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Demographic Leadership: A First-of-Its-Kind Diversity Leadership Online Course in a Tier-1 University Doctorate Degree Program

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Demographic Leadership –

A First of its Kind Diversity Leadership Online Course in a Tier-1 University Doctorate Degree Program

Abstract

This first course in a professional doctorate degree program called the Doctorate of Technology (DTECH) on demographic leadership at a tier 1 university was premised on years of research, practice, and scholarship. The scholarship was conducted by asking the question "Why don't you like me?"

"Why don't you like me?" as a research question, is not about the author(s) individually, but about each of us as individuals. It is about all of us. The question is really "why don't others like us, or why don't we like others?" Literature suggests as humans we tend to feel most comfortable with those who are like us. Those who resemble us racially, ethnically, and in other similarly significant ways.

The premise for this discussion resides in humans trying to understand each other; understand who we are personally and why others may cause us to feel uneasy, fearful, or other similarly negative responses.

The demographic leadership course, which is subsequently described in this paper, was written to heighten awareness to the changing face of our Nation. It addresses three major shifts happening right now, and far into the future; namely, (1) the changing racial and ethnic face of our Nation, (2) the shortage of younger individuals to backfill our society, and (3) the rapid aging of massive numbers within our society.

This paper details the decisions attendant to the many facets of demographics, and more specifically cultural diversity. These many facets are the premise for this first online course in the new curriculum.

The author will examine and articulate the many meaningful, cross-demographic cohort discussions and agreed-to topics. The curriculum, in the final analysis, was designed to heighten awareness to the many tightly integrated cultural issues of today.

Doctor of Technology Overview

The DTECH degree evolved over a six-year period beginning in 2013. During this time, there were two paths being pursued in parallel.

The first path was to identify what type of curriculum would be most applicable to business and industry participants. Students in the DTECH program were identified as the most likely participants, this given the DTECH program was designed as a 100% online program. The intent was to provide an educational opportunity to those who might not otherwise be able to participate in a traditional on-campus program.

A thought-leading team of faculty [1] from diverse departments was assembled to research and conceptualize what such a degree might look like and how it might be best delivered. The team launched two parallel research efforts, one to ascertain what precedents and experiences with similar goals existed around the world, i.e., an international review of other doctoral programs addressing similar needs, and the second was to conduct an interest and needs assessment of a sample of high probability individuals. The findings of both studies yielded rich results, and their key features were incorporated in this program.

In addition to the extensive review of the literature, the faculty team [2], [3] designing this program conducted a survey and needs assessment of a large (300+) cohort of professional master's degree alumni. This work, and the experience of dealing with a similar clientele, albeit at the master's degree level, enabled the development team to draft a proposed program.

Another primary factor in the design of the Doctor of Technology degree was the necessity of meeting the US Government's requirement for recognition of a doctoral level degree.

Specifically, the US Department of Education's Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (NCES, n.d.) (IPEDS) stated a "Doctor's degree-professional practice" is [4]:

> *A doctor's degree that is conferred upon completion of a program providing the knowledge and skills for the recognition, credential, or license required for professional practice. The degree is awarded after a period of study such that the total time to the degree, including both pre-professional and professional preparation, equals at least six full-time equivalent academic years.*

The program that evolved from this process was an industry-facing, distance professional doctoral program permitting extensive tailoring of the learning experiences. This enabled enrollees to address a need/problem/issue specific to their enterprise while simultaneously accomplishing and advancing along on one or more of the program's key competency tracks.

The second path was administrative in nature. This path included details regarding what will be required to gain approval of a doctoral degree program in a tier-1 highly ranked research university. Gaining approval of a terminal degree program is a significant undertaking that requires approval through multiple levels of academic critique.

Specifically, the sequence of academic approval moves in a recurring nature through the proposing academic department, college, Graduate School, and Provost's Office [5], [6]. Each of these approval entities is a recurring series of activities, namely, questions and proposed

changes are an expected part of each approval body. Once university approval is obtained, the program must gain the approval of the State's Higher Education Commission.

