



Cost of Poverty to Community Sustainability

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“In total, the United States spends nearly \$1 trillion every year to fight poverty. That amounts to \$20,610 for every poor person in America, or \$61,830 per poor family of three,” [reports the Cato Institute](#) (April 11, 2012).

“Based on data from the past two decades, every 1 percent reduction in the poverty rate requires a corresponding 2 percent rise in the share of the working age population with employment,” states [U.S. News & World Report](#) (January 29, 2013). “The Census Bureau’s new Supplemental Poverty Measure ... identifies an even larger 50 million people are in poverty in the US, and over half of those did not work during the year.”

The poverty rate in the United States is 15–16%—approximately 50 million people.

According to Charles Murray in his book *Coming Apart in America*, 30% of adult men in the bottom 20% of households in America do not work outside the home compared with only 2% of adult men in the top 20% of households.

The multiplier effect when people are less educated

According to the [National Health Statistics Reports](#) (No. 51, April 12, 2012), the average number of births to women who have less than a high school diploma or GED is 2.5. The average number of births to a woman with a college degree is 1.1. Because there is a direct correlation between educational attainment and income, the number of children born into poverty is far greater. In 2011 in the United States, 49% of all children under age 5 received WIC (the Women, Infants and Children federal food program). The average age for a college-educated woman to have a child is 30.1 years. The average age for an individual without a high diploma or GED is in the teens.

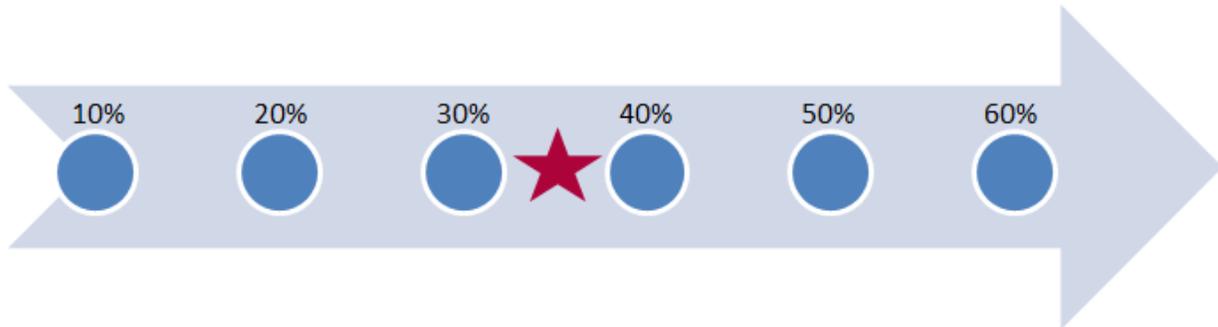
So the generational repetition of childbearing occurs in less educated households almost twice as often. In other words, for less educated women every 15–18 years the generation has children. For more educated women, the generation repeats about every 30 years. So in 90 years, 2.5 children X 5 generational repeats is 90.5 children from less educated women (if none of the children surpasses their mother’s educational attainment level; see chart at bottom of page 3). In 90 years for more educated women, it is 1.1 children every 30 years for a total of 3.3 children.

How that multiplier effect impacts community critical mass

There is a “radar”-related dynamic in communities. In other words, things happen in each community under the radar; these things generally are not seen. Paul Saffo of the Institute for the Human Future in



California indicates that it takes “20 to 25 years to become an overnight success.” In other words, it takes a while to develop critical mass. In social phenomena, it is around 35–40% when something becomes critical mass and gets on the communitywide radar.



When a community has 10–20% poverty, it impacts the community, but it is under the “radar.” However, when the poverty (under-resourced) rate continues to climb (think Detroit in recent years), the individuals with the resources become alarmed because they understand that if the pattern continues, the resourced will not be able to support the under-resourced BECAUSE OF THE MULTIPLIER EFFECT and the COSTS OF POVERTY to the community.

Reversing the pattern

How does a community reverse the pattern? There are many possible ways, but here’s one with a proven track record in recent years. Bridges Out of Poverty in conjunction with Getting Ahead in a Just-Gettin’-By World is an exciting success story in a number of communities across the United States.

