DCCUMENT RESUME

ED 036 386 RC 004 122

AUTHOR JCHNSCN, HELEN W.
TITLE RURAL INDIAN AMERICANS IN POVERTY.
INSTITUTION DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE, WASHINGTON, D.C. ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE.
REPORT NO AER-167
PUB DATE SEP 69
NOTE 31P.
AVAILABLE FRCM SUPERINTENDENT CF DOCUMENTS, U. S. GCVERNMENT PRINIING OFFICE, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20402

EDRS PRICE EDRS PRICE MF-$0.25 HC-$1.65
DESCRIPTORS ACCULTURATION, *AMERICAN INDIANS, *DEMOGRAPHY, *DISADVANTAGED GROUPS, EDUCATIONAL BACKGROUND, FAMILY INCOME, FIELD STUDIES, LIVING STANDARDS, *MINORITY GROUPS, OCCUPATIONAL CLUSTERS, *RURAL POPULATION, RURAL YOUTH, SPECIAL HEALTH PROBLEMS, TABLES (DATA), VALUES, YOUTH PROBLEMS

AESTRACT

IT IS REPORTED THAT AMERICAN INDIANS IN THE 1960'S LACKED MATERIAL RESOURCES AND A SENSE OF BEING A PART OF THE LARGER SOCIETY. THESE PROBLEMS DATE BACK CONSIDERABLY IN HISTORY AND HAVE BEEN INFLUENCED BY SOCIAL, ECONOMIC, AND CULTURAL FACTORS. IN AN EFFORT TO POINT CUT THE POVERTY CCNDITIONS OF THIS MINORITY GROUP, INFORMATION RELATIVE TO DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS, FAMILY INCOME, EDUCATION, HEALTH CONDITICNS, AND OCCUPATIONAL DISTRIBUTION IS PRESENTED. GECGRAPHIC DISTRIBUTICN OF RURAL NONRESERVATION INDIAN GROUPS, CASE STUDIES IN OKIAHCMA, AND THE EXISTING DILEMMA FACED BY RURAL INDIAN YOUTH ARE CONSIDERED. A CONCLUDING SECTION POINTS OUT SCME HOPEFUL DEVELOPMENTS WHICH ARE EMERGING--FOR EXAMPLE, MORE INDIAN YOUTH ARE ENROLLED IN SCHCOL EACH YEAR, AND MORE ARE GOING TO CCLLEGE OR TECHNICAL SCHOOL. AN APPENDIX CONTAINS NUMEROUS TABLES AND STATISTICAL DATA. (SW)

RURAL INDIAN AMERICANS IN POVERTY

ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE ■ U.S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE ■ AGRICULTURAL ECONOMIC REPORT NO. 167

CONTENTS

Washington, D.C. 20250 September 1969

For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C., 20402

HIGHLIGHTS

Most Indian Americans are in poverty. They lack material resources and a sense of being a part of the larger society. Their problems have roots in history and are influenced by social, economic, and cultural factors of deep significance to their solution. Little guidance for the future is offered by past experience, and the Indian minority position makes the answers even more difficult to find.

Indian Americans numbered only about one-half million in 1960. The majority were living on reservations in 27 States. Indians are the most rural of the U.S. minority ethnic groups, and they are mainly rural nonfarm people. They have low incomes, poor health and housing, and are educationally and technically unprepared for a sophisticated, modern economy.

More than three out of five rural Indian families had less than $3,000 income in 1959, nearly twice as large a proportion as in the total rural population. This large number of rural Indians in a low-income position is especially serious in view of the large average size of their families.

Educational attainment in the rural Indian population was generally low in 1960. Fourteen percent had received no schooling at all, and only about one-third had gone to high school.

While there has been improvement in Indian health status, serious problems remain. These are accentuated by environmental conditions not conducive to good health, by social and physical isolation making services difficult to render, and by lack of information concerning proper hygiene and nutrition.

Like the rural population as a whole, rural Indians are mainly in non-farm occupations, mostly as blue-collar workers. Only 12 percent of rural Indians were in white-collar jobs in 1960, reflecting in part their lack of educational preparation for this kind of work.

While the great majority of rural Indians live on reservations, it is estimated that in 1960 there were about 100,000 rural nonreservation Indian groups living in some 20 States across the country. Most are in very poor social and economic circumstances, and do not receive Federal services and benefits such as reservation Indians do.

In many ways, Indian Americans are at a turning point in their history. Acculturation to non-Indian society has been slow and painful. It has also been generally unsuccessful. The question of whether to attempt assimilation or to retain a separate culture has had no satisfactory answer for Indians or for the dominant society surrounding them.

For Indian youth, an acceptable solution to this problem is especially important. Uncertain where their future lies -- on or off the reservation --

they face a difficult decision which only they, with assistance from the rest of society, can ultimately make. Better educational and employment opportunities are certainly priority needs. Some progress is being made along these lines and promising developments are occurring in many places, but the dimensions of unsolved problems are still considerable.

Integration or separatism -- these are the opposite positions from which to evolve some clear direction toward social and economic opportunity. The decision about how to reach this goal is, of course, a matter for the Indians themselves. The rest of the Nation can help more effectively when this decision is made.

RURAL INDIAN AMERICANS IN POVERTY

By

Helen W. Johnson
Economic Development Division
Economic Research Service

INTRODUCTION

Most Indian Americans are rural residents, and they are poor. They are not attuned to the modern technological economy of America, nor are they certain in what direction their future lies -- within the larger society or separate from it; on the reservation or away from it; as Indians or as Indian Americans. Somewhere between these polar points, a way will doubtless be found.

The story of why rural Indians today are in poverty has roots in their history, in the development of the industrialized American economy, and in the difficult process of assimilation of a minority culture by the dominant one in every society. There is considerable documentation of the history of this minority group vis-a-vis the U.S. Government in the long contention over land, tribal rights, relocation of living space, and redirection of occupational activity. All of these past events have a bearing on the size and vigor of the Indian population, their attitudes and present outlook, and the eventual resolution of their problems. This history will not be recounted here since its major impacts are already well-known to the American public. 1/

The critical element in the history of the U.S. economy which helps to explain the current distress of rural Indians is the development of an urbanized, technical society -- a society for which rural Indians are not prepared. Nothing in their history or experience has contributed to making possible successful adjustment in a nonfarm economy -- educationally, occupationally, or socially. Rural in orientation and largely separated from the rapid urbanization of the last few decades, Indians have been out of touch with industrial and technological developments now predominant in our national economy.

The cultural hiatus between Indian Americans and the society around them is equally severe in its implications for rural Indian disadvantage. Acculturation of a minority population is always a long and tortuous process. A

1/ Brandon, William, The American Heritage Book of Indians, Dell Publ. Co., New York, 1964. See also, "Indian, North American," Encyclopaedia Britannica, Vol. 12, 1957 edition and references cited therein, p. 209.

minority group confronted with the loss of its own cultural heritage as the price of assimilation finds itself resisting new ways as long as possible. At some point in time, a choice is made -- to give up the old familiar values and patterns of living, to adopt the ways of the alien culture, or to effect some combination of the old and the new. Meanwhile, there is a drawing apart of the two cultures on both sides. The dominant society, not really understanding the dilemma, often manifests impatience and prejudice, or at the very least, lack of empathy. Until the gap between the two cultures is closed, the minority group suffers not only economic and social discrimination, but malaise of spirit.

Indian experience with American culture has been no exception. Rural Indians today are mostly poor, ill at ease, and largely unacculturated. They are in limbo, not at home in either world. The way to achieve an intermediate position between the familiar culture and the dominant but alien one is not at all clear. Some first steps, however, are quite apparent and apply to people in poverty wherever they are and of whatever cultural origin. Alleviation of poverty status, improvement of educational and employment opportunity, and wider participation in the society at large constitute high-priority needs for all people in distress. Rural Indians are among the most deprived groups in America today. The pages that follow will give some measure of the depth of their disadvantage.

RURAL INDIANS IN THE 1960'S

Demographic Characteristics

In 1960, there were 552,000 Indians in the United States, including 28,000 Aleuts and Eskimos in Alaska (app. table 1). 2/ Indians constituted the smallest of three minority ethnic groups, or less than 1 percent of the U.S. total population. The Spanish-surname population, by contrast, was about 2 percent of the total and Negroes were 11 percent. Indians were, however, the most rural of these groups, -- about 70 percent of them were classified in the 1960 Census as living in rural areas, compared with 21 percent of the Spanish-surname people and 27 percent of the Negro population. More than half the rural Indians (55 percent) were rural nonfarm residents.

