The Americas

The World’s Racial and Ethnic Crossroad


When it comes to who owns the evolution of America Vespucci’s first name, all the peoples living within the first cartographic mapping of a discovered continent in the 1400s proudly say they do. But under that common continental name America—between the Arctic Circle at its northernmost point to Tierra del Fuego at its southernmost—lies a sea of humanity as diverse as civilization has ever seen.

Three original people branches make up most of the original construct called the Americas: the Amerindians, who were already there hunting buffalo or building mighty temples like Machu Picchu or Tenochtitlan; the fair-skinned family colonizers from northern Europe who settled in Canada and the United States; and the darker-skinned soldier colonizers from southern Europe who seized most of the territory from Mexico on down.

Added to this mix are African branches, forcibly imported as slave labor up and down the continent; Asian branches duped into indentured labor; and even more branches from Europe freely crossing the Atlantic to pursue economic opportunity and religious freedom.

Yet, the Americas’ diversity story isn’t just about horizontal migrations from continents afar, but about massive vertical migrations from Latin America to the United States and Canada, from neighboring countries into each other, from the countryside to the cities.

This extraordinary racial and ethnic mix has been exploited, championed, and celebrated.

Historically, in the United States migration and its resulting cultural conflicts were managed through various forms of apartheid, in Canada through territorial separations, and in Latin America through miscegenation. But with the triumph of the Civil Rights Movement that brought the Jim Crow, separate-but-equal, and voting disenfranchisement walls tumbling down; with Canada’s self-conscious call to the “multicultural mosaic” and its open offer of citizenship to whoever is willing to make “O Canada” their anthem; and with Latin America’s syncretistic ethos that melds all peoples and influences into what Mexican novelist Carlos Fuentes referred to as “la raza cosmica” (the cosmic race); there is in the Americas a promise of what is possible when diversity and inclusion become part of the social, political, and cultural fabric.

In fact, it’s the Americas’ historical diversity challenges that explain why diversity as a modern social and corporate concept has had its roots in the lands of Bolivar, Lincoln, and Trudeau.

But despite the glimmering hints across the Americas that there is promise in the promise—Toronto as the most diverse city in the world, six women presidents through Latin America’s
modern history, election of the first black president in the United States—there is trouble in the cradle of diversity.

Anti-immigrant legislation is sprouting in states across el Norte, coupled with the existence and structural reinforcement of a perpetual underclass disproportionately black. An awakening in Canada is taking place that, despite its self-perception of openness, “visible minorities” still show up at the bottom of the economic pyramid. In Latin America, distancing from the Bolivarian dream of one Latin America is perpetuated through the marginalization of those from sister countries.

Understanding diversity across the various countries in the Americas involves complexities. While racial diversity is a reality up and down the Pan-American highway stretching from Juneau, Alaska to Punta Arenas, Chile, how it manifests can be both similar and different. Some similarities exist around the history of those who are darkest being the most discriminated against. But when it comes to the hierarchy of diversity issues, in terms of how societies’ structures and attitudes keep people marginalized, differences come into play. In the United States, race trumps class. No matter how economically successful one is, race still plays an inordinate role in how people are viewed. In Latin America, it’s the reverse: class trumps race. To be poor is to be the most powerless. No matter the skin color, economic success is the ticket into acceptance.

Understanding this and other distinctions is essential in developing effective and relevant diversity and inclusion strategies in the Americas. In this section we do a deep dive into Canada, Brazil, and the United States. Pay careful attention to the similarities, as well as the differences, in how diversity dimensions show up across las Americas (the Americas).
With each passing day, diversity becomes a more pressing issue of discussion among leaders of major Brazilian companies. Some of them have already created plans of action, so diversity is more valued by their workers. Others, however, still continue to discuss the issue without really knowing what to do or how to create a plan of action.

For diversity to be truly valued by Brazilian companies it must make sense to business leaders. Today sustainability, social responsibility, and corporate citizenship have been positioned to make sense from a business perspective, but diversity has yet to completely enter the corporate mindset. This is due to the fact that it is not yet quite clear how diversity could help spur business.

But the case is there to be made from a Brazilian context. Here I will make the case by using three concepts: diversity, inclusion, and innovation.

Diversity means the existence inside the company of persons with different group identities. By this we mean gender, race, age, religion, and persons with disabilities.

Inclusion means the philosophy, mindset, strategies, and programs used to employ people who, on a large or small scale, are discriminated against in the job market. We are once more referring to gender, race, age, religion, and persons with disabilities.

Innovation means the implementation of new practices that bring new ideas, products, and services to the organizational culture, with the objective of making the business of companies stronger. For innovation to be fostered, there is a need for a greater diversity of perspectives and backgrounds that have not been present in the organization before. And, once again, here we are talking about talent that is diverse through gender, race, age, religion, and disability.