We believe that under-resourced adults are problem solvers who generally don’t have the same information that resourced individuals do. Knowledge is a form of privilege, just as social access, race, and money are. We teach resourced individuals about the daily reality of being under-resourced, and we teach under-resourced individuals the information and knowledge that many resourced individuals have used to “get ahead.”

Here are some of the results that Bridges Out of Poverty/Getting Ahead communities are getting:

Youngstown, Ohio

Three hundred-plus individuals went through 15 Getting Ahead groups. Full-time employment increased from 31% to 76%. Fifty-eight percent pursued postsecondary endeavors.

South Bend, Indiana

Twenty-three percent improved their employment situation in three months. By the end of six months, 63% had improved their situation by moving to full-time employment.

Colorado

For 165 Getting Ahead graduates, unemployment dropped from 60% to 42% by the end of the course (12 weeks).



Dubuque, Iowa

For 119 Getting Ahead graduates, unemployment dropped from 51% to 25% by one year later, full-time employment doubled one year after graduation, and homelessness dropped from 21% to 7% one year after graduation.

Longview, Texas

The city used Getting Ahead with hourly employees and was able to promote 40% of the individuals who finished Getting Ahead.

Fletcher Ellen Healthcare Hospital, Vermont

The application of Bridges concepts dropped its turnover rate in half in the first 90 days; the hospital saw a 50% improvement in unscheduled absences.

Youngstown Community College, Ohio

Increased its academic retention from 60% (spring 2009) to 100% (spring 2010).

Walla Walla Community College, Washington

Increased retention by 23% for participants who did Investigations (Getting Ahead version for colleges).

Columbiana County Municipal Court, Ohio

Implemented nine policy changes—one of which saved the county more than \$65,000 in jail fees in 2008 and more than \$43,000 in jail fees in 2009. Proceeds from bondable cases have increased 28%, and failure-to-appear warrants have substantially decreased.

Generational Extrapolation Chart

		(2.5 Births/Female)	(1.7 Births/Male)
Year 2000	1 mother		
Year 2018 – 1st Generation	1 mother produces: 2.5 children	1.25 are female	1.25 are male
	In next generation, will birth:	3.125 children	Will father 2.125 children
Year 2036 – 2nd Generation	3.125 + 2.125 = 5.25 children	2.625 are female	2.625 are male
	In next generation, will birth:	6.56 children	4.46 children
Year 2054 – 3rd Generation	11.02 children	5.51 female children	5.51 male children
	In next generation, will birth:	13.78 children	9.37 children
Year 2072 – 4th Generation	23.15 children	11.58 female children	11.58 male children
	In next generation, will birth:	28.94 children	19.68 children
Year 2090 – 5th Generation	48.62 children	24.31 female children	24.31 male children
	*** In next generation, will birth:	60.77 children	41.32 children
	Total blood-related descendants in a 90-year span: 90.5 *** Counting offspring of 5 th generation, total comes to 190.13		

(see notes on next page)



Supporting chart notes from an actuary

The preceding chart shows how many direct descendants of 1 woman there could be after 90 years, but it doesn't really represent rate of population growth. A population replacement chart is where we can say that for every 1 woman without a high school education, 90 years from now there will be 3 women without a high school education her exact age, assuming there are no external forces pushing her children into a higher education classification.

Another point: For every mother, if we exclude artificial insemination, there by definition must be a father. This is represented in the college-educated population (births for both genders is fairly equal). But something is missing for the less educated population; for every 3.0 mothers, there are only 2.4 fathers. One could hypothesize that this is a combination of (a) fathers in that classification who didn't know they had fathered certain children and (b) fathers who are not represented in the survey (i.e., deceased or in jail) fathered a greater number of children on average than those represented in the survey.

The preceding chart assumes that the child will not surpass the educational attainment level of the mother or father. The chart also assumes that the children of the uneducated mother are born before age 18, so using 18 as a generational time frame may vary by mother.

In trying to make a comparison between certain population classification, we have to make assumptions. Whether the exact situation is going to arise in real life is largely a moot point. The important thing is to show differences between these populations.