A majority of Indians were located in 27 States, their number in these States ranging from 2,500 in Florida to 83,000 in Arizona (fig. 1 and app. table 1). More than two-fifths of the total U.S. Indian population lived in Arizona, Oklahoma, New Mexico, and California. If Alaskan Natives are added to the four-State total, the proportion located in the West rises to more than one-half. In a majority of the 27 States, more than half the Indians lived on reservations. In all but one State, about 30 to 96 percent of the Indian population was rural; in Illinois the rural proportion was only 7 percent.

2/ U.S. Census of Population, 1960, PC (2)1C, Nonwhite Population by Race, Subject Reports.

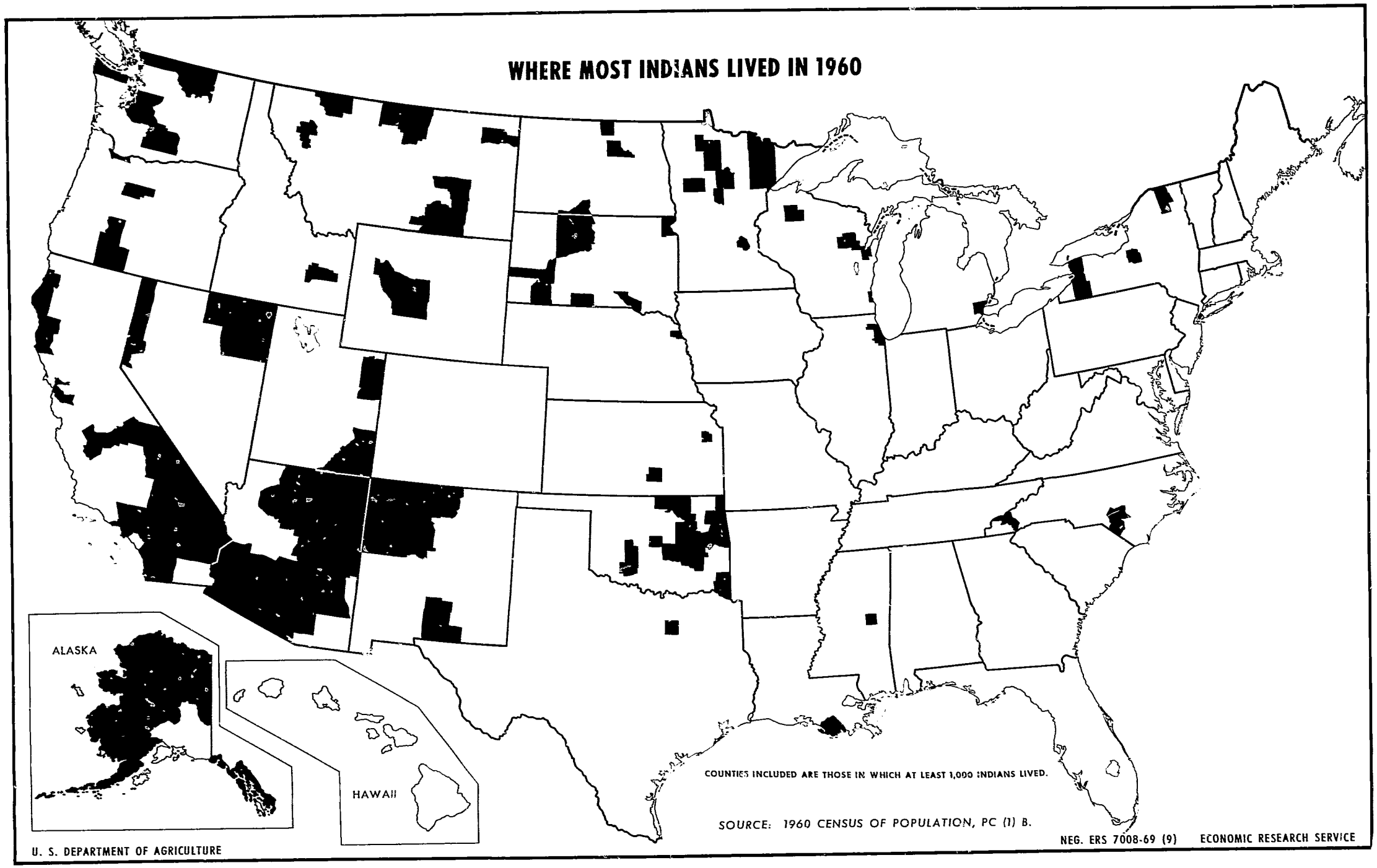
WHERE MOST INDIANS LIVED IN 1960
ALASKA
HAWAII
COUNTIES INCLUDED ARE THOSE IN WHICH AT LEAST 1,000 INDIANS LIVED.
SOURCE: 1960 CENSUS OF POPULATION, PC (1) B.
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
NEG. ERS 7008-69 (9) ECONOMIC RESEARCH SERVICE

Figure 1

The Indian population as a whole is very young (fig. 2). The median age of rural Indians in 1960 was 17.7 years, compared with 27.3 for the total rural population. More than 60 percent of the rural Indian population was under 25 years of age (app. table 2). In the total rural population, the figure was 48 percent. This high proportion of young people among rural Indians is especially significant for future population growth when viewed together with the high birth rate of Indians. Rural Indians have one of the highest birth rates of any minority ethnic group in the United States. While life expectancy at birth for Indians was below that of the United States as a whole in 1964, it had increased 12.5 years since 1940. For Indians, the 1964 figure was 63.5 years, and for the United States, 70.2 years. 3/

3/ Indian Health Highlights, Public Health Serv., U.S. Dept. Health, Education, and Welfare, 1966, p. xiv.

