



Louis E.V. Nevaer

# Managing Hispanic and Latino Employees

A Guide to Hiring, Training, Motivating,  
Supervising, and Supporting the Fastest Growing  
Workforce Group

An Excerpt From

***Managing Hispanic and Latino Employees:  
A Guide to Hiring, Training, Motivating, Supervising, and  
Supporting the Fastest Growing Workforce Group***

by Louis E.V. Nevaer  
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# A Note on the Nomenclature

Many years later, as he faced the firing squad, Colonel Aureliano Buendia was to remember that distant afternoon when his father took him to discover ice. At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and in order to indicate them it was necessary to point.

*Gabriel García Márquez*  
*One Hundred Years of Solitude*

Since time immemorial people have tried to understand the universe in which they live. This involves, first, giving names to things, and, second, grouping things to make sense of relationships. At times this can be innocuous: we can divide people into those who are left-handed and those who are right-handed, mindful that there are some who are ambidextrous. A more obvious way to categorize humanity is by gender: male and female. Then again, it is prudent to bear in mind the transgender: those among us who are of one sex but identify with the opposite gender, or those who have the anatomical features of both sexes, but identify with one specific sex. There are also ways of looking at the world that can be charming in their innocence: anthropologists, for instance, classify societies based on the principal carbohydrate in their diets. The world, to them, consists of societies that eat corn (found in the New World), or consume

rice (found on the western shores of the Pacific Ocean or the northern shores of the Indian Ocean), or those that subsist on wheat (Europe, the Mideast, and most of Africa).

In the United States, “identity politics,” the natural outgrowth of the ideas championed by the nineteenth-century philosopher and misanthrope Herbert Spencer, rule the day: if Darwin sought to classify every creature into scientific families of genus and species, Spencer insisted that humans also be classified into groups that defined and constricted through orders and disorders. “Hispanic” is as much a product of Social Darwinism as is “Latino.”

Terms evolve over time, of course, and nomenclature to describe those in the United States who are immigrants from Latin America, of Spanish ancestry or the descendants of these groups is no different. “Spanish Americans,” used widely in the nineteenth century, gave way to “Spanish-speakers” and “Spanish-surnamed” for most of the twentieth century before “Hispanic” was introduced officially in 1970 by the Nixon administration, out of respect for the fact that the Spanish-speaking world, after nine years of deliberations, adopted, in 1935, the word “Hispanidad” as a universal affirmation of identity, which is commemorated on the “Día de la Hispanidad,” an international holiday celebrated each fall.

“Latino,” which, by using the Spanish word for “Latin,” can be viewed as inherently condescending—would we call Americans of Italian ancestry “Italianos” or those of French heritage “Français”?<sup>1</sup>—emerged as a politically correct term in the 1990s. It has, in fact, replaced an array of words used to describe *Hispanics born in the United States*: Chicano and Mexican American, for instance, are now seldom used.<sup>2</sup> The same is true, of course, of other groups who have seen terms evolve over time: one can empathize with the staff of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People and the United Negro College Fund: who calls people of color “colored people,” and who calls blacks “Negros” this century? Those organizations, unfortunately, are stuck with terms that have fallen into disuse.

A simple way of remembering the difference is this: *though every Latino is a Hispanic, not every Hispanic is a Latino*. Hispanic is the more inclusive term.

Of course, many people prefer to be identified by nationalities: Puerto Ricans like to be called Puerto Rican, and Cuban Americans prefer almost always to call themselves “Cuban.” Some new arrivals eschew a “Mexican” identity for their ethnic origins: Maya immigrants from Chiapas and Zapotec immigrants from Oaxaca see themselves preferably as “Maya” or “Zapotec” first; then, as a second choice, they embrace “Mexican.”

For the purposes of this book, these are the definitions used:

**Hispanic:** a person of Latin American or Iberian ancestry, fluent in Spanish. It is primarily used along the Eastern seaboard, and favored by those of Caribbean and South American ancestry or origin. English or Spanish can be their “native” language.

**Latino:** a U.S.-born Hispanic who is not fluent in Spanish and is engaged in social empowerment through Identity Politics. “Latino” is principally used west of the Mississippi, where it has displaced “Chicano” and “Mexican American.” English is probably their “native” language. “Empowerment” refers to increasing the political, social, and spiritual strength of an individual or a community, and it is associated with the development of confidence of that individual or community in their own abilities.

