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Who Will Our Students Be?

Demographic Implications for Urban and Metropolitan Universities

Today we're going to talk about the implications for metropolitan universities of some of the current debates upon which demographics can shed some light. The present usually binds our view of the future, but demography gives us a way to peer over the present into the future because every comment about the future is based on an event that has already happened. By looking carefully at the information we have available, it is possible to see how such events impact each other and, in this case, how such information can be useful to urban and metropolitan universities.

Debates about Government and Welfare

We are now in the middle of another major debate in Washington. The debate is over the reduction of "the bloated, ever-expanding federal government, which is taking control over

our lives, violating the Constitution and the Bill of Rights. Leave the federal government in a closet,” so the speech goes, “and on Monday it is twice as big as it was; it’s like yeast.” I’ve heard at least four presidents make the same speech. The trouble with the speech, however, is the facts. For, *in fact*, the federal civilian work force is exactly the same size now as it was in 1952—about 2,800,000 workers. Its growth is flat as a pancake. The number of state government workers has gone from 1,000,000 to 4,000,000 workers during this period and local government from 3,800,000 to the new total of 11,000,000 local government workers. If you’re looking for bloated government, don’t come to Washington. Go to Fargo. Even Omaha. This is where government bloat is taking place, but nobody is interested in the facts.

These numbers are nondebatable. The U.S. Census knows what you did for a living and who paid your salary. The fact is that it’s more fun to have the argument without being bothered by the facts. We are, however, in the process of bloat—raiding money *away* from this “bloated ever-expanding federal government and giving it instead to lean and mean state government, which is closer to the people.” And the people who say this will, through a process not identified in any state, give the money to “the leanest, meanest closest to the people of all, most competent—local government.” If you believe that... .

However, let’s look at government. The federal work force went down 56,000 workers in one year; state government was up 73,000, local government up 172,000 in that one year. Government is our fourth largest industry, employing almost 20,000,000 people in a work force of only 109,000,000. Therefore, government is a very important source of economic stability in terms of wages. If the government hires more people than General Motors and Mickey Mouse put together, it says something very interesting.

We are, however, now downsizing the federal government because we’re supposed to. The reason we are supposed to is that we tend to apply methods to the federal government about four years after business has given them up. You may remember program budgeting, which came into universities after business said, “this is nonsense; it doesn’t work.” The government is a sort of a second-hand store for business—management ideas that are tried in business and don’t work end up in the federal government. So, we’re now downsizing the federal government for no particular reason when we probably should be downsizing local government. My friends at the I.R.S. tell me

that they're going to have to cut their work force twenty percent, so they have a version of 1040 that they think can be processed nationally with fourteen clerks and six letter openers!

The second major debate is about welfare. It suggests to me that higher education needs to pay attention to it as well. Let's take Aid to Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) as an indicator of welfare. There are two views in Washington. Number one, it's a crisp program designed so that most people get off welfare within six months. Two, it's a total failure designed for people who stay on welfare forever, the welfare queens who drive up to food stamp centers and pick up their food stamps without getting out of their Cadillacs. Which of those two views of welfare is correct? The answer is yes.

Again, the numbers are available and nobody has asked for them. How long do people stay on AFDC? The answer is that twenty-six percent are off AFDC within six months, never to return. Twenty-five percent are still on AFDC after thirty-seven months, unlikely ever to get off, and the other fifty percent are in the middle, shading towards the successful rather than the unsuccessful end of the program. You will never hear this on the evening news. What you will hear is why welfare is a good program or welfare is a bad program. The fact is that almost all programs, Headstart, for example, are wonderful for twenty percent of the people who use them, awful for another twenty percent, and the balance falls in the middle shaded towards one end or the other. And that's the way most programs work, including bilingual programs, student counseling programs, you name it. This is the metaphor for how it works. However, because it has three parts, a successful part, an unsuccessful part, and the middle, commentators just can't deal with that much ambiguity. As a result, as far as I can tell, the facts have never been reported on AFDC although they are freely available.

