Research on Hispanics benefits the field of management

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Abstract

Purpose – The papers published in this special issue demonstrate that the field of management can make important contributions to the knowledge about Hispanics and Latin Americans (HLAs) in the workplace. The purpose of this paper is to offer an alternative yet complementary perspective that conducting research on HLAs will make important contributions to the field of management.

Design/methodology/approach – Conceptual paper.

Findings – Research on HLAs provides opportunities to develop and use innovative research design and measurement approaches (including qualitative and hybrid methods), leads to innovative solutions and protocols for addressing ethical challenges and Institutional Review Board regulations, and creates opportunities to access large secondary databases, sources of data collection, and research funding.

Research limitations/implications – Additional research is needed to realize the benefits that result from conducting research on HLAs in the workplace.

Practical implications – Because research on HLAs involves designing studies with an end in mind, results will lead to actionable knowledge that will help bridge the science-practice gap.

Social implications – Future research on HLAs is likely to have important social implications given that demographic changes in the USA have catapulted HLAs into soon becoming the largest ethnic minority group in the country and Hispanic workers are projected to represent about 80 percent of the total growth in the US labor force over the next four decades.

Originality/value – The alternative perspective that conducting research on HLAs will benefit the field of management is not meant to compete with but, rather, complement contributions of the other papers published in this special issue.

Keywords Cross-cultural management, Ethics, Qualitative research, Latino, Confidentiality, Cross-cultural studies, Cultural studies, Hispanic, Latina, Science-practice divide

Paper type Research paper

Demographic projections estimate that, by the year 2060, 120.8 million Hispanics will comprise nearly one-third of the US population , thereby constituting the largest ethnic minority group in the country (United States Census Bureau, 2012). Moreover, over the next four decades, 37.6 million Hispanic workers are projected to join the US workforce, representing about 80 percent of the total growth in the labor force (Meinert, 2013). In addition, Hispanics and Latin Americans (HLAs) in the USA have already become a large and rapidly growing market segment and, therefore, businesses are actively competing with one another over their purchasing power and loyalty (Du *et al.*, 2011). In the political arena, it is widely believed that Hispanic voters gave President Barack Obama a crucial advantage in his re-election in 2012 (Foley, 2012). Despite these developments, there is a dearth of research on HLAs in the workplace (Blancero and DelCampo, 2012). Therefore, this special issue of *Journal of Managerial Psychology* on HLAs in the workplace is not only timely but also highly needed (Olivas-Luján, 2008).

Collectively, the papers in this special issue make a convincing case that the field of management can make important contributions to our knowledge about HLAs in the workplace. For example, papers in this special issue have contributed to our knowledge of immigration-related stress and support systems that may mitigate such stress (Luksyte *et al.*, 2014); how country of birth, ethnicity, and cultural differences relate to career and parental role commitment (Zhang *et al.*, 2014); family and work balance (Beutell and Schneer, 2014); challenges involved in working in multilingual groups (Offerman *et al.*, 2014); obstacles faced by Hispanic entrepreneurs and recommendations on how to overcome these obstacles (Canedo *et al.*, 2014); and differential perceptions and behaviors of Hispanics at work compared to other ethnic groups and what actions managers, and organizations in general, can take to address them (Arévalo-Flechas *et al.*, 2014; Guerrero and Posthuma, 2014).

In our paper, we offer an alternative yet complementary perspective that the field of management will, in turn, benefit from conducting research on HLAs. To paraphrase former US President J.F. Kennedy, in our paper we ask not what the field of management can do for HLAs in the workplace, but what research on HLAs in the workplace can do for the field of management. First, research on HLAs involves designing studies with an end in mind and, therefore, results will lead to actionable knowledge that will help bridge the gap between science and practice. Second, research on HLAs will provide opportunities to develop and use innovative research design and measurement approaches, including qualitative and hybrid methods. Third, research on HLAs in the workplace will lead to innovative solutions and protocols for addressing ethical challenges and Institutional Review Board (IRB) regulations. Finally, research on HLAs will open up opportunities to access large secondary databases, sources of data collection, and research funding. In short, our paper focusses not on the contributions that the field of management can make in terms of conducting research on HLAs, but on the benefits that conducting research on HLAs will offer for the field of management. Next, we offer a description of each of these four benefits. As a preview, a summary of selected challenges in the field of management, benefits from conducting research on HLAs in the workplace, and reasons for these benefits are summarized in Table I.