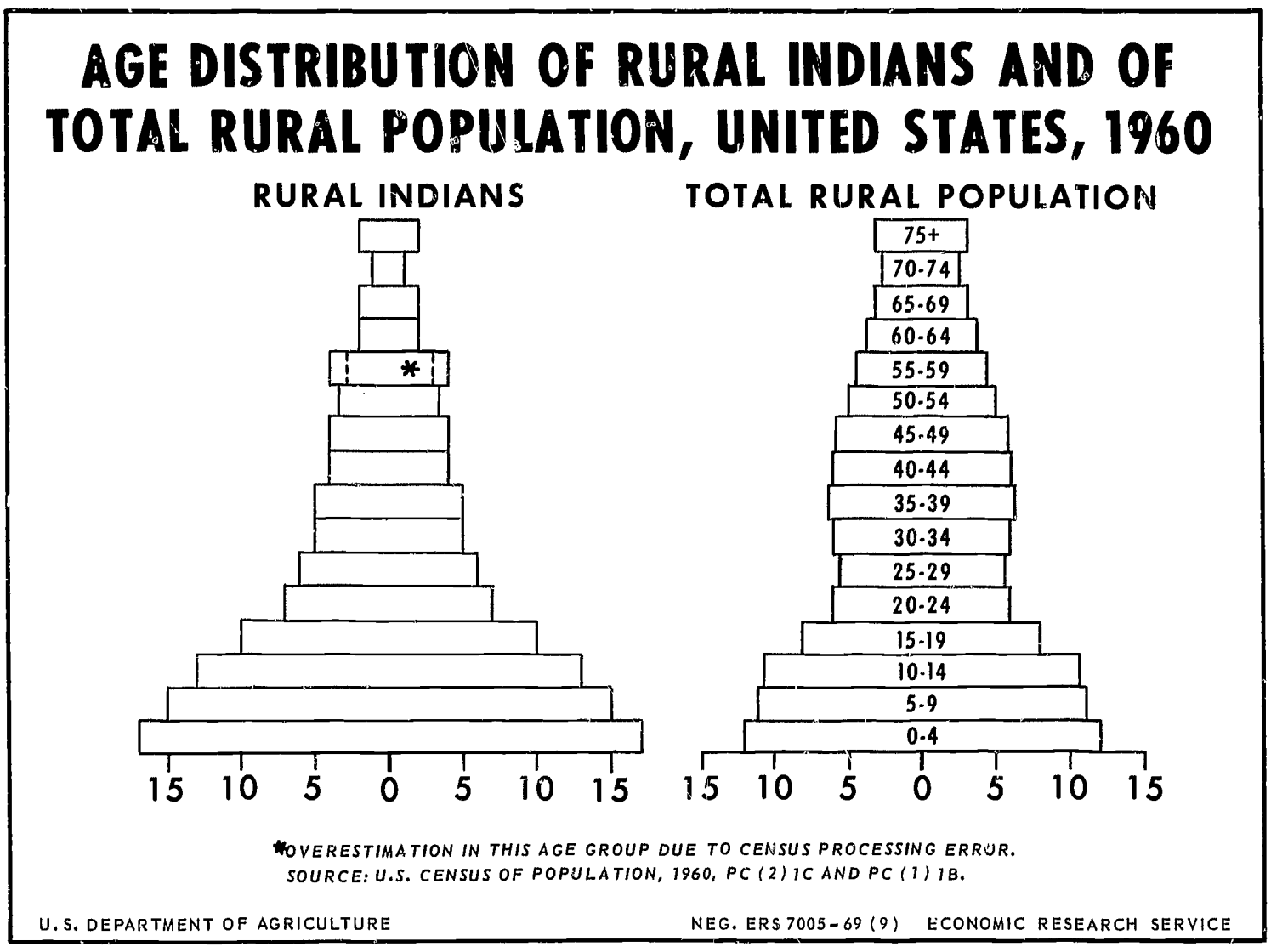

Figure 2

As would be expected in a population with these demographic characteristics, the average size of Indian families is large. Two out of three rural Indian families have four persons or more, compared with one out of two in the total rural population (app. table 3). Small, two-person families are only about half as frequent among rural Indians as in the total rural population. More than one-fourth of Indian families have seven members or more; in the rural population, the proportion is only 9 percent. The large size of Indian families reflects in part the age structure of the population and in part its high birth rate.

Family Income

More than three out of five rural Indian families had less than $3,000 income in 1959, nearly twice the proportion in the total rural population (fig. 3). Family income below the $1,000 level was three times as prevalent among the rural Indian population as among the total rural population. At the other end of the scale, less than 3 percent of rural Indian families had incomes of $10,000 or more, whereas nearly 12 percent of families in the total rural population reported that level of income (app. table 4). The high proportion of rural Indians in a low-income position points to especially serious deprivation when the large average size of families is considered.

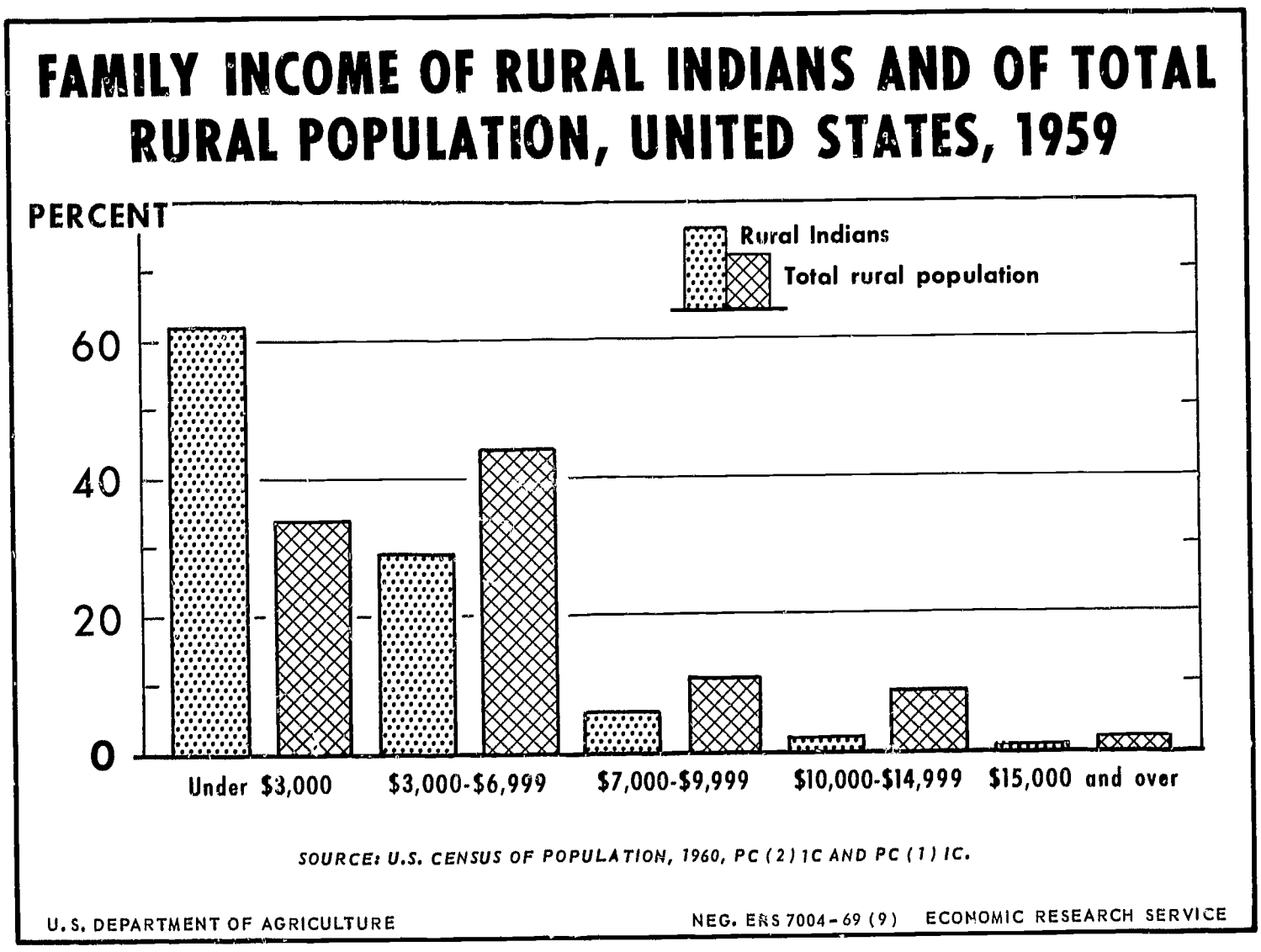

Figure 3

The income of rural Indian families is not only low, but is derived largely from sources unproductive for the Indian families and for the national economy. Many families are receiving public assistance from Federal or State funds. Many reservation Indians also obtain some income from leases of land, but these rents are generally low because much of the land is of poor quality. Moreover, the share of income each family receives has greatly diminished over the years due to the fragmentation of property rights through generations of inheritance in large families. Income derived from employment available on and near reservations is relatively limited because of prevailing low wage rates and the seasonal or sporadic nature of the jobs. Income from all sources, therefore, still leaves most rural Indian families in poverty.

Education

The educational attainment level in the rural Indian population 14 years old and over in 1960 was low (fig. 4). Fourteen percent of rural Indians had received no schooling at all, compared with only 2 percent of the total rural population. Only about one-third of the rural Indians had gone to high school and 3 percent to college. In the total rural population, comparable figures were 45 percent for high school attendance and 10 percent for college.

Possession of functional literacy is said to require at least 5 years of schooling -- a level that 27 percent of rural Indians 14 and over in 1960 had not attained (app. table 5).