What Demographers Do

So what demographers do is try to find nondebatable numbers. We have five rules, an important one of which is that if you weren't born you don't count. That is more important than it might appear. In the State of New York, for example, there are 660 abortions for every 1,000 live births. Now separate the ethics of the abortion issue from the demographics of it in a state in which no one is moving in and a considerable number of people are moving out. Then the question of who gets born in this state is the key to the

state's future. Is it upper-middle income college graduates who are getting abortions? Is it low-income high school drop outs who are getting abortions? The answer is critical to New York's future in a state in which there is no movement in.

So, the first rule is more complex than you might think. And, just as an aside, the problem with the pro-life/pro-choice debate is that it totally blinds us to the quality of life of the children who are born. I'm just done in by the fact that if you look at kids five years and under, over thirty percent are being raised in poverty. Today, one household in four has a child in the public schools. When I was growing up sixty-five percent of households had a child in public schools. Three quarters of the voters will vote against a school bond issue and probably vote against higher education if they have a chance. Past a certain point, a voter's interest is more in research on arthritis than it is on quality of life for little children. And I'm about at that point myself—but not quite.

Some people have more children than other people. Some people live longer. Some people move more often, and some people have more money than other people. Those are the other four rules—that's the field.

The key to understanding demographic trends is Dick Easterlin's discovery twenty-two years ago that every decade people get exactly ten years older. You can put this on graph paper if you have an engineering background, and you will see that any bulge or trough in age distribution moves up the time scale in successive years. The principle is just extraordinary in its simplification. So, we can say with great confidence that today's children are going to become tomorrow's adults. But they may move away. Pennsylvania leads the country in the percentage of people who live there who were born there: eighty percent of Pennsylvania residents were born in Pennsylvania. By contrast, only thirty percent of current Floridians were born in Florida. At a retreat with the Florida Legislature two years ago, I asked one hundred and fifteen legislators how many of them were born in Florida. Fourteen hands went up. That's the leadership of this state.

When you look at the Pennsylvania legislature and the Florida legislature, it is as night and day. Pennsylvanians not only look alike and talk alike, they walk alike. They lead with their right shoulder—watch Pennsylvanians when they come into a room. Great place to raise children. Low crime rate. Great comfort and security, a sense of well-being and belonging. There is no

need for street signs anywhere in Pennsylvania, because everybody has been there before. But getting a new idea across the state line into Pennsylvania, or any state populated primarily by people born in that state, is an illegal act. What goes with comfort and security in their way of life is an inbred hostility to people who come in and suggest that they might do it another way.

Florida, on the other hand, is transient, as we shall see in a moment in another context; it's dangerous. It has the highest murder rates in the country. Not just in Miami—everyone of the major metropolitan area in this state is in the top thirty in violent crime. Tough place to raise children. A lot of psychosomatic illness. Street signs every five feet. Before Johnny Carson quit, he once said that if a husband in Florida misses a turn on a freeway, his wife can have him declared legally dead. It is pretty tough here, but new ideas wash into Florida like the tide, because ideas are brought by people who come from somewhere else. Florida, therefore, is quite hospitable to new ideas because nobody in Florida, to speak of, was born here.

Just for fun, I asked the Pennsylvania and Florida legislatures, both at a cocktail parties, whether they plan to die in their state. The Pennsylvanians in the legislature not only said yes, they were smiling and said, "Oh, yes, the family plot is in Lancaster. My grandfather is here. My grandmother is here. My mom is here. My dad is here. And my wife and I will be right here." And they knew where the plot was, and they could draw a diagram of it for you. When you talk to the Florida Legislature, on the other hand—I got to about thirty people at the cocktail party—not a single one planned to die in Florida. Where did they plan to die? Michigan, North Carolina, Pennsylvania, Indiana, Ohio, New York. Why? "That's where my family is from." "That's where my roots are."