Let’s explore each of these diversity dimensions as they manifest in Brazilian companies. This data is taken from Perfil Social, Racial e de Gênero das 500 Maiores Empresas do Brasil e Suas Ações Afirmativas – Pesquisa 2010, (“Social, Racial, and Gender Profile of the 500 Largest Brazilian Companies and their Affirmative Actions”), published by the Instituto Ethos de Empresas e Responsabilidade Social. In this annual study, research was conducted by the Instituto Ethos and the Ibope Inteligência, in partnership with the Fundação Getulio Vargas de São Paulo (FGV-SP), the Fundo das Nações Unidas para a Mulher (Unifem), the Instituto de Pesquisa Econômica Aplicada (Ipea) and the Organização Internacional do Trabalho (OIT).

For my discussion on religion and sexual orientation I will use data collected primarily by the Brazilian press.
Gender

Through the research of the Ethos Institute, women represent 33 percent of the workforce. The participation of women in higher hierarchy levels is smaller: 27 percent in supervision, 22 percent at the manager level and almost 14 percent at the executive level. There is clearly a big disadvantage for women in the bigger companies of the country.

This inequality becomes more stark when you consider that women have on average a higher educational attainment than men. Women have an average number of years of study (7.4) superior to the men (7) and are a majority (55 percent) among Brazilians who reached at least 11 years of study. In 2007, they had the higher proportion of enrollment (55 percent) and the higher numbers (60 percent) of completion of higher education.

Given these numbers, it is important that Brazilian companies continuously seek to increase women's participation in the job market in a systematic and structural way.

Race

Afro-Brazilian and mulatto populations comprise the majority, 51 percent, of Brazil's population. This represents approximately 98 million people. The white population actually decreased between 2004 to 2009, from 51 percent to 48 percent, representing around 92.5 million people.

But when it comes to representation in the workplace, Afro-Brazilians are not proportionally represented. Overall, in the workforce we see a drop in Afro-Brazilians representation where they are 46.5 percent of the economically active population and 45 percent of the working population. And the further up in the workforce hierarchy one looks, the less Afro-Brazilians are represented.

At the functional level Afro-Brazilian men are at 31 percent, at the supervision level at nearly 26 percent, at the managerial level 13 percent, and at the executive level 5.3 percent.

The situation for black women is even worse than for black men: 9 percent in the functional level, 5.6 percent in supervision, 2 percent in the managerial level, and 0.5 percent in the executive ranks. For executives, in absolute numbers this translates to 6 black women (all mulatto) among the 119 women or the 1,162 directors, black and non-black, of both sexes.

The one positive piece of news is that these numbers of Afro-Brazilian representation actually reflect an improvement in three out of the four levels between 2007 and 2010. It increased 24 percent at the functional level, 53 percent at the supervisory level, and 51 percent at the executive level. But the trend was not consistent. At the managerial level, Afro-Brazilian representation decreased 24 percent.

Age

Through the research of Instituto Ethos, persons younger than 45 years old represent 85 percent of the total of employees and they are the majority in three hierarchy levels:
functional (85 percent), supervision (81 percent) and manager (67 percent). Only at
the executive level are they out-represented by people older than 45 years old who have
nearly 60 percent of the positions at this level.

Young people from 16 to 24 years old represent 9 percent of the functional employees of
companies. Yet they only hold 2.4 percent of supervisory jobs. The analysis shows that
the high differences in the levels suggests the existing of a big rotation with few chances
for ascension and limited trust in the possibility of young people to be able to hold
positions with more responsibilities.

Also standing out is the little participation, 2.5 percent, of people 56 years or older in
the employee numbers of a company. In manager positions people at this age represent
6 percent and in supervision positions only 3 percent. This shows that there are few job
opportunities for them in the major companies in the country. The worst part is that it
hasn’t concretely entered companies’ agendas what actions they can develop to face the
rapid aging of the Brazilian population.

**Persons with Disability**

Through the research from Instituto Ethos, people with disability represent 1.5 percent
in the operational positions, 0.6 percent in supervision, 0.4 percent in management and
1.3 percent at the executive level. In absolute numbers, this translates into 8,860 people
among the 573,724 in the operational positions, 146 among the 25,603 supervisors, 54
among the 13,629 managers and 20 among the 1,505 executives.

According to the 2000 Census, 14.5 percent of Brazil’s population has some type of
disability, physical, hearing, visual or intellectual. It is important to highlight that the
Brazilian Federal Constitution forbids any kind of discrimination against the hiring
of people with a disability and impedes that their salary be different to the one paid
to people that don’t have a disability. More than that, article 93 of Law 8.213, of
1991, known as “Lei de Cotas” (Quotas Legislation), obliges the company with 100
or more employees to have 2 percent to 5 percent of their positions with rehabilitated
beneficiaries or people with disability in the following proportions: up to 200 employees
– 2 percent; from 201 to 500 employees – 3 percent; from 501 to 1,000 – 4 percent; and
more than 1,000 – 5 percent.