**Latin:** an abbreviation for “Latin American,” or “Latinoamericano” in Spanish (written as one word), a Latin is a person who was born in Latin America and migrated to the United States. Regardless of his or her immigration status, a Latin is a foreign-born worker for whom English is a “foreign” language and who lacks the cultural fluency taken for granted by those born and raised in the United States. Spanish, Portuguese, or an indigenous language is their “native” language.

These words are not interchangeable, notwithstanding what Hispanic and Latino groups might want to mislead themselves into thinking. The following sentence is true: Hispanic culture had a huge impact on Aztec society. The following sentence is false: Latino culture had a huge impact on Aztec society. For marketing and political reasons, however, the terms are often used interchangeably. The “National Association of Hispanic Journalists,” for instance, uses “Increasing the influence of Latinos in U.S. newsrooms” as a slogan. Shouldn’t that be the job of the National Association of *Latino*

Journalists? The otherwise sensible Pew Hispanic Center—a Washington, D.C.-based think tank that provides information and conducts research on issues, perceptions, and trends affecting the Hispanics in the United States—joining the linguistic fray, uses “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably just as one finds the random corporate use of “his” and “her” to create the appearance of gender-neutrality.<sup>3</sup> The Pew Hispanic Center is not only intellectually lazy by resorting to such a cop-out, but awkwardness results in almost every report they issue, because words are consistently used incorrectly.

There is something to be said for good form, with market-based caveats. If you were to ask me, I’d prefer that you’d say, “You haven’t seen anything yet.” But if you tell me that, for marketing purposes, you settled on the slogan “You ain’t seen nothin’ yet,” I would understand your reasoning: it may not be grammatically correct, but it ain’t gonna kill me to put up with slang.

It should also be pointed out that there are classist connotations to these terms. In the same way that the phrases “blue collar” and “white collar” telegraph certain generalizations about individuals, so do the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic.” It’s possible to criticize the use of code words to convey certain attributes, but, factually, a blue-collar worker is more likely to bowl and a white-collar employee is more inclined to play golf. Such is the way of the world. In this manner, a “Latino,” for the most part, is likely to be working class, did not graduate from college, a Democrat, would like to be a member of a union, is paid by the hour, and is not fully assimilated into the mainstream of American life. A “Hispanic,” on the other hand, is middle class, a college graduate, inclined to vote Republican, a salaried (professional or management) employee, and more likely than not to be acculturated to American society. Finally, many find the use of “Latino” when speaking in English to be both patronizing and a linguistic abomination, but it’s a crowd-pleaser, particularly among the politically active.

This all said, Hispanics, Latinos, and Latins are distinct individuals, who, at times, loathe one another, and, on occasion, seethe when grouped together. Say “Latino” to the wrong person, and an



unintended insult results. Say “Hispanic” to the wrong person, and you will be dismissed as being “prejudiced.” It is important to remember that “Hispanic” and “Latino” can each be considered a pejorative, depending on the listener’s sensibilities. What can be said with certainty is that, intellectually, “Latino,” used when speaking in English, is the *name* given to the *children of the Hispanic diaspora in the United States*. For now, in terms of nomenclature, it remains challenging, and there are no absolute rules; terminology is still evolving as this century unfolds. With this caveat, be forewarned: terms used in this book mean distinct things, and please refer to this Note for clarification.

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# Introduction

Once every century a singular event transforms the American workforce. In the nineteenth century, industrialization gave rise to the cities becoming the nation's economic engines, resulting in waves of migration from the countryside into urban centers. Farmers became factory workers, and in the process, America's rural character became an urban one. The social and cultural consequences of this transformation gave rise to new sociological and cultural forces: "bourgeoisie" and "proletariat" entered academia, and the benign egalitarianism of a rural existence was replaced by the more defined distinctions between social class and economic income. It was in cities where the consumption of the "haves" became more conspicuous to the "have-nots," who were relegated to the urban squalor of tenements, ethnic ghettos, and immigrant enclaves on the wrong side of the tracks.