So what you see here, I think, is the impact of the percentage of state residents who were born in that state, just a simple little nondebatable number that makes an enormous difference in terms of how a state can govern itself. It also tells you that demographers are important! We're limited, but within our range, we do some extraordinarily good stuff, we think. What we look at is things like ethnicity. We don't use "race" because it is a scientifically disabused concept. Interestingly, today the darkest quarter of the white population is darker than the lightest quarter of the black population. The only people who believe in race are the people in the U.S. Census. There is a little proviso that comes with the census form that says, essentially, "We

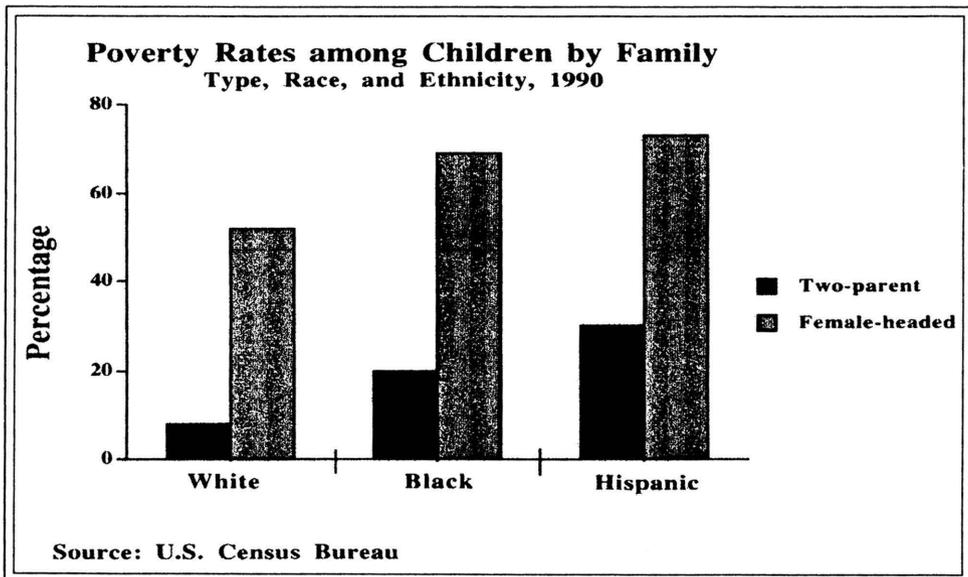
know that race is scientific nonsense. We're asking, 'if there were races, what race would you be?'" A very different question.

So the issues are really ethnicity and age. Age is a very important diversity issue now. When I go to a party, my wife and I tend to go with fifty year olds. There are thirty year olds there at the party, but they just don't get it. So, we are discriminating on the basis of age a lot. Ethnicity, age, region, class, sex, and religion. We have all these things simultaneously. And that's why there are numbers lumpers and numbers splitters. The splitters get doctorates by taking one idea and making three ideas out of it. This is probably eighty percent of their output. And there are lumpers who try to pull stuff together. Ken Boulding, the economist. Lewis Thomas, the biologist and author of *Lives of a Cell*. Lumpers are rare, and try to pull stuff together, more important, in my belief, than making a new distinction. Ernie Boyer was another example of a person who really understood that.

Ethnicity, Poverty, and Higher Education

Let's look at one of these categories: race...ethnicity if you will, and poverty rates—living below the poverty line. The wealth of the household has implications for eighth grade kids taking math in the United States (see Figure 1).

Figure 1



If we look at Asian, white, Hispanic, and black math scores, we also ought to compare the richest quarter of each ethnic group with the poorest quarter to see how much wealth has to do with scores, compared to what ethnicity has to do with scores. Compare wealthy Asians versus poor Asians in terms of math scores. Wealthy whites and poor whites. Wealthy Hispanics and poor Hispanics. Wealthy blacks and poor blacks. This is mostly about class—the one thing that Americans will not talk about. And I think one of the reasons that metropolitan and urban universities have not had the visibility they ought to have is the fact that class plays a very important part in the urban organization.

