

Stephen L. Klineberg, Ph.D.

Stephen L. Klineberg, Ph.D., a graduate of Haverford College, with an M.A. from the University of Paris and a Ph.D. from Harvard, Stephen Klineberg joined Rice University's Sociology Department in 1972, after teaching at Princeton. In 1982, he and his students initiated the annual "Houston Area Survey," now in its 27th year of systematic studies of the changing demographic patterns, experiences, attitudes, and beliefs of Harris County residents. The recipient of ten major teaching awards at Rice and a frequent public speaker, Klineberg is currently at work on a book that explores the ways the public is responding to the economic and demographic transformations of Houston and America.

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Abstract

The Changing Face of Houston: Tracking the Economic and Demographic Transformations Through 27 Years of Houston Surveys.

The Houston region recovered from the collapse of the oil-boom in the 1980s to find itself in the midst of a restructured economy and a demographic revolution. We review the findings from 27 years of the "Houston Area Survey" (1982–2008) to measure these remarkable transformations and to consider their implications for the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.



THE CHANGING FACE OF HOUSTON: Tracking the Economic and Demographic Transformations Through 27 Years of Houston Surveys

STEPHEN L. KLINEBERG
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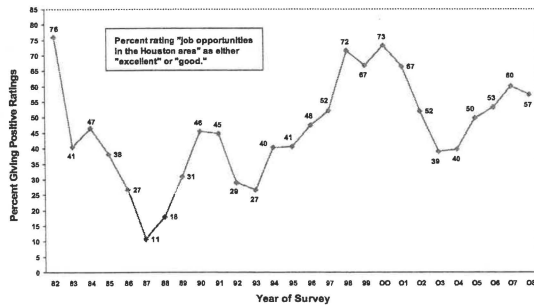


THE HOUSTON AREA SURVEY (1982-2008)



- Supported by local foundations, corporations, and individuals, the annual surveys have interviewed 27 scientifically selected successive representative samples of Harris County residents.
- In May 1982, just two months after the first Houston Area Survey was completed, the 80-year oil boom suddenly collapsed.
- The region recovered from the deep and prolonged recession of the mid 1980s to find itself squarely in the midst of . . .
 - a restructured economy and
 - a demographic revolution.
- These are the same transformations that have refashioned American society itself in the past quarter-century. For 27 years, the Houston surveys have tracked area residents' changing perspectives on these remarkable trends.

FIGURE 1: POSITIVE RATINGS OF JOB OPPORTUNITIES IN THE HOUSTON AREA (1982-2008)



THE RESTRUCTURED ECONOMY



- The "resource economy" of the industrial era, for which this city was so favorably positioned, has been replaced by a new high-tech, knowledge-based, fully worldwide marketplace.
- The traditional "blue collar path" to financial security has now largely disappeared. Almost all the good-paying jobs today require high levels of technical skills and educational credentials.
- In 2008, 74% of the survey respondents *disagreed* that, "A high school education is enough to get a good job." In the 2007 survey, 61% *agreed* that, "There are very few good jobs in today's economy for people without a college education."
- In this increasingly unequal, hourglass economy, "What you earn," as the saying goes, "depends on what you've learned."

FIGURE 2: TWO CONTRASTING QUARTER-CENTURIES SINCE WORLD WAR II

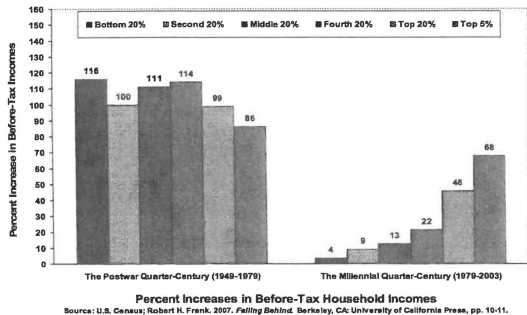


FIGURE 3: CONCERNS ABOUT HEALTH CARE, POVERTY, AND INEQUALITY (1997-2008)