In the twentieth century, the defining event was the result of the nation's response to the Second World War. As the nation mobilized to meet military challenges in Europe and the Pacific, the labor market was depleted of able-bodied men who enlisted in the armed forces, and labor shortages were filled by women. American women entering the workforce proved to be a dramatic, sustained, and irreversible social and cultural phenomenon. Whereas women comprised only 18% of the labor market in 1900—primarily as schoolteachers, secretaries, waitresses, nurses, and other "support" professions—by the time the war ended, they would hold 28% of all jobs in the country.<sup>5</sup> In the second half of the twentieth century, women would continue to increase their presence in the American labor force, holding 42.5% of all jobs by 1980.<sup>6</sup> Since then, depending on how the labor market is defined and how workers are counted by age group, women comprise 46–51% of all workers.<sup>7</sup> In consequence, gender equality, "glass ceilings," affirmative action, mentoring programs, and

discussions of sexism in the workplace have all been issues that have defined the business culture throughout the American economy for more than half a century. Women, as the twentieth century drew to a close, held 39.3% of all executive, administrative, and managerial jobs in the nation.<sup>8</sup>

In the current century, it is not difficult to see the seismic demographic changes that are fast transforming the American workforce: the United States has become a bilingual consumer economy, where “Oprima 2 para español” almost always follows “Press 1 for English,” on virtually every customer service telephone number. No law requires that companies reach out to their customers, vendors, and the public by providing Spanish-language operators, but they do: it is *economics*—the natural interplay of market forces as celebrated by Adam Smith—that is driving the spread of Spanish in the United States. This was first anticipated by Adam Smith. “It is not from the benevolence of the butcher, the brewer, or the baker that we expect our dinner, but from their regard to their self-interest,” he wrote in *The Wealth of Nations*. “We address ourselves, not to their humanity, but to their self-love, and never talk to them of our necessities, but of their advantages.” Spanish is how corporate America seeks to build market share and establish a competitive advantage. Recruiting Hispanic employees is how this is most efficiently achieved.

To be sure, the passage of the North American Free Trade Agreement, or NAFTA, accelerated the integration of the economies of the United States, Canada, and Mexico. This internationalization fueled trade, tourism, and migration among the three nations, and strengthened the spread of Spanish throughout the U.S. economy. Suddenly product labels had to be bilingual because a manufacturer in Chicago was selling to stores in New York and Mexico City. Of greater consequence, a shopper walking into a store in Miami or Los Angeles was more likely to be more fluent in Spanish than in English than in decades past. At the same time, local and state government realized that to fulfill their mandates, they had to address linguistic challenges: a child entering school for the first time who spoke little English, a 911 operator taking an emergency call from a Spanish-speaking resident, a public health outreach coordinator

challenged by the need to provide medical information in Spanish to greater numbers of people.

The proliferation of Spanish reflects fundamental demographic changes that are reshaping the nation's workforce. This is occurring at a time when Hispanic ascendance in the workforce reflects several fundamental trends:

1. As Baby Boomers age, non-Hispanic Whites are retiring in greater numbers, leaving the workplace entirely.
2. For unknown reasons, the fertility rate of non-Hispanic Whites is falling; fertility rates among African Americans hover around the natural "replacement" level; and fertility rates among Hispanics continue to increase.
3. Hispanics are predominantly working age, meaning that they are overrepresented in the labor market.
4. These overlapping trends—the emergence of a bilingual consumer economy in the United States and the ascendance of Hispanics in the labor force—are creating an unprecedented challenge for American employers.

That sweeping demographic changes are transforming America's workforce is undeniable.

Consider two facts:

- Hispanics in 2005 comprised 14% of the nation's population, but constituted 22% of workers.<sup>9</sup> *That Hispanics are almost a decade younger than the population at large means that Hispanics, Latinos, and Latins, disproportionately, are of working age, either leaving college and entering the workforce, or well on their way to establishing their careers; and*
- Hispanics in 2050 will represent 32% of the nation's population, but will comprise 55% of workers. *As America's baby boomers and Generation X-ers mature and retire, Hispanics and Latinos, native born and Latin immigrant alike, will dominate the workforce.*<sup>10</sup>

These demographic changes are sweeping in scope, but they are no surprise to any manager, supervisor, or administrator who has seen the rapid changes in candidates in recent years. The closest phenomenon in *living memory* remains the entry of women in the workforce after World War II: women today constitute almost, if not, half of all workers currently employed. The obstacles this continues to pose for business—“glass ceilings,” and gender equality on governing boards, directorships, and CEO suites—demonstrate both the power of demographics, and the need to manage these changes effectively, and how the repercussions of demographic changes reverberate across the decades.

