
The Emerging Diversity in the River City's Workplace

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Jacksonville Human Rights Commission



Northeast Florida Center for Community Initiatives
Department of Sociology and Anthropology
University of North Florida
Jacksonville, FL

Kearney Hoover, Research Assistant
Jeffry A. Will, Director and Associate Professor of Sociology
Tracy A. Milligan, Coordinator, Research Programs and Services
with
Charles E. Owens, Assistant Director and Professor of Criminal Justice
John Talmage, Visiting Assistant Professor of Sociology
Timothy J. Cheney, Assistant Director of Research Programs

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Introduction

As a result of dramatic demographic change, including massive immigration, low birth rates for Whites, and the retirement of the Baby Boomer generation, the United States is experiencing an ongoing transformation of its work force. In 2000, White non-Hispanic Americans comprised almost three-quarters of the labor force; by 2050 that representation is expected to fall to slightly more than half – about 53 percent (Fullerton & Toossi, 2001). As the proportion of White workers decreases, minorities in the labor force are increasing, particularly Asians and Hispanics. By 2020, minorities are expected to almost double their current representation in the workforce.

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 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), 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). Diversity also enhances marketability in an expanding global economy. 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) 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.”

Diversity in the workplace, however, also comes with a caveat. Studies have shown 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, or heterogeneous, workforce (Estlund, 2005). Some of this might be explained by the fact that heterogeneous groups are more likely to experience conflict, communication problems, and less cohesion (Alpert; Williams & O'Reilly, 1998). However, more important than the overall composition of the workforce is the extent to which it changes over a period of time (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.

Understanding Our Changing Diversity

To better understand the changing diversity in the Workplace in Jacksonville, a variety of 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. to provide current and future trends in buying patterns and wealth indicators. Information including population demographics, business activity, geographic information, and household characteristics are included in this analysis. Additional information from the U.S. Department of Commerce and a number of other government and business sources were used to supplement as needed.

Jacksonville’s Demographic Portrait: Past and Future

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 [Table 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, Jacksonville's population was comprised mainly of non-Hispanic Whites (about 73 percent). In just ten years that number had dropped to 65 percent, and by 2010 non-Hispanic Whites are only expected to represent about half of the population; the only segment of the population where the White representation is expected to grow faster than the minority representation is the 65 and older category (Kelly, 2005), those that are no longer considered part of the working-age population. Compared to the United States, the racial and ethnic composition of Jacksonville is changing at a more rapid rate, which only emphasizes the immediate importance of diversity management for the River City.

**Table 1: Population Change, 1990-2010, Duval County, Florida*
(Percent of Population)**

	1990	2000	2010 (Projected)
Non-Hispanic White	71.2	63.5	55.4
Non-Hispanic Black	24.1	27.5	32.2
Asian	1.8	2.7	3.9
Hispanic	2.6	4.1	6.3
Other	.31	2.11	2.3

Source: U.S. Census Bureau, ESRI Business Analyst
*Percentages may not add up to 100 due to rounding

Workforce Participation

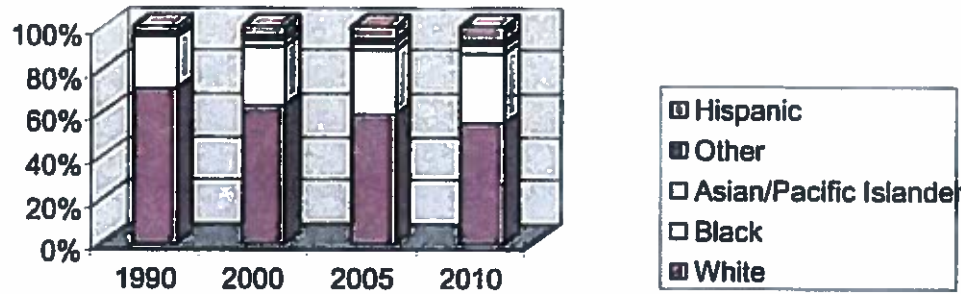
The labor force of Jacksonville in 2000 was predominantly comprised of non-Hispanic Whites, who represented 71 percent of employees. All minorities are underrepresented in the workforce, with non-Hispanic Blacks having the greatest representation (20 percent), followed by Hispanics at four percent, Asians at three percent, and Other minorities at two percent. In the next five years, Jacksonville is expected to gain more than one hundred thousand new residents and add more than 30,000 employees (ESRI Business Analyst). As the pool of employees continues to

become more diversified, minorities are expected to rapidly gain representation in the workforce.