As a matter of fact, wealthy black children do better at math than poor Asian children do, a revelation that ruins all our stereotypes about Asian kids having a math gene that enables them to recite calculus basically from the crib. So wealth is an important part of education. Indeed, if you want to find out what SAT scores predict, they don't predict grades in the freshman year very well at all.

I was a trustee at a private college for fourteen years and every year I asked the admissions office to do quintiles on grades of the freshmen versus SAT scores by quintile for the same freshman class. It was a negative correlation. The better the SAT, the lower the grades in the freshman class. Why? The college has a tough freshman year. You've got to have some kind of internal gyroscope to get through some very tough times. There are fifteen bars within a mile of campus. If you want to find a way to get an excuse, it's easy. So the kids who do well in their freshman year are kids who have some kind of internal tenacity that we still don't know much about, but it is very important.

If you look at the household income of the SAT taker and compare that with scores, you find that every time you add \$10,000 to household income, the SAT math and verbal scores combined go up a minimum of nine points without exception for any indicator for wealth. It's what statisticians call a linear series. It is so rare in nature that computers don't even know how to do these, but this is what the SAT is actually predicting, and predicting it perfectly: the household income of the test taker.

Indeed, think about where personal computers are located. If the household is under \$30,000, nineteen percent have a computer at home; up to \$50,000, twenty-nine percent; and over \$50,000 fifty-nine percent of those

homes have kids who are not only computer literate but also computer clever. I believe that kids learn computing basically at home, but they learn how to do it right at school. Also, if we think about where homes with computers are located, the home computer is quintessentially suburban. That has important implications for metropolitan and urban universities, especially if you are in the heart of the city, because the suburban family will be more and more computer literate.

And just to indicate our problem, look at who goes to college from four different household income levels: below \$23,000, \$23,000-\$41,000, \$41,000-\$68,000, and over \$68,000. There is still an astonishing difference in terms of access to some form, any form, of post-secondary education. Now, we've been working on that since 1936. You would think by this time, we would have made more progress on this variable than we have. My feeling is that a lot of the people with low incomes and low college-going rates are in your metropolitan service area. There are also low income people in rural areas, but they probably get more support per capita than low income people in certain cities.

The best weapon a metropolitan or urban university has is that it belongs to the most diverse system ever of post-secondary institutions that share the complex task of providing advanced education. As we talk about urban institutions, you've got to remember that important fact. For example, Miami-Dade Community College, not far from here, is one of the two or three premier institutions in the country in terms of meeting the needs of the city. If you talk to people in the Miami area about what a difference that institution has made to their city, you find an extraordinary ability to take immigrants and refugees and make good technicians out of them so that their kids can move up the economic ladder. There is an astonishing story told there and it has relevance for your institutions.

And a final little introductory point about post-secondary education: if I were to ask you who you think lives longer in America, black men or white men, what would you say? Let's use the racial stereotype for just a minute. Most of you would say, well, white men live longer—which they do—about four years on average. Next question. Who lives longer, black male college graduates or white male college graduates? Let's assume the B.A. is the indicator of the college graduate. This is interesting because there is no difference in life expectancy if you add the college degree to race. How does it

work? Does the degree have nutritional value that keeps you going or does it cure cancer? No. The fact is that with the degree, the black male moves into the middle class. And middle class people, be they white, green, black, or purple, will live four years longer than people who are poor, which is what the black male would be without the college degree. Not only does the degree increase your earning power, it adds four years to your life if you are a black male.

Of course, what are we going to do in metropolitan and urban universities with the fact that for most Americans lifelong learning is now a reality. I have three daughters who have all come back to some form of further education after they have graduated; but for depression people like me, we had to go to school until the money ran out, then we worked like crazy, and then the plan was that before we died we'd have two years in which to have a good time. That is what we all looked forward to; and, of course, when we got here it was disappointing as it always is. People are returning to take classes or pursuing lifelong learning in other ways. It seems to me that the implications of that for urban and metropolitan universities are really quite profound.