Research on HLAs will help bridge the science-practice gap
The science-practice gap refers to a disconnect between the knowledge that academics are producing and the knowledge that practitioners are consuming (Rynes *et al.*, 2002). Specifically, Cascio and Aguinis (2008) conducted a content analysis of almost 6,000 articles published in the *Journal of Applied Psychology* and *Personnel Psychology* from 1963 to 2007 and results revealed that much industrial-organizational (I-O) psychology research does not address issues of concern to practitioners and society in general. In fact, Cascio and Aguinis (2008) concluded that "[…] if we extrapolate past emphases in published research to the next 10 years, we are confronted with one compelling conclusion, namely, that I-O psychology will not be out front in influencing the debate on issues that are (or will be) of broad organizational and societal appeal. It will not produce a substantial body of research that will inform HR practitioners, senior managers, or outside stakeholders, such as funding agencies, public policymakers (including elected officials), or university administrators who control budgets" (p. 1074).

Research on HLAs in the workplace will help bridge the science-practice gap in the field of management because that practitioners in all business fields regard HLAs in the USA as current or potential customers and employees. Further, policy and law makers have become interested in knowledge that may inform their practices and

Selected challenges in the field of management	Benefits from conducting research on HLAs in the workplace	Reasons for benefits
1. There is a disconnect between the knowledge that academics are producing and the knowledge the practitioners are consuming (i.e. science-practice gap)	Research on HLAs in the workplace will help bridge the science-practice gap	Practitioners regard HLAs as current or potential customers and employees, and policy and law makers are interested in knowledge that may inform their practices and decisions. Consequently, research on HLAs has great potential in terms of influencing business practices and governmental policies
2. The field of management is currently dominated by quantitative methodological approaches, the majority of work on research methodology focusses on data-analysis issues, and there is a need to develop innovative research design and measurement tools, particularly in the qualitative domain	Research on HLAs in the workplace will provide management scholars the opportunity to develop and use innovative research design and measurement approaches because of the unique methodological challenges involved in studying HLAs (e.g. traditional surveys are often not a viable data collection approach)	Research using HLA samples often forces scholars to develop and implement creative data collection procedures, including the use of qualitative as well as hybrid methods, which future management research can use in other settings and with other populations
3. The intensification of legal, commercial, and political interests has led to important changes in the human participant regulatory system at both federal and local levels, and Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) are often perceived as convoluting the research process and even infringing on researchers' rights to conduct free inquiry	Research on HLAs in the workplace will provide management scholars the opportunity to develop and use innovative ways of addressing important ethical challenges and IRB regulations	Conducting research on HLAs in the workplace often requires the use of innovative ways for addressing unique ethical challenges (e.g. studying vulnerable populations, maximizing anonymity in the data collection process). Such solutions and protocols, which can be developed and implemented in the particular case of research on HLAs in the workplace, could then be applied in other research domains and with other types of populations
4. Researchers in the field of management compete for journal space with an increasingly large number of individuals worldwide; journal rejection rates hover around 90 percent; and successful publication in high-quality journals often requires the use of multiple studies involving large samples, which in turn require that researchers secure difficult-to-obtain financial resources	Research on HLAs in the workplace will open up opportunities to access large secondary databases, sources from which to collect primary data, and research funding	Conducting research on HLAs in the workplace will offer unique and valuable opportunities in terms of data collection and research support. Such opportunities are likely to lead to meaningful and value-added scholarly contributions that will be disseminated via publication in high-quality journals

Table I.
Summary of selected challenges in the field of management, benefits from conducting research on Hispanics and Latin Americans (HLAs) in the workplace, and reasons for these benefits

decisions. Consequently, research on HLAs has great potential in terms of influencing business practices and governmental policies.

