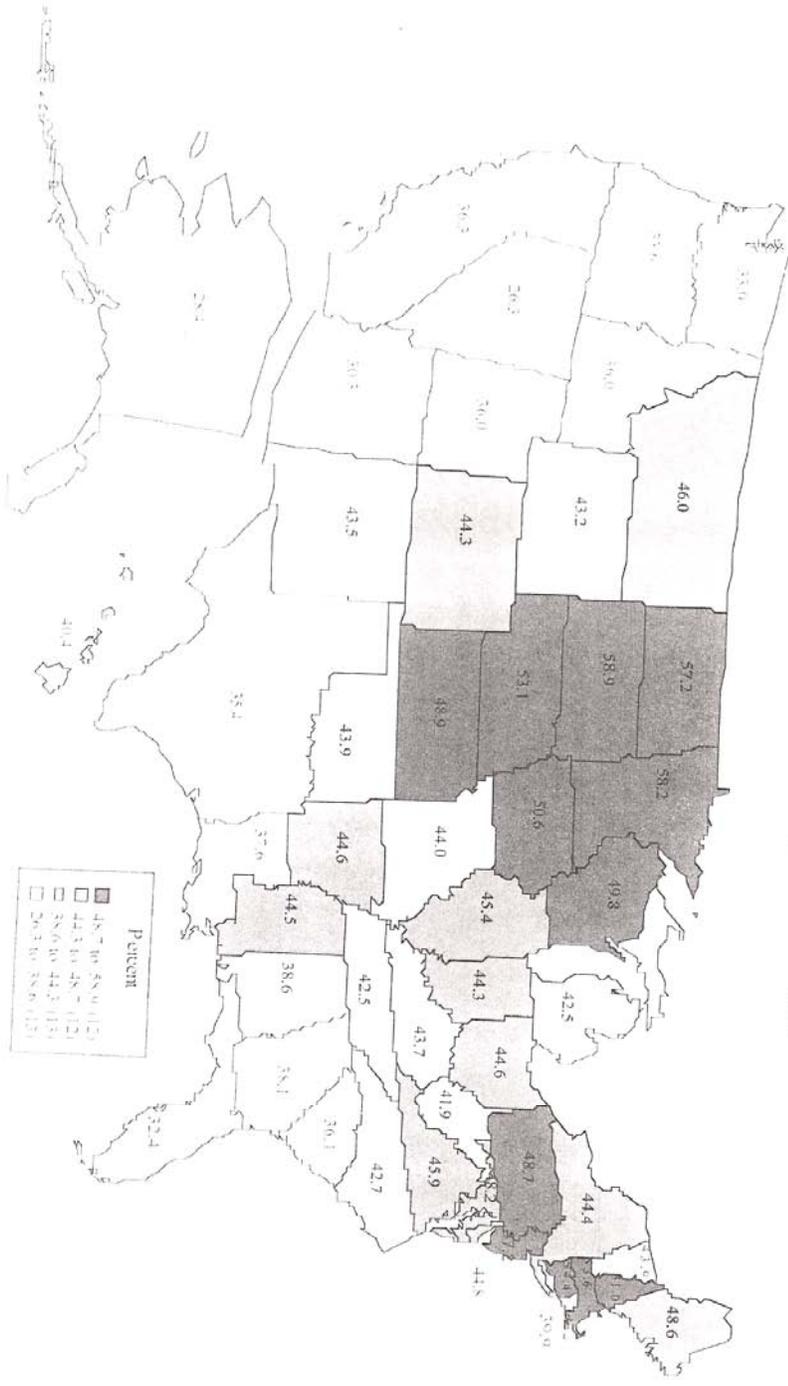
Conclusion

In this short paper, we have looked at many changes in people and institutions in the US. The federal government provides little of the money that fuels public schools, but provides vital policy making, research that is relevant to all educators at all levels, and dissemination of good information to everyone. It is very important that the federal government do this.

