Understanding and Preparing for the Emerging Diversity in the Workplace: A Case Study

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ABSTRACT

Race relations and economic development have been major concerns for many large American cities over the past several decades. Concerns over racial and ethnic diversity have also played a significant role in deliberations within major corporations looking for cities to expand or relocate operations. In this paper we examine the changing ethnic and racial makeup of the workforce in Jacksonville, Florida, and the implications these changes will have on workers in the future. As with the national case, population projections indicate that Jacksonville’s labor force will change dramatically over the next decade. These changes, coupled with ongoing race relations concerns in the community, represent potential strain on the economic growth and social cohesion for the city. Recommendations for a proactive response from city and business leaders are included.
**Introduction**

Race relations and economic development have been major concerns for many large American cities over the past several decades. Concerns over racial and ethnic diversity have also played a large role in deliberations within major corporations looking for cities to expand or relocate operations. In this paper we examine the changing ethnic and racial makeup of the workforce in Jacksonville, Florida, and the implications these changes will have on workers in the future. As with the national case, population projections indicate that Jacksonville’s labor force will change dramatically over the next decade.

Associated with dramatic demographic changes, including massive immigration and low birth rates for non-Hispanic Whites, the racial make up of the United States is experiencing an ongoing transformation resulting in an increasingly diverse workforce. Over the next several decades, the non-Hispanic White representation in the labor force in the United States is expected to drastically decline. In fact, by 2050, it is estimated that minorities will represent almost half (47 percent) of the workforce (www.dol.gov; Fullerton and Toossi, 2001).

These changes have prompted research concerning the effects of this phenomenon, and what can be done to maximize the benefits of a culturally diverse workforce while minimizing the negative effects. While much of the emphasis has been focused on the changing racial composition, diversity is usually defined more broadly as any characteristic that differentiates one person from another (Wentling, n.d.), including race, sex, age, class, education, and sexual orientation. The changing composition of the workforce demands that all kinds of people interact with one another or else risk the chance of reducing productivity (Gandz, 2001, Lauber, 1998). As both domestic and foreign companies are becoming increasingly interdependent and those with buying power are more varied, diversity is needed at every level of business in order to meet the demands of the employees, suppliers, customers, and the community (Gandz, 2001).

**Understanding Our Changing Diversity**

To better understand the changing diversity of the workplace in Jacksonville, a variety of data sources were used, including the data from the U.S. Census Bureau, the
Department of Labor Statistics, the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and BUSINESS ANALYST®, the proprietary program developed by ESRI Inc.. Information including population demographics, geographic information, and educational characteristics are included in this analysis. American FactFinder and the EEO Data Tool (both links within the U.S. Census) were used to obtain most of the information concerning race. Because the EEO Data Tool differentiated between Hispanic and non-Hispanic and the American FactFinder did not, we include non-Hispanic as necessary.

**Jacksonville’s Demographic Portrait**

Like the rest of the country, Jacksonville has experienced a dramatic change in the racial and ethnic composition of its population, particularly over the last decade. As can be seen in Figure 1, this trend is expected to continue in the future and will heavily impact the local workforce. Overall, the proportion of Whites in the general population is steadily decreasing while minority representation is increasing. In 1990, Duval County’s population was comprised mainly of non-Hispanic Whites (71 percent). In just 10 years that number dropped to 64 percent, and by 2010 non-Hispanic Whites are expected to represent about half (55 percent) of the population. Compared to the United States, the racial and ethnic composition of Duval County is changing at a more rapid rate, which only emphasizes the immediate importance of diversity management for the River City.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1990</th>
<th>2000</th>
<th>2005</th>
<th>2010 (Projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>NH White</td>
<td>71%</td>
<td>64%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH Black</td>
<td>24%</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>30%</td>
<td>32%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH Asian</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NH Other</td>
<td>3%</td>
<td>4%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
<td>.3%</td>
<td>2%</td>
<td>5%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding*
Workforce Participation

Historically the racial composition of Jacksonville’s workforce has mirrored that of the general population, with non-Hispanic Whites slightly overrepresented and minorities slightly underrepresented. In 2000, non-Hispanic Whites represented 74 percent of the civilian workforce while non-Hispanic Blacks represented 19 percent, Hispanics represented four percent, Asians represented two percent, and other minorities represented two percent. As the population of Jacksonville becomes progressively more diverse, it is expected that the workforce will undergo the same transition.