There is also a change in attitude on the part of our freshmen. This is, of course, the eighteen year olds who are getting more and more atypical if you look a tour 14,000,000 students. If you look at who is full-time, in residence, and eighteen to twenty-two years of age, that's twenty percent or one fifth of the student body in America's higher education system. Yet, this fifth is written about as if it were the whole thing. But there has been a big increase in people who want to make big bucks in a hurry and a steady decline in the percentage of incoming freshmen who come to college just to develop a meaningful philosophy of life. It just may be that freshmen are indicating pretty much what the rest of us are indicating, too.

A little mystery is that so many states are having an increase in the numbers of college-going rates for the year after people graduate from high school. New York is way up. New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Ohio, Georgia, Illinois, Minnesota, Florida are all up a little bit. North Carolina and California, on the other hand, have had large declines in the percentage of high school graduates who go right on to college. What's going on here? I don't have a clue, but something fairly systematic is.

In big states with large urban and metropolitan areas, there is a large increase in people going to college right away, as soon as they can. Maybe

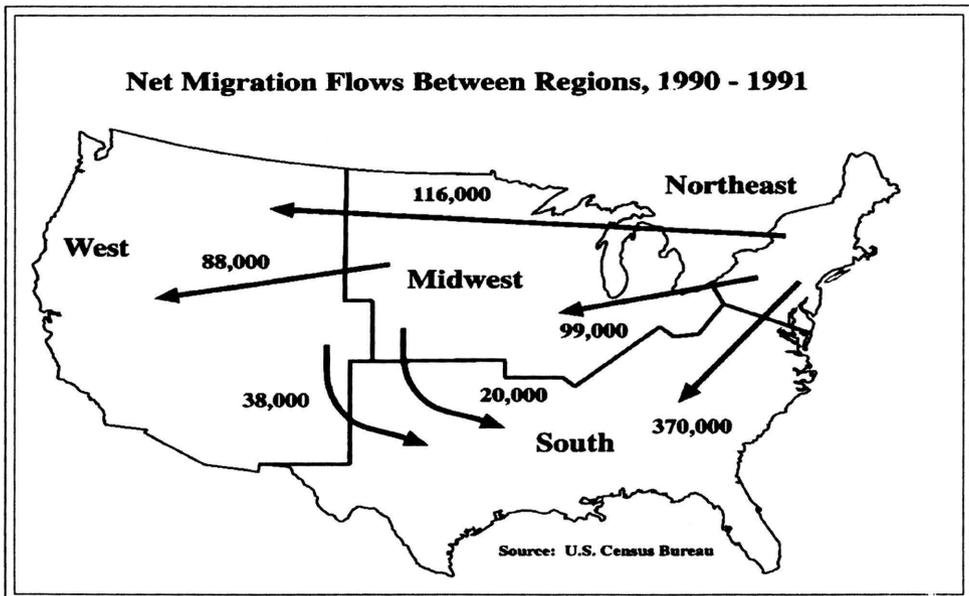
they think the price of tuition is going to continue to go up so they want to get in at the lowest end of the curve. Maybe they think that student financial aid is going to go down, which is probably true, I don't know. In California, it's clear, a lot of people don't think there will be a place for them and that's one of the reasons why the rate of students going to college is changed, I think, in that particular place.

Migration in America

The white population of the United States, mostly concentrated in the northern half of the nation is old, rich, well-educated, and declining in number. The southern half is ethnically more diverse, younger, poorer and less well-educated. Over ninety percent of the U.S. population growth is in the southern half of the nation. Immigration has reached record highs, but only fifteen percent of the immigrants are from Europe. The remaining immigrants are from South and Central America and from Asia. The cultural impact of this diversity of backgrounds will be considerable and I'll discuss it a bit later.