Consider the following illustration from outside of the field of management. Roelofs *et al.* (2011) conducted interviews with US Hispanic construction workers to explore why they suffered a disproportionately high rate of workplace injury compared to other demographic groups. Results showed that pressure from supervisors to work fast and workers' fear of retaliation for speaking up about safety issues were among the most important causes of workplace injury. Regarding pressure from supervisors to work fast, a particularly interesting finding was that many of the Hispanic workers explicitly revealed their preference for working for non-Hispanic (i.e. "American") supervisors, who were seen as exerting less time pressure and being more humane. In contrast, Hispanic supervisors were not preferred and were perceived as over-exerting their Hispanic subordinates to "look good" to fellow non-Hispanic supervisors. Meanwhile, perhaps contrary to some preconceived notions, lack of training, language barriers, and cultural values were actually not among the most important causes of workplace injury. Based on the results of this study, Roelofs *et al.* were able to design a workplace safety intervention program called Leaders in Safe Construction specifically for contractors in the USA employing Hispanic construction workers.

In sum, conducting research on HLAs in the workplace will likely involve data collection efforts "with implementation in mind" (Hakel *et al.*, 1982). Designing a study that begins with the end in mind focusses explicitly on application (Aguinis and Vandenberg, 2014). In the case of Roelofs *et al.*, the goal was to improve safety conditions. Other goals can include improving job performance as well as employee well-being in general. Results of such research are likely to be received positively by organizational and policy decision makers and, consequently, allow management researchers to have a greater impact on organizations and society. In short, research on HLAs is likely to help narrow the much lamented science-practice gap.

Research on HLAs will help the development and use of innovative research design and measurement approaches

The field of management is currently dominated by quantitative methodological approaches, and the majority of work on research methodology focusses on data-analysis issues. Moreover, such dominance has not changed much over the past few decades (Scandura and Williams, 2000). For example, Aguinis *et al.* (2009) conducted a content analysis of almost 200 articles published in *Organizational Research Methods* (*ORM*) from 1998 to 2007 and reported that only about 10 percent of articles addressed qualitative topics. Also, data-analysis issues have been addressed by about half of all articles published during this time, whereas only 15 percent of *ORM* articles addressed research design topics and about 35 percent addressed measurement issues. In addition, Aguinis *et al.* (2009) conducted a content analysis of the 25 articles published in *Academy of Management Review* (*AMR*) between 1987 and 2007 that received the largest number of citations. Specifically, they coded statements by *AMR* authors regarding design, measurement, and analysis tools needed to test each of the theories proposed. Results revealed that while only about 10 percent of *ORM* articles' topics are qualitative, about 50 percent of the design topics mentioned in the *AMR* articles are qualitative. In short, there is a clear need to develop innovative research design and measurement tools, particularly in the qualitative domain.

Research on HLAs in the workplace will provide management scholars the opportunity to develop and use innovative research design and measurement approaches because of

the unique methodological challenges involved in studying HLAs (e.g. Erdem *et al.*, 2009; Evans *et al.*, 2011; Roelofs *et al.*, 2011). For example, many individuals targeted in such research may not have the necessary proficiency to read and respond to a survey. So, the use of surveys administered via mail or electronically – which has been (Podsakoff and Dalton, 1987) and continues to be one of the most popular ways of collecting data in I-O psychology, organizational behavior, human resource management, and related fields (Scandura and Williams, 2000) – is not a viable alternative in many cases. Accordingly, research using HLA samples forces scholars to implement creative data collection procedures, including the use of qualitative (Easterby-Smith *et al.*, 2008) as well as hybrid (Molina-Azorin, 2012) methods.

There are several examples of the development and use of innovative methodological approaches implemented by scholars who have conducted research involving HLAs. For example, Erdem *et al.* (2009) used an innovative qualitative approach by asking HLA foodservice employees in focus group sessions to identify specific environmental barriers to practicing food safety behaviors. An interesting and previously underexplored finding was that a major barrier to enacting food safety behaviors was co-workers who did not follow food safety-related rules and also expressed negative attitudes toward food safety behaviors – that is, "bad apples" whom managers should avoid hiring or should manage carefully. Future management research (e.g. employee training) can also use such innovative qualitative approaches to produce similarly interesting and actionable knowledge.