In 2000, Whites represented the largest proportion of Duval County residents of all ages; however, there were significantly larger proportions at older ages. In fact, of all Whites in Duval County, more than one-third (37 percent) were over the age of 40 and only 29 percent were under the age of 20. As can be seen in Figure 2, while the White representation is lowest in the younger age group, minority representation is greatest in the younger age group. Thus, it is the working-age population that shows the greatest increase in minority representation.
As can be seen in Figure 3, there is a significant difference in the civilian workforce in Duval County by age and race and ethnicity, similar to that of the population as a whole. While Whites have the largest representation, more than half are age 40 or older. Additionally, non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanics, and Others have a larger proportion of younger workers than non-Hispanic Whites. As older, predominantly non-Hispanic White workers begin to retire, the workforce will become more heterogeneous, and diversity management will become even more critical in the success of business.

In 2000, non-Hispanic Whites represented 64 percent of the civilian labor force but had a much larger representation in the top 25 fastest growing occupations in the area. Because the proportion of non-Hispanic White workers continues to shrink, it is expected that these occupations will go through a diversifying transition, which could have negative and/or positive consequences.

Figure 4 shows the top 25 fastest growing occupations for the Duval County and the surrounding areas and the proportional representation of non-Hispanic Whites employed in each in 2000. As can be seen in Figure 4, non-Hispanic Whites are over represented in the majority of the fastest growing occupations. Dramatic exceptions to this rule include only six occupations, most of which also represent lower wage work and have lower educational requirements.
**Education and Future Employment Opportunities**

Education is an important factor in predicting quality of life. Greater levels of educational attainment are associated with higher personal income, a more highly-skilled workplace, fewer demands on social services, higher levels of community involvement, and better decisions regarding healthcare and personal finance. A less educated workforce translates into an overall decline in wages, which produces a smaller tax base, and is detrimental to all Americans (Kelly, 2005). As the need for educated workers increases, it is necessary for Americans, particularly minorities, to increase their levels of education in order to compete globally.
1. Medical Records and Health Information Technicians ($27,350)
2. Physician Assistants ($94,400)
3. Network Systems and Data Communications Analysts ($56,080)
4. Medical Assistants and Other Healthcare Support Occupations ($23,880)
5. Dental Hygienists ($52,990)
6. Dental Assistants ($29,140)
7. Home Health Aides (Results for Nursing, Psychiatric and Home Health Aides) ($19,180)
8. Cement Masons and Concrete Finishers (Results for Cement Masons, Concrete Finishers, and Terrazzo Workers ($28,450)
9. Drywall and Ceiling Tile Installers (Results for Drywall Installers, Ceiling Tile Installers, and Tapers ($30,660)
10. Diagnostic Medical Sonographers (Results for Diagnostic Related Technologists and Technicians) ($49,300)
11. Brickmasons and Blockmasons (Results for Brickmasons, Blockmasons, and Stonemasons) ($32,780)
12. Personal Financial Advisors ($67,840)
13. Self-Enrichment Education Teachers (unable to find racial statistics for Duval County) ($24,370)
14. Database Administrators ($62,680)
15. Computer Software Engineers, Systems Software (Results for Computer Software Engineers) ($79,470)
16. Pharmacists ($90,740)
17. Farmworkers & Laborers, Crop, Nursery, & Greenhouse (Results for Miscellaneous Agricultural Workers, Including Animal Breeders) ($19,540)
18. Preschool and Kindergarten Teachers ($38,130)
19. Respiratory Therapists ($42,060)
20. Social and Human Service Assistants (Results for Miscellaneous Community and Social Service Specialists) ($26,210)
21. Public Relations Specialists ($46,260)
22. Medical and Health Service Managers ($78,860)
23. Reinforcing Iron and Rebar Workers (Results for Iron and Steel Workers) ($35,880)
24. Physical Therapists ($62,240)
25. Cost Estimators ($55,490)

Numbers in parentheses represent the median annual income for Duval County and its surrounding areas.

Source: 2000 Census Bureau
Non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics have the lowest levels of educational achievement among Americans; the same is true of residents of Jacksonville. While the proportions of students graduating from high school have increased during the last ten years, certain segments of the population are much less likely to reach this milestone – mainly Blacks and Hispanics. Figure 5 shows the percentage of the population in Duval County that has not graduated from high school. According to the 2000 Census, in Jacksonville only 14 percent of White residents 25 and older lacked a high school diploma. On the other hand, more than one-quarter of Blacks and more than one-fifth of Hispanics had never graduated from high school. While these numbers are better than the national averages, they still indicate that there is significant ground to be made up if the community is to adequately address educational inequality.