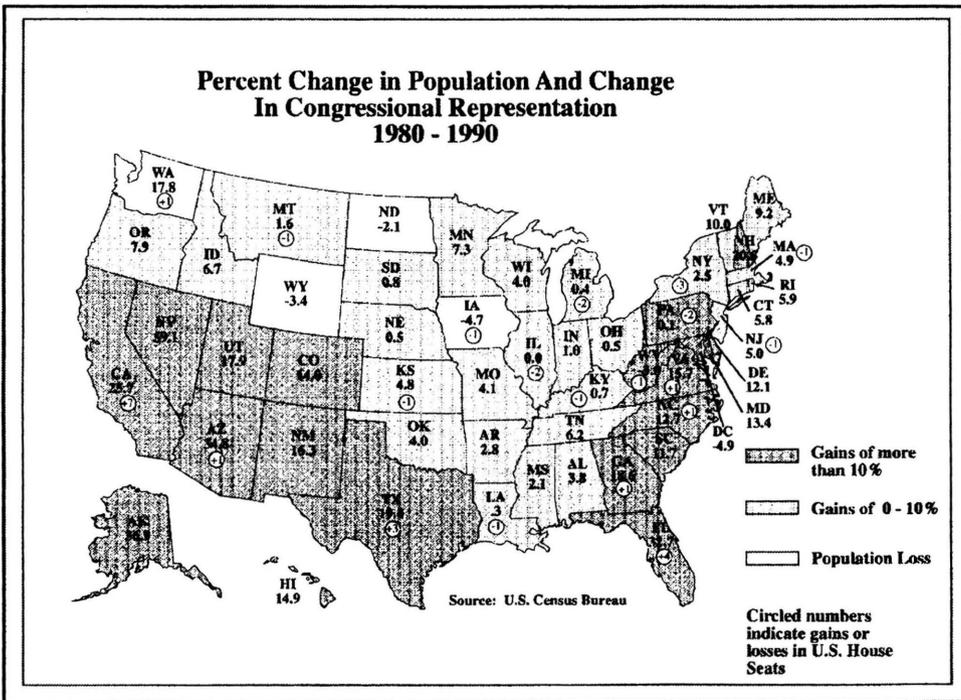
A large number of Americans move each year, 103,000,000 between 1985 and 1990 (see Figure 2).

Figure 2



During the 1980's, Americans moved from small towns, rural areas, and center cities and moved to the suburbs. In addition, more than half the counties in America had decreases in their population between 1980 and 1990, mostly in the Midwest, which lost younger and better educated citizens to the Southeast, Southwest, and Pacific coast. The middle of the nation is now aging in place because the out-migration of young people is not offset by young people moving in. As a result, New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, Michigan, and Illinois all lost two or more seats in the U.S. House of Representatives to California, Texas, and Florida, which gained fourteen new seats (see Figure 3).

