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Changing Demographics— A Call for Leadership

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Overview

Demographics, the study of cohorts, provide certain "givens" with which all educational leaders work. Today, most schools must address issues of racial and economic diversity. Poverty has a pervasive relationship with school performance; if you know the household income and educational level of the parents, you can predict about half of the variance in scores on the NAEP, as well as most IQ tests. Likewise, transience, or the movement of students in and out of different schools, creates severe educational and community problems. High-transience states have the lowest percentage of high school graduates admitted to college and also have the nation's highest crime rates. States' differences in educational achievement are far greater than any

> test score differences between American students and those of other nations. Race also impacts educational leadership in complex ways. The complexity of school districts across many categories makes school leadership exponentially more difficult. If a leader plays a different role in a stable community than in one with high student turnover, schools of education are challenged to adequately prepare educational leaders for these new realities that vary from state to state.

"Leadership" is one of those words we assume we know. Nevertheless, it is almost impossible to predict that a particular person will become a leader in a particular situation. From Shakespeare's Henry V to Winston Churchill, the world is full of people who were assumed to have no leadership qualities, yet at the right time turned in spectacular performances. The opposite can also be true. Many new superintendents who would have been magnificent in a posh suburb ended up in an inner city as a mediocre practitioner. Indeed, part of life's fun is the surprise at how often some people can rise above their talents and background in a particular setting.

However, in education the leader must work with certain "givens." Many, if not most, of these givens fall under the category of demographics. Basically, psychology studies individuals, sociology studies groups, and demography studies cohorts. Black citizens of Wisconsin who are between 21 and 40 years of age are not a group but a cohort. Cohort behavior can be predicted with great precision without predicting the behavior of any individual within the cohort. Therefore, in this chapter, we will present a series of demographic developments that will demand a response from educational leaders, then conclude with some summary comments about leadership and demographic environments.

GLOBAL ISSUES—THE HUMAN SPECIES

Our species numbers a little over 6 billion at present, but everywhere in the world, females are having fewer children than their ancestors did. In 100 years, our species will have fewer youth and more elderly, and is predicted to stabilize at 11 billion. Our population will then begin a decline as 11 billion people cannot be maintained with the lower birth rate in 2100, and a large number of humans will have aged out of the child bearing years. We can feed 11 billion people and provide clean air and drinking water, but there is no way 11 billion of us can have flush toilets.

Few people live well. Of our current 6 billion, one-third live in only two nations—India and China at one billion each. When we think of the "developed" nations, we are talking about 11% of the population. When

we discuss "globalization," we are talking about only a handful of the more than 200 nations containing our species—almost 2 billion people in the world today have never made a phone call. The computer the U.S. worker can buy with one month's wages would require eight years of work for the Bangladeshi worker. Our species is either very rich or very poor. Bill Gates's assets equal the total earnings of 42% of the U.S. population; the richest 200 people in the world represent about 40% of the world's prosperity. Currently, almost 200 million children have no education/ schooling available to them at all and virtually no health care.

It is probably time for American students and teachers to understand what life is like for over a billion people who live in utter poverty. If we can teach children about the plight of the snail darter, it should be possible to convey the life of over 1.5 billion "endangered" members of our own species. The international protests against globalization, from Seattle to DC, suggest that the developed nations are proceeding to improve their own economies with complete disregard for a majority of the human species living in undeveloped nations.

It is vital that Americans understand this critical issue, and it will require the most courageous kind of educational leadership, from boards, superintendents, principals, and teachers. It will be crucial to present these facts without framing all the answers for our students, many of whom will live part of their lives in another nation, and many more of whom will have to adapt to an increasingly diverse United States. Our geography has made it all too easy to be isolationist, and the schools have aided in creating this mindset. If September 11 has truly changed our feelings about involvement in the world, and about our vulnerability to angry members of societies that resent our values, the schools will have to foster understanding through leadership in every public school in the nation.