The Doctor of Technology program was fully approved in the fall of 2018 by the university and State authorities. A pilot beta cohort began January 2019. In the two semesters following, fall 2019 and spring 2020, enrollment grow to an unexpectedly high number of 200 students enrolled.

Background for the Course

The United States of America is undergoing, and will continue to undergo, a demographic transformation the likes of which have never been experienced in this great Nation. The demographic changes which surfaced in the literature and became more pronounced around 2008, are now at the precipice of tectonic-like change, and its impact on higher education is already being felt [7].

Three major events will take place over the upcoming decade. Each of which, by itself, may appear harmless and go relatively unnoticed. Together these three transformative changes paint a forever changing face of the demographics of the U.S. The impact of these three primary drivers of demographic change is already being felt in the hallowed halls of higher education. Colleges and universities are scrambling to accommodate these, still to be fully understood, major impacts.

The first of these changes is the racial and ethnic composition of our nation [8], [9], [10]. This transition represents the new 'minority-majority' of America (or the 'majority-minority') where the non-Hispanic White population becomes the minority overall for the first time in U.S. history. Figure 1 depicts this transition.

Characteristics	Population						Change from 2016 to 2060	
	2016		2030		2060			
	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent	Number	Percent
Total population	**323,128**	**100.0**	**354,840**	**100.0**	**403,697**	**100.0**	**80,569**	**24.9**
One race								
White	248,503	76.9	263,302	74.2	274,576	68.0	26,073	10.5
Non-Hispanic White	197,970	61.3	197,888	55.8	178,884	44.3	-19,086	-9.6
Black or African American	43,001	13.3	48,934	13.8	60,471	15.0	17,470	40.6
American Indian and Alaska Native	4,055	1.3	4,657	1.3	5,567	1.4	1,512	37.3
Asian	18,319	5.7	24,382	6.9	36,778	9.1	18,459	100.8
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	771	0.2	912	0.3	1,124	0.3	353	45.8
Two or More Races	8,480	2.6	12,652	3.6	25,181	6.2	16,701	196.9
Hispanic	57,470	17.8	74,751	21.1	111,022	27.5	53,552	93.2
Native-born population	**279,283**	**100.0**	**301,057**	**100.0**	**334,364**	**100.0**	**55,081**	**19.7**
One race								
White	222,942	79.8	232,488	77.2	236,517	70.7	13,575	6.1
Non-Hispanic White	189,896	68.0	188,066	62.5	165,685	49.6	-24,211	-12.7
Black or African American	38,345	13.7	42,939	14.3	50,977	15.2	12,632	32.9
American Indian and Alaska Native	3,465	1.2	4,030	1.3	4,958	1.5	1,493	43.1
Asian	6,377	2.3	9,361	3.1	17,253	5.2	10,876	170.6
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	576	0.2	685	0.2	865	0.3	289	50.2
Two or More Races	7,578	2.7	11,555	3.8	23,795	7.1	16,217	214.0
Hispanic	37,819	13.5	51,410	17.1	83,777	25.1	45,958	121.5
Foreign-born population	**43,845**	**100.0**	**53,783**	**100.0**	**69,333**	**100.0**	**25,488**	**58.1**
One race								
White	25,560	58.3	30,815	57.3	38,059	54.9	12,499	48.9
Non-Hispanic White	8,073	18.4	9,823	18.3	13,198	19.0	5,125	63.5
Black or African American	4,656	10.6	5,996	11.1	9,494	13.7	4,838	103.9
American Indian and Alaska Native	590	1.3	627	1.2	609	0.9	19	3.2
Asian	11,942	27.2	15,021	27.9	19,525	28.2	7,583	63.5
Native Hawaiian and Other Pacific Islander	195	0.4	227	0.4	259	0.4	64	32.8
Two or More Races	902	2.1	1,097	2.0	1,386	2.0	484	53.7
Hispanic	19,652	44.8	23,341	43.4	27,246	39.3	7,594	38.6

Note: The official population estimates for the United States are shown for 2016; the projections use the vintage 2016 population estimate for July 1, 2016, as the base population for projecting from 2017 to 2060. Percentages will not add to 100 because Hispanics may be any race.
Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 National Population Projections.