American employers, for the most part, have successfully incorporated women into their workforces, and the lessons learned can be applied to the successful integration of Hispanics now. In fact, Hispanics are fast expanding throughout the American workforce at a time when there is an emerging literature documenting how proper management of the Hispanic employee impacts directly an organization’s performance.

*Hispanics today are what women were to management in the 1950s: a challenge that must be met because it is a reality that cannot be ignored.*

This book gives managers, supervisors, and other administrators the knowledge and tools necessary to deal successfully with this century’s defining demographic shift that will transform the American workplace in the decades to come. Make no mistake: as irreversible as the ascendance of women over the past half century has been, it is now an undeniable reality that the “Hispanization” of the U.S. labor force will transform the nature, character, and culture of the American workplace.

The ascent of Hispanics as a presence in the workforce, and the specific challenges the Hispanic, Latino, and Latin employee poses to managers, stands to be the defining labor trend in the United States this century.

Managers confront obstacles that arise from the ascendance of Hispanics in the workplace, and from the characteristics of the mosaic components that constitute these employees. For Nonexempt

employees, as such workers are defined under federal law, managers have specific tasks: how can managers assume their proper role in the corporate effort to increase productivity and profits? What does the explosion of Hispanics in the workforce mean? What are the characteristics of the Hispanic employee that require dedicated strategies from managers? How does America's increasingly bilingual consumer economy impact and inform the working environment? Is the stereotype of the Hispanic worker as being "docile" a cultural misunderstanding of Hispanic "loyalty" and "patience"?

For Exempt employees, as such personnel are defined under federal law, managers additionally confront other issues: Is the stellar performance achieved by Hispanic women with graduate degrees indicative of the how Hispanics in general will transform corporate America's productivity in the age of globalization? How can managers cultivate the Hispanic employee for the benefit of both employee and the organization as this century unfolds?

How can employees who are members of the Hispanic diaspora, an "out-group" in American society, acculturate and move closer to being part of the "in-group" of mainstream American life? To this end, the discussion presented in this book is divided into three sections.

Part I is "The Hispanic Employee and American Demographics." The impact Hispanics are having on the nation's demographics—and the disproportionate impact on the labor market—is discussed. This section addresses the fact that there is now a bilingual, bicultural workforce transforming the American workplace. The chapters in Part I introduce the reader to the demographic changes that are transforming the American workforce. The ascendance of Hispanics in the labor market is a seismic event, fundamentally changing the workplace and the nature of management-labor relations. Who are the Hispanics, what do they expect from their supervisors, and how do they see their obligations to their colleagues, co-workers, and employers? Chapter 1, "The Changed American Workforce," examines the demographics transforming the American workplace. Chapter 2, "Who Is the Hispanic Employee?" explores the mosaic of peoples and cultures that

constitute the Hispanic diaspora in the United States. Although they share the same fundamental cultural, social, historical, and linguistic “DNA,” there is tremendous variation within the “Hispanic” identity. Chapter 3, “Management and the Hispanic Outlook,” examines the survival of worldview and philosophies of the continent’s First Peoples in Hispanic society, and how the perspectives of Native American sensibilities inform how Hispanics, Latinos, and Latins see the world around them, the society in which they live, and their approach to life and work.

Part II is “The Strategies and Skills for Supervising Nonexempt Hispanic Employees.” Most Hispanics in the United States are hourly employees. These chapters explore their cultural, social, and other characteristics. Together, the section examines the strategies and skills for cultivating and empowering nonexempt Hispanic employees, whether these are found in factories, restaurants, hotels, agricultural production, retail operations, and so on. Throughout this section the winning strategies employed by successful firms are discussed and developed. Chapter 4, “Finding, Attracting, and Selecting the Best Hispanic Candidates,” discusses successful strategies for recruiting Hispanic, Latino, and Latin candidates, which, because of their language skills, remain in demand even in periods of economic contraction, simply because the American economy continues to evolve into a more fully bilingual consumer economy. Chapter 5, “How to Evaluate the Hispanic Employee’s Performance and Conduct,” offers insights on better strategies for measuring and appraising the work of members of the Hispanic diaspora, which is critical because traditional performance review systems are under scrutiny and are falling into disfavor. The final chapter in this section is Chapter 6, “Hispanics, Managers, and Labor Relations.” This chapter compares and contrasts how the collectivistic tradition of Hispanic society affects not only how exempt employees, but also how these cultural values are fueling the resurgence of unions, with nonexempt Hispanic, Latino, and Latin employees swelling union membership. In a value-neutral discussion, more successful strategies for labor relations are presented.

