Introduction

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Diversity includes everyone and excludes no one. It cannot be dismissed. It is a thread woven through the fabric of society that is virtually impossible to unravel. This nation is more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse than at any point in its history. Its growth, economic stamina, and well-being pivot on the strength and knowledge of African American, Hispanic, Asian American, and Native American children and children of two or more races who constitute more than half of the nation's youth population. It is this cohort of preK–12 school-age children, also known as centennials, iGeneration, or generation Z,[1] who by and large are the least served by the nation's education system.[2] While academic excellence and equity for all students are heralded in virtually every education policy and program, the tangible outcomes are insufficient and do not offer these students the necessary tools for a good quality of life as productive adults. Teachers are the linchpin of a quality education, and a racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse teaching and learning community enhances and leverages student achievement—particularly for the underserved and under-achieving preK–12 student population.[3] Although the *millennial* cohort's demographic profile mirrors that of the increasingly diverse and challenging student population, their representation in the nation's teaching force is scarce and too often short-lived.

Informed education policy makers and administrators seem to understand the advantages of their presence, but efforts to recruit, groom, and retain millennial teachers of color are out-of-date and woefully inadequate. Try as we might, there is no silver bullet that will immediately change the

demographic profile of the nation's teaching force, but a cross-cultural understanding of motivation can do much to enhance recruitment efforts, while rewards and incentives can boost retention. Current efforts do not capture the motivations of this important segment of the population.[4]

This book is intended to disrupt the current line of inquiry that suggests that by simply increasing the number of teachers of color, equity has been established, the academic achievement gap among students from various socioeconomic backgrounds will close, and all will be well. The goal of this work is to probe beneath the surface to recognize and explain how the current generation of teachers of color may have a distinctly different mind-set than their predecessors and white peers; what habits of mind and experiences contribute to their understanding of quality teaching and student learning; what constitutes good and useful preparation and practice; and what processes and policies accommodate cultural responsiveness and allow for all students to meet their full potential.

ON THE SURFACE

The evidence is stark. There is a lack of parity in the number of teachers of color and preK–12 students from similar backgrounds. Millennials are the most racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse generation to date and in 2015 surpassed generation X to become the largest share of our nation's workforce.[5] While the proportion of African American, Hispanic, Asian, and Native American preK–12 educators varies by state and vicinity, the fact remains that teachers of color are in short supply and will remain so for the foreseeable future. It is conceivable that a significant number of preK–12 students will never have the opportunity to learn from a teacher of color.[6]

The reasons for this lack of representation are complex and varied, and have changed somewhat over time. Outlined below, using a generational lens, are factors that have largely deterred individuals of color from pursuing a teaching career as young adults.

Baby boomers: More career options for women generally and for African Americans and other minorities specifically; teaching degrees conferred coincide with the height of a national teacher surplus and a simultaneous decline in teachers' salaries; a limited number of individuals from distressed urban areas pursuing teaching degrees and returning to their home communities

Generation X: Increased focus on accountability measures that included challenging teacher assessment licensure examinations; a reframing of four-year, university-based teacher education programs to a postbaccalaureate format that required a fifth or sixth year of study[7]

Millennials: Limited financial support to pursue teaching and the tendency not to stay very long in one career or work space,[8] as well as a discomfort with the preK–12 school environment[9]

Although these are trends impacting generational cohorts, there are racial, ethnic, and cultural differences among individuals who enter teaching.[10] Despite common stereotypes such as African American teachers as hard-nosed disciplinarians or Asian Americans as the best teachers of mathematics and science,[11] there are yet-to-be-determined reasons why significant proportions of educators in different racial/ethnic groups cluster in certain secondary level areas—African Americans in special education, Hispanics in foreign languages, and Asian Americans in mathematics.[12] While these are among the nation's high-need subject areas, the reasons why individuals of color gravitate toward these disciplines need further probing.[13]

Much of the research on teacher diversity focuses on white educators and their understandings and skills when teaching students coming from backgrounds other than their own.[14] There are clues in the scant literature about teachers of color and how their knowledge and cultural experiences are often disregarded in their preparation programs and as they work in schools. Moreover, the literature on preservice teachers of color exposes the "overwhelming culture of Whiteness that pervades teacher education programs."[15] In other words, whiteness frames how preservice teachers of color are recognized and treated in their programs. There is little insight into where and how matters of educator racial/ethnic and linguistic diversity intersect with generational difference.

