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## A Book Review of The Nexus of Teaching and Demographics: Context and Connections from Colonial Times to Today

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### Abstract

See Book Review.

### Keywords

american education, systemic change, foundation of education, historical context

### Author Bio

Dr. Carlson is an assistant professor of Leadership and Learning in Minnesota State University Moorhead. Her research interests include teacher effectiveness and online pedagogies.

The Nexus of Teaching and Demographics: Context and Connections

from Colonial Times to Today

By: Boyd Bradbury

A Book Review

By: Kristen Carlson, Ed.D.

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Biography: Dr. Carlson is an assistant professor of Leadership and Learning in Minnesota State University Moorhead. Her research interests include teacher effectiveness and online pedagogies.

## Introduction

The history of American education is relevant today in helping teachers, administrative leaders, teacher educators, and policymakers re-envision the schools of tomorrow. *The Nexus of Teaching and Demographics: Context and Connections from Colonial Times Today* (2021) presents a straightforward approach to addressing the everchanging educational landscape that is elementary and secondary education. Within the book, topics addressed include the history and foundation for public education in America, involuntary minorities within the educational context, the contrast between public school student and teacher demographics, the recruitment, retention, and exodus of teachers from the field, and the intersect of best practices, resilience, pedagogical dissonance, and demographics. Dr. Boyd L. Bradbury's book examines America's past with a lens that allows the reader to look to the future with a plausible, practical approach for educational improvements.

## Author's Approach

Throughout the text, Bradbury writes clearly and cohesively with an academic tone. A strong benefit to Bradbury's approach is that there is just-enough information provided to help the reader understand the context, but not an overwhelming amount of legal jargon, public policy, or dates to remember. The book's chapters are scaffolded well; beginning with a history of education in the United States and building up to the intersection of "how demographics, pedagogical dissonance and resilience, and best practices meet" (p. xix). Bradbury writes from a systemic viewpoint making the book worthwhile to anyone involved in education that is interested in learning more about the shifts needed to improve the school system as we know it to create more inclusivity for all students. When applicable in a chapter, Bradbury does venture down avenues to address best practices for the elementary and secondary classrooms and at times

shares perspective from a teacher educator viewpoint. These sections pull the reader into a classroom and leave them thinking about the changes that one person, one school, and one state can make to improve our students' lives. In the book, Bradbury does well to refrain from bias regarding any policy decisions regarding education that have been made, but he does succinctly inform the reader of the policy along with the improvements or hinderances said policy has created for on-the-job educators. The entire book is written to be very informative. The modern lens' of politics, technology, and diversity and equity are all addressed.

### **Logic and Readability**

While the first three chapters are heavy on historical foundations of education in the United States, the book remains easy to follow because of Bradbury's ability to write history as a story. Analogies are embedded throughout the book to help the reader understand historical events as they relate to education. This is especially helpful for the novice teacher and/or teacher candidate whom may be reading the book. For example, Bradbury explains the impacts for elementary and secondary students that assimilation and cultural pluralism has on their lives utilizing an example of V8 juice and a tossed salad.

### **Academic Contribution**

In Bradbury's book, a strong foundation of knowledge is built with actionable information for use in policy making and classroom use in the future. Throughout the book, Bradbury utilizes a range of primary sources from U.S. Department of Education policies and reports to journal articles and dissertations to help share the storying of education's changing demographics. Additionally, Bradbury thoroughly describes key terminology prior to delving into the impacts and/or relationship the term has in the field of education. For example, historical trauma is addressed in chapter three to describe the complex trauma that impacts American

Indian identity within the school system. One critique would be that Bradbury could take the issue of historical trauma a step further to identify actionable plans for addressing the trauma within the curriculum. Another example of Bradbury's description of terminology is when he informs the reader of how historically America went about "training teachers for Black schools to educate freed slaves" (p.43). In this example, Bradbury does state that there is a lack of teachers of color in our schools but would better add to the literature by addressing specific components of education's past that will help make change for today and tomorrow. The book does contribute to the academic field as a great introduction to America's historical foundation in education and how education is changing based on today's demographics.

### **Conclusion**

The book, *The Nexus of Teaching and Demographics: Context and Connections from Colonial Times Today*, clearly utilizes the historical past in American education to make suggestions for improving the future of education. Bradbury utilizes analogies and writes with a active voice to engage the reader and allow them to envision a better educational system for our future children. This book is scaffolded to allow novice, educational history readers to stay engaged with the content without feeling overwhelmed with information. It is also a useful reference for anyone who has not stayed current with the demographics of our current school systems. Overall, this book was informative, easy to read, and useful for anyone in the field of education who is looking to make change systemically for the betterment of tomorrow's children.