Figure 1. Changing U.S. Demographics 2016 – 2060 (000)

As with any country, the youth of the U.S. reflect the bench strength of the nation. These members backfill for the aging and are the primary workers for sustaining age-related social programs. They are the strength of the working class and hold the keys to our innovation. This group must be sufficiently educated and capable of sustaining a country.

In the year 2020 (Figure 2), less than one-half of the children under 18 years of age were Caucasian (thus, a minority). This crossover comes with a new term: either ‘the new minority-majority’ or ‘the new majority-minority’ (when referring to non-Hispanic Whites).

Characteristic	2016	2020	2030	2060
Total children under 18 (in thousands)	**73,642**	**73,882**	**75,391**	**79,788**
One race				
White	72.5	71.7	69.4	62.9
Non-Hispanic White	51.1	49.8	46.9	36.5
Black or African American	15.1	15.2	15.5	16.0
American Indian and Alaska Native	1.6	1.6	1.5	1.4
Asian	5.2	5.5	6.3	8.1
Native Hawaiian and Pacific Islander	0.3	0.3	0.3	0.3
Two or More Races	5.3	5.8	7.1	11.3
Hispanic	24.9	25.5	26.5	32.0

Note: The official population estimates for the United States are shown for 2016; the projections use the vintage 2016 population estimate for July 1, 2016, as the base population for projecting from 2017 to 2060. Percentages will not add to 100 because Hispanics may be any race.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 National Population Projections.

Figure 2. Percent of Children by Age (000)

In the year 2020, under-18 Caucasians represented 49.8% of the total youth [11], [12]. The combined minorities exceeded the non-Hispanic White population for the first time in U.S. history. By 2060, roughly two-thirds of the youths will be other than Non-Hispanic White. This trend is not expected to reverse because significantly higher growth of the combined minority groups continues to outpace this one.

Given the new minority-majority is here, it is relevant to define each cohort group. The below listing defines each of these currently recognized cohort groups by age [13], [14].

The millennials (Gen Y), span the years 1981 through 1996. They follow the veterans, baby boomers, and Gen Xers. Gen Z is discussed as the most recent generational cohort on whom there is sufficient early information.

- **Veterans** (Traditionalist) 1922-1945; 52 million people; born before and during WW II
- **Baby Boomers** 1946-1964; 78.8 million people; after WW II
  - Reared during a period of optimism, opportunity, and progress.
  - Began turning 65 on January 1, 2011; aging to 65 years old at 10,000/day, through December 31, 2029.
- **Generation X** (Gen X) 1965-1980; 44 million people
  - Came of age in the shadow of the boomers
  - Children of veterans, older boomers, or younger siblings of younger boomers.
- **Generation Y** (Millennials) 1981-1996; 75.3 million people
  - **C**hildren of younger boomers
  - Known as the 'most loved' generation.
- **Generation Z** (Gen Z) 1997-2012; population yet to be defined
  - **C**hildren of Gen X.

In 2015, the millennials (Gen Y) became the largest adult group, surpassing the baby boomers. In this same year, Gen Y surpassed Gen X as the most significant force in the U.S. labor market. In 2015, millennials made up 25% of the U.S., roughly 30% of voters, and nearly 40% of the workforce [15].

In 2018, millennials were 55.8% white and nearly 30% new minorities: Hispanic, Asian, and those identifying as two or more races. Millennials are more racially and ethnically diverse than previous cohorts. This new trend will only be superseded by Gen Z [16].

A large percentage of the growth in minorities stems from the migration into the U.S. from Latin America and Asia. These immigrants are typically younger and have growing families.