CENSUS 2000—IMPLICATIONS FOR SCHOOLS

The nation reached a population of 281 million in 2000, but half of these people lived in only 10 states. (In fact, over a third lived in only nine metro areas!) *Nothing is distributed evenly across the United States*, not sex, race, religion, wealth, or educational level. In the year 2000, almost 40% of public school students were "minority," and there were more Hispanics (not a race but an "ethnic group") than there were blacks. People were allowed, for the first time, to choose as many racial categories as they wished (which we will consider later). At the time of the 2000 census, blacks had moved to the suburbs in record numbers, owned their own homes, and could afford to have their children attend college. In addition, many blacks migrated back to the "New South," especially the Coastal South, after their parents and grandparents had moved to the big cities in the Midwest and secured manufacturing jobs. Blacks, especially with college degrees, were

welcomed "back" to the South; in 2000, none of the 10 most segregated cities in the nation were in the South. As of this writing, the black high school graduation rate is roughly equal to that of whites; access to college is also much improved for blacks, but the college graduation rate is not. Hispanics are still working on improving their high school graduation rate, although they have done very well in small business starts and in home ownership.

As residential patterns change, so do demographics in school populations. By 2000, approximately 80,000 schools were spread across 15,000 school districts in 3,068 counties, with almost 50 million students taught by 2.4 million teachers. (For every teacher there was one additional paid non-teaching adult.) Compared with the Baby Boom (1946-1954) and Boomlet (1977-1983) years, school enrollments in 2000 had increased very little across the nation, but again nothing is distributed evenly. Five states had considerable increases; ten states posted declines; and large numbers of states grew only a couple of percentage points in enrollments.

In addition, about half the population lived in suburbs, a quarter in big cities, and a quarter in small towns and rural areas. However, because of the local control tradition, our 80,000 schools are systematically skewed toward the small towns and rural areas. Nineteen thousand schools are in big cities, 22,000 in suburbs, and 39,000 in small towns and rural areas. Moreover, in 1990, the inner rings of big cities contained impoverished families, immigrants, elderly persons, and singles, while the outer rings teemed with children and young middle-class parents, all demanding a variety of youth services. By 2000, however, differences in economic status between inner and outer rings were decreasing; wealthy counties like Fairfax, Virginia, had over 30% of its students eligible for free federal lunch programs. Immigrants are increasing in the distant suburban rings, and singles are moving into every ring. Everything in the cities in 1990 has "come to a suburb near you," and vice versa. While national racial diversity has increased, over 70% of our 3,068 counties remain over 80% white. On the other hand, a few large places in the nation remain 100% white: most suburbs are now racially and economically diverse to some degree. While an incredible 43 million Americans move every year, this transience, unfortunately, creates one of the most severe educational problems. During a 5-year period, almost half of us move to a different house/apartment. No other nation's people move that often, nor would they want to! The vast majority of moves are within the same state, almost half within the same county; ten million people move to a different address (attend a different school) every year. Some estimate that a million young people in the United States have no fixed address or phone number.

Moreover, transience has a major impact on the community. Transience has a very direct link to crime. As a police chief told this author, "If you don't know your neighbor, you might just as well steal his lawnmower." In addition, a teacher in a transient area may begin and end the year with

24 students, but 22 of the 24 may be different students from the ones he/she started the year with! To be a principal in a school with a 35% yearly turnover is much more difficult than being principal in a school where almost all the students remain for years. The states with the highest percentage of 19-year-olds who have graduated from high school and been admitted to college (55-60%) are stable states with little transience, while the bottom states, with only 25 to 30% of 19-year-olds graduated from high school and admitted to college, are the nation's six most transient states with the six highest crime rates! These states' differences in educational achievement are far greater than any test score differences between American students and those of other nations. This greater complexity of school districts along many categories makes the issue of school leadership exponentially more difficult. By 2015, in schools in states like California, Texas, Florida, and New York, minority students will become the majority, while minorities in Maine schools will only account for 9% of the student body. A successful superintendent or principal from Maine, therefore, will not necessarily possess the qualities or experience to be a "leader" in Florida. While about 2,000 of our 3,068 counties have a white majority, and students might relocate to a more diverse part of the nation, what kind of diversity training should leaders receive? As one principal asked, "they need diversity training, but whom do they practice on?" How should school leaders be trained (if that's not an oxymoron) to deal with transient students and faculty, while also handling increased diversity of those who stay? If a leader plays a different role in a stable community than in one with a constant stream of people moving in and out, how do leadership training programs in schools of education prepare prospective principals and superintendents?