Figure 3

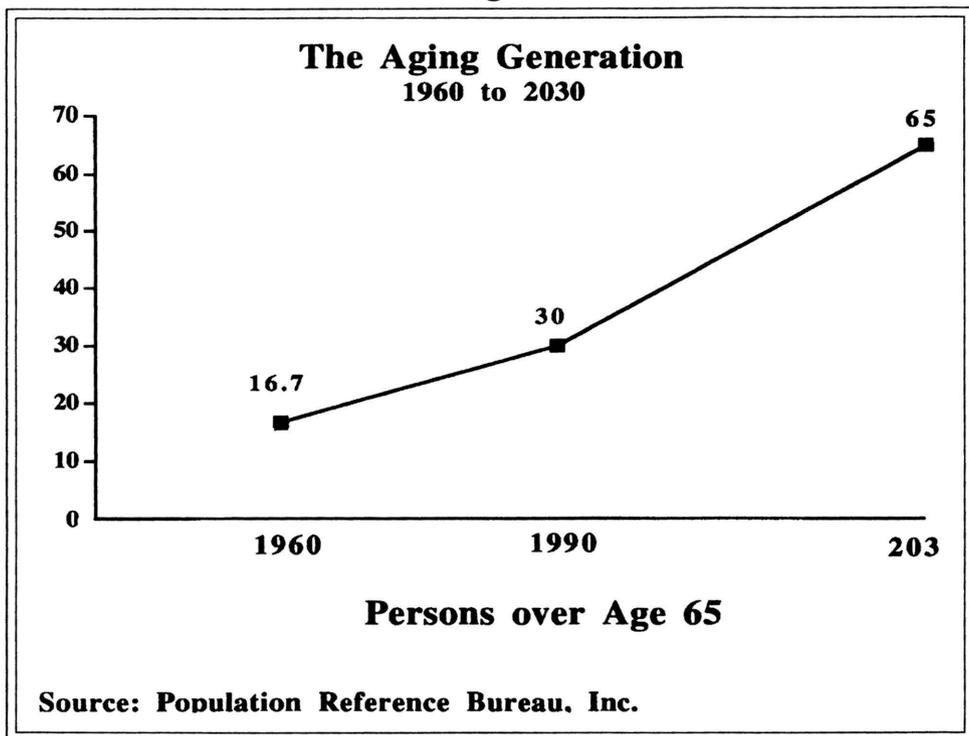


The Aging of the Population

The general population is aging, as well (see Figure 4, next page). When a demographer says that there is a thirty seven percent increase in fifty year olds in 1996, it's not even a prediction. These are the first of the Baby Boomers. There was a thirty-seven percent increase in births in 1946—the same people

fifty years down the pipeline of life. This is not rocket science. You do not need to be smart in my field. So, if you've got a thirty-seven percent increase in births in 1946, it's a thirty-seven percent increase in fifty year olds in 1996; in 2006, there will be a thirty-seven percent increase in sixty year olds. And in 2011, there be a thirty-seven percent increase in retirees—except that most people do not retire at sixty-five now. And as time goes on, sixty-five as the great watershed at which you are old is going to disappear.

Figure 4



Congress passed the Social Security legislation in 1933, when the average American lived to fifty-eight years. The legislation guaranteed retirement for any worker at sixty-five. For the first twenty years, this program made an enormous amount of money because most people did not live long enough to collect anything compared to what they had paid in. Now, however, we are beginning to see the consequences of the seventeen-year long celebration begun in 1946 at the end of World War II. The result was 70,000,000 people.

A Berkeley graduate student of mine said last year that he was very lucky to get into Berkeley because there were nineteen applicants for each one admitted. His whole life will be spent competing with all these other people born in the same year he was. I was born in 1931. Virtually no one else was. I mean, I'd love to compete with somebody, but there's nobody around to compete with. I was a college dean at thirty because the other five people weren't interested. But when I retire, who covers my benefits, Social Security and Medicare? I'm not the problem. The problem is the discrepancy in the number of people retiring, perhaps to poverty, and the number of people generating the revenue to support them in their retirement years.

After the Boom

The demographics are also interesting because over thirty percent of the children in the "Boomlet" (children of the Boomers) are below the poverty line. Large numbers are being raised by single parents, and it does not appear that this work force is going to be terribly well-trained, at least not at the moment. Currently lots of colleges and universities are reporting a big increase in admissions. That will continue about six more years, and then it will begin to turn around. We've got a few years of rising admissions from the "boomlet," but after about 1990, births began to go down and the projections are just about right. They do not go back to 3,000,000 per year but stay close to 3,800,000 a year. The new plateau is higher than the previous one, but it is nevertheless a plateau. And if we continue to increase the numbers of kids born in poverty, high school dropouts, etc., that means that we may even have a declining population of applicants in higher education.

What happened during the decline in births after 1990 was that it was almost entirely white. There was a black decline, too, but the black decline was largely middle class. When people move into the middle class, their birth rate goes down.