Figure 5: Percent of Duval County Residents 25+ Who Have Not Graduated From High School, 1990, 2000

Source: 1990 and 2000 Census Bureau

 Compared to the rest of the country, residents of Jacksonville 25 and older have slightly lower levels of educational attainment (2000 U.S. Census). While the level of education has increased for all segments of the population, the educational attainment
gap is widening. As can be seen in Figure 6, Non-Hispanic Whites and Asians are the most educated, while non-Hispanic Blacks, Hispanics, and Other minorities are much less likely to have a college degree.

While the real income for those with a Bachelor’s Degree or higher has steadily increased, the real income of those with a high school diploma or less has remained relatively constant or, in some cases, declined (Kelly, 2005), and as it stands right now, the fastest growing segments of the population are also the least educated. As the city and the workplace become more diverse, lower levels of education can be detrimental to the economy and the community. Not only will the workforce be less skilled, but lower levels of education are linked to lower incomes which increase dependence on social services (Kelly, 2005).

![Figure 6: Percent of Duval County Population 25+ With a Bachelor's Degree or Higher, 1990 and 2000](source: 1990 and 2000 Census Bureau)

In order for Americans to maintain a competitive edge in the knowledge-based global economy in the midst of the growing diversity in the workplace, the disparities in education must be addressed. If, as it stands now, the increasing minority representation in the labor force means an increasing number of uneducated workers, conflicts can be
anticipated. Non-Hispanic Whites continue to be among the most educated among Americans, but are representing a smaller portion of the workforce. As the need for unskilled labor decreases and knowledge-based jobs increases, it is imperative that minorities achieve higher levels of education.

While there are a variety of impediments that prevent minorities from achieving the educational attainment necessary to succeed in the increasingly knowledge-based economy, the greatest obstacle to higher education for non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics is the incompletion of high school (Kelly, 2005). Knowing this, it is essential that efforts are made to ensure that minorities graduate from high school in greater numbers. However, just focusing on high school is not enough – minorities with a high school diploma are still less likely to obtain a college degree. Some additional obstacles that disproportionately preclude non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics from attending college include funding, access, and preparation (Kelly, 2005).

**Perceptions of Workplace Diversity**

During the late 1990s and through 2003, an annual race relations survey was conducted in Jacksonville to assess the state of race relations in the community. One item within the broader survey examined perceptions of how Blacks are treated in the workplace. Throughout the survey years, approximately 80 percent of Whites believed that Blacks had equal opportunities for good jobs (see Table 2). On the other hand, less than half of the Black respondents (except in 2000) believed that they had equal opportunity. By 2003, the proportion of Blacks believing they had equal employment opportunity dropped to below 40 percent.

Coupled with the changes in the diversity of the workplace, as well as with the dramatic differences in educational achievement, the dramatic differences in perceptions of opportunity pose a particular problem for managing the changing workplace.
Table 2: Percent of “same or better” responses to opportunities for Blacks getting good jobs compared to Whites by race (1998–2003).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Survey Year</th>
<th>White</th>
<th>Black</th>
<th>B/W Gap</th>
<th>Non-Black Minority</th>
<th>N-B/W Gap</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1998</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>44%</td>
<td>35%</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1999</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>41%</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2000</td>
<td>80%</td>
<td>54%</td>
<td>26%</td>
<td>79%</td>
<td>1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2002</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>42%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>75%</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2003</td>
<td>77%</td>
<td>39%</td>
<td>38%</td>
<td>59%</td>
<td>18%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Discussion and Conclusion: The Effects and Implications of Diversity

Gandz (2001) categorizes business into three levels: service, design, and strategic. At the service level, employees from a multitude of backgrounds are necessary to better understand and serve the needs of the customers. The design level, which includes management, engineers, marketing, and operational groups, benefits from diversity by designing products that appeal to a broad range of customers. Finally, diversity at the strategic level (the highest level of business) provides knowledge of how different groups perceive the world. “Diversity in employees means diversity in talent and strategic thinking, thinking which leads to shrewd marketing practices generally and successfully targeting of specific cultural groups.”