The final section is Part III, “The Hispanic Employee and the Organization’s Future.” From Miami to New York, Houston to Chicago, Hispanic executives are coming into their own, and their needs reflect the cultural, social, and business skills that they bring to the table. These chapters focus on the career needs of Hispanic, Latino, and Latin employees, discussing the Hispanic, Latino, and Latin employee in management positions. Hispanics as managers and executives are among the fastest growing segment throughout corporate America. Chapter 7, “How to Keep Hispanic Nonexempt Employees Challenged and Satisfied in the Workplace,” offers strategies for nurturing the majority of Hispanic, Latino, and Latin workers, who are nonexempt employees. Chapter 8, “Nurturing the Hispanic Exempt Professional,” examines how mentoring is the single most important tool for developing, cultivating, and nurturing Hispanic, Latino, and Latin employees for middle- and upper-management positions in ways that speak to their cultural traditions and are consistent with the values of the Hispanic diaspora. Chapter 9, “Training and Development: How Successful Managers Nurture their Hispanic Workforce,” approaches training from a culturally aware approach, where policies make “sense” to members of the Hispanic diaspora. The last chapter, Chapter 10, “Empowering the Hispanic Employee and an Organization’s Future,” examines medium- and long-term strategies for easing the transition to the demographic inevitability of twenty-first century America: a Hispanic plurality in the American workplace.

A Conclusion summarizes the discussion presented with a broad overview of the implications for the changed American labor market of the ascendance of Hispanic culture in the United States.



# The Hispanic Employee and American Demographics

For reasons that are not well understood, fertility rates among non-Hispanic women in countries spread across the northern hemisphere are dropping. From Italy to Russia to the United States, these demographic crises threaten the nature and character of various nation-states. Italy, for instance, has the lowest fertility rate in the world. The United Nations reports that fertility among Italian women dropped from 2.5 children per woman between 1960 and 1970, to 1.2 today. As a result, the population of Italy is expected to decline by 28%, from 57.3 million in 1995 to 41.2 million by 2050.<sup>1</sup> The consequences for Italy are sweeping: “Venice is on course to become a city virtually without residents within the next 30 years, turning it into a sort of Disneyland—teeming with holidaymakers but devoid of inhabitants,” John Hooper reported in the London newspaper *The Guardian*. “The register of residents, tallied every 10 years, shows that the population of Venice proper has almost halved—from 121,000 to 62,000—since the great flood of 1966.”<sup>2</sup>

In Russia, the situation is not as grave, but it is still alarming. Russia’s population peaked in the early 1990s (at the time of the end of the Soviet Union) with about 148 million people in the country. Today, Russia’s population is approximately 143 million. The U.S. Census Bureau estimates that Russia’s population will decline from the current number to a mere 111 million by 2050, a loss of an additional 30 million people, and a decrease of more than 20%. Russia loses more than 700,000 people annually, roughly the equivalent of

losing the population of San Francisco, California, every year. For Russian leaders, this demographic reality is unprecedented in scope. Russian leader Vladimir Putin has characterized this problem as “[t]he most acute problem of contemporary Russia. It is a crisis, insofar as the integrity and future of that nation-state is threatened.”<sup>3</sup>

This time, come tomorrow, there will be fewer Italians and Russians in the world than there are today.

