



RESEARCH REPORT

Engaging Employers in Immigrant Integration

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Contents

Contents	3
Acknowledgments	iv
Executive Summary	v
Engaging Employers in Immigrant Integration	1
Why Study Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration?	1
Methodology	3
The Need for Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration	4
What Do We Know about Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration?	8
Conceptual Framework: Employer’s Decision to Engage in Immigrant Integration	20
What Can Employers Do to Foster the Integration of Their Immigrant Workers?	24
Conclusion	29
Appendix A Summary of Unstructured Interviews with Employer Representatives, Immigrant Organizations, and Labor Groups	31
Notes	36
References	37
About the Author	41
Statement of Independence	42

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Executive Summary

The share of America's workers who are foreign born is growing, and employers are increasingly relying on immigrants to meet their labor needs. The future of America's competitiveness lies heavily on how these immigrants integrate into the workforce. Many immigrants have low levels of education, limited English-language proficiency, compromised immigration status, and difficulties validating credentials gained abroad. Such characteristics hinder their productivity and prevent employers from taking full advantage of their employees' talents.

The large share of immigrants in the workforce underscores the need to engage employers in the workforce integration of immigrants. Employers stand to lose when immigrants have skill gaps, and employers are direct beneficiaries when immigrants upgrade their skills. Employers rely on immigrants for labor and, in recent years, have openly advocated for higher employment-based immigration, regularization of undocumented workers, and comprehensive immigration reform. Finally, in a country such as the United States, where there is no national integration policy, the private sector plays an important role in assisting immigrants with their integration because government funding is not enough.

This report addresses the following questions:

1. What do we know about employer engagement in immigrant integration?
2. What conceptual and theoretical strands can guide knowledge about employer engagement in immigrant integration?
3. What can employers do to foster immigrant integration?

To answer those questions, I review the evidence from literature, and complement this evidence with interviews with key people who are knowledgeable about employers' role in immigrant integration. The focus is on integration practices that take place in the workplace. To provide context, I examine data on the characteristics of immigrant workers from the American Community Survey; these characteristics attest to the need for employer engagement in immigrant integration.

The main findings of this study are the following:

1. In 2013, 17 percent of the American workforce and 44 percent of those lacking a high school diploma were foreign born.
2. Twenty-five percent of all immigrant workers were not proficient in English, 26 percent did not have a high school diploma, and 52 percent were not US citizens.

3. The largest dissimilarity in terms of occupation between US natives and immigrants was among workers with lower levels of education.
4. Immigrant college graduates are less likely than comparable US natives to work in college-intensive occupations.
5. Most of what we know about employer engagement in immigrant integration is related to English-language training, with little information about other forms of engagement. Most studies of workplace training in the English language involve case studies of one industry and programs in which labor unions are involved.
6. Employers are interested in learning more about the most effective practices and resources available to improve the integration of their immigrant workers.
7. Literature about training and high-performance work practices has dominated the research on employer investments in workers, but there are few examples of those concepts being used to analyze managerial practices with the immigrant workforce.
8. Economic conditions, relationship of employers with immigrant-serving organizations, and the demographics of workers and consumers play a role in whether employers adopt workplace-integration practices.
9. The conceptual framework of employer engagement in immigrant integration developed here emphasizes (a) the need for agreement between the different segments of the company; (b) the need to increase the knowledge base of employers about effective integration practices; (c) how immigrant-serving organizations, labor unions, and workforce agencies can increase the knowledge base of employers and can facilitate engagement; (d) the importance of the demographic, economic, and labor market contexts; and (e) the effects of workplace integration practices on business outcomes.
10. The literature review and the interviews with key informants unveiled workplace practices that employers could adopt to foster the integration of their immigrant workforce. Examples of these practices are (a) providing English-language training; (b) offering naturalization assistance; (c) providing safety and occupational training in workers' native languages; (d) having a better understanding of credentials acquired abroad; (e) equipping human resources staff with knowledge in immigration policy and compliance; (f) providing immigrant-conscious employment assistance programs; (g) providing affidavits of support and sponsorship to immigrants trying to adjust their status; (h) negotiating worker-training funds with unions; (i) implementing high-performance work practices that are inclusive of immigrant workers; and (j) partnering with immigrant-serving organizations to enhance employer's capacity to serve immigrant workers.

Engaging Employers in Immigrant Integration

Why Study Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration?

Immigrants are an intrinsic part of America's workforce. In 2013, 17 percent of all workers ages 18 to 64—24 million—were immigrants. Immigrants are an even larger proportion of workers without a high school diploma, of whom 44 percent are foreign-born. In industries such as landscaping, apparel manufacturing, and animal slaughtering and processing, more than one-third of workers are foreign born. Among medical and life science professionals, 43 percent are foreign born.¹ With the aging of baby boomers and the continuing low birth rates, the competitiveness of America's labor force hinges more than ever on the effective integration of immigrants into the workforce.