HABITS OF MIND

Millennials of color are a unique and valuable cohort of prospective and practicing preK–12 educators. It is difficult to precisely isolate their characteristics by the typical indicators of age or race/ethnicity. It's a challenge similar to learning how to wear bifocals: with a slight adjustment of the eyes, you can focus on either close-up or distant objects. Paul Taylor, in his

book *The Next America: Boomers, Millennials and the Looming Generational Showdown*, posits that generalizing about generations can be messy given three overlapping properties of reality: *life cycle effects*—wherein younger people may be different from older people today, but as they age may become more like them; *period effects*—where major historical events (wars, social movements, booms, busts, religious awakenings, and medical, scientific, and technological breakthroughs) affect all age groups, but the depth of impact may differ according to where people are situated in the life cycle; and *cohort effects*—where period events leave a particularly deep impression on the young, who are still forming their core values and worldviews.[16] When coupled with habits of mind that guide a person's perceptions, attitudes, and approaches to difference (including race), these realities involve a myriad of individual and social/cultural positionalities that can lead to a professional commitment to teach.[17]

Parents and grandparents of the millennial generation are by and large baby boomers, who came of age during the civil rights era and framed the 1960s counterculture. As the largest generation of the last century, they used their numbers as ordnance to forge acceptance of difference as well as free and open expression. Their efforts were rewarded in varying degrees with programs and policies that were designed to offer equal access and opportunity, especially in the education sector.

Generation X and millennial teachers of color have likely heard first-hand accounts or opinions on how individuals such as Martin Luther King Jr., César Chávez, and Russell Means and organizations like El Movimiento and Asian American Political Alliance were able to find common ground and pushed hard to change policies that discriminated against minorities and women. As Grant and Agosto state, implicitly and explicitly, the various civil rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s raised fundamental questions about teacher capacity and spoke to the necessity of embedding social justice issues within the knowledge, skills, and dispositions of teacher education programs, as well as within the scholarship and actions of teacher educators.[18]

Consequently, it is not surprising that those in the generation X cohort grew up within a newly established comfort zone, finding little to challenge and assuming that education is a human right, and that millennials recognize education as accessible and a credible tool for change generally.[19] So within the teacher education sector it is typical that millennial teachers of color tend to pursue initial teacher preparation as well as continuing professional development from nontraditional sources or alternative routes,

are more inclined than other cohorts to work in public and private charter schools with greater freedom to develop curriculum, and are passionate about moving the social justice agenda forward.[20] With few exceptions (for example the Institute for Teachers of Color—a university/school district collaborative effort), millennials work to establish nonthreatening spaces outside of the academy and schools for intellectual work that will fine-tune their teaching craft and nurture ideas.[21] In essence, they have created their own professional development communities.

It should not be unexpected that teachers of color seek asylum outside of mainstream institutions to learn and to exchange views.[22] Achinstein and Ogawa, in their book *Change(d) Agents: New Teachers of Color in Urban Schools*, use the metaphor of "double-bind" to describe the professional, cultural, and personal principles that inspire and the organizational pulls that challenge new teachers of color who attempt to engage in cultural/professional roles.[23] This notion helps to explain how millennial teachers generally, and those of color specifically, have come to work at their teaching craft and at the same time find space outside of the norm to focus on their own self and reality. The importance of learning about one's students is paralleled by the importance of learning about oneself.[24]

GOOD AND USEFUL PREPARATION

Teacher preparation programs often bear the brunt of responsibility for criticism of the performance and quality of their teacher candidates.[25] Regardless of their format or approach to delivering instruction, most programs are required through state approval agencies and accrediting bodies to embrace diversity in their student body, curriculum, and faculty. Programs that are successful typically highlight their commitment in a mission statement and use it as a marketing tool in their promotional literature. But, as Gist points out, "[I]t is the residue of institutional racism and systemic policies and practices that creates different opportunities for different groups of teachers that often go unchecked in color-blind discourse in teacher education."[26] While many of these programs have sincere intentions and often meet political expectations on paper, newly licensed teachers too frequently disappoint school and district administrators and are also disappointed once they enter the classroom.

The notion that neophytes from any profession, much less those in teaching, will be able to hit the ground running and make major accomplishments

is absurd; however, this is often the case for millennial teachers of color, who have been highly sought after and are considered exceptional by virtue of their skin color, second-language proficiency, or socioeconomic background. Yet, this sets up another type of double-bind experience for teacher candidates of color as they often then experience feelings of being marginalized or alienated, and their self-value is diminished in learning settings where the faculty unknowingly negate or ignore differences between candidates.[27] In sum, the negative assumptions in teacher education programs about diversity emanate from their fairly homogeneous student populations, the assimilationist ideology that undergirds a number of programs, the types of courses and clinical experiences that are offered, and the nature of the faculty.[28]

It is essential that faculty at all levels understand the precepts of culturally responsive pedagogy and demonstrate it in their work, but too often this is not the case.

According to Faltis and Vades, we currently have no information on what teacher educators in all roles understand about language and language diversity in schools, their level of competency for preparing students for teaching language integrated with content in linguistically diverse classrooms, or their competency for teaching preservice teachers about language uses and language demands in and across content areas.[29] Unfortunately, Faltis and Valdes' statement also has broad-based applicability in the teacher preparation sector.