It is also clear that demographically, the most vital *national* goal for the US would be to reduce the number of poverty youth by *half* in the next decade. The federal government could lead and coordinate, but would require the active involvement of every participant in education, including shared funding between the three levels of government, foundations and other partners. Each state would have to develop its own action plan to deal with state differences. The *nation* could put a plan like this in place for the total spent for the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan for two months. Indeed, states have taken the lead in developing high-quality preschools, and the results have been improved performance in kindergarten and the early grades. Here is one component of the national effort which is already partially accomplished because local and state leaders could see the obvious benefit. Now we need a *national plan*, which will involve everyone from the President on. As this is written, Senator Obama has mentioned his concern for youth poverty but has yet to suggest a *plan* for cutting it in half. The federal government must provide the leadership, and everyone should “buy in,” as everyone would benefit.

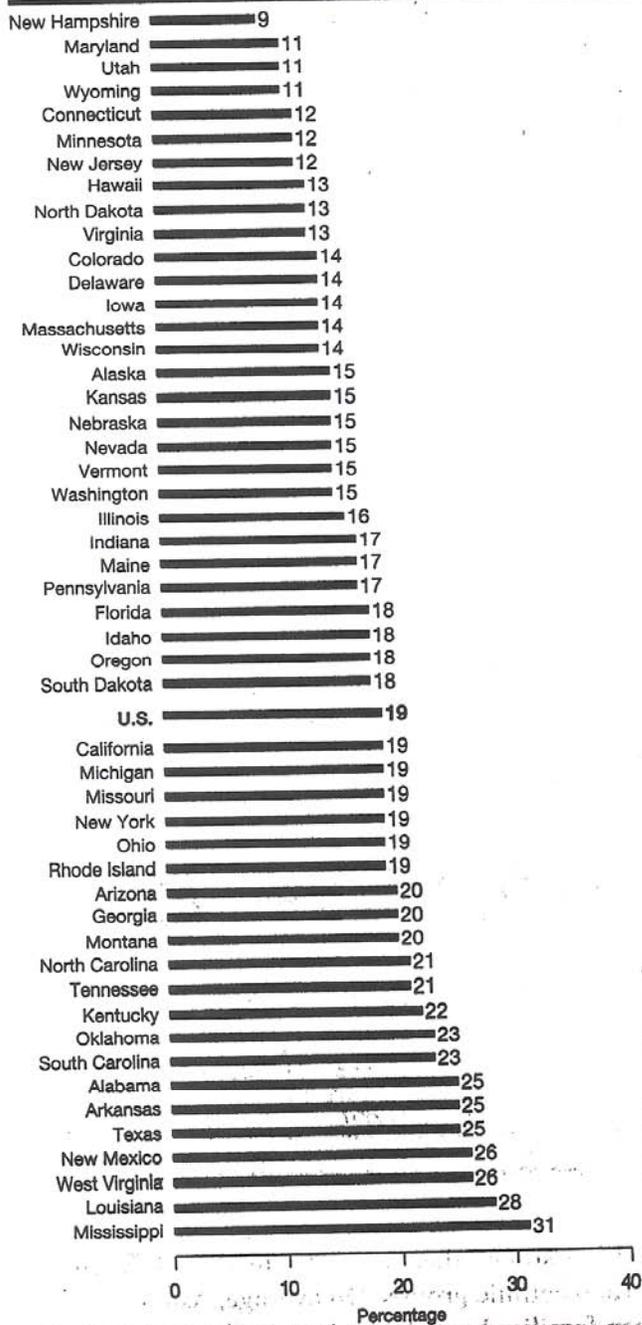
The Appendix accompanying this report includes additional data by state on the percentage of children in poverty, the chance for attending college by age 19, change in population, change in high school completion rates, annual net migration of bachelor’s degrees, percentage of adults with an associate’s degree or higher, and percentage of 9th graders lost in the educational pipeline and attaining bachelor’s degrees.