Although there are no projections for the demographics of the labor force in Jacksonville for the year 2010, it can be assumed that it will be at least as heterogeneous as the general population. If all things were to remain the same, the overall representation of non-Hispanic Whites in the workforce could be expected to decline from 71 percent in 2000 to 62 percent in 2010; at the same time, all minority groups are expected to gain representation. Chart 1 shows the dramatic change that would take place in just ten years if only the actual numbers changed. However, as the population becomes increasingly diverse, it is the working-age population that is showing the greatest increases of minorities (Kelly, 2005), which means that their representation in the workforce will be even greater than these numbers project.

Another aspect of diversification is not just a larger representation of minorities in the workforce as a whole, but also more representation in jobs that have been chiefly held by non-Hispanic Whites. For instance, non-Hispanic Whites, who occupy 85 percent of all existing management-level positions in Jacksonville, are significantly overrepresented in this area, compared to non-Hispanic Blacks who constitute nine percent of management, Hispanics three percent, and Asians two percent. As the non-Hispanic Whites in management positions begin to retire, the pool of employees to replace them will be significantly more heterogeneous. As a result, minorities will be found in greater numbers in positions that are overwhelmingly held by non-Hispanic Whites. While minority workers can be found in every industry, they are currently concentrated in areas such as unskilled labor and service, and may not be prepared for the shift in the available jobs. Equally important is the fact that the fastest-growing segment of jobs is in "knowledge-based" fields which require higher levels of education and training.

Chart 1: Duval County Population by Race, 1990, 2000, 2005, and 2010 Estimate (Percentage)



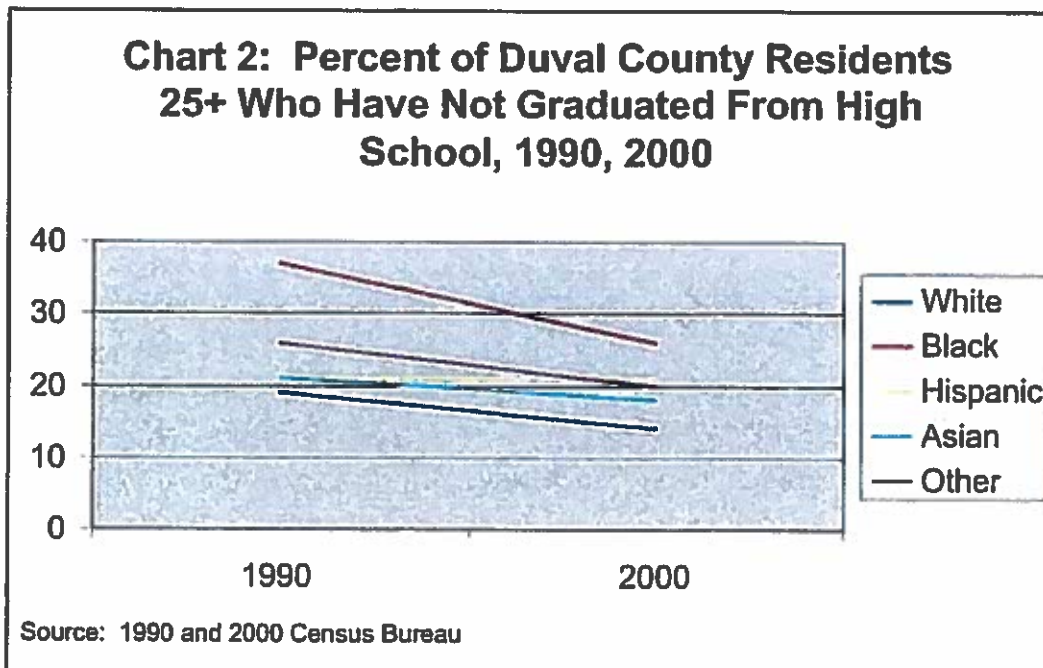
Source: 1990 & 2000: U.S. Census Bureau; 2005 & 2010: ESRI Business Analyst

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.