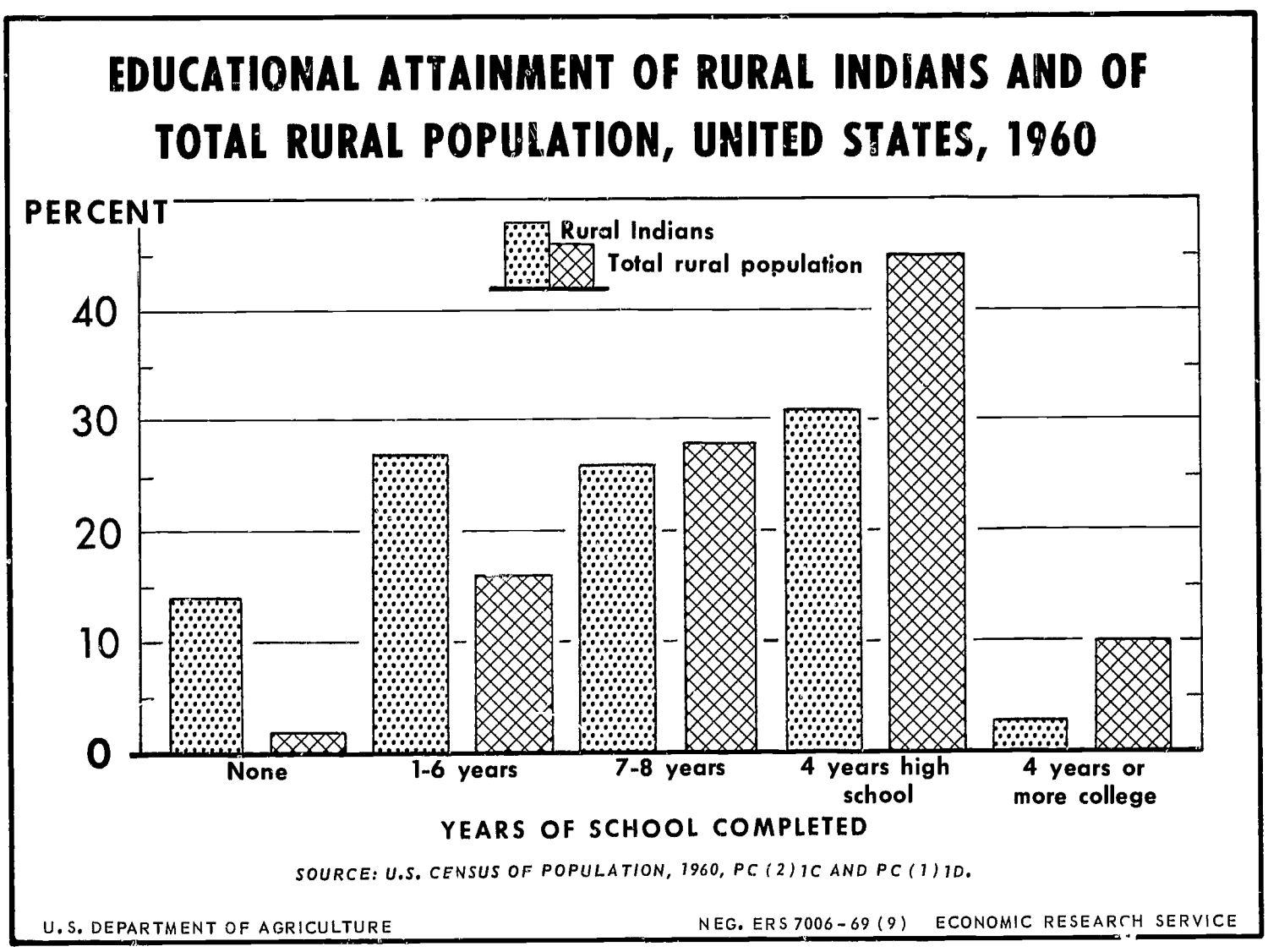

Figure 4

In terms of median years of school completed by Indians 14 years old and over, there was wide variation among the States in which most of them lived. In all States except Kansas, where the figure was 11 years, the medians were below the national average of 10.6 years in 1960. The median in Louisiana was only 3.9 years, while in the rest of the States the range was from 5.2 years in Mississippi to 9.7 in California.

The Federal Government, through the Bureau of Indian Affairs (BIA), provides educational services for children who live in isolated areas not served by public schools or who have other special needs. During the 1967/68 school year, 51,595 Indian youths attended 226 Bureau schools in 17 States. An additional 4,200 lived in Bureau dormitories and attended public schools. Also, about 8,500 Indian students, ages 6 through 18, were enrolled in mission and other private schools (app. table 10).

During the last 10 years, the Indian high school dropout rate has fallen from an estimated 60 percent to slightly more than 42 percent. This rate was still higher than the national figure of 26 percent, but represented a net gain of about 7 percent on the general population. The educational achievement of Indian students as measured by standardized tests, lags behind the national norms, the deficit by grade 12 typically being as much as 2½ years.

Indian children, like other minority groups, face special problems that complicate their educational experiences. More than half of them must learn English as a second language. They encounter many new concepts, values, and attitudes when they enter school. A large proportion have grown up in geographic and social isolation and have had little experience with the majority culture. Efforts are being made to meet their special needs through such programs as TESL (Teaching English as a Second Language), and through expanded staff services, improved curriculum offerings, school year and summer enrichment experiences, kindergarten programs, increased parental and community involvement in school affairs, and improvement of educational staff. 4/

Health

Since 1955, on about 250 reservations in 23 Federal Indian Reservation States and in several hundred villages in Alaska, the Indian population has received health protection from the Public Health Service (PHS) of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare. The service population, estimated to be 381,000 in 1965, comprises potential beneficiaries who depend in varying degrees on PHS for essential health services. These beneficiaries include some small groups for whom sanitation facilities projects are authorized, but who do not receive medical services from the Indian Health Service (in PHS). The stated goal of the Public Health Service is to "elevate the health status of Indians and Alaskan Natives (Indians, Aleuts, and Eskimos) to the highest possible level." 5/

4/ Statement supplied by Bureau of Indian Affairs.
5/ Ibid., pp. xi-xii and p. 1.

Some aspects of Indian health have shown marked improvement in the past 10 to 15 years, but stubborn problems remain. Provision of adequate health services and facilities is complicated by the heterogeneity of the Indian tribal population and its dispersion over a very large geographic area, frequently in out-of-the-way places. Reaching these people with health assistance is difficult because of language barriers, the Indians' frequent lack of knowledge that help is available, and their high degree of social as well as physical isolation. Some of the most acute problems in safeguarding and improving the health of Indians are rooted in the environmental hazards under which they live. These include substandard, overcrowded housing; lack of adequate sanitation facilities and safe water supplies; insufficient understanding of proper hygienic practices; and often a pervading atmosphere of despair and frustration, which introduces a sense of hopelessness about improved health and well-being. In addition, there are diet deficiencies which contribute to physical and spiritual debilitation.

In an attempt to remedy the most serious problems, the Public Health Service has instituted programs to increase the number and kind of health services, to make them more accessible, and to raise their acceptance level. To supplement their own hospitals and health centers and to stretch resources, the Public Health Service has contractual arrangements with hundreds of private health practitioners, community general hospitals, State and local tuberculosis and mental hospitals, and a few nursing homes. In the PHS program to improve sanitation, Indians themselves have participated in planning and constructing facilities and have contributed more than one-third of the total program effort since 1959 by donating labor, materials, and money. There are also training programs being carried on for Indian personnel in all phases of the health field.

Considerable progress has been made in reducing mortality from communicable diseases and in lowering infant mortality rates. The most outstanding success has been in decreasing the number of deaths from tuberculosis, a disease very widespread in the Indian population. The rate had declined to 21 deaths per 100,000 population by 1964, a drop of 61 percent in 10 years (app. table 6). Infant mortality rates decreased 45 percent during 1954-64. However, compared with the general population the progress has been relative. These 1964 rates, for example, are roughly comparable to those in the total population some 15 or 20 years ago and are thus still much higher than rates among non-Indians.

"Unfinished business" in the Indian health field is enormous. Life expectancy among Indians is considerably below that of the general population; infant and maternal mortality rates remain high; and environmental changes needed to bring about substantial improvement in health are far from accomplished. Unmet needs of varying dimensions cover the entire health spectrum, including not only facilities and services, but educational and environmental improvement.

Occupational Distribution

There are striking similarities between the occupational patterns of rural Indians and rural people as a whole. Both populations are overwhelmingly

in nonfarm occupations -- 63 percent for employed rural Indians and 76 percent for the total employed rural population, according to the 1960 Census of Population (app. table 7). About 38 percent of both groups were in blue-collar occupations, and a slightly larger percentage of rural Indians than total rural population were in service work (13 and 9 percent, respectively). In white-collar occupations, however, the proportion of all rural people was twice as high as for rural Indians -- 28 percent, compared with 12 percent (fig. 5). This undoubtedly reflects a relative lack of nonfarm job opportu-.ities and a lower level of educational attainment among rural Indians. The predominance of rural Indian workers in lower paid occupations also helps to account for their generally low level of income.