Chance for College by Age 19 in 2006



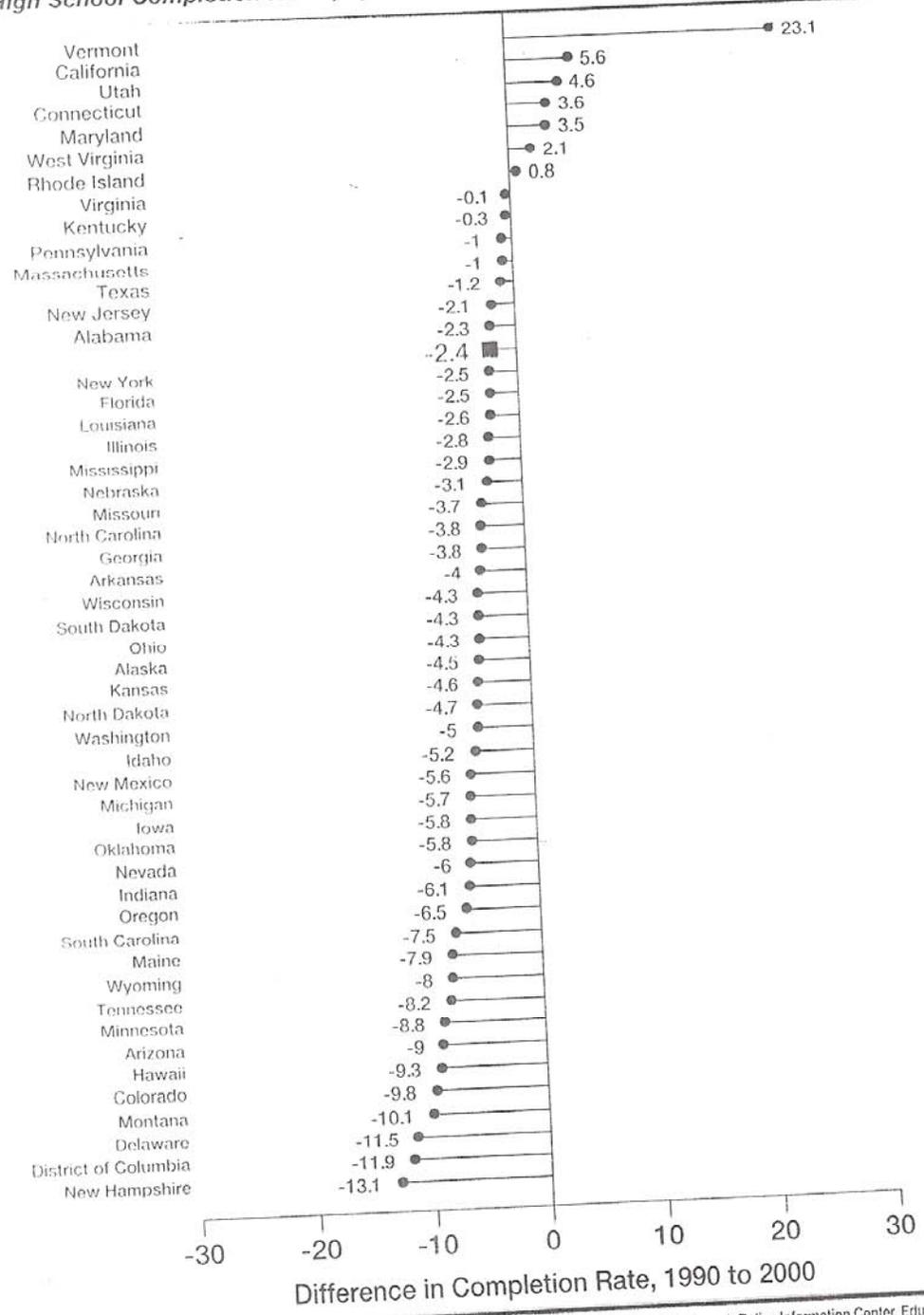
105 SECONDARY EDUCATION OPPORTUNITY, SEPT. 2008