Gen Z will further this trend towards future growth in diversity. In 2020, the underrepresented minority became the majority (if we consider children under the age of 18). Data suggests one-third of Gen Z is, by definition, a minority.

From this perspective, the millennials ushered in the nation's future diversity. Gen Z follows; solidifying and defining the racial and ethnic trend line.

The second of the three changes represents a shortfall of bench strength due to the crossover where the number of people 65+ years of age is greater than the youths under the age of 18. In other words, there is a shortage of young people to replace an aging generation [17], [18].

When addressing the shrinking bench strength of our youth, one must look at not only declining birthrates but the subsequent dwindling number of high school graduates going to college [19] – [23].

The impact of this transition is reflected in the number of working-age individuals compared to those not working. When youth dependency (those under the age of 18) is added to the old-aged dependency (government term), the net effect is a total dependency where there are two dependents for every three working-age adults.

At present, in the U.S., a person's working phase is defined as being between the ages of 18 and 64. Those below the age of 18 are 'youth,' while those aged 65 and above are categorized as 'senior non-working.'

In the ideal scenario, youth backfill for the aging and become the workers ensuring the continuation of social programs (Social Security, Medicare, etc.).

In 2035 – for the first time in U.S. history – the 65+ cohort is expected to outnumber the youth (under 18 years old). Figure 3 depicts this changing demographic.

Characteristic	Population						Change from 2016 to 2060	
	2016	2020	2030	2040	2050	2060	Number	Percent
Total population	**323.1**	**332.6**	**354.8**	**373.1**	**388.3**	**403.7**	**80.6**	**24.9**
Under 18 years	73.6	73.9	75.4	76.8	77.9	79.8	6.2	8.4
18 to 44 years	116.0	119.2	125.0	126.3	129.3	132.3	16.3	14.1
45 to 64 years	84.3	83.4	81.3	89.1	95.4	97.0	12.8	15.1
65 years and over	49.2	56.1	73.1	80.8	85.7	94.7	45.5	92.3
85 years and over	6.4	6.7	9.1	14.4	18.6	19.0	12.6	197.8
100 years and over	0.1	0.1	0.1	0.2	0.4	0.6	0.5	618.3

Note: The official population estimates for the United States are shown for 2016; the projections use the vintage 2016 population estimate for July 1, 2016, as the base population for projecting from 2017 to 2060.

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2017 National Population Projections.

Figure 3. Percent of U.S. Population by Age 2016 – 2060 (000)

The shift from a youth-dependent to an elderly-dependent population has significant implications. The combination of youth and old-age dependency is even more revealing. In the year 2020, the total dependency ratio (as a measure of the burden on the working-age group) was 64%. This means that, in 2020, there were two dependents for every three working-age adults. This ratio reflects slower growth, a declining fertility rate, and an aging demographic.

Retirement impacts this discussion. Current economic, political, and social events cause some of those eligible for full retirement (as defined by the U.S. Social Security Administration) to delay it. While there are significant reported data points on this topic, the real impact, currently, is uncertain. It is simply mentioned here to heighten awareness and raise consciousness.

The third and final significant change is the 'graying' of America. The last of the baby boomers (born between 1946 and 1964) will turn 65 years of age by December 31, 2029. This is particularly significant because of the financial impacts on social services and safety nets currently supporting our aging population.

These three primary drivers of demographic change are already being felt in our businesses, educational institutions, lives, and homes.

The Program Considerations

The course itself was composed of three types of student immersion techniques to enhance performance in the virtual environment. The three techniques were video modules, PowerPoint slides, and videos of subject interviews.

The video modules were instructor led. They provided rich descriptive discussions of the applicable subject matter. The PowerPoint slides were attendant to each video module. The slides provided charts, tables and clarifying visual representation of the video modules. The videos of subject interviews provided first-hand accounts of encounters and extrapolations of unconscious bias. The interviews further provided the interviewed subjects the opportunity to recognize their unintended consequences of manifested behaviors. The videos served as a meaningful reflection tool for the videoed subjects, and were well received by the students.