Further, the study shows a disturbing inverse correlation between the number of programs
implemented for people with disabilities and their actual numbers in the workforce. On
the one hand, between 2003 and 2010, the number of companies that started to adopt
special programs for the hiring of people with disabilities jumped from 32 percent of the
companies to 81 percent. But on the other hand, there has been a continuous *decrease*
of the presence of people with disabilities in the companies: from 3.5 percent in 2003, to 2
percent in 2005, to 1.9 percent in 2007 and 1.5 percent in 2010.

There is still no documented explanation to explain this decrease but anecdotally it’s well
known that in the past few years a greater number of companies have been choosing to
pay the fines for not achieving the quotas as preferable to hiring people with disabilities.
Religion

Brazil is a religiously diverse country. Brazilians are majority Christian (89 percent), and within this faith, mostly Catholic. The slaves, mainly originating from Africa, brought their own religious practices, which survived the oppression of the colonizers, creating the Afro-Brazilian religions. In the second half of the 19th Century, Spiritism in Brazil started to gain momentum, and nowadays is the country with the highest number of Spiritistas in the world. In the last decades, the Protestant religions—especially Evangelicalism—have grown quickly in numbers of practitioners currently reaching a significant part of the population.

Even though religion is very present in the life of people it doesn’t show up or play a part among employees in the job environment. There are two reasons that can explain the absence of valuing religious diversity in companies. First of all, companies are seen as secular environments, in which work is the determinant thing. Religiousness is still considered an expression of private life and morality and therefore subjective as a personal choice. Second, to declare yourself as a religious person can expose one to being discriminated against inside the company, especially if one’s religion has a history of being discriminated against. In Brazil, Umbanda and Candoble, introduced by the slaves ripped from Africa by European colonization, were forbidden for a long period of time.

Sexual Orientation

For the most part, homosexual men and women do not feel free to be out in the Brazilian workplace. Even when companies offer domestic partner benefits, many still don’t feel comfortable enough to take advantage of them.

These closeted feelings and behaviors may have a better chance of changing given some recent legal rulings. In May of 2011 the Supreme Court decided that the relations among people of the same sex were to be considered as a stable union just the same as the ones between a man and a woman. This means that a same-sex union is recognized as equivalent to a heterosexual one. The ruling on the recognition of the rights of same-sex couples was unanimous.

According to the APOGLBT (Associação da Parada do Orgulho LGBT de São Paulo, Sao Paolo Gay Pride Parade Association) four million people took part in the 15th Parada do Orgulho LGBT (Gay Pride Parade) in Sao Paulo in June 2011. The State Governor and the City Mayor were present. The numbers of participants was larger than the numbers at the 42nd New York Gay Parade that happened during the same period.

Perhaps these events are too recent for homosexuals to reveal their sexual orientation with liberty inside companies. It is important to remember that prejudice and discrimination toward homosexuals is still strong in Brazil and that many gays are victims of homophobic violence because of that. In one recent manifestation of violence, a father had part of his ear amputated because he was hugging his son. Both were mistaken as being gay.
Diversity, Inclusion, and Innovation Spurring Businesses

Brazil stands out as one of the main budding countries in the world’s economic scenario right now. Brazilian companies are living all the consequences of the globalized economy and many of them have been through mergers and acquisitions. This creates two important challenges: the search of new markets for their products and the necessity to recognize and exploit the new capacity of a more diverse workforce.

This cannot be done without a deep revision of company culture and this requires management—especially the executive leaders—to be intrinsically attentive to the management of diverse people through values.

It is fundamental to business that all employees have the technical competence, reach goals, get results, and, ultimately, show performance in order to be active agents in the constant spurring of business. However, currently, it is equally fundamental that all the employees be recognized by their personal values, without which the technical performance doesn’t mean anything. This is why the management of people starts to make sense when you understand that the identity of each person must be accepted and respected in the company environment where the person works.

However, even though Brazilian companies are aware that people must be valued, and even if they have created consistent programs for quality of life and professional development, the focus on the process is still stronger than the focus on the person. While the speech about the value of people is growing in Brazilian companies, there is no proof that actions are matching the speech.

Diversity

Most companies practicing this recognition are in the market of B2C (business-to-consumer) business. It is the growing diverse consumer that becomes an increasingly active agent of the economy (with rights supported by specific legislation) that leads these companies to begin to value diversity as a powerful instrument that can help to assure the success of business.

The majority of companies that are in the B2B (business-to-business) market don’t seem to have yet found a reason to create more consistent actions that value diversity. Commercial transactions between companies are increasingly being done through electronic forms, and are focusing on processes that in many instances replace people. There isn’t the perception that the success of their business depends on human beings. In the B2B market it is more difficult to make the business case and therefore it requires deeper exploration.

Inclusion

Many leaders of Brazilian companies still see inclusion as an action of social responsibility or as the fulfillment of a legal obligation. In Brazil, companies with more than 100 employees are obliged to employ a percentage of people with disability and many others are obliged to employ, for a period of two years, young apprentices, from 16 and 24 years
old, who study in public schools. More recently there has been a campaign to employ ex-convicts. Around 30,000 are released annually from the Brazilian prisons.