POVERTY AND LEADERSHIP

Although the United States is the richest nation in terms of Gross National Product, the family at the 90th percentile makes almost 6 times as much as the family at the 10th percentile of income, the biggest gap of any "developed" nation in the Luxemburg Income Study (see www.lisproject.org). It is also clear that the gap between rich and poor in the United States is increasing. While it is seldom mentioned, when we look at the more than 17 million youth in the United States who live in poverty (20% of all children), about 9 million of them are white, 4 million are black, and almost 4 million are Hispanic. What the newspapers and TV cover is the fact that poor black children are 37% of all black youth, Hispanics about the same, while the 9 million poor white children are only 16% of all white children. While it is true that black and Hispanic communities have severe poverty problems, poor white children also have major economic issues, in Appalachia as well as in other areas. Given the large number of middle-class

blacks, now college graduates and living in the suburbs with good jobs, being born black is no longer a universally handicapping condition. However, being born poor is—no one ever benefited from being born into poverty.

It is also clear that racial desegregation has not led to economic equality. Some examples of working on the issue of youth poverty can be seen— the San Francisco Schools are adding a few low-income students to a number of middle-income schools with excellent results. If the numbers of low-income kids are small, the middle-income majority does not suffer score declines. At the same time, the low-income students placed into this new environment often show surprising score and attitude gains. The Kentucky Schools decided about a decade ago to build an income "floor" under every student in low-income rural areas, to assure an equal investment with those students in more affluent suburban schools. Over the last 20 years, the rate of youth poverty in America has been steady at 20%. Poverty has a dramatic relationship to school performance. As noted above, the household income and educational level of parents can predict about half of the variance in scores on the NAEP, as well as most IQ tests. It is true that an occasional brilliant, charismatic school leader, usually a principal, has been able to inspire low-income students and teachers to very high performance levels. But such examples are so rare, they are the exception that proves the rule.

Environments do have a pervasive impact on behavior; studies show that a criminal, released back into the same environment that made him/her a criminal in the first place, will be back in jail within four years of release. Similarly, some environments clearly make it more difficult for the educational system to achieve success. The San Francisco experiment works by taking children out of difficult environments and putting them into productive ones, at least part-time. We also are trying to increase the number of parents who have the literacy skills needed to read to their children at home, thus improving the environment for learning in another way. Head Start, never fully funded, has shown pervasive and positive results through time. The shift from "day care" (hours of TV and naps) to "preschool" (children learn their letters and numbers, learn English when needed, and how to behave with other youngsters) is one of today's most promising efforts at equalizing opportunity. Nevertheless, poverty rates don't decline, and more efforts are needed in this direction.

Many of these changes will take years before they improve young people's school performances, and a real test of school leaders will be to make everyone—business, government, parent, and even teacher leadership—"stay the course" for the decade or more that will be necessary for improvement to take hold. "High-stakes" tests have a role to play, but it should be limited to assessing what curriculum innovations are working, and how they could be improved. Otherwise, it's like asking a thermometer to cure a fever. School leaders will have to make sure that what is

taught in the classroom is of primary importance, well-aligned with state content standards, and that the tests not only assess how well the curriculum is learned, but also are demonstrably useful in improving performance.