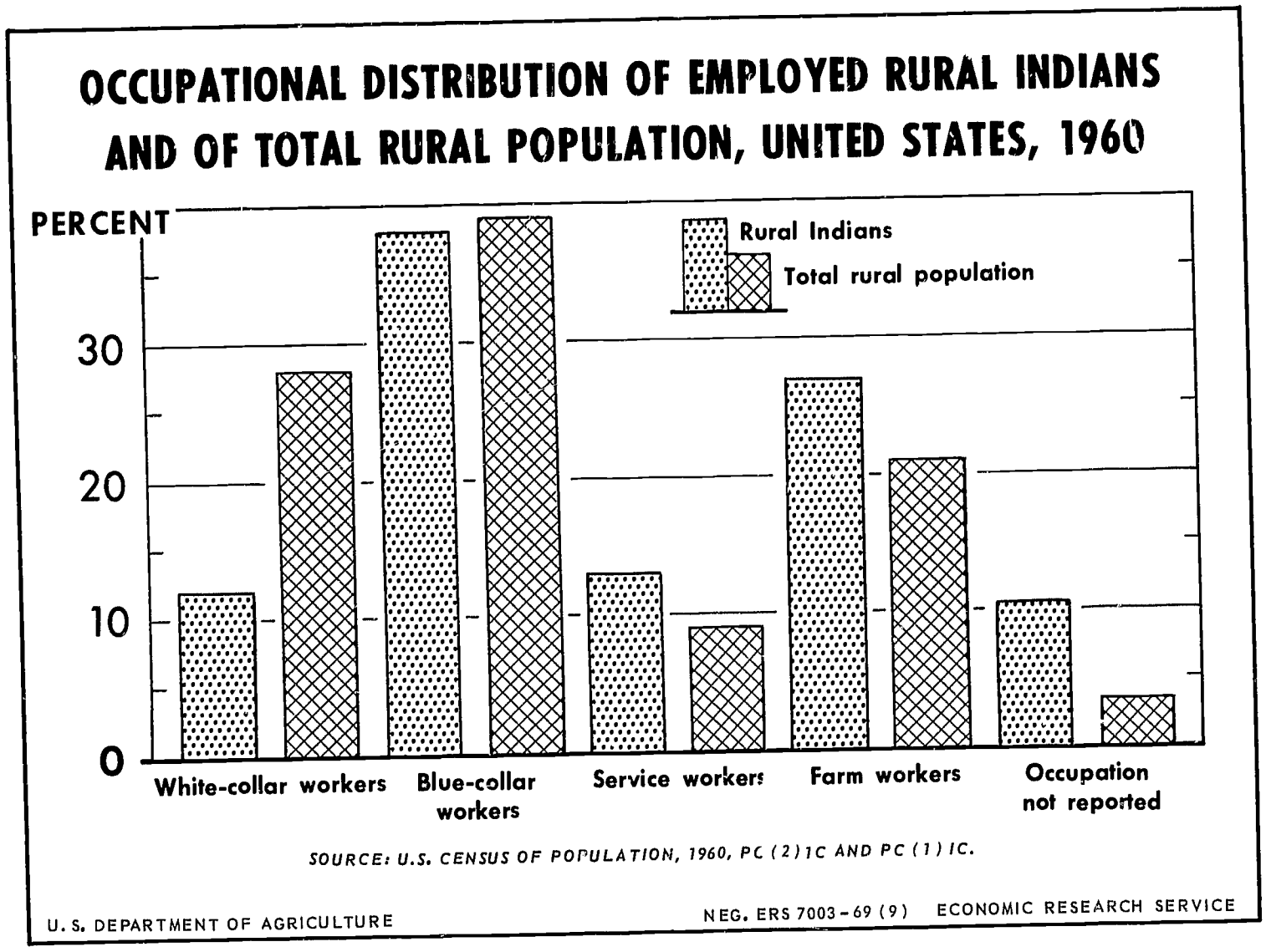

Figure 5

RURAL NONRESERVATION INDIAN GROUPS

The foregoing discussion dealt primarily with the rural Indian population living on reservations, plus Alaskan Natives. It has been estimated in the Economic Research Service that there were more than 100,000 rural Indians living off of reservations in 1960 (app. table 8). 6/ They were located in the rural areas of 20 States in every part of the country, from Maine to California (fig. 6). More than 60 percent lived in Oklahoma and North Carolina. Estimates on the size of these rural nonreservation Indian groups include only the counties that had at least 100 rural Indians.

6/ Beale, Calvin L., Estimated Population in Rural Nonreservation Indian Groups in the United States, 1960, Econ. Res. Serv., U.S. Dept. Agr., 1968. Unpublished paper.

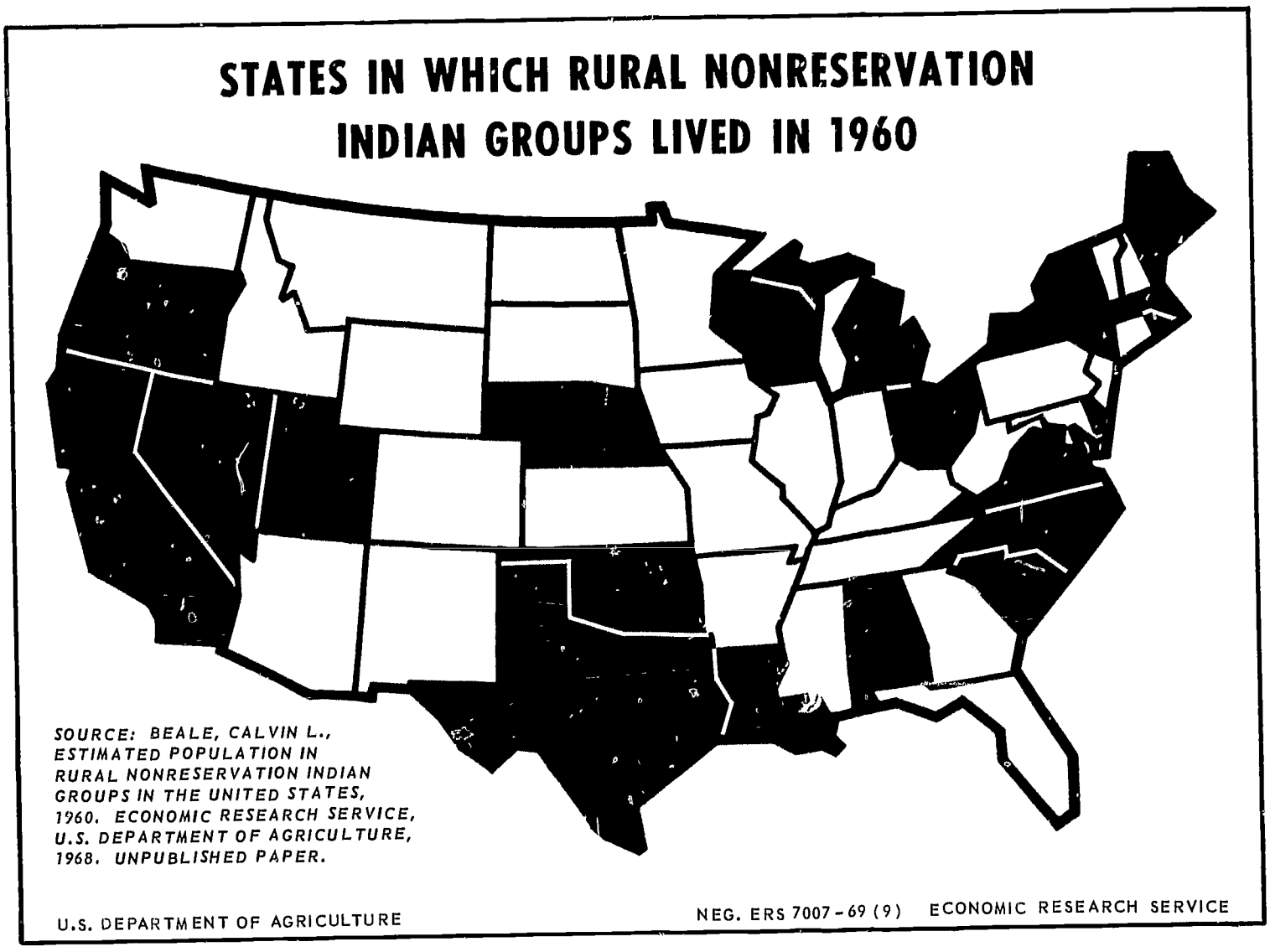

Figure 6

Information is limited about rural Indians who live off of reservations. They do not receive Federal support as Indians, nor do they receive the BIA or PHS services that reservation Indians do. Some nonreservation Indians never have received such services. Their status and characteristics vary widely in the different parts of the country, making it difficult to generalize about them. Some have remained separate populations and have tried to retain their Indian culture and traditions. Others have become triracial through generations of intermarriage with Negroes and whites. With the termination of reservation status for many Indians and their dispersal through the general population, it is impossible to state precisely the socioeconomic conditions under which rural nonreservation Indians live. Detailed information on local circumstances is essential for better understanding.

