



A Future for the Latino Church: Models for Multilingual, Multigenerational Hispanic Congregations
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“As one of the most prominent Hispanic scholars in the church, Daniel captures both the obstacles and opportunities embedded within America’s fastest-growing segment of Christianity, Hispanic evangelicals.”

—Rev. Samuel Rodriguez, president, National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference, The Hispanic National Association of Evangelicals

A Brief Interview with Daniel A. Rodriguez, author of *A Future for the Latino Church*

What need are you addressing in *A Future for the Latino Church*?

Do leaders and members of Hispanic churches in the United States recognize that their communities are in a moment of transition? Older barrios in cities like Chicago, Dallas, Los Angeles, Houston, Miami, New York, Philadelphia and San Antonio, once dominated by foreign-born Spanish-speaking *mexicanos*, *cubanos* and *puertorriqueños*, are now dominated by their native-born children and grandchildren. Even more significantly, a growing number of U.S.-born Latinos are not only English dominant, but they do not speak Spanish at all! Furthermore, they often do not maintain the same level of allegiance to their ancestral homelands or to the cultural and religious commitments their parents or grandparents brought with them from their countries of origin. Nevertheless, the overwhelming majority of U.S.-born English-dominant Latinos are still Latinos at heart. However, they embrace many values and attributes of the dominant group in the United States, thereby creating a cultural distance between themselves and their foreign-born parents, grandparents and neighbors who have more recently arrived in the United States from Latin America. This book seeks to address this reality in a way that not only helps to inform and equip the Hispanic evangelical church to fulfill its God-given mission but also in a way that strengthens Hispanic families and communities across the country, especially those being impacted by this moment of transition.

What have you discovered in your research for this book?

My research during the past five years has convinced me that a modern-day parallel to the episode described in Acts 6:1-7 is being played out in barrios in Chicago, Dallas/Fort Worth, Los Angeles, Miami, New York, Philadelphia and San Antonio. With the rapid growth of the Hispanic evangelical church during the past three decades, problems have arisen.

AUTHOR Q & A



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One of the most significant is that U.S.-born English-dominant Latinos are unintentionally being overlooked in the distribution of the church's attention and resources. U.S.-born English-dominant Latinos, the modern-day Hellenists, are grumbling against foreign-born Spanish-dominant Latinos, the modern-day Hebrews. The complaint of the former is that many Spanish-dominant Latinos still equate "Hispanic ministry" with ministry conducted almost exclusively in Spanish. Under this assumption and historic paradigm, generations of U.S.-born English-dominant Latinos are subsequently "being overlooked in the daily distribution" of *spiritual* food.

The primary assumption underlying this study is that the unique social and cultural context of U.S-born Latinos of Cuban, Mexican and Puerto Rican ancestry calls upon church leaders to prayerfully and thoughtfully reexamine the viability of their traditional approaches to ministry. Like the Greek-speaking Jews described in Acts 6:1-4, "Hellenized Latinos" (i.e., English-dominant Latinos) are getting overlooked, at least insofar as most Hispanic Protestant, evangelical and Pentecostal churches are concerned. The present study addresses this problem, highlighting and analyzing the efforts of dozens of churches across the United States that are successfully reaching all Latinos, including native-born English-dominant Latinos.

What is the main thesis of *A Future for the Latino Church*?

When considering Hispanic ministry in the U.S., most denominational and local church leaders uncritically assume a Spanish-speaking immigrant church model. As a result they are often reluctant to provide relevant and contextually appropriate ministries for U.S.-born English-dominant Latinos. This reluctance is often due to the inability to recognize "the moment of transition in the barrio." Native-born English-dominant Latinos are the largest and fastest-growing group of Hispanics in the U.S. Nevertheless, like the Hellenized Jews described in Acts 6:1-2, U.S.-born English-dominant Latinos are getting overlooked by the overwhelming majority of Hispanic ministries that perpetuate the language and culture of the immigrant generation at the expense of their native-born children and grandchildren. This is the fundamental problem I am addressing in this ground-breaking study.