It might be pointed out that males and female die at different rates, which is true. In addition, surviving newborns, statistically, are 51% female and 49% male. And females tend to have their first child at an earlier age than fathers. But to incorporate those assumptions makes this chart unclear and impossible to follow. So to simplify things, we are making precisely the same assumptions for both groups, and we can clearly see the average numbers in offspring/population growth based on these two classifications. There is a definitive difference.

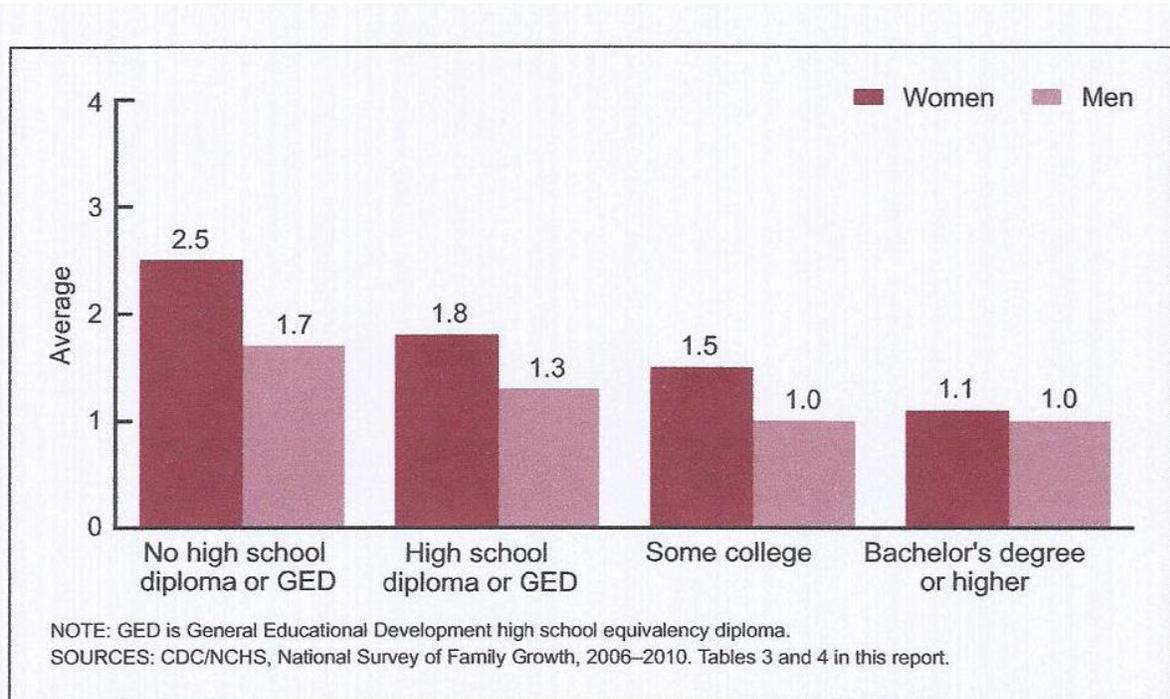


Figure 1. Average number of children ever born or fathered for women and men aged 22–44 years, by education: United States, 2006–2010

The chart above comes from National Health Statistics Reports. <http://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/nhsr/nhsr051.pdf> No. 51. April 12, 2012. Fertility of Men and Women Aged 15–44 Years in the United States: National Survey of Family Growth, 2006–10, by Gladys Martinez, Kimberly Daniels, & Anjani Chandra.

In this report, “Men with the lowest level of education were more likely to have four or more children (10%).”



An article by Sara Lipka states that in 2008, among Americans ages 18 to 26 whose total household income was near or below the federal poverty level, 47% were or had been enrolled in college, compared with 42% in 2000. Eleven percent of them had earned a degree, a proportion roughly equivalent to eight years ago, according to the article, which is based on data from the U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey.

SOURCE: [/chronicle.com/article/Many-Young-Adults-in-Poverty/65826](http://chronicle.com/article/Many-Young-Adults-in-Poverty/65826)/June 9, 2010: Many Young Adults in Poverty Have a College Degree, Report Says, by Sara Lipka.