THE TRANSFORMATION OF "RACE" IN CENSUS 2000

Ever since Thomas Jefferson directed the first U.S. census, we have used it to adjust the government to fit changes in the people by changing the number of U.S. House of Representatives' members from each state. No census has ever used exactly the same racial criteria as the previous census. However, we have never been able to describe ourselves as a combination of races and ethnic groups—until Census 2000. For a century, anthropologists have said that no scientific basis exists for racial categories; and other nations that have a census almost never use the U.S. definitions of race (at least as they were used in the last census—there are no "Hispanics" anywhere in the world except in the United States, and none listed there until the 1980 census).

Census 2000 has brought two major shifts in our thinking about race. First, racial lines are blurring. Seven million people said that they were of mixed racial ancestry in Census 2000, the first time the census has ever allowed this answer. Tiger Woods is indeed a "Cablinasian": Caucasian, black, Indian, and Asian. But is he *fully* black? Or is he exactly one quarter black, and who figured that out? If one adds Native Americans who are mixed to the Native American pool, one doubles the size of the American Indian population. Children of Asian and Hispanic immigrants are marrying out of their "race" in more than a third of the cases. The politics of race will cause some minority leaders to argue that "one percent of black blood makes you *fully* black" but then Tiger would have to be *fully* each of the categories that are actually only a quarter of who he is. Tiger could be considered four "total" people under this logic. In addition, all of the longitudinal studies of racial groups would be invalid, as the 7 million people of "mixed ancestry" could not be considered in any sample of progress in economics, education, housing, or on any measure of racial change in America, like the National Longitudinal Study. In order to qualify for federal funds, every superintendent would have to fill out, not the 5 racial categories for each student, but all the combinations as well (64 boxes to describe "race," another 64 if you add "Hispanics," who are not a race but an "ethnic group" very poorly defined in the census forms). Many court cases have already held that a school system may not force a student to choose between the mother and father's racial/ethnic heritage, thus supporting multiracial answers to school records questions on students' racial qualifications. The unmanageability of racial "labeling" in educational

systems makes "poverty" a more useful variable—you're either eligible for free/reduced price federal lunches or you're not. Poverty may become the major criterion for inequity, which would make some sense, given the increased ambiguity of race.

The second major racial shift is the increased preference for national origin over race, even among blacks. For years we have known that Asians do not cluster in America; Chinese do, Koreans do, Japanese do. Even if Hispanics are not a "race," it's still true that Mexicans cluster in Texas, Cubans in Florida. American Indians are another obvious example. As early as 1900, "Euro-Americans" clustered separately, for instance, in groups of Germans, Italians, and Poles. In fact, if an Italian woman married a German man in 1900, the event would be called "miscegenation," and the two families might never speak to each other. Today, only 15% of "European-Americans" are German/German, Italian/Italian, and so on. The "melting pot" came to be through Americans marrying people who came from other nations, as we are now seeing with Hispanic and Asian immigrants.

However, the situation for blacks has been different. Since the 1960s, it has been essential for the civil rights agenda's establishment that all blacks be seen as identical—brothers and sisters of the same lineage. Any splintering would have drastically reduced the impact of the national campaign, from *Brown v. Board of Education* in Topeka to King's "I Have a Dream" speech in Washington. Ignoring differences within the black community was a political necessity, even though it was common knowledge that Martin Luther King Jr. had an Irish grandmother and that many black leaders, like Malcolm X, were of mixed white and black ancestry.

Yet in 2002, due in part to Census 2000's provision for people of mixed ancestry, even the black community is beginning to see national origin as more important than race. Although some civil rights activists and community leaders still emphasize black solidarity, blacks are no longer a monolithic group but are as varied as the Asian and Hispanic communities. For example, almost half of Miami's black community is West Indian, while a third of New York City's black population were born in another nation such as Haiti, Nigeria, Senegal, or Jamaica. In Boston, large numbers of blacks are Cape Verdean, and "brown blacks" are from Ethiopia and Somalia. Many U.S. Haitians are as worried about being seen as "all white" as they are about being seen as "all black." It is also becoming clear that many U.S. blacks actually know very little about their African origins. Will Smith, the actor, made his first trip to Africa in 2000 and reported that "everything I knew about Africa was 80% false" ("Nationality Trumps Skin Color," 2002).