As another illustration of an innovative methodological approach, Evans *et al.* (2011) implemented a hybrid approach (i.e. use of both qualitative and quantitative methods) to study HLA males who acted as informal caregivers for their aging mothers (e.g. bathing, toileting, dressing, feeding). Evans *et al.* (2011) were able to use results from the qualitative portion of their study to more meaningfully interpret and communicate results of the quantitative results. Future management research (e.g. stress, burnout) can also use such innovative hybrid approaches to interpret and communicate research findings more meaningfully.

Complementing the methodological approaches adopted by studies published in this special issue, Marin and Marin (1991) offered the following recommendations for conducting research with HLAs: first, use back translation to produce an appropriate translated instrument; second, pre-test the translated instrument; third, obtain sponsorship from leaders in the targeted organization or community; fourth, explicitly communicate to respondents how the research project helps support respondents' preferred cultural or organizational values, and fifth, use researchers' culture-specific knowledge relevant to the research study.

The first recommendation is to use back translation, also known as double translation, to produce a translated instrument (e.g. Spanish) that is conceptually equivalent to the original version (e.g. English). Conceptual equivalence is achieved when both the explicit and subtle (i.e. connotative) meaning of the instrument's original version (e.g. English) has been adequately captured in the translated version (e.g. Spanish). In back translation, one individual translates an instrument's original version (e.g. English) into a translated version (e.g. Spanish). Another individual then translates the translated version (e.g. Spanish) back to the original language (e.g. English), thereby creating the back-translated version. Inconsistencies between the original version and the back-translated version are discussed in a meeting between the researcher(s) and the two translators in order to make any necessary adjustments to the items in the translated version. We further suggest

two practical implementation guidelines for back translation (Douglas and Craig, 2007):

(1) iterate the back translation process until a comparison between the original version and the back-translated version does not reveal inconsistencies; and

(2) use a team-based approach where multiple translators as part of a team go through each iterative step to benefit from team members' diverse perspectives and expertise of the languages and cultures at hand.

The second recommendation is to pre-test the translated instrument to assess the degree to which the translation is clearly and accurately understood by targeted respondents, not just the researchers. In a pre-test, researchers ask a group of respondents to paraphrase the wording of items in a translated instrument or express how they understood the meaning of its items. We further suggest three practical implementation guidelines for pre-testing (Douglas and Craig, 2007):

(1) use the translated instrument to collect more data if respondents' answers in the pre-testing procedure successfully capture the explicit and subtle meaning of the instrument's original version;

(2) either find a better translated version of the instrument or re-conduct the translation using back translation if respondents' answers in the pre-testing procedure failed to capture the explicit and subtle meaning of the instrument's original version; and

(3) identify and correct any difficulties respondents may have with support materials such as response scales and visual aids in the process of pre-testing.

The third recommendation is to obtain sponsorship (i.e. "stamp of approval") from leaders in the organization or community from which the researcher wishes to collect data. Examples of sponsorship may include a speech or a letter from a leader urging respondents to fully cooperate with the researchers. Sponsorship boosts the legitimacy of the researchers and their associates (e.g. interviewers, assistants) in the eyes of the respondents (e.g. employees) – thereby increasing participation in the study and also improving accuracy and completeness of responses, especially responses involving highly sensitive information (e.g. income, sexual behavior, immigration status).

The fourth recommendation is to communicate explicitly how the research project helps support respondents' preferred cultural or organizational values. This helps motivate respondents to participate in the study and to provide high-quality responses. As an example of practical implementation, in the context of conducting management research on HLAs, researchers can provide small gifts to the children or relatives of the respondents to show appreciation for the value of familialism (i.e. identification with and attachment to one's nuclear or extended family) – a value that tends to be highly regarded among HLAs (Marin and Marin, 1991, p. 14).

The fifth recommendation is to use researchers' culture-specific knowledge relevant to the research study. Such culture-specific knowledge can ease and improve the quality of the implementation of the previous four recommendations. As an example of practical implementation, in the context of management research conducted on HLAs, the research team should have one or more HLA researchers who are both bilingual and bicultural so that they appreciate and personally relate to HLA values such as allocentrism, simpatía, familialism, and machismo (Marin and Marin, 1991).