It is believed from available evidence that many of these Indian groups are in poverty, in poor health, in poor housing. Educational levels are generally low, and both unemployment and underemployment are widespread. For example, those who are trying to make a living in tobacco farming, as in North Carolina and Virginia, are small-scale owners, tenants, or hired workers. Operating on a poor land base and threatened by increasing mechanization in tobacco production, they face further deterioration in an already low level of living unless alternative employment becomes available. Some Indians -- in Wisconsin, for example -- are part-time, noncommercial farmers who depend primarily on timber and sawmill operations for income. Their economic situation is better than that of most rural nonreservation Indians but still below acceptable standards. Some nonfarm Indians are employed in construction and industrial enterprises, such as steel workers in New York State and cotton mill workers in the South. Some rural Indians are seasonally employed in tourist trade in the recreation areas of a number of States. Many engage in hunting, fishing, and trapping. However, some communities of rural Indians are heavily dependent on public welfare. By and large, the scattered evidence suggests that the sources of livelihood open to rural nonreservation Indians are precarious, and their socioeconomic status is below an acceptable level.

CASE STUDIES IN OKLAHOMA

As part of a study of rural poverty conducted by the Economic Research Service in the Ozarks Region in 1966, 37 nonreservation Indian families in two counties in Oklahoma were interviewed. While this number is too small to permit much generalization, there are common threads that run through the stories of these families that shed some light on their situation. It is believed that the families in the survey are reasonably typical of rural families in parts of the Ozarks Region.

Findings revealed that the income of these Indian families was universally low, much of the financial support coming from public assistance. Most of the families were very large. While the parents had had little or no education, the children still at home were attending school. However, few of those who had left home had completed more than about 8 years of schooling. Housing was usually crowded and of poor quality; plumbing facilities and sewage disposal were found to be inadequate or nonexistent. Unemployment and underemployment were widespread. Most families had some indebtedness, chiefly for medical or dental services; few carried health or life insurance.

A number of them maintained home garden plots, but few families produced any meat or poultry for home consumption.

The obvious conclusion is that these rural Indian families are destitute. Their opportunities to get out of poverty appear to be extremely limited in their present location and with the educational and skill levels they now have. Programs designed to alleviate the poverty of these rural Indian families would encompass essentially the same objectives as those for other rural poor: namely, to increase incomes and job opportunities; to provide better housing and health services; and to make available improved education and vocational training.

WHITHER INDIAN YOUTH?

Rural Indian young people today stand at a fork in the road, uncertain which direction to go. Poised between the world of their ancestors and the alien world of the larger society, they lack a clear guidepost pointing the way to social and economic opportunity. Reluctant to depart from the Indian environment of known culture and tradition, and fearful of the unfamiliar ways of another culture, these youths are following as yet uncharted paths.

The plight of Indian youth and their elders is neither new nor unique. For many decades, Indian Americans have been confronted with the choice of remaining in reservation status under paternalistic protection or breaking away to the unknown hazards of "becoming Americanized" in the larger society. Their dilemma has been aggravated by the vacillating posture of U.S. Indian policy which at times has urged them to make their way by developing industry on the reservation, and at other times has encouraged them to abandon reservation life and become assimilated into American society. Neither of these alternatives has worked very well. Indian Americans are still at the crossroads.

Sociologically, Indian youth symbolize a "lost generation." Like second-generation immigrants of yesterday, they are in a sense "cultural hybrids" or "marginal men" -- caught between two worlds, at home in neither. As with other minority groups, they find themselves trying to cope with two quite different sets of expectations and values. They are being asked to give up one cluster of cultural traits before another one has been acquired. This situation creates uncertainty and inner conflict, a feeling of loss of identity and selfhood, a strong sense of alienation. Whether the individual blames society for his alienation or feels responsible for his own estrangement, the resulting disenchantment is equally destructive.

Alienation is often found among minority cultural groups and among people who have long suffered poverty and deprivation. Indian Americans fit into both of these categories. More than most minority ethnic groups they have known discrimination and dependence on outside society due to prolonged reservation status. This situation has effectively maintained a chasm between them and the dominant, non-Indian population. Most rural Indians have been in poverty for a very long time. The generally poor land base they started with has steadily become poorer, and the land they control is far less extensive than it once was. Commercial farming and cattle ranching are no longer feasible as a livelihood for most Indians, and they have not been

prepared for alternative occupations. Nor do job opportunities exist on or near most reservations. With this kind of history and heritage, the door is closed to the great majority of Indian young people to build fruitful lives on the reservation.

In addition to lack of economic opportunity, social disorganization affects Indian youth adversely. Pressures of poverty and unemployment, as well as tensions between the Indian and non-Indian cultures, have torn at the roots of traditional family ties. The prevalence of divorce, separation, and unwed mothers signals a weakening of family strength, one indication being the disproportionate number of foster children from broken Indian homes. An official of the National Committee on Indian Health testified recently that in North and South Dakota, 17 times as many Indian as white children are placed in foster homes. 7/ The most startling evidence of social disorganization, however, is the prevalence of suicide among the young. For example, the suicide rate among Indians 15 to 24 years old is four times that of the same age group in the general population. 8/

Disorientation, anxiety, and isolation among Indian youth are thought to lead early in life to excessive drinking, accidents, and fatalities. Alcoholism, widespread among adults also, has long been a health and environmental problem among reservation Indians. It is often attributed to prohibition restrictions on some reservations and to a desire for release from the emptiness of reservation life. One reservation doctor is quoted as saying that the primary disease of the alcoholic is not alcoholism but rather "a disturbed relationship with his fellows and with society in general, a relationship that finds its overt pathology in the uncontrolled use of alcohol, and the diseases and accidents which go along with such use." 9/ Young people are widely exposed to the pattern of heavy drinking on the part of their elders. Confronted also by what they regard as excessive restrictions by tribal authorities, many young people seek greater independence of action apart from reservation life.

One alternative open to Indian youth is acculturation to the larger society. This society's sophisticated, technological economy is changing rapidly and growing ever more complex, and calls for skills beyond those which most young Indians possess. They do not acquire from their own culture many of the concepts deeply embedded in today's world of work. For example, Indian cultural traits do not typically embrace the ideas of working on a fixed time schedule, of competing rather than sharing, of "saving for a rainy day." Work habits taken almost for granted by modern business and industry are not a part of the orientation Indian youth acquire from their own society. Nor, because of both their rural and reservation residence, have they had available adequate educational preparation or vocational training, guidance, and counseling

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7/ Statements of William Byler and Dr. Daniel J. O'Connell in hearings before the Subcommittee on Indian Education of the Committee on Labor and Public Welfare, U.S. Senate, Wash., D.C., Oct. 1, 1968.

8/ Indian Health Highlights, op. cit., p. 19.

9/ Olson, Cal, "The Indian in North Dakota," The Fargo Forum and Moorhead News, Fargo, N.D., Jan. 19, 1966, p. 8.

which would teach them the work habits and attitudes required where the jobs are. This "preparation gap" grows ever wider as the American economy becomes more complicated, more bureaucratic, and more specialized in the skills required to run it.

Thus we return to the question, Whither Indian youth? Some leaders urge Indian young people to obtain all the education they can and then take the plunge into the world outside of the reservation. Many have done this. Some have succeeded; others have returned to reservation life after varying periods of time spent in unsuccessfully searching for adjustment outside. Some have returned to their reservations in the hope of sharing with families and tribal members what they have learned from pursuing higher education. There are those who feel that economic opportunity can be developed on the reservation if industry can be attracted to available sites, where partial support of training is usually provided by the Bureau of Indian Affairs for the local labor force.

On many reservations, this approach has worked in a variety of enterprises. One industrial plant with almost all Navajo Indian personnel is the largest nongovernment employer in New Mexico. However, some reservations have been unable to combine successfully the ingredients for industrial development.