To employ young apprentices means a financial investment for the majority of companies. The legislation that obliges companies to employ young apprentices is to benefit those who face unfavorable socioeconomical conditions, or who sometimes have an unstable family and live in the periphery of Brazilian cities. The companies select the most intelligent ones—those who have the potential after the training to become good professionals, those who will reach their goals and get results. The action of social responsibility is sustained by the project of financial investment.

However, to employ persons with disabilities requires more of an investment from companies. People with a physical disability—especially those in a wheelchair—need accessibility to buildings through ramps and adapted bathrooms (which, interestingly, is not mandated by legislation). People with visual disabilities—especially those who are blind—need screen readers in their computers. People with hearing disabilities—especially those who are deaf—sometimes need professional interpreters of their sign language (Lingua Brasileira de Sinais, Libras, Brazilian Sign Language). People with intellectual disabilities—for instance someone with Down's Syndrome—need specialized orientation for the learning and development of some professional tasks. These technological tools and resources are understood by the majority of business leaders as costs and not as an investment. Besides, many companies don't fully trust that people with disabilities can reach goals and get results in the same way as people who do not have a disability. There is still a good amount of awareness and education that needs to take place to be able to change this mentality.

Hiring ex-convicts also provides challenges in Brazil businesses because it is difficult for business leaders to see this as a financial investment with a return. It is known that, in Brazil, for each ten people who leave prison, seven go back to criminal life. It is therefore also known that employing ex-convicts provides an important opportunity for them not to go back to the criminal life and for making society safer. However, few are the ones who have the chance to study in prison. Of the 500,000 prisoners in Brazil, less than 60,000 take courses, 25 percent are illiterate and 50 percent went only to the first classes of middle school. The level of qualification is low. Few also work in companies inside the prisons. This is why only 1,500 ex-convicts have secured a formal job in the past two years. This really low number of hiring shows that the Brazilian business leaders really don't understand it as a project with a strong ROI.

Innovation

Leaders in Brazilian companies see innovation as the successful exploring of new ideas. And success means increased revenue, access to new markets, and increased profits. Brazilian business leaders know that growing sales can only be fed and induced by innovation.

However, the organizational culture of Brazilian companies remains conservative. Business leaders still believe that innovative ideas are produced by intuitive people or by small groups of creation that work in complete isolation. Besides, the organizational
structures are still rigid and do not allow for more free flowing strategic and creative discussions. This creates closed spaces to which only powerful people has access. By not going to the lower hierarchy levels, by not spreading the reach through more diverse employee groups, the discussions remain with the same people, that in general have the same ideas, have the same business visions, and who have the illusion that they see it all and will never lose control. There is a small space left for doubts. Little space is left for creativity. Consequently, there is not much space for innovation in cultures that discourage changes and demand conformity.

The business sector in Brazil still believes that the source of innovation resides exclusively in making large investments in basic research in the universities, in employees who went to post-graduation courses abroad, and in scientific articles with an international impact. This old, top-down way of thinking limits the channels to a small group of similar people: people in a rich family, who went to the best schools of the country, and who share the same business ideas.

**Examples of Diversity Management in Brazil**

It is impossible to be certain whether Brazilian companies that intend to implement diversity programs among their staff are sustaining this project through serious consideration of the subject. It is also impossible to say for certain that the leaders of these companies can understand the existing relationship between diversity, inclusion, and innovation.

It is possible, however, to say, without a doubt, that Brazilian companies are not resisting the idea of having a more diverse environment or preventing the hiring of people coming from diverse backgrounds. They may still be feeling slightly bothered for having to face the challenge of accepting not only “equal people” but also “different people” into their working capacities. But, given their intelligence, these leaders are beginning to realize that diversity is good for their businesses.

When referring to “Brazilian” companies, I am not necessarily speaking of those that originated in Brazil. We are talking about enterprises that operate in Brazil, irrespective of where their head offices are located. In this historical moment, in which companies are a product of mergers, acquisitions and incorporations, few companies remain purely Brazilian. Nevertheless, even for companies owned by multinational corporations, their biggest challenge is to establish themselves in Brazil and its unique culture, a place different from any other country on the globe. Even though issues related to gender, race, age, persons with disabilities, religion, and sexual orientation may have common denominators around the world, in Brazil, many of these concerns have particularities that are specific to Brazilian culture. That is exactly the challenge of global enterprises such as Phillips, Walmart, Santander Bank, Gerdau, and Braskem.

Serasa Experian is one of these products of mergers and acquisitions. Experian is a U.K.-headquartered global information services company that acquired the Brazilian credit bureau, Serasa. Serasa Experian, where I work and where I am responsible for leading diversity and inclusion, has become in the past ten years a leading benchmark
for professional qualification and hiring of persons with disabilities. The company approaches the employability of persons with disabilities through the business logic I have laid out here as we seek all levels of personnel and competent professionals who can achieve results for the company.