In the United States there is a similar demographic phenomenon unfolding. “Non-Hispanic White women and Asian women 40 to 44 years old had fertility levels below the replacement level (1.8 and 1.7 births per woman, respectively),” the Census Bureau reported in August 2008. “The fertility of Black women aged 40 to 44 (2.0 births per woman) did not differ statistically from the natural replacement level.”<sup>4</sup> The number of non-Hispanic whites in the United States will begin to decline, while the African American population will remain more or less unchanged, within a decade. It is the *higher fertility rates among U.S. Latinos and Latin immigrants to the United States*, in fact, that account for the *population growth* in the United States: “Hispanic women aged 40 to 44 had an average of 2.3 births and were the only group that exceeded the fertility level required for natural replacement of the U.S. population (about 2.1 births per woman),” the Census Bureau report continues.<sup>5</sup> It is clear that U.S.-born Hispanics are the principal catalyst for internal population growth, and were Hispanics *removed from the demographic equation*, the United States would, like Italy and Russia at present, be confronting the specter of *depopulation*, beginning in 2020.<sup>6</sup>

# The Changed American Workforce

The demographic role of Hispanics becomes more apparent when one considers that immigrants from Latin America account for almost 60% of all legal immigrants. In addition, there are an estimated 10–12 million people in the United States who have entered, or remained, in the country in violation of existing immigration laws. Most of these illegal aliens are Latin American. That the majority of these individuals—legal and illegal immigrants alike—are actively employed further strengthens the importance of Latins in sustaining economic growth, and the role of Hispanics as members of the American workforce.

These facts represent a demographic sea change affecting the American workplace in unprecedented ways. It is important to recall that as recently as 1990, the Census Bureau believed that Hispanics would not overtake African Americans to become the nation's largest minority until 2020. It occurred fully *two decades* sooner than experts estimated. When it happened, earlier this decade, it transformed the United States into the fastest-growing *Spanish*-speaking nation in the world, and it made front-page headlines around the world. "Hispanics have edged past blacks as the nation's largest minority group, new figures released today by the Census Bureau showed. The Hispanic population in the United States is now roughly 37 million, while blacks number about 36.2 million," Lynette Clemetson wrote in the nation's newspaper of record, the *New York Times*, in January 2003, documenting the federal government's official announcement of the seismic demographic shifts that defined the character of the United States in the first decade of the twenty-first century.<sup>1</sup>

Every year since then the Census Bureau, along with other federal agencies, has continued to document the structural changes in

the American workforce, changes that herald the ascendance of Hispanics—and the Hispanic employee—in ways that a mere generation ago were unimaginable.

Consider a few tantalizing facts:

- Hispanics are almost a decade younger (9.5 years) than the general population;
- More than a third of Hispanics are younger than 18 years old;
- Fertility rates of Hispanics are higher than the natural replacement level;
- More than 34 million Mexicans have a legal claim of some kind to seek to emigrate to the United States, which will be discussed later in the chapter<sup>2</sup>;
- Hispanic women who attain graduate degrees earn 15% more than their non-Hispanic counterparts; and
- In September 2008 the United States replaced Spain as the second-largest Spanish-speaking nation in the world; only Mexico has more Spanish speakers.<sup>3</sup>

These changes have not unfolded without comment. “It is a turning point in the nation’s history, a symbolic benchmark of some significance,” Roberto Suro, then-director of the Pew Hispanic Center, said of the emergence of Hispanics as the largest minority, displacing the historic position held by African Americans. “If you consider how much of this nation’s history is wrapped up in the interplay between black and white, this serves as an official announcement that we as Americans cannot think of race in that way any [longer].”<sup>4</sup> Other voices have been raised in acknowledgement—and alarm. “The persistent inflow of Hispanic immigrants threatens to divide the United States into two peoples, two cultures, and two languages. Unlike past immigrant groups, Mexicans and other Hispanics have not assimilated into mainstream U.S. culture, forming instead their own political and linguistic enclaves—from Los Angeles to Miami—and rejecting the Anglo-Protestant values that built the American

dream,” Samuel Huntington, of Harvard University, wrote in the pages of *Foreign Affairs*.<sup>5</sup>

These demographic changes are also of profound socioeconomic consequence, simply because, unlike other immigrant groups, Hispanics have reached a “tipping point,” economically mandating that Spanish be one of the languages of business, and through higher birth rates, fundamentally changing the character of American society in this century. It is not news, for instance, that, during the second half of the twentieth century, certain American metropolitan areas struggled to remain economically viable in the face of sustained population losses. Buffalo, Detroit, and Chicago are three cities that experienced sustained—and debilitating—population declines beginning in the late 1950s. Only one, Chicago, was able to *reverse* this trend, and is now in the throes of an urban relative revitalization that is the envy of the Midwest.