POLICIES AND PRACTICE

Despite the perception that schools have been notably weak instruments for disrupting the intergenerational transmission of advantage and disadvantage,[30] millennial teachers generally and those of color in particular are inspired to create a more just society through education. Sonia Nieto recognizes the changing landscape of teaching and offers a set of qualities, dispositions, values, and sensibilities that all teachers should have: a sense of mission; solidarity with, and empathy for, their students; the courage to challenge mainstream knowledge; improvisation; and a passion for social justice.[31] In this vein millennials, even more numerous than their baby boomer predecessors but uniquely skilled and equipped with technology, seize many opportunities to tackle policy issues that confront them on a daily basis.

The issues of underresourced schools and facilities, limited time for professional development, and students who bring a multitude of issues from home and community that have confounded or impacted teachers' work are similar for teachers of recent generations. But it appears that younger teachers have entered the profession during a time when these issues are commonly understood. Millennials tend to accept them as part and parcel of the job. On the other hand, their more seasoned colleagues perceive issues like standards-based reform as a threat to their authority, discretion, and prior identity.[32]

This millennial generation is described as apolitical and driven by "people issues" more than by political platforms. They have also been viewed as polarized by their backgrounds. A study of black and Latino/a millennial college students indicates that they are politically engaged through modern activist movements and that personal background, prior political activism, and psychosocial factors predict such involvement. Using the Black Lives Matter movement and Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) as context, Hope and Keels find that participation in either of these movements is not a solitary political experience, but is accompanied by participation in various types of political activism, including protests, boycotts, and campaign donations.[33] Millennial teachers of color often choose to frame their ideas and actions outside of the academy and their workplaces as a way to check systemic policies and practices that create different opportunities for different groups of teachers. Once they are firm in their convictions, they will move deliberately into meaningful action. Since millennials, as well as the generation X cohort, are more inclined than their baby boomer predecessors to venture into different professions, they are often fearless about making noise and moving on to a new career space.

OVERVIEW

This volume begins with a first-person introduction to four millennial teachers, leading us into the focus of this work. In the chapter "Stagger Lee: Millennial Teachers' Perspectives, Politics, and Prose," the reader gets to know Sarah Ishmael, Adam T. Kuranishi, Genesis A. Chavez, and Lindsay A. Miller as I did when chatting about how they feel concerning issues of teacher diversity; about the things that their professors, school colleagues, and the authors in this book got right or wrong; and about the primary experiences

that help frame their approach to teaching. Understanding where millennials are situated within the nation's population provides a necessary context for each of the following chapters. In chapter 2, "Millennials, Generation Xers, and Boomers—A Demographic Overview," Janice Hamilton Outtz and Marcus J. Coleman describe how the very diverse millennial cohort is similar to its predecessors but in many ways different in its commitment to the profession. The data explains why some call them the most threatening and exciting generation since the baby boomers.

Chapter 3, "Understanding 'Me' Within 'Generation Me': The Meaning Perspectives Held Toward and by Millennial Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Teachers," from Socorro G. Herrera and Amanda R. Morales, reveals a number of key but typically overlooked socioeconomic and cultural factors that encourage or discourage millennials of color as they prepare for and enter their teaching careers. In chapter 4, "Millennial Teachers of Color and Their Quest for Community," Hollee R. Freeman broadens our understanding of how teachers of color use this tool to enhance and advance student learning and at the same time fulfill their own social justice goals.

As Keith C. Catone and Dulari Tahbildar offer in chapter 5, "Ushering in a New Era of Teacher Activism: Beyond Hashtags, Building Hope," activism for social justice, or any cause, has many challenging facets. How millennial educators of color work to advance their agenda within schools is guided not so much from their formal preparation, but rather from their personal experiences in schools and communities. Similarly, in chapter 6, "Black Preservice Teachers on Race and Racism in the Millennial Era: Considerations for Teacher Education," Keffrelyn D. Brown and Angela M. Ward posit that African American teachers possess an authentic understanding of bigotry from family peers and experiences external to the academy.

There are scores of initiatives designed to recruit millennial teachers of color into the nation's preK–12 schools, but as Sabrina Hope King explains in chapter 7, "Advancing the Practices of Millennial Teachers of Color with the EquityEd Professional Learning Framework," the work is not complete once they enter the classroom. If we hope to retain these bright, socially conscious young educators, then professional development and other opportunities must be tailored to engage them.

States and school districts have at their disposal federal and other resources for quality teacher recruitment and professional development. In chapter 8, "Removing Barriers to the Recruitment and Retention of Millennial Teachers of Color," Zollie Stevenson Jr. advises that decision makers should

consider more closely how these funds are distributed on behalf of a more racially, ethnically, and linguistically diverse corps of preK–12 teachers.

Many of the thoughts and recommendations presented in this volume are viable, but must be considered within the political landscape of the nation. In the final chapter, "The Double-Edged Sword of Education Policy Trends," Michael Hansen provides insights into a number of contemporary issues that either advance or impede progress in establishing a high-quality teaching and learning community that includes everyone—and excludes no one.