An answer to the question about the road Indian youth might take is not easy to find. In the end, Indian young people will decide for themselves between life on the reservation or off, toward separatism, or toward integration. But a few beginning steps appear to be in order regardless of the decision made. Greater social and economic opportunity could be opened to all Indian Americans to raise their levels of income and provide improved housing, health facilities, and other services, the requisites of a better life for the rural poor of every cultural origin. A favorable home environment would get Indian youth off to a better start no matter where they seek fulfillment of their goals. For these young people, more relevant education and vocational training, improved employment counseling and placement, and greater patience and understanding from the larger society will aid their transition to productive lives in a new setting.

A FEW FORWARD STEPS

Although most rural Indians are indeed in poverty and in physical and social isolation, some hopeful developments are emerging. There is scattered evidence of local decision-making among reservation Indians concerning steps they can take themselves to improve their situation. In some places, voter registration drives have been conducted, Head Start programs have been established, and Indian adults have participated in Work-Incentive, Job Corps, and special Community Action programs. 10/ One writer quotes a North Dakota Indian as saying, "The Indian is in a period of transition and is just beginning to catch on to political maneuvering." 11/ Another observer of the Indian situation says that "the Indian is capable of change...has changed in the past, and will adapt to technocracy and urbanism when he wants to. He

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10/ Manpower Report of the President, U.S. Dept. Labor, Jan. 1969, pp. 107-108.

11/ Olson, Cal, op. cit.

will act now when he has to, though not always knowing why." 12/ Changes in habits and attitudes take time, but a beginning has been made. Successful adjustment has been demonstrated by the many Indians who have risen to prominence in various fields, including government, business, and the arts. Local efforts to attract business and industry to reservations have also paid off in some areas.

As for Indian youth, more of them each year are enrolled in school -- a majority in public schools -- more are going on to college or to technical schools, and scholarship assistance is more widely available than formerly for pursuing higher education. Indian languages and lore are being introduced into the curriculums of some Indian schools. Young people who go to large cities such as Chicago and Los Angeles are finding church-supported centers to aid them in finding housing, jobs, and friends. 13/ Several nationwide organizations are attempting to coordinate programs of this kind and to articulate the needs and desires of Indians of all ages. Inadequate as these efforts are relative to the dimensions of need, they are nevertheless "a few forward steps."

CONCLUSION

Rural Indian Americans comprise a relatively small but exceptionally needy minority group. They are not only poor in material goods, they are widely impoverished in spirit. This is due to a prolonged period of dependence on society at large, as well as profound disturbance about the future. More than a century of social isolation in separate enclaves has taken its toll on initiative, creativity, and independent thought and action. The way ahead, especially for the present generation of Indian youth, abounds in difficult questions, with few positive answers to the problem of accommodating Indian culture to the surrounding society.

Although the present size of the Indian population is not known, estimates range from 600,000 to 800,000. Even accepting the latter figure as approximately correct, the Indian population in need represents a relatively small proportion of the total rural poor. Considering the depth of distress of rural Indians, the task of ameliorating the poverty of the great majority of them would not be an insuperable undertaking for an affluent country like the United States. Material poverty can be lifted primarily with money and jobs. It has been estimated that "the basic economic problem of the Indian communities could be solved by the provision of 40,000 jobs. This would seem a small demand for a nation where civilian employment has increased an average of 723,000 each year from 1955 to 1965, and where the last five years the average increase has been almost 1.5 million per year." 14/

Poverty of spirit can perhaps be lifted by releasing the energies and talents of Indians in local decision-making and by developing creative public

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12/ Lynn, Paul Ross, A Study of Developmental Problems of American Indian Children and Youth. Report prepared for United Church of Christ, Mar. 1964, p.2.

13/ Hoffman, James W., A Comeback for the Vanishing American? Presbyterian Life, Feb. 1, 1969.

14/ Nader, Ralph, Lo, the Poor Indian, The New Republic, Mar. 30, 1968, quoting Professor Gary Orfield of the Univ. of Virginia, p. 15

and private relationships to work out feasible solutions to difficult problems. Some new kind of Indian-Government partnership to guide the future course of Indian communities, whether on or off of reservation lands, appears to be desirable.

It is important not only to recognize the need for Indian leadership and full participation in policy making, but also to identify specific Indian wants and desires. To remedy the unusual situation of prolonged dependent status in American society requires extraordinary effort and understanding on the part of the non-Indian population. As a recent task force report of the Chamber of Commerce of the United States said, "Indian spokesmen have stated Indian wants. They want to retain their culture. They want to be consulted and to have a real voice in decisions relating to themselves. They want to retain their reservation lands. And Indians want to enter modern economic life and enjoy its advantages. The Task Force supports these legitimate aspirations of Indian Americans. The Task Force further believes the public has a special and continuing national responsibility to see that the opportunities and rewards of society are fully extended to these citizens." 15/

Genuine acculturation of the Indian people can be promoted only when they play their full part in the life of the larger society. When rural Indian Americans come to feel they have not only a real stake in the future of America, but a responsibility, and the ability, to contribute to it, they will then be able to lift themselves out of poverty of spirit. Meanwhile, the rest of society can help by finding a way to remove the conditions that produce material poverty. Achieving these twin objectives will then lend credence to the phrase Indian Americans.

15/ Chamber of Commerce of the United States, Rural Poverty and Regional Progress in an Urban Society, Task Force on Economic Growth and Opportunity, Fourth Report, 1969.

APPENDIX

Table 1.--Indian population in selected States, by urban or rural residence, and in United States, 1960

State	Total	Urban	Rural	Percentage rural
	Number	Number	Number	Percent
Alaska	1/ 42,522	5,425	1/ 37,097	87.3
Arizona	83,387	8,300	75,087	90.0
California	39,014	20,619	18,395	47.1
Colorado	4,288	1,792	2,496	58.2
Florida	2,504	1,024	1,480	59.1
Idaho	5,231	689	4,542	86.8
Illinois	4,704	4,380	324	6.9
Kansas	5,069	3,564	1,505	29.7
Louisiana	3,587	745	2,842	79.2
Michigan	9,701	5,007	4,694	48.3
Minnesota	15,496	4,798	10,698	69.0
Mississippi	3,119	170	2,949	94.6
Montana	21,181	2,572	18,609	87.9
Nebraska	5,545	1,971	3,574	64.5
Nevada	6,681	1,678	5,003	74.9
New Mexico	56,255	8,960	47,295	84.1
New York	16,491	8,852	7,639	46.3
North Carolina	38,129	1,698	36,431	95.5
North Dakota	11,736	1,174	10,562	90.0
Oklahoma	64,689	23,917	40,772	63.0
Oregon	8,026	2,580	5,446	67.9
South Dakota	25,794	4,558	21,236	82.3
Texas	5,750	4,101	1,649	28.7
Utah	6,961	1,643	5,318	76.4
Washington	21,076	7,025	14,051	66.6
Wisconsin	14,297	3,996	10,301	72.0
Wyoming	4,020	422	3,598	89.5
Total, 27 States	525,253	--	--	74.9
Total, United States	551,669	--	--	--

1/ Includes Aleuts and Eskimos. Residence distribution partly estimated.

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1960 PC(2) 1C, Nonwhite Population by Race. (Includes States with 2,500 or more total Indian population.) PC(1) 1B, United States Summary, General Population Characteristics (table 56).

Table 2.--Age distribution of rural Indians and total rural population, United States, 1960

Age	Rural Indians		U.S. rural population	
	Total	Percentage of total	Total	Percentage of total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Years:				
Under 5	64,340	16.9	6,260,791	11.6
5 to 9	56,988	15.0	6,083,155	11.3
10 to 14	48,481	12.7	5,725,977	10.6
15 to 19	37,080	9.8	4,487,549	8.3
20 to 24	25,934	6.8	3,076,511	5.7
25 to 29	21,829	5.7	3,023,849	5.6
30 to 34	20,161	5.3	3,306,444	6.1
35 to 39	18,550	4.9	3,436,986	6.4
40 to 44	15,825	4.2	3,275,216	6.1
45 to 49	15,378	4.0	3,122,993	5.8
50 to 54	13,120	3.5	2,754,841	5.1
55 to 59	15,046	1/ 4.0	2,415,273	4.5
60 to 64	8,500	2.2	2,051,452	3.8
65 to 69	7,309	1.9	1,855,498	3.4
70 to 74	5,139	1.4	1,424,809	2.6
75 and over	6,626	1.7	1,753,081	3.3
Total, all ages	380,306	100.0	54,054,425	2/ 100.0
	Years		Years	
Median age	17.7	--	27.3	--

1/ Overestimation in this age group due to Census processing error.
2/ Percentages are based on unrounded data and may not total 100.