A closer examination of how Chicago achieved this turnaround is instructive: “After half a century of seeing its population dwindle as people abandoned the core of the city and moved to the suburbs, Chicago has finally rebounded,” Pam Belluck reported in March 2001, after the Census Bureau released data from the 2000 census. “For the first time since 1950, the city’s population grew, and by a larger number than demographers and historians had been expecting. . . . The growth is primarily the result of an influx of immigrants, especially Mexicans and other Hispanics. . . . The biggest change in Chicago’s population mosaic is the increase in Hispanics, up more than 200,000 from 1990. While partly the result of better counting efforts, demographers say there has been a rapid stream of Mexicans coming from Mexico and from other American cities, and a growing influx of immigrants from El Salvador, Guatemala, Colombia and other countries.”<sup>6</sup>

If only Buffalo were this fortunate, it might reverse its sustained decline.

What this means, however, is that there are more Hispanics than ever before, that they are younger than the general population, and they are entering the ranks of the employed in greater numbers. Non-Hispanic whites, whose numbers are declining, are also older, which

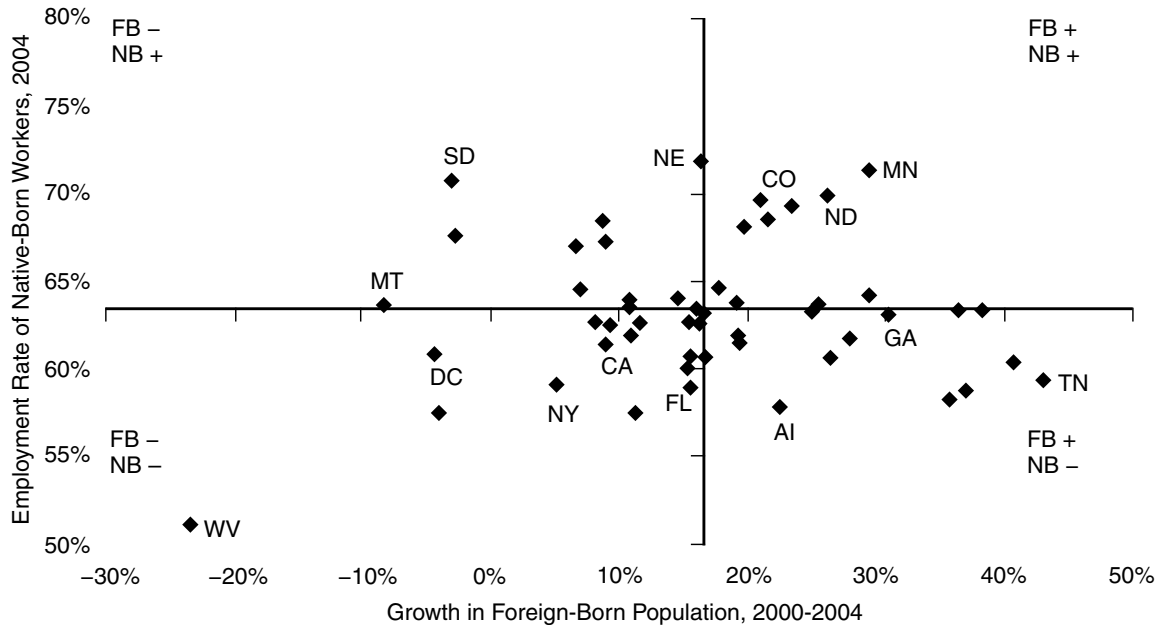
means they are leaving the workforce: “Happy Retirement” parties are held, primarily, for non-Hispanic white and African American employees, while the “New Employee Orientation” programs administered by human resources professionals are generally geared for new Hispanic and Asian (Indian, Chinese, and Korean immigrants) employees, with a minority of new workers entering the workforce being non-Hispanic whites or African Americans.

In consequence, there is a continuous change in the character of American society: this time, come tomorrow, there will be fewer non-Hispanic employees in the American workforce than there are today, all other economic considerations notwithstanding.

The fact of this undeniable reality, too, has not unfolded without comment, and controversy. The debate over illegal immigration is as much about the failure of the federal government to control the borders as it is about the apprehension and fear that Americans sense as they witness, in the course of their routine workdays and their personal leisure, how communities across the country are changing. Hispanics are everywhere; Spanish is heard more often on the public stage of civic life.