Over these last few years, numerous enterprises have benchmarked with us on how to hire, qualify, develop, and advance people with disabilities. Among them, Accor Hospitality, Accor Services, Banco Itaú, Banco Safra, Banco Santander, Brasilprev Seguros, Bristol-Myers Squibb, Cardif, Cielo, Claro, Deloitte, Dow Brasil, Festo Automação, Fibria, Goodyear, Grupo Fleury, Holcim, Insper, Logos Engenharia, Medial Saúde, NEC do Brasil, NET Serviços, PWC, Penalty, Progen, Promon Engenharia, Propay, RedBull, Siemens, Terra Portal, and TozziniFreire Advogados.

What they find when we share learnings is that Serasa Experian understands that to reach goals and achieve results professionals have to be well trained and have access to adequate technical and human resources. Under this principle, we offer 415 hours of courses every semester, architectural adaptations (for wheelchair users), screen reading software and printers in Braille (for persons with visual disabilities), electronic magnifiers (for persons with limited vision), Brazilian Sign Language interpreters (for persons with hearing disabilities), and professional and pedagogical support (for persons with intellectual disabilities).

These resources are always understood, not as an expenditure, but as an investment the company makes in regard to its professionals. This is an extremely important distinction. Expenses reduce the bottom line. Investments yield returns that increase it.

**Conclusion**

Brazilian companies need to create a proper environment so innovation can flourish. This environment will only be created if people give value to diversity and inclusion.

To make innovation a corporate competence demands new structures that actively encourage the interaction beyond the existing formal, centralized, and hierarchical borders in ways that distribute the responsibility and expertise throughout the whole company.

For that, it is necessary to include in the most important discussions, all of those who are willing, in an engaged way, to exchange ideas and competencies. Corporations that really want innovation have to create a new culture in which everyone can manifest an idea and, when compelling, be given the resources to take the idea forward into the marketplace.

The management of diversity is one of the greatest business challenges of the new Millennium. Companies that want to be successful will have to rethink the nature of their competences, processes, structures, and policies and develop new ones. Those that do will be able to make the most of the increasingly diverse labor force and marketplace.
Bibliography


The United States and Canada: Redefining Diversity

By Michael Collins, Research and Publications Analyst, Diversity Best Practices

So much has been written about U.S. diversity, one wonders if space should be devoted to writing even more about it. But to leave out the United States would be to assume that the global diversity journey here has come to end. Conversely, despite its vast diversity, very little is written about neighboring Canada’s progress and challenges. To leave out Canada would be to assume that its story is not distinct and different from that of the United States. Instead, I posit that diversity and inclusion in these two North American countries is entering a new phase—where commonly held beliefs about people and how they interact with each other and their world are being challenged at a rapid pace.

Accounting for 8 percent of the world’s population, the United States and Canada are an amalgamation of nearly 530 million racially and ethnically diverse individuals covering nearly 10 million square miles. Over time, immigrants have added to the already diverse mix of native peoples that populated the space. Now, these two countries fancy themselves a global mosaic wherein its most populated metropolises enjoy a wealth of cultures, languages, religions, and heritages.

Diversity Challenges in the United States

Because so much has been written about the United States, my discussion here will be limited to new trends in diversity and inclusion. Three dynamic changes are taking place in the United States right now: immigration patterns, generational shifts, and the altering of workforce demographics.

The Changing Face of Immigration

As people of the world keep pushing global boundaries, the U.S. population has experienced steady growth in its immigrant population. Yet, even though the vast majority of Americans can—and often do—trace their roots to other countries, contemporary immigration trends still encounter opposition.

In 1970, immigrants accounted for 4.7 percent of the U.S. population. By 1980, the immigrant population had swelled to 6.2 percent. Today, they represent 12.5 percent of the total U.S. population.\(^1\) In 2010, 25 percent of U.S. residents under age 18 were immigrants or the children of immigrants.\(^2\) As immigrants continue to come to North America and have children, the demographics of the continent will continue to shift. Demographers project that by 2050, non-Hispanic whites will become a minority in the United States—as immigrants and their children come to account for 82 percent of population growth.\(^3\)

Latinos—specifically those from Mexico—make up the vast majority of the immigrant population in the United States. Almost half of new immigrants are of Latino background.
In fact, Mexican immigrants account for nearly 30 percent of all immigrants in the United States—which is more than six times more than their closest rival, immigrants from the Philippines, who account for 4.5 percent of the U.S. immigrant population. And as Mexican immigrants continue to reside in the United States, researchers project Mexican-American births will overtake Mexican immigration as their population continues to swell. Today, about one million immigrants enter the country legally yearly. Such a figure contributes to the 37 million documented immigrants that currently make up the U.S. population. Another 11 million are undocumented immigrants.