Figure 9
Percentage of Children in Poverty, by State, 2005



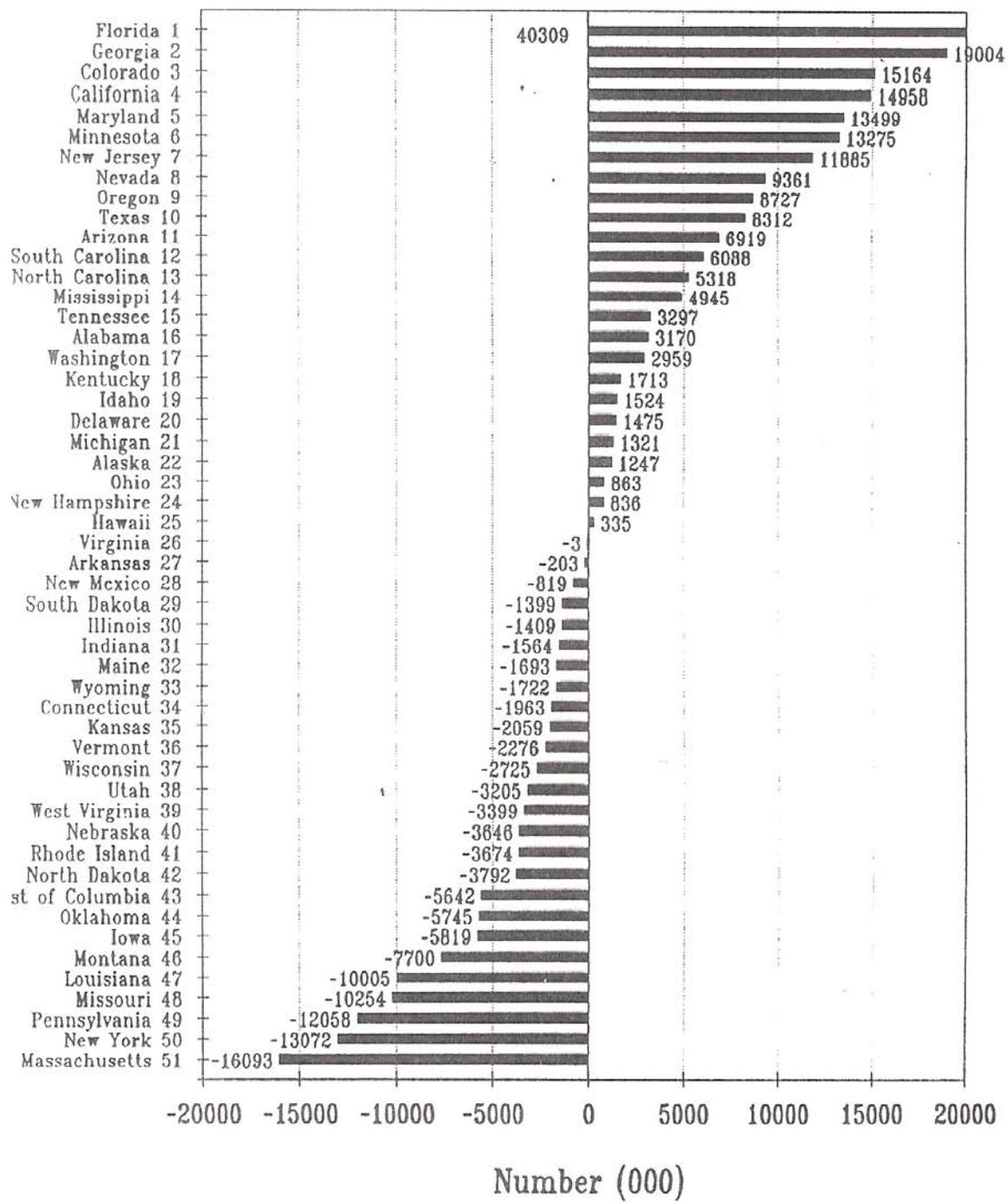
Source: Poverty data are from the American Community Survey, reported in *Kids Count State-Level Data Online* (www.aecf.org/kidscount).