In sum, conducting research on HLAs in the workplace will likely require the use of innovative research design and measurement approaches, including qualitative and hybrid methods. Such methodological approaches, which can be developed and used in the particular case of research on HLAs in the workplace, could then be applied in other research domains in the field of management. Moreover, the implementation of these innovative design and measurement tools will be successful to the extent that researchers follow practical implementation guidelines regarding translation issues, obtaining sponsorship from leaders in the targeted organization or community, explicitly communicating to respondents how the research project helps support respondents' preferred cultural or organizational values, and using researchers' culture-specific knowledge relevant to the research study.

Research on HLAs will help the development and use of innovative procedures for addressing ethical challenges and IRB regulations

Concerns regarding the well-being of participants in social science research have led to the creation of private and academic IRBs, which are responsible for reviewing and monitoring research involving human subjects. All research conducted by individuals affiliated with universities in the USA must be approved by the local IRB. Most IRBs use a group process to review research protocols and related materials such as informed consent documents. These measures are taken to protect the confidentiality of research results and to ensure protection of the rights and welfare of human participants of research (Aguinis and Henle, 2002). In recent years, the intensification of legal, commercial, and political interests has led to important structural changes in the human participant regulatory system at both federal and local levels (Hamilton, 2005). Unfortunately, as concluded by Hamilton (2005, p. 200), "IRBs often convolute the research process for researchers and participants and, perhaps innocently or because of fear, unnecessarily infringe on researchers' rights to conduct free inquiry. It is also apparent that more rigorous local requirements are in most cases neither virtuous nor necessary."

Research on HLAs in the workplace provides management scholars the opportunity to develop and use innovative ways of addressing ethical challenges and IRB regulations. The reason is that conducting research using HLA samples involves unique ethical challenges (Aguinis and Henle, 2002). For example, some individuals in the target population may have never participated in a research study and many of them may not be aware of their rights as research participants. Moreover, there are cultural and language barriers that classify HLAs as members of a vulnerable population (Sieber, 2012). Further, maintaining confidentiality is especially important when conducting research with HLAs because such research may intentionally or unintentionally involve particularly vulnerable research participants (i.e. undocumented individuals) whose identification by others (e.g. governmental officials) likely puts them at risk of harm (e.g. deportation) (Lahman *et al.*, 2011). In turn, such harm inflicted upon research participants will discourage others from participating in future research projects.

Research using HLA samples has addressed the aforementioned and other ethical challenges by adopting unique and innovative practices, which are often not taken advantage of in mainstream management research. For example, Bloom *et al.* (2009) addressed ethical challenges by intentionally blurring traditional boundaries between researchers and study participants (i.e. Latinas experiencing domestic violence), practitioner partners (i.e. community-based organizations), and other stakeholders (i.e. university staff such as IRB members). That is, to ensure that participants not only

remained safe but also benefited from the study, researchers, and practitioner partners worked together to develop various safety protocols and training (e.g. what to do if the abusive partner of the study participant showed up during an interview), as well as providing accommodations such as transportation and child care to participants if needed. The researchers also sought to benefit practitioner partners (e.g. by allowing partnered community-based organizations to include interview questions to evaluate their existing services) and other stakeholders (e.g. by involving university IRB members in the development of study features to more closely and quickly meet the needs of the IRB).

As another example, Burke *et al.* (2012) obtained verbal consent from HLA study participants instead of the more typical written consent. The reason is that the HLA participants in that study (i.e. migrant and seasonal farmworkers) were especially vulnerable (i.e. many of them were probably undocumented residents) and thus needed the maximum possible degree of anonymity. Future management research studies, which use participants who may suffer harm when anonymity is compromised, can also benefit from adopting such innovative practices.

In sum, conducting research on HLAs in the workplace will require the use of innovative ways for addressing important ethical challenges and IRB regulations. Such solutions and protocols, which can be developed and used in the particular case of research on HLAs in the workplace, could then be applied in other research domains and types of samples in the field of management.

Research on HLAs will open up opportunities to access large secondary databases, sources of data collection, and research funding

Conducting research that is published in high-quality journals in the field of management is more difficult than ever before (Aguinis and Vandenberg, 2014; Ashkanasy, 2010). Prospective authors compete for precious journal space with an increasingly large number of individuals worldwide, and rejection rates hover around 90 percent (Certo *et al.*, 2010). Moreover, publication in high-quality journals often requires the use of multiple studies involving large samples. In addition, such data collection efforts usually require that researchers secure difficult-to-obtain financial resources. Research on HLAs can help address these challenges in three ways: increased opportunities to access large secondary databases, sources from which to collect primary data, and research funding. Researchers in fields other than management are already taking advantage of these opportunities, as we describe next.