While the unprecedented growth in immigrant populations has seemingly gone unchecked, it is not without social and economic opposition. Several cities throughout the United States have sanctuary policies, which protect undocumented immigrants from enforcement of federal immigration laws. But a recent poll found that nearly 60 percent of the general public support sponsored legislation to remove federal funding to cities with sanctuary policies. The same amount believed the Justice Department would take legal action against such cities.

Similarly, while the American public generally embraces documented immigrants, opposition to undocumented immigrants is increasing. Research shows that while 12 percent of Americans have a negative view of “legal” immigrants, 36 percent have a negative view if they are “illegal” immigrants—believing illegal immigrants should be subject to detention if apprehended.

Anti-illegal immigration measures have been enacted in immigrant-heavy states, such as Arizona. In April of 2010, Governor Jan Brewer signed the Support Our Law Enforcement and Safe Neighborhoods Act, requiring all illegal immigrants over the age of 14 to have registration documents in their possession at all times. It also requires law enforcement agents to attempt to determine individuals’ immigration status; and it attempts to crack down on those that harbor illegal immigrants. The state, which is heavy with Mexican illegal immigrants, was federally blocked from enforcing the law. However, polls found that overwhelming majorities in the state and on a national level support the measures.

To go along with such acts, undocumented immigrants have found a certain level of acceptance as well. The DREAM Act, a recently reintroduced bill, calls on the federal government to offer temporary citizenship to students or military enlistees who have been in the country for five years or more. After two years in college or the military, undocumented immigrants would be afforded citizenship. Congressional officials expect the passage of this plan to increase tax revenue by $2.3 billion over the next ten years—something that resonates with many lawmakers in tough economic times.

**Generational Shifts: Generation Y’s Takeover**

As part of a global trend, it is worth mentioning Generation Y and its impact on American society. Usually defined as people born between 1977 and 1998, and usually children of Baby Boomers, this generation is marked by its strong connection to technology, diversity, and prevailing inclusionary ideals. Pew research points out that Generation Ys growth signifies a new phase in racial and ethnic diversity. Individuals between the ages of 13 and 29 are predominately minority, with 18.5 percent of them being Latino.
Interestingly, the upswing in interracial relationships fully manifests itself in the growing number of mixed-raced people between the ages of 13 and 29.

Because of these shifting demographics, research shows that this generation is the most tolerant of any generation—having the highest rates of support for interracial marriage, LGBT rights, and a general fluidity when viewing religion and spirituality. Research shows that a majority of Gen Yers (53 percent) support gay marriage, with a slightly larger majority believing it is acceptable for a couple to live together without intending to get married. A social progressive agenda has come to characterize this generation.

Education has also come to characterize Generation Y. As the most educated generation to date, 90 percent of Gen Yers have high school diplomas, and 40 percent of college freshman intend to pursue graduate school after college. And the U.S. Census shows that 40 percent of people between the ages of 18 to 24 were in college in 2008—higher than any previous generation. Entering the workforce at a rapid pace, Generation Y is expected to switch careers frequently, and challenge the status quo in ways other generations have not done in the past.

Likewise, they are the first native online population—enabling this generation to connect more rapidly across vast spaces, and seeing this as a normal and preferable form of communication.

The Decline of White Men

In the wake of one of the most devastating recessions our global economy has seen, white men’s position at the top in business and industry has been shaken to its core. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that during the first quarter of 2011, nearly 600,000 college-educated white men between the ages of 35 and 64 were unemployed—nearly 5 percent of white men. For those left without a job, it has proven increasingly difficult to land jobs in what has become a fickle job market dominated by Generation Y.

In addition to the pain induced by the recession, women have been outpacing men in obtaining college and advanced degrees. U.S. Census data from 2010 indicates that 37 percent of employed women have college degrees or higher, compared to 35 percent of men. When the demographic data is narrowed to men and women between the ages of 25 and 30, the gap widens—36 percent compared to 28 percent. While women are still underrepresented in several fields, and a wage disparity favoring men is still prevalent, an influx of qualified women are entering the workplace at the same time that white men are losing their jobs—marking a dynamic shift in how company leadership looks, and how wealth and influence are distributed.

Likewise, the diversity that has come to characterize Generation Y—coupled with them entering the workplace in droves—will likely mean a decrease in the visibility, leadership, and role of white men in the workplace. The implications are huge for white male privilege in the sense that sexual, racial, and ethnic minorities are growing to fully challenge the social hierarchy that has been in place for years in the United States.
A Closer Look at Canadian Diversity

As the second largest country in area in the world, Canada represents a land rich with natural resources and growing diversity. Immigration to Canada since the 1980s has expanded the foreign-born population from 3.9 million to 6.2 million people. Immigrants now represent 19.8 percent of the total population, and are projected to amount to 22 percent by 2017.15 “Visible minorities,” a term used to describe “persons other than Aboriginal peoples who are non-Caucasian in race or non-white in colour,” has been created in accordance to Canada’s Employment Equity Act. Because of increased immigration and low percentages of European immigrants, the percentage of visible minorities is projected to grow 20 percent by 2017. The majority of Canada’s immigrants are from European countries, such as Germany, Italy, and Ukraine, while South Asians and Chinese immigrants make up about four percent of the population.16

One of the main reasons immigration is gaining speed through the open door policies of the Canadian government is that the labor force throughout the country is rapidly shrinking. After enjoying 25 years of growth, expansion of the labor force is slowing to an end—which is expected to take place by 2016.17 With Baby Boomers reaching retirement age, Canada—like many other countries around the globe—is experiencing a graying affect, wherein many people are aging out of work.