Change in High School Completion Rates, by State, 1990 to 2000



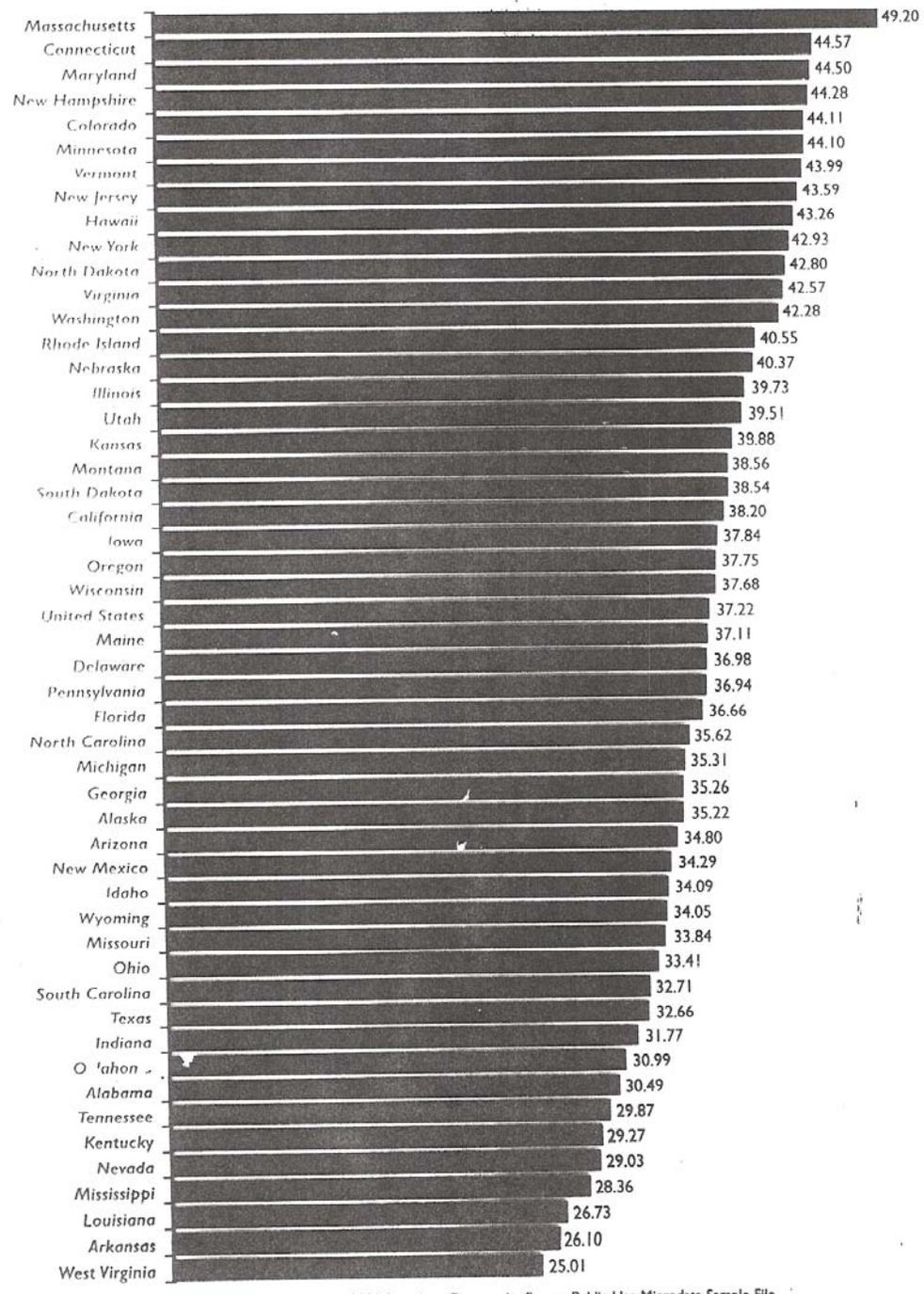
Source: Paul E. Barton, *Unfinished Business: More Measured Approaches in Standards-Based Reform*, Policy Information Report, Policy Information Center, Educational Testing Service, Princeton, N.J., January 2005.