It is important, however, to remember that the decline after the baby boom was the same thing as the boom itself. The boom was quintessentially white; the decline is quintessentially white. Indeed, in every place in the world except Utah, white populations are just barely at or below the replacement level. You need 2.1 children per female over her lifetime to stay even. The current white birth rate in the world is 1.9 children per female. Black popu-

lations will grow only slightly in this country, since there is very little black immigration, and increases in American population will come mainly through Asian and Hispanic immigration.

This immigration leads us to a new problem—what do we call minorities when the group they represent is more than half of a population? Fourteen states have this problem at the present time, and twenty-two jurisdictions in California and at least eight in New Jersey have no ethnic majority. Interethnic politics is the only politics of winning because you may not win an election even if you get all the voters of your ethnic group, whatever your ethnic group, because it may not control the majority. In Oakland, for example, if you're a white candidate without a black support base, your election is in jeopardy because the black vote is almost as large as the white vote. As a result, interethnic political coalitions are the order of the day in most of our largest cities and may be markers for the new forms of churches, museums, health care delivery, and education that we will have when these new traditions become hybridized.

What, then, is a better term for “minority?” What they are. In 1960 you only had two choices: you could be white or anything else. Calling someone “non-white” is really quite insulting. Imagine if the sex question had been “are you male or non-male?” Think of how women would have felt. That's how people felt whom you called “non-white.” In 1980 you could become a Hispanic, and in 1990 you had a plethora of categories. We are moving away from race and toward national origin as a useful measure and I think that is probably what is going to carry.

Remember that there are 240 nations in the world and every one of them has somebody who lives in the United States. What happens if all these people marry people from the 239 other nations? Well, in three generations, women may start looking like the computer-generated face of a young woman in a recent *Time* Magazine. She was created from all the noses, all the ears, all the eyes, of the women in the world. Focus groups organized by *Time* said that when whites look at this face, they say she is white; when blacks look at the face, they say she is black; Asians say she is Asian; Native Americans say not only that she is Native American but that she is Hopi; and Hispanics, with no identifying ethnic physical categories at all, say that she is Hispanic. I've written a little piece called, “What Should We Call People?” in which I sug-

gest that we give this whole thing up as Canada did twenty years ago. I would leave you with the thought that the real issue in terms of life's diminution is not ethnic background, but poverty. A poor white kid is in very much the same situation as a poor black kid, and we as educators should remember that along with the other revelations that demography can provide us. Perhaps the hybridization that I referred to earlier will be the answer.

The selected demographic trends that I have mentioned indicate that the American people are older on average, less familiar with problems of youth, have fewer points of certainty, such as college at 18 or retirement at 65, are less white and more diverse in ethnicity, migrate in identifiable patterns, and raise more children in poverty than in past years. These cultural changes have numerous ramifications and challenges for educators, especially at urban and metropolitan universities. I hope that you will be mindful of them as you plan for the new millennium.

NOTE: This article is an edited version of the plenary address delivered at the 1996 Annual Conference of the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities at Orlando.

Is your institution a metropolitan university?

If your university serves an urban/metropolitan region and subscribes to the principles outlined in the Declaration of Metropolitan Universities printed elsewhere in this issue, your administration should seriously consider joining the Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities.

Historically, most universities have been associated with cities, but the relationship between "the town and the gown" has often been distant or abrasive. Today the metropolitan university cultivates a close relationship with the urban center and its suburbs, often serving as a catalyst for change and source of enlightened discussion. Leaders in government and business agree that education is the key to prosperity, and that metropolitan universities will be on the cutting edge of education not only for younger students, but also for those who must continually re-educate themselves to meet the challenges of the future.

The Coalition of Urban and Metropolitan Universities brings together institutions who share experiences and expertise to speak with a common voice on important social issues. A shared sense of mission is the driving force behind Coalition membership. However, the Coalition also offers a number of tangible benefits: ten free subscriptions to *Metropolitan Universities*, additional copies at special rates to distribute to boards and trustees, a newsletter on government and funding issues, a clearinghouse of innovative projects, reduced rates at Coalition conventions. . . .

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