The growing number of immigrants in the workforce poses challenges in an economy in which high levels of education and technical skills are increasingly in demand. One-third of immigrant workers do not have a high school diploma. More than one-fourth has compromised legal immigration status, because they either are temporary workers or are without valid documentation to reside in the United States. Many are unable to validate occupational credentials they have earned. The high proportion of workers with limited English-language proficiency is especially challenging. One of every four immigrants in the workforce—over 6 million—does not speak English at all or speaks it poorly. These problems hinder their integration into the workforce and prevent employers from taking full advantage of their talents (Dawson et al. 2014; Duval-Couetil and Mikulecky 2011; Bulow Group, Inc. 2005).

Immigrant integration is commonly left to the immigrants, ethnic communities, and immigrant organizations (Borjas 1992; Penninx 2003; Portes and Böröcz 1989). But the large share of immigrants in the workforce underscores the need to engage employers in their integration. Employers stand to lose when immigrants have skills gaps but directly benefit when immigrants upgrade their skills. Employers rely on immigrants for labor and, in recent years, have openly advocated for higher employment-based immigration, regularization of undocumented workers, and comprehensive immigration reform (American Hospital Association 2013; Hegman 2007; US Chamber of Commerce

2014).² Engagement in immigrant integration demonstrates that employers see immigrants as an integral part of their workforce and adds currency to their demands for immigration reform.

Finally, in a country such as the United States, which has no national integration policy, the private sector plays an important role in assisting immigrant integration. The government alone cannot meet this need. Since 2008, funding for Adult Basic Education has stalled at around \$600 million. Although 36 million adults—including 26 million workers—lack foundational literacy and numeracy skills, federally funded programs serve only 1.6 million people (National Skills Coalition, n.d.). The English-literacy component of the Adult Basic Education program has also stalled at around \$70 million, despite the growing number of workers with limited English proficiency (LEP).³ The supply of English-language classes cannot keep up with the demand.⁴ Employers can fill some of those needs through workplace-based programs.

This report analyzes employer engagement in immigrant integration, with a focus on workplace practices. Workplaces are essential spaces for immigrant integration. Most immigrants come to the United States to work, and they spend a good part of their lives in workplaces. Thus, workplace-based practices can have great effect on the integration of immigrants. Because workplaces are the domain of employers, employers have the power to implement workplace-integration practices if they so wish.

The goal of this report is to provide a roadmap for understanding and enhancing employer engagement in the workforce development of immigrants. It seeks to answer three questions:

1. What do we know about employer engagement in immigrant integration?
2. How can we conceptualize employer engagement in immigrant integration?
3. What can employers do to engage in workplace integration?

From a policy perspective, the topic is timely. New White House initiatives call for further employer engagement in job-driven training (White House 2014). Employer engagement is widely recognized as an element in successful workforce-development systems (Barnow and Spaulding, forthcoming). In addition, in its *Strengthening Communities by Welcoming All Residents* report, the White House Task Force on New Americans encourages employers to engage in the integration of immigrants (2015).

For businesses, the idea that supporting and investing in workers is essential to maintaining a competitive edge is gaining traction. Having a “good jobs strategy”, being a “high-road” employer, and maintaining high-performance work practices are increasingly recognized as employer choices (Ton 2014). Good Companies @ Work (a Hitachi Foundation program), the Good Company Index, and the US Department of Labor’s motto “Doing Good and Doing Well” are examples of how supporting workers is

good for businesses (Bassi et al. 2014; US Department of Labor 2015). Employer engagement in immigrant integration belongs to this broader set of business practices in which workers are central for successful business performance.

Methodology

To better understand and enhance employer engagement in immigrant integration, I draw from a systematic review of the literature and unstructured interviews with informants knowledgeable about employer engagement in immigrant integration. The literature review examines studies of workplace immigrant integration practices and nonimmigrant-specific literature that is relevant for understanding employer engagement in workforce development.

Because I interviewed individuals from a diverse set of organizations, I used an unstructured interview to elicit information that could be used to generate a conceptual framework from the bottom up. Unstructured interviews are used when trying to “understand the complex behavior of people without imposing any *a priori* categorization, which might limit the field of inquiry;” this method also generates additional questions in response to interviewee narratives (Zhang and Wildemuth, n.d.).

The main topics addressed in the interviews were (1) whether the large presence of immigrants in the workforce have changed workplace, management, or human resources practices; (2) how employer engagement in immigrant integration plays out in the industry relevant to the interviewee; (3) which workplace-integration practices employers are using; and (4) why employers engage in those practices.