The primary question in designing a course in demographic/diversity leadership was "how to convey something that causes pause in our response toward others?"

The course examined the reasoning behind why we may not like another, or why another may not like us. The theoretical answer resided in awareness heightening. But heightening awareness to what?

Through a faculty team, it was decided the course would focus on three basic concepts:

1. The underlying demographic shifts changing the mosaic of our nation.
2. A deeper dive on who those demographic cohorts were and their underlying implications toward heightening awareness.
3. Real-life interviews expounding on basic elements of the course content.

The course outline focused on:

- ❑ Changing U.S. demographics.
- ❑ Growing racial and ethnic diversities.
- ❑ Implications of a shrinking youth population.
- ❑ Implications of youth demographics entering college.
- ❑ College enrollment impacts, both undergraduate and graduate.
- ❑ Economic, social, and emotional significance of an aging population.
- ❑ An understanding of blind spots, bias, and unconscious bias.
- ❑ Legal implications of changing behaviors.
- ❑ Corporate and community efforts.
- ❑ Our personal responses to these many national changes.

The course required three detailed, rich, thought-provoking papers, defining cohorts, and their characteristics. The papers were designed to heightening awareness to cohorts with demographic characteristics relative to age, gender, race, ethnicity, physical or emotional challenges, sexual orientation, and several other student-focused characteristics or traits.

The final paper allowed the students to further define a cohort of importance or significance to them. This defined cohort tended to stir a student-centered highly emotional response.

For each paper delivered, the student applicably addressed each cohort in terms of the below.

- ❑ Basic demographics
  - Birth years
  - Number in cohort at peak and today
  - Age range in 2020
- ❑ Generational core values
  - Hard working?
  - Conservative?
  - Believe in hierarchy?
  - Believe in command and control management structures?
  - Work to live versus living to work?
  - Others?
- ❑ Significant life events (called seminal/formative life events - i.e., what happened in their lives that formed who they are?)
  - Wars?
  - Crises?
  - Stock market crashes?
  - 9/11?
  - Government programs (New Deal, Dust Bowl, social security established? Deaths of famous people? Etc.)
- ❑ How they were raised?
  - Nurtured?
  - Strong religious convictions for their times?
  - "Latchkey kids"?
  - Ignored?
  - Shunned?
- ❑ Cultural memorabilia of their time? What famous things are indicative of this generational cohort?
  - Mickey mouse?
  - Jukeboxes?
  - Golden era of radio?
  - Color TV?
  - Internet?
  - Apple computers?
  - iPhone?
- ❑ Heroes of this particular cohort. Who does the predominance (majority) of this generational cohort relate to as heroes?

Conclusion

At this writing, the course is nearing the conclusion of its first semester offering. The student comments have been incredibly positive. Students have been solicited for input into how to make the course better in subsequent semesters. This includes the content of the course, the assignments and type of assignments, the interviews used during the course, and the course video modules.

In the final analysis, how deep do we have to look to find something we do not like about another person, race, ethnicity, or other defining characteristic? What human emotions enter this equation: anger, jealousy, envy, fear?

The course was designed to heighten awareness of the many changes happening in and around our nation. These changes impact our society, our businesses, our educational institutions, our homes, our heads, and our hearts.

The course was also designed to help us to see others' perspectives. To understand these seemingly unrelated 'things' are, in fact, related.

These many circumstances, whether it's the changing racial and ethnic face of our nation, the delaying of marriage, home buying, and having children of our youth, the capitalization of our retiring workforce, or the cultural difficulty of accepting, are happening now, at this time, and are not going to resort back to a previous time.

These many changes are real.

Whatever the reason, whenever the time, whether it is the authors, or any one of you, we all seek to understand the depth of the question, *"Why Don't You Like Me?"*

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