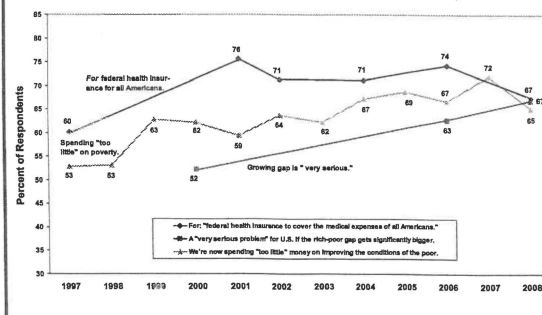
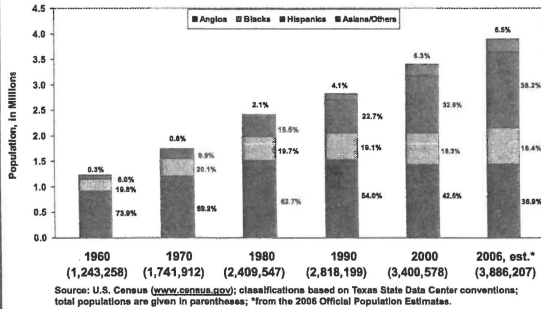


FIGURE 7: THE DEMOGRAPHIC TRANSFORMATIONS OF HARRIS COUNTY (1960-2006)



INTERACTIONS OF ETHNICITY AND AGE



- The other demographic revolution: the remarkable "aging," or "graying," of the American population.
- Today's seniors are primarily Anglos, as are the 76 million Americans born between 1946 and 1964, now aged 44 to 62. In the next 30 years, the numbers over age 65 will double.
- The younger cohorts, who will replace the "Baby Boomers," are disproportionately non-Anglo and far less privileged.
- The "aging of America" is thus a division not only by generation, but also by socioeconomic status and ethnic background.
- Nowhere is this ongoing transformation more clearly seen than in the age distributions of the Harris County population.

FIGURE 8: THE PROPORTIONS IN FOUR AGE GROUPS WHO ARE ANGLO, BLACK, LATINO, AND ASIAN OR OTHER (2003-2008, COMBINED)

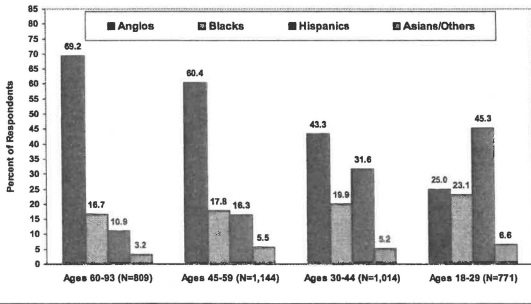
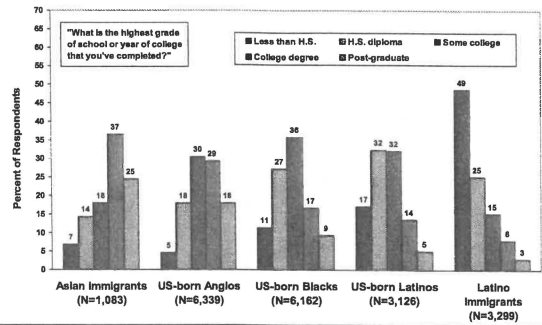


FIGURE 9: EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT IN FIVE HOUSTON COMMUNITIES (1994-2008)



THE NEW IMMIGRATION: TWO VIEWS*



- **The dominant pessimistic story:** Immigration is increasing dramatically, and it is producing a rapidly growing population of unassimilable foreigners. English will soon lose its status as the nation's language. Poverty will grow, placing ever greater pressure on America's already-overburdened taxpayers. The country is being swamped by a rising tide it cannot absorb.
- **A different story of the future:** After accelerating in the 1990s, immigration has leveled off. The newcomers are moving out of poverty and assimilating at least as rapidly as the earlier immigrants from Europe. The baby boomers will soon retire. Today's immigrants and their children will be the voters and citizens, the workers and taxpayers, of America in the new century.

* From: Dowell Myers. 2007. *Immigrants and Boomers: Forging a New Social Contract for the Future of America*. New York: Russell Sage Foundation.

FIGURE 10: MEASURES OF SOCIOECONOMIC STATUS AMONG LATINO IMMIGRANTS BY TIME IN U.S. AND BY GENERATION (1994-2008)