The 13 informants were selected for their knowledge about workplace-based employer engagement and their ability to offer a high-level view of the main issues of interest for this report. The interviewees were the directors, program officers, and program managers of employer and professional, immigrant-serving, and national organizations engaged in skills development. The employer and professional organizations interviewed were (1) American Apparel and Footwear Association; (2) Information and Technology Industry Foundation; (3) Council for Global Immigration; (4) ImmigrationWorks USA; (5) Los Angeles Chamber of Commerce; and (6) Society for Human Resource Management. The immigrant-serving organizations interviewed were (1) National Immigration Forum; (2) Upwardly Global; and (3) US Committee for Refugees and Immigrants. Two of the interviewed organizations were union groups: (1) Building Skills Partnership, Los Angeles; and (2) Healthcare Career Advancement Program. I also interviewed two workforce development

organizations: the National Skills Coalition and World Education Services. Appendix A presents a global summary of the interviews.

The systematic literature review and the conversations with key informants were used to inform the development of a conceptual framework. It was clear that interviewees were bringing the perspective both of the employer and of the worker and were identifying outcomes, relationships, and intervening variables that could be put together in a conceptual framework.

The section “What Can Employers to Foster the Integration of Their Immigrant Workers?” is generated from the literature review and practices identified in the conversations with key informants. Those conversations unveiled specific practices either because interviewees were directly involved in their implementation or because they knew of employers who were putting them in place. I will not produce an exhaustive inventory of current practices nor assess how common those practices are among employers. Such information could not be generated because the number of organizations interviewed was too small and because employers were not part of the study. Practices identified in the course of the conversations with key informants can be seen as examples of what is possible within the workplace when immigrant integration is a goal.

The Need for Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration

In 2013, there were 41 million immigrants in the United States, and 24 million ages 16 to 64 were in the workforce. The share of immigrant workers has increased from 14 percent in 2001 to 17 percent (figure 1). Among workers without a high school diploma, the immigrant share has increased considerably, from 29 percent in 2001 to 44 percent in 2013.

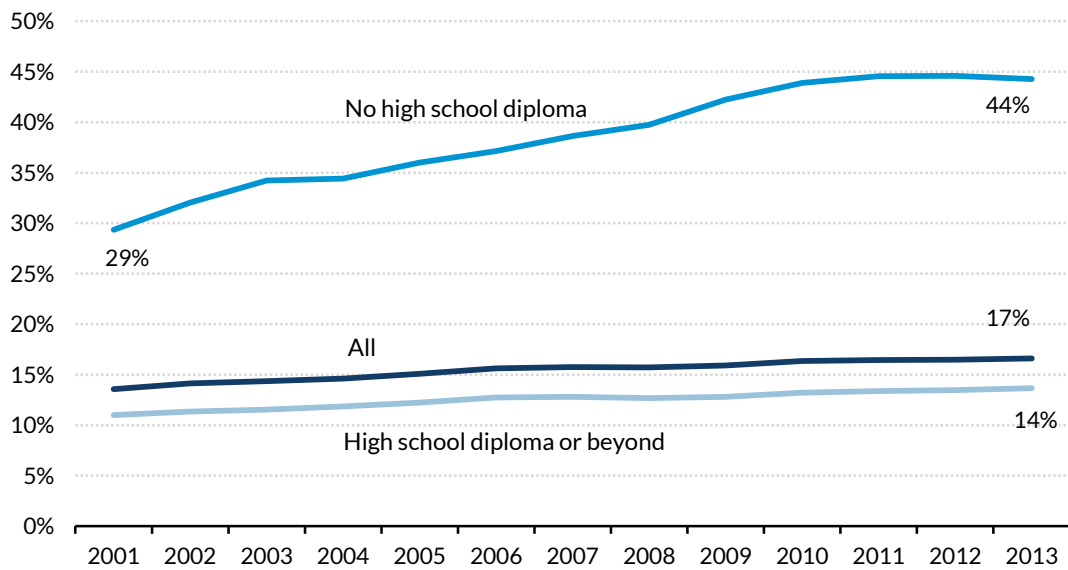
Immigrants have been able to secure jobs, but the need for employers to engage in immigrant integration is evident upon examining the characteristics of immigrant workers, their occupations, the industries where they work, and the trends in federal government funding. Twenty-five percent of immigrant workers do not speak English or speak it poorly, and 26 percent do not have a high school diploma (table 1). About 10 percent has lived in the United States for five years or more. Over half of immigrant workers are not citizens.

Looking across 15 detailed industries employing the largest share of immigrants, I find that though some have many self-employed entrepreneurs, most rely heavily on hourly and salaried employees

(figure 2). The taxi and limousine industry has the highest share of immigrants: 57 percent of workers in this industry are foreign born. Manufacturing employs a large share of immigrants. Fifty-four percent of workers in the cut-and-sew apparel industry are immigrants, lending credence to Connelly and DeGraff's (2003) claim that immigrants have changed the face and the language of manufacturing work. In the animal slaughtering and processing industry, 37 percent of workers are immigrants. The landscaping industry and services to buildings and dwellings also rely heavily on immigrant workers.

FIGURE 1
Share of Immigrants by Educational Level

Workers, 2001–13



Source: Tabulations of 2013 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata based on Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0 [machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

TABLE 1

Selected Characteristics of Immigrants

Workers, 2013