As the workforce is shrinking, the number of women entering the workforce is growing. Making up more than half of the total work population, women in Canada still need to prioritize work over family if they hope to see growth in their careers.18 But while the country enjoys a growing, ethnically diverse population, the country has struggled to increase representation in the high levels of the workforce. Research shows that only 13 percent of corporate board seats on the Financial Post 500 are held by women,19 and only 6.8 percent are held by visible minorities.20

As such, Canada is experiencing a dynamic diversity and inclusion opportunity—one where Canadians can leverage their growing visible minority population and offer women the opportunity to enjoy work life balance more fully. Recognizing this, Canada has developed diversity plans that emphasize three priorities: human development policies that are geared toward increasing the pipeline of minority talent earlier in life; civic vitality that focuses on bettering the quality of life for underrepresented minorities of lower socioeconomic status; and living standards that are in keeping with decreasing the economic and social disparities throughout the country.21

Companies are required to develop diversity plans that are in keeping with equal opportunity legislation. However, having a plan and seeing plans coming to fruition are two different things. Research shows that while 70 percent of companies surveyed by the Human Resources Professionals Association of Ontario have vision statements that indicate a commitment to diversity, 74 percent have not allocated any resources to diversity and inclusion efforts on a company level.22 Without inclusion measures being taken, statistics revealing a lack of women and visible minorities in senior leadership positions can only persist, if not increase.
Canada’s Aboriginal Population

Also known as First Nations or First Peoples, Canada’s Aboriginal population makes up 3.8 percent of the country, according to the most recent census.\(^{23}\) The core of this group is made up of Inuit and Métis people.

Inuit emerged from what is now western Alaska, and after migrating toward Greenland, have considerable numbers in Nunavut, Northwest Territories, and Quebec. Upon European contact during the early 19th century, Inuit way of life was altered tremendously—with massive death because of exposure to new diseases and introduction of European culture. By 1939, the Supreme Court of Canada officially recognized Inuit as Indians, enabling them to be under rule of federal laws and criminal courts. As such, many were converted to Christianity, and held accountable for breaking laws that were not part of their native moral codes.

After the Canadian government set up public boarding schools for Inuit people in the 1950s and 1960s, students became culturally integrated in a way that ran counter to traditional Inuit beliefs, values, and language.\(^{24}\) Also, during the 1950s, the federal government established public service operations throughout areas that were heavily populated by Inuit—offering much needed medical care for the people. By the 1970s, the Inuit began asserting political agency by establishing political associations to represent their interests. These organizations aided in land claim settlements that saw the federal government yielding autonomy and cash settlements to Inuits in regions throughout Quebec.\(^{25}\)

Métis, another Aboriginal population, are of mixed ancestry between European settlers and First Nations. Today, almost 400,000 people self-identify as Métis, and are spread throughout Alberta, Manitoba, Ontario, British Columbia, and Quebec—with smaller pockets dispersed throughout the rest of the country.\(^{26}\) Like Inuit people, Métis faced similar integration tactics on the part of Canada’s federal government that ultimately threatened to erode their cultural heritage. However, by the 1930s, Métis took a more politically active role, yielding the Métis Population Betterment Act of 1938—a measure that gave land and funding to Métis in Alberta.\(^{27}\)

People With Disabilities in Canada

People with disabilities are a growing demographic throughout Canada. The disability rate rose from 12.4 percent in 2001 to 14.3 percent in 2006—meaning that about one in seven Canadians has a disability.\(^{28}\) The population of people with disabilities is expected to continue to grow, topping 6 million by 2026. While the employment rate for working-aged people with disabilities grew between 2001 and 2006 by more than four percent, just over half of people with disabilities are currently employed. This is compared to Canadians without disabilities whose employment rate is 75 percent.

As the population continues to grow, companies will need to take measures to accommodate those with special needs. The number of people with disabilities in need of special structural accommodations at work has increased by more than 160,000 between 2001 and 2006. However, less than half of people with disabilities that need these accommodations have had them met by their employer. This is a 27 percent decrease from 2001.\(^{29}\)
**U.S. and Canadian Diversity and Inclusion: The Next Generation**

As demographics shift, it is important that the focus of diversity and inclusion efforts shift as well. It is no longer enough to be aware of and sensitive to difference. Successful global diversity practitioners must be crossculturally competent in their inclusion approach. Diversity Best Practices President Andrés Tapia says, “We need to know how to perform the actual behaviors, techniques, and approaches to manage both the upsides and downsides of difference. In doing so, we’ll be better equipped to consider other people’s subjective ways of doing the same things while staying true to who we are and producing the desired business outcomes.”