First, research on HLAs in the workplace will open up opportunities to access large secondary databases. Examples of secondary data sources include the use of the Central Personnel Data File, the Federal Human Capital Survey, and the Demographic Profile of Federal Employees (e.g. Choi, 2010; Choi and Rainey, 2010). In addition, many organizations regularly collect massive amounts of data on a variety of business functions such as human resources (Davenport *et al.*, 2010). So, there are opportunities to form partnerships where organizations provide their databases to researchers who then analyze and make sense of the data, thereby benefiting both parties (Aguinis *et al.*, 2013). We emphasize that the use of secondary databases is subject to the same standards regarding the publication of two or more manuscripts using the same primary data. For example, Kirkman and Chen (2011) suggested that it is important to clarify whether papers using the same data set address similar research questions, used similar constructs and theories, and have similar implications for theory and practice. Overall, the use of publicly available

databases requires that this fact be acknowledged when a manuscript is submitted for publication (Colquitt, 2013).

Second, conducting research on HLAs also offers opportunities regarding the collection of primary data. For example, Foley *et al.* (2002) obtained access to "2500 members of the Hispanic National Bar Association (HNBA), a professional organization comprised mainly of Hispanic lawyers, law professors, judges, and law students" (p. 481). As another example, Gomez (2003) obtained a list of current Hispanic MBA students and working MBA graduates from the National Society for Hispanic MBAs. A third illustration is offered by the previously mentioned study by Roelofs *et al.* (2011), who collected their qualitative data by participating in a community-led project called *Protección en Construcción: The Lawrence Latino Safety Partnership*. As a result of this partnership, Roelofs and colleagues were able to gain access to Spanish-speaking study participants.

Third, there are numerous organizations that provide financial support specifically for conducting research focussed on HLAs. Such opportunities have been created in response to the increasing number and importance of HLAs in the USA, for example, the Institute for Global Organizational Effectiveness (IGOE), launched at the Kelley School of Business, Indiana University, offers a new model of business-university collaboration. IGOE received funds from private donors, and these funds are used for teaching and research activities particularly targeting HLAs. The donors benefit from recruiting MBA students who receive financial support for completing their degrees as well as from the actionable knowledge generated by faculty and doctoral students who also receive IGOE's support (Aguinis and Vaschetto, 2011). Other sources of research funding include a number of research centers focussing on issues relevant to HLAs (e.g. see http://journals.dartmouth.edu/latinox/resource_center/academics2.shtml). Moreover, having HLAs as part of the research team may lead to additional funding from sources such as the National Institutes of Health (Chang, 2012).

In sum, there are increasing demands on management scholars to obtain data and financial support for research projects. Conducting research on HLAs in the workplace offers unique and valuable opportunities in terms of data collection and research support.

Conclusions

Demographic changes in the USA have catapulted HLAs into soon becoming the largest ethnic minority group in the country. Moreover, Hispanic workers are projected to represent about 80 percent of the total growth in the US labor force over the next four decades. Due to these demographic changes, HLAs are sought after as consumers, voters, and employees at all organizational levels. Thus, this special issue of *Journal of Managerial Psychology* devoted to research on HLAs in the workplace is very timely, particularly considering that such research is virtually non-existent in most mainstream management journals. Collectively, the articles in this special issue make an important contribution to our knowledge base regarding HLAs in the workplace (Blancero and DelCampo, 2012; Stone *et al.*, 2006). Our alternative perspective that conducting research on HLAs will benefit the field of management is not meant to compete with but, rather, to complement these contributions. We believe that research on HLAs will help bridge the much lamented science-practice gap, lead to the development and use of innovative research design and measurement approaches as well as solutions for addressing ethical challenges and IRB regulations, and open up unique and valuable opportunities for data collection and research funding. We look forward to a bright

future of research on HLAs in the workplace, which will lead to important theoretical advancements, meaningful applications, and important benefits for the field of management.

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