Taking into account the nation's complex racial, ethnic, and national origins presents a challenge for educational leaders whose own diversity is thin and getting thinner. At present almost 40% of our students are "nonwhite," compared with 10% of secondary teachers, 14% of K-6 teachers, 16% of principals, and only 4% of superintendents (*Schools and Staffing in*

the United States, 1996). It isn't just the schools—of our 3,000 counties, about 2,000 are more than 85% white. With 43 million of us moving every year, many students will move from virtually all-white schools into more diverse schools and communities, without much previous experience of knowing students from different backgrounds and cultures, because they were simply not present in any quantity in the school from which they moved.

It is of course true that American schools reflect the nation far more than they change it, but the complex issues involving the blurring of racial lines, the new preference for national origin, and the interaction of race and poverty create major challenges for educational leadership. Because each major metro area in the country has its own unique "fingerprint" of diversity, tradition, local/political leadership, and economic development, future educational leaders may have to be either "home grown" or an almost perfect fit from outside. Given the recent decline in black college students who choose to major in education, plus the widespread tendency to politicize the appointment of superintendents to the state level, it appears that local control (and leadership) of public schools is in for a difficult decade, especially in light of the new issues that surround race.

CONCLUSION

In this short piece, I have endeavored to present some major demographic trends that will require leadership from responsible educators, local and state governments, and school board members. Although we hear the mantras, "We're for Children," and "Leave No Child Behind," with one of every five youngsters in the world's richest nation growing up in poverty, it's hard to take the slogans as policy. There is no "silver bullet" providing a quick solution to any of the issues raised.

Educational leaders must understand how states differ from each other. If one looks at the percentage of 19-year-olds by state who have both graduated from high school and been admitted to college, the range, according to the Mortenson Institute (1996), is from 55-60% in North Dakota, Massachusetts, New Jersey, Iowa, Nebraska, and South Dakota, to only 25-30% in Texas, Georgia, Florida, Arizona, and Alaska. (Those states whose population is stable do well; the transient states do not.) These are huge differences in the educational fulfillment of the American dream of having one's children graduate from high school and be admitted to college. Before we become preoccupied with testing as the solution to educational problems, we might ask why the differences between the states are so great, far greater than the differences between the United States and other nations. What would it take for Texas, Georgia, and Florida to do as well as Iowa, Nebraska, and the Dakotas? We might also ask, are we content with the fact that about twice the youth are high school graduates and college students in some states than in others? Do we assume that students are simply smarter in Iowa than in Florida?

It is very difficult to keep our eye on equality and quality at the same time. In the 1960s, if one said that high scores on standardized tests were the only things that mattered, one would be criticized for ignoring issues of race and class. Today, if one speaks of class and race differences in schools and states, one is automatically assumed to be against high standards. Furthermore, a major question from the 1950s—"What knowledge is of most worth?"— is barely asked today. Certainly, school leaders must help the American public understand that diversity and high-performing schools are not at odds with each other. Demographics can be very helpful in defining the paths each state and each school must take on its own to achieve commonly accepted goals.

ISLLC QUESTIONS

Standard 1

- What does Hodgkinson suggest are several demographic issues that educators might see as barriers to the school's vision that must be identified and removed?

Standard 2

- How might a school's transient rate for students and faculty impact how educational leaders advocate, nurture, and sustain a school culture and instructional program conducive to all students' learning and staff professional growth?

Standard 3

- Which demographic issues might affect an educational leader's effective management of the organization, operations, and resources for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?

Standard 4

- Which of Hodgkinson's demographic issues provide additional challenges to educational leaders' collaboration with families and community members with diverse needs and mobilization of community resources?

Standard 5

- In what situations and in what ways do educational leaders need to consider demographic realities when attempting to act with integrity, fairness, and in an ethical manner?

Standard 6

- In what ways can educational leadership promote the success of all students while considering the demographic realities of the local community and the larger society?

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