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1960, PC(2) 1C and PC(1) 1B.

Table 3.--Size of family for rural Indians and total rural population, United States, 1960

Size of family	Rural Indians		U.S. rural population	
	Families	Percentage of total	Families	Percentage of total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
2 persons	10,878	16,9	4,033,744	30.6
3 persons	10,091	15.7	2,673,386	20.3
4 persons	9,325	14.5	2,522,948	19.1
5 persons	8,915	13.8	1,757,769	13.3
6 persons	7,515	11.7	1,035,401	7.9
7 or more persons	17,637	27.4	1,165,107	8.8
All families	64,361	100.0	13,188,355	100.0

Source: 1960 Census of Population, PC(2) 1C and PC(1) 1D.

Table 4.--Distribution of family income for rural Indians and total rural population, United States, 1960

Income	Rural Indians		U.S. rural population	
	Families	Percentage of total	Families	Percentage of total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Under $1,000	18,025	28.0	1,310,295	9.9
$1,000 to $2,999	22,085	34.3	3,112,294	23.6
$3,000 to $4,999	12,391	19.2	3,154,303	23.9
$5,000 to $6,999	6,557	10.2	2,670,812	20.3
$7,000 to $9,999	3,659	5.7	1,422,191	10.8
$10,000 to $14,999	1,290	2.0	1,198,998	9.1
$15,000 and over	354	0.6	319,458	2.4
Total families	64,361	100.0	13,188,351	100.0

Source: 1960 Census of Population, PC(2) 1C and PC(1) 1C.

Table 5.--Years of school completed by persons 14 years old and over in the rural Indian and total rural population, United States, 1960

Years of school completed	Rural Indians		Total rural population	
	Total	Percentage of total	Total	Percentage of total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
No school years completed	29,550	13.5	788,380	2.1
Elementary school:				
1 to 4 years	29,020	13.3	2,626,000	7.1
5 to 6 years	29,343	13.4	3,123,443	8.5
7 years	21,480	9.8	3,026,772	8.2
8 years	34,585	15.8	7,165,249	19.4
High school:				
1 to 3 years	47,403	21.7	8,446,084	22.9
4 years	20,819	9.5	8,061,562	21.8
College:				
1 to 3 years	5,106	2.3	2,276,682	6.2
4 years or more	1,599	.7	1,436,057	3.9
Total	218,905	100.0	36,950,229	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1960, PC(2) 1C and PC(1) 1D.

Table 6.--Selected vital statistics, Indians and total U.S. population, 1964 and 1954

Vital statistics	Indians	United States (all races)
	Number	Number
Infant deaths per 1,000 live births:		
1964	35.9	24.8
1954	65.0	26.6
Maternal deaths per 10,000 live births:		
1964	6.3	3.4
1954	18.4	5.2
Deaths per 100,000 population, by specified cause--		
Tuberculosis:		
1964	21.3	4.3
1954	54.0	10.2
Gastritis, enteritis, etc.		
1964	19.3	4.3
1954	56.0	4.9
Morbidity per 100,000 population, by specified cause 1/--		
Tuberculosis:		
1964	184.1	26.6
1954	571.0	62.4
Dysentery:		
1964	417.5	8.5
1963	428.1	8.4
23 Federal Indian Reservation States--		
Birth rate (registered live births per 1,000 population):		
1964	43.1	21.0
	Years	Years
Average age of death, 1964	43.8	63.6
Life expectancy at birth, 1964	63.5	70.2
Median age of population	17.3	29.5
	Percent	Percent
Percentage of population under 20 years	55.2	38.5

1/ Cases reported per 100,000 population.

Source: Indian Health Highlights, 1966 edition U.S. Dept. Health, Educ., and Welfare, Pub. Health Serv., pp. xvi,7.

Table 7.--Occupational distribution of employed rural Indians and total rural population, United States, 1960

Occupational category	Rural Indians		Total rural population	
	Total	Percentage of total	Total	Percentage of total
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
White-collar workers	7,892	12.0	4,752,562	27.6
Blue-collar workers	25,241	38.3	6,707,235	38.9
Service workers	8,382	12.7	1,566,678	9.1
Farmworkers	17,506	26.5	3,604,185	20.9
Occupation not reported	6,939	10.5	618,197	3.6
Total employed	65,960	100.0	17,248,857	100.0

Source: U.S. Census of Population, 1960, PC(2) 1C and PC(1) 1C.

Note: White-collar workers: Professional and technical; managers, officials, and proprietors; clerical; and sales. Blue-collar workers: Craftsmen and foremen; operatives, and nonfarm laborers. Service workers: Private household and service. Farmworkers: Farmers and farm managers, farm laborers, and foremen.

Table 8.--Estimated population of rural "nonreservation" Indian groups, by State, 1960

State 1/	Number	State 1/	Number
Oklahoma	37,730	Nebraska	1,000
North Carolina	31,345	Alabama	755
California	13,995	Delaware	540
New York	6,950	South Carolina	535
Oregon	2,955	Massachusetts	425
Louisiana	2,470	Texas	370
Wisconsin	2,400	Rhode Island	300
Michigan	1,715	Ohio	130
Maine	1,435	Nevada	100
Virginia	1,131	Utah	100
		Total	106,380

1/ States that had counties in which at least 100 rural Indians lived.

Source: Beale, Calvin L., Estimated Population in Rural Nonreservation Indian Groups in the United States, 1960, Econ. Res. Serv., U.S. Dept. Agr., 1968. Unpublished paper.

Table 9.--Estimated Indian population resident on, or adjacent to, Federal reservations, by State, September 1968

State	Estimated population	State	Estimated population
Alaska 1/	55,400	Nebraska	2,500
Arizona	105,900	Nevada	4,400
California	6,600	New Mexico	74,500
Colorado	1,600	North Carolina	4,600
Florida	1,200	North Dakota	13,600
Idaho	5,100	Oklahoma 2/	72,400
Iowa	500	Oregon	2,800
Kansas	1,000	South Dakota	30,000
Louisiana	300	Utah	5,700
Michigan	1,000	Washington	16,000
Minnesota	10,400	Wisconsin	6,500
Mississippi	3,200	Wyoming	4,100
Montana	23,100		
		Total	452,000

1/ Includes Aleuts and Eskimos.
2/ Includes former reservation areas in Oklahoma.

Source: Estimates of the Indian Population Served by the Bureau of Indian Affairs: September 1968, Office of Program Coordination, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, March 1969, table 1.

Table 10.--Enrollment of Indians, ages 6 through 18, by type of school, selected years, 1952-68

Year	Total enrollment	Public schools		Federal (BIA) schools		Other schools	
		Enrollment	Percentage of total	Enrollment	Percentage of total	Enrollment	Percentage of total
	Number	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
1952	99,441	52,960	53.3	36,414	36.6	10,067	10.1
1954	104,470	58,855	56.3	35,586	34.1	10,029	9.6
1956	122,855	71,956	58.6	39,676	32.2	11,223	9.1
1958	129,760	78,822	60.7	39,677	30.6	11,261	8.7
1960	133,316	84,650	63.5	37,377	28.0	11,289	8.5
1962	117,562	69,651	59.2	38,887	33.1	9,024	7.7
1964	132,654	79,286	59.8	44,132	33.3	9,236	7.0
1966	141,694	86,827	61.3	46,154	32.6	8,713	6.1
1968	142,630	87,361	61.2	46,725	32.8	8,544	6.0

Source: Annual School Census of Indian Children, Bureau of Indian Affairs, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1952-1968.

Note: In 1961, the Bureau dropped from its school census Indian children living in the States of California, Idaho, Michigan, Minnesota, Nebraska, Oregon, Texas, Washington, and Wisconsin, where educational responsibility for Indians had previously been assumed by the States. It is estimated there were at least 115,000 Indian children in public schools in 1968.

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☆ U. S. GOVERNMENT PRINTING OFFICE : 1969—394-374/ERS-16