The impact of Latin immigrants on “Native Born”—U.S. Latinos included—cannot be characterized as either negative or positive. Their impact depends on a variety of factors, including the economic circumstances of individual states, specific industries, and the conditions of local labor markets. In the most comprehensive analysis available, the Pew Hispanic Center sought to analyze, state-by-state, the impact of all immigrants (Foreign Born workers) on the economic opportunities of American workers, including U.S.-born Latinos (Native Born workers). The results, when plotted on a matrix, demonstrate that there is no single answer to that complicated question.

To understand the overlapping and interrelated dynamics of these demographic changes, however, consider New Orleans. In the aftermath of Hurricane Katrina, many residents decided not to return to that city, and as a result, the population remains just over half of what it was before the storm struck New Orleans. In the resulting absence of “Native Born” workers, industries—from construction



Growth in the Foreign-Born Population Is Not Related to Employment Rates of Native-Born Workers by State, 2000–2004

Center point is the average of growth in the foreign-born population and the average employment rates + denotes above average – denotes below average

to hospitality, restaurant to health services—have desperately sought to find employees, regardless of national origin, or even immigration status. Latin immigrants have filled that vacuum, swelling the ranks of that city's workforce.

“First came the storm. Then came the workers. Now comes the baby boom,” Eduardo Porter reported in December 2006. “‘Before the storm, only 2 percent [of babies born in New Orleans] were Hispanic; now about 96 percent are Hispanic,’ said Beth Perriloux, the head nurse in the department’s health unit in Metairie.”<sup>7</sup> The reality that New Orleans is becoming a Hispanic city is undeniable. “The demographics of the health units used to be 85 percent African American, who had Medicaid, and 15 percent other,” Dr. Kevin Work told the reporter. “When the clinics reopened, I started seeing the faces changing. Now 85 to 90 percent are Hispanic undocumented, and only 10 to 15 percent have Medicaid.”<sup>8</sup>

How can one assess the “impact” of Latin immigrants on “Native Born” workers, when the former residents of New Orleans remain absent from their community? Can it be denied that New Orleans is fast-becoming a bilingual city, where the majority of “new” residents are native Spanish-speakers, and where Hispanic culture is changing the fundamental nature of that city’s social, cultural, and economic character? Of greater consequence, if eight or nine out of every ten children being born in New Orleans and neighboring communities is a Latino child, what will the city look like in the future? Has city government made plans for the fact that, beginning in 2010 and 2011, children enrolled in preschool and kindergarten are from households where Spanish is spoken at home, and whose understanding of English may be little, or even nonexistent? Further down the road, come 2020, what are the high schools of New Orleans going to look like, as these youngsters become teenagers, that city’s youth—that city’s future?

In trying to understand the continuing polemics over Latin immigration and Latino workers, a basic understanding of how Hispanic demographics are shaping the United States is a fundamental necessity for all workplace managers, supervisors, and other administrators. The demographic realities of New Orleans are visceral and



dramatic; evidence of changes is also closely linked to the emergence of the United States as a bilingual consumer economy. In no uncertain terms, what is happening in New Orleans—hailed as the “newest” city in “Latin America” by some Latin American intellectuals—foreshadows how the American labor force will evolve this century.

It is, in essence, as if “Latin America,” through an unexpected seismic movement, shifted, and is now about 200 miles north of the Rio Grande. The result is nothing less than the “Hispanization” of the United States, in general, and the American workforce, in particular. These are the demographic facts of life that inform how the American society will evolve and change throughout the twenty-first century.

### **In Review**

- Hispanics, through higher fertility rates and immigration, account for virtually the entire population growth in the United States as this century unfolds.
- Hispanics, U.S.-born Latinos, and Latin immigrants are almost a decade younger than the non-Hispanics, meaning they are at earlier stages in their careers and are disproportionately represented in the American workplace.
- Hispanics, in the same way that women swelled the ranks of the employed in the second half of the twentieth century, are on track to constitute almost half the nation’s workforce by 2050.

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A Guide to Hiring, Training, Motivating, Supervising, and  
Supporting the Fastest Growing Workforce Group***

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