As we look at the steadily increasing Latino population in the United States—which is positioned to account for 17 percent of the working-age population within the next decade—corporate leaders will need to make themselves aware of cultural tropes that may impede their ability to attract and retain top Latino talent. Robert Rodriguez, senior vice president of ALPFA Consulting says, “Along with discrimination, Latinos are also the victim of common negative stereotypes including being perceived as being too passive and lacking the conviction necessary to be a good manager, of being too emotional to fill leadership positions.”

Rodriguez goes on to point out that, “These stereotypes often are the result of a lack of understanding about how cultural principles and traditions common in the Latino community impact actions and behavior.” With a lack of full cultural awareness, and a clear understanding of how to address difference, the modern company cannot successfully leverage Latino talent or consumers—a fact that will most notably affect profitability.

But how is cultural competence achieved? It is first important to open the lines of communication surrounding difference. Familiarizing oneself with cultural difference and learning to adapt and welcome change goes a long way in shifting inclusion efforts away from just tolerance to a crosscultural competence that becomes a part of the business at all levels.

Likewise, the newest phase in diversity and inclusion calls on us all to think systemically about how difference can and should be in conversation with all aspects of the business. Tapia points out that **systemic thinking** is “the ability to see the connections and interrelationships across different disciplines, functions, organizations, people, trends, and cultures that lead to insightful analysis and innovative, sustainable solutions.”

For example, realizing that racial minorities and women are underrepresented in science, technology, engineering, and mathematical careers is something that sheer recruitment efforts can address. Systemic thinking calls on diversity professionals to evaluate the pipeline at all levels to address underrepresentation beginning as soon as grade school, all the way up through high school and university levels of development.

In the case of Millennials, company leaders will need to work along with human resource departments and managers to ensure that they are able to recruit and retain top talent. Armed with education, a willingness to switch jobs, and an interest in flexibility, company leaders will need to create cross-departmental and cross-functional career pathing to create a welcoming work environment that meets the needs of this generation without
sacrificing business interests. This may include altering benefits packages, offering telecommuting options, relaxing dress codes, and offering stretch work opportunities that exhibit an investment in professional development of these workers.

Additionally, companies must display strategic savvy in their approach to the new phase of diversity and inclusion. Under this tenet, leaders and companies will need to take inventory of changes in their organization’s workforce and make strategic plans to work all employees into the business moving forward. This goes beyond policies and guidelines, and really focuses on making decisions that are well thought out and cohesively developed.

As workforce demographics shift in a way that has affected white men’s privilege, companies will need to be strategic in how they approach white men who are, while diminishing, still a significant part of the workforce. Matt Carmichael, director of information projects at Advertising Age, says that companies will need to pay special attention to how being culturally inclusive can, and likely will, come into conflict with white male leadership—and white privilege more broadly conceived.

“The workplace is going to need to be sensitive to the needs of the white male as they are changing, as they lose their dominance in the upper echelons of the business world—and it's not going to be easy. There will be a lot of bruised egos, false senses of entitlement, not things that workplaces have had to worry about in the past,” Carmichael says. 33

PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) is just one company that has demonstrated a developed strategy to transition diversity and inclusion efforts into a vein that more directly includes white men. The organization has developed a “White Men and Diversity” DVD featuring diversity and inclusion experts speaking about the importance of engaging white men. The video is viewed by firm partners and discussed in a diversity awareness course centered on white male engagement.

**Conclusion**

Known for being cultural mosaics, the United States and Canada have come to exemplify the dynamic possibilities associated with diversity. With a strong history of immigration that continues today, it is no wonder that population demographic shifts are taking place. As diversity and inclusion practitioners approach the changing North American terrain, it will be important that they keep in mind that the old rules of workforce diversity and inclusion just do not apply anymore.

As business plays out on a global stage, it is important that companies in the United States and Canada pay special attention to the growing numbers of diverse individuals making up the general population. By becoming crossculturally competent—growing to be more than just aware of difference, but proficient in engaging with individuals who are different—diversity and inclusion practitioners can lead the way in reshaping the corporate landscape to better mirror the general public.

Likewise, age demographic shifts bring attention to how employers will need to approach the younger generations with systemic strategies that attract and retain top talent.
Understanding the nuances of the complex Generation Y, and devising strategies that cross different departments, will go a long way in ensuring a smooth transition as the guard is handed over.

Endnotes
1 Terrazas, Aaron and Jeanne Batalova, “Frequently Requested Statistics on Immigrants in the United States,” Migration Policy Institute, October 2009.
4 Terrazas and Batalova, October 2009.
26 2006 Census: Aboriginal Peoples
29 “Advancing the Inclusion of People With Disabilities 2009.”
32 Tapia, August 2011.
33 Collins, July 15, 2011.