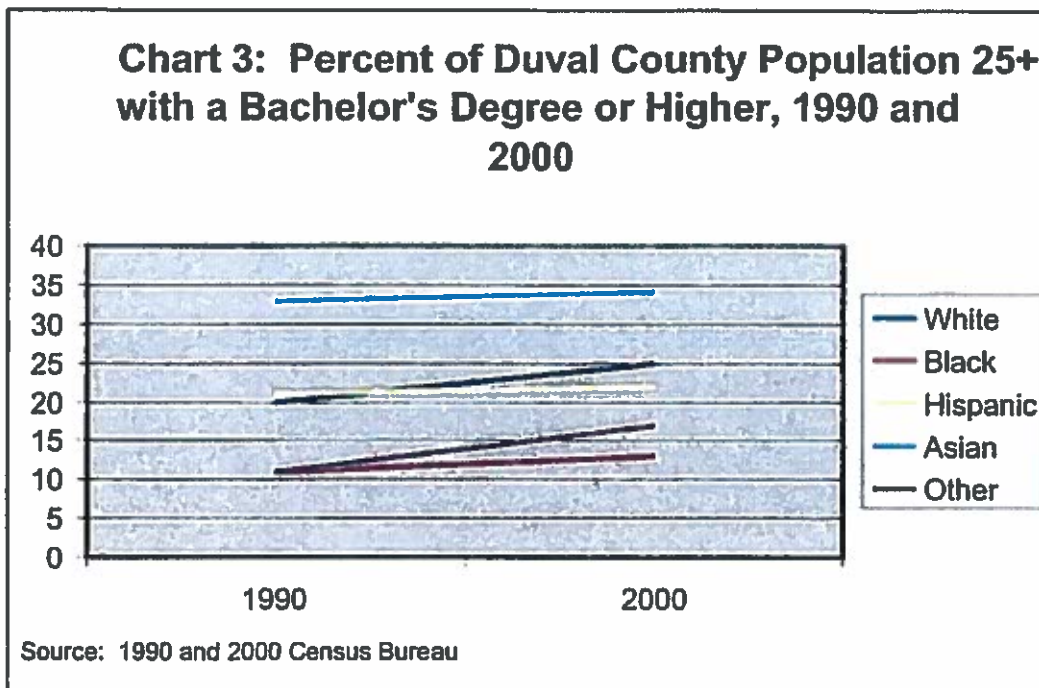
Non-Hispanic Blacks and Hispanics have the lowest levels of educational achievement among Americans; the same is true of residents of Jacksonville. While the proportions of students graduating from high school have increased during the last ten years, certain segments of the population are much less likely to reach this milestone, particularly minorities. 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 had never graduated from high school, and more than 20 percent of Hispanics lacked a diploma. While these numbers are lower than the national averages, Jacksonville also ranks lower in the proportion of the population that has received a Bachelor's Degree or higher. **Chart 2** shows the percentage of the population in Duval County that has not graduated from high school.



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. 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. **Chart 3** shows the educational attainment of residents of Duval County 25 and older who have received a Bachelor's Degree or higher. As the city becomes more diverse, along with the workplace, lower levels of educational attainment can be detrimental to the economy and the community. Not only will the workforce be less-skilled, lower

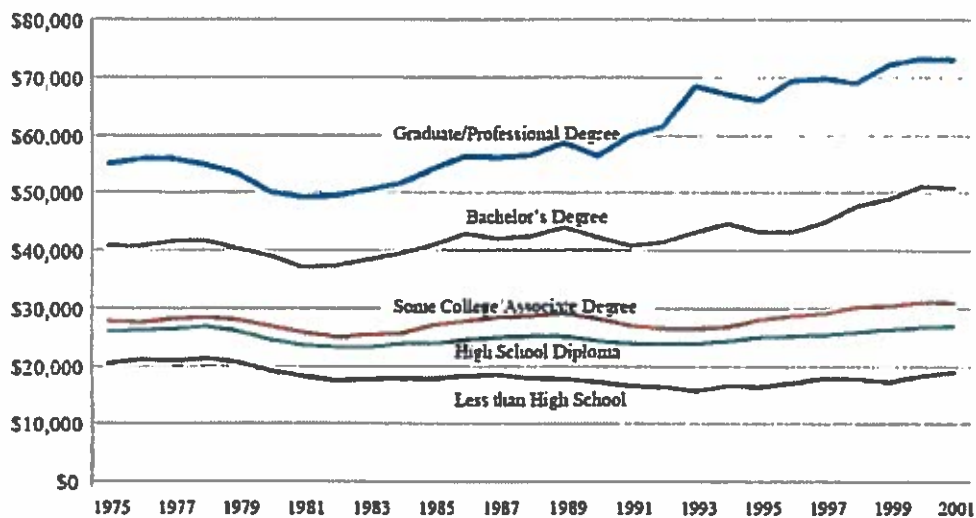
levels of education are linked to lower incomes which increase dependence on social services. There has not been much of an increase in real income in the last thirty years for those with less than a Bachelor's Degree (see Chart 4). As it stands right now, the fastest growing segments of the population are also the least educated.



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.

Chart 4

**Mean Earnings by Degree Level
(Adjusted to 2001 Dollars Using the Consumer Price Index)**



Source: U.S. Census Bureau, Bureau of Labor Statistics

Adopted from: *As America Becomes More Diverse: The Impact of State Higher Education Inequality*

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 incompleteness 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).

Discussion and Conclusion

As the racial composition of Jacksonville transitions, the work force is expected to experience a similar (if not more dramatic) transition. 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, there are two of particular significance: Diversity management and increasing educational outcomes within the community.

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 can be 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; 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

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