While the increasing diversity in the workplace has been associated with lower levels of prejudice (Estlund, 2005) and increased productivity (Gandz, 2001), it is also associated with a host of negative outcomes. Thus, diversity in the workplace also comes with a caveat. Studies have shown that lower levels of satisfaction and attachment, lower performance evaluations for those who are different, and higher levels of absenteeism and turnover rates can be associated with a diverse workforce (Estlund, 2005). Some of this may be explained by the fact that heterogeneous groups are more likely to experience conflict, communication problems, and less cohesion (Williams and O'Reilly, 1998, Alpert, n.d.). However, it has been suggested that more important than
the overall composition of the workforce is the extent to which it changes over a period of time – racial integration of a workplace negatively affects turnover rates and other factors associated with job satisfaction and attachment (Sorenson, 2004).

Considering the rapid increase in minority representation that is projected, negative consequences associated with the diversification of the labor force could be detrimental to the economy. Fortunately, these negative consequences are not inevitable. To diminish racial segregation, discrimination, and the negative effects associated with a shifting workforce, diversity management is the key.

Diversity management has been described as a process ensuring the advancement of all people (Sorenson, 2004) and maintaining an environment where everyone feels welcomed, valued, and respected (Jennings, 1996). In effectively managed organizations all employees feel that hard work, motivation, and the proper qualifications will lead to advancement (Bond and Pyle, 1998), which in turn gets more people involved, improves morale, encourages and supports positive attitudes, and increases individual creativity. Effective diversity programs have several features in common. To begin with, diversity is recognized as a formal process that is manifested in laws, rules, and/or procedures. A central body (e.g. top level management) outlines the requirements and expectations for diversity, but leaves the details up to the individual departments. This not only ensures the support and participation throughout the company, but also allows for departments to tailor the program to meet the specific needs of their employees (Reichberg, 2001). Before beginning training, the purpose of diversity should be established.

Diversity training programs have been grouped into three categories: awareness-based, skills-based, and integrated. Awareness-based training aims to increase employee knowledge and sensitivity to diverse issues; skills-based training provides the necessary skills to function in a culturally diverse workplace; and integrated training combines diversity training with other concepts, such as leadership skills (Wentling). While there are a variety of methods appropriate for diversity training, studies have shown that certain techniques work better than others (See Gandz, 2001; Green et al, 2002; Reichenberg, 2001).
To successfully transition to a diverse workforce, training should include all employees and not just management. The most effective approaches include integrated training in a series of seminar-type programs that focus on employees as individuals and not as members of groups. They also emphasize that diversification is going to affect everybody, not just one segment of the company – members of minority groups need to be aware of the effects they have on the dominant group, and vice versa (Gandz, 2001). Training should be a recurring effort, and the outcome should be monitored. Diversity management programs with accountability are most successful (Bielby, 2000).

Finally, organizations need to be aware of the possibility of backlash. Not everyone favors a diverse workforce, particularly those who feel it may have a harmful effect on their own well being or status. Diversity can be interpreted in a variety of ways and can often lead to a change in the positions of power as well as a change in the expectations of employees, which in turn leads to employees fearing the outcome (Bielby, 2000).

In addition to diversity management, the low educational attainment of minorities must be addressed. Before diversity in the workplace can successfully be accomplished, inequalities in education must first be addressed. While the biggest hindrance for minorities attending college is the lack of a high school diploma, other problems include access to higher education, affordability of higher education, adequate role models emphasizing education, and overall preparation for entrance to college. As the knowledge-based workplace in Jacksonville expands, skill sets for all citizens, and particularly minorities, must be improved if conflict is to be limited.

Being aware of the obstacles that are associated with a diversifying workforce as well as successful strategies for overcoming these obstacles is key to a smoother transition. Diversity in the workforce benefits society as well. Work is where adults are most likely to have contact with someone of another race on a regular basis, and also where people of all backgrounds are “forced” to cooperate and get past their differences. It is through this contact that people are most likely to overcome their prejudices (Estlund, 2005).

Research presented here as well as a variety of studies conducted elsewhere have confirmed that economic and social disparities exist, and have for a long time, within the Jacksonville community. Current economic and educational trajectories do not appear to
be enough to alleviate these issues. In addition, already serious perceptual differences between racial groups concerning the problems faced in this community represent a potential obstacle to community based efforts aimed at addressing this inequality.

Thus, as the inevitable ethnic diversity increases over the years, particularly in the labor force, the city needs to be prepared to address continued and potential future racial conflict. In order to successfully meet the challenges this change entails, the community needs to be proactive in addressing potential issues that can arise. While there are many areas that could use development or improvement, two are of particular significance: Diversity management and increasing educational outcomes within the community.
References