Average Annual Net Migration of Bachelor's Degrees by State 1989 to 2001



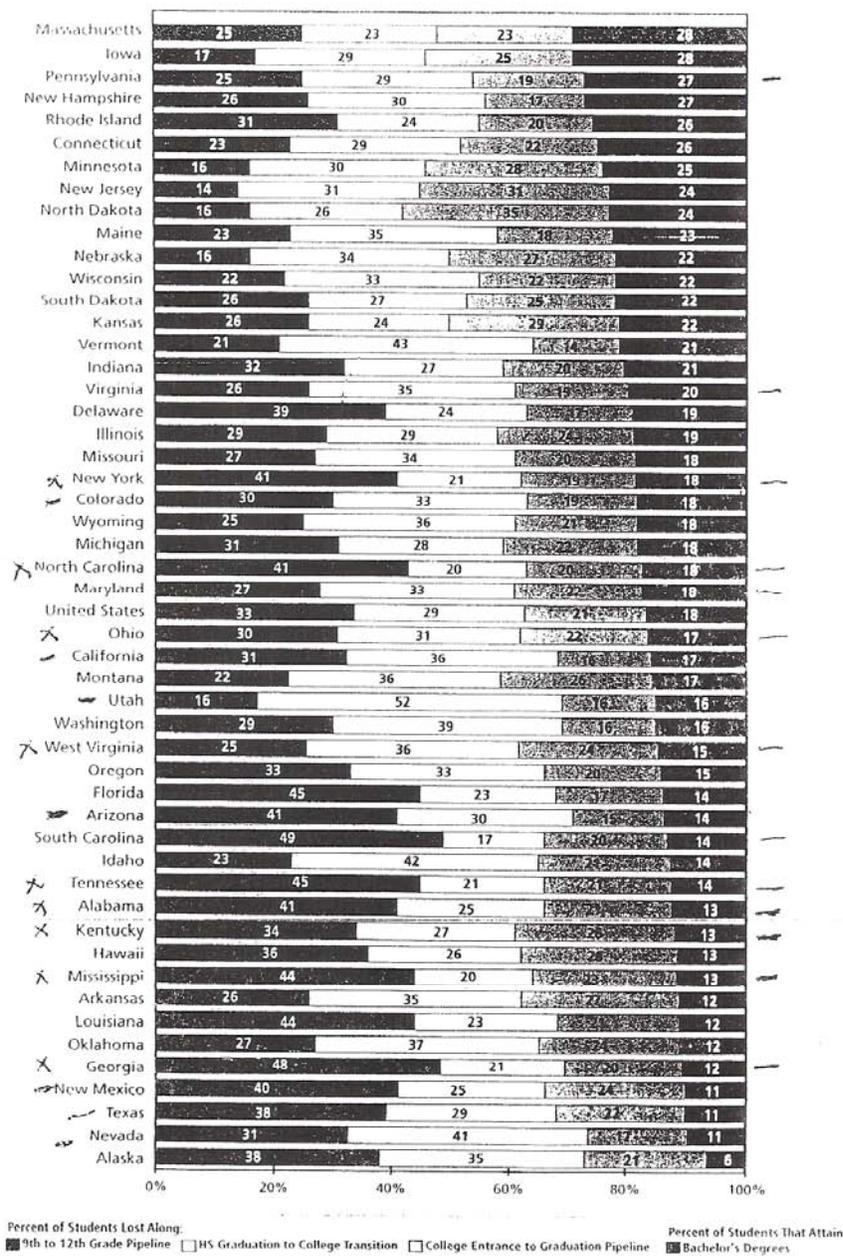
SEP T, 2008

Percent of Adults 25-64 with an Associates Degree or Higher
(American Community Survey)



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2006 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata Sample File

Figure 1: Percent of 9th Grade Students Lost Along the Education Pipeline, and Percent that Attain Bachelor's Degrees, 2000



APPALACHIA - STATES

	% RURAL	KIDS COUNT 2007 % POVERTY	KIDS COUNT OVERALL	# ARC COUNTIES	2,000 - 2004 MIGRATION (IN VS. OUT)
US	21%	19%		37	-703
ALA.	45%	25% (44 th)	48 th	37	
GA.	28%	20% (36 th)	41 st	37	+181,000
KY	45%	22% (41 st)	40 th	51	+22,141
MS.	52%	31% (50 th)	50 th	24	-10,423
NC	43%	21% (39 th)	39 th	29	+160,864
SC	40%	23% (42 nd)	46 th	6	+79,476
W.V.	54%	26% (47 th)	44 th	55	+6,794
NY	13%	19% (30 th)	18 th	14	-771,944
PA	23%	17% (23 rd)	21 st	52	-19,365
TN.	36%	21% (39 th)	43 rd	50	+71,204
OH.	23%	19% (30 th)	28 th	29	-133,416
MD.	14%	11% (2 nd)	24 th	3	+21,969
VA.	27%	13% (8 th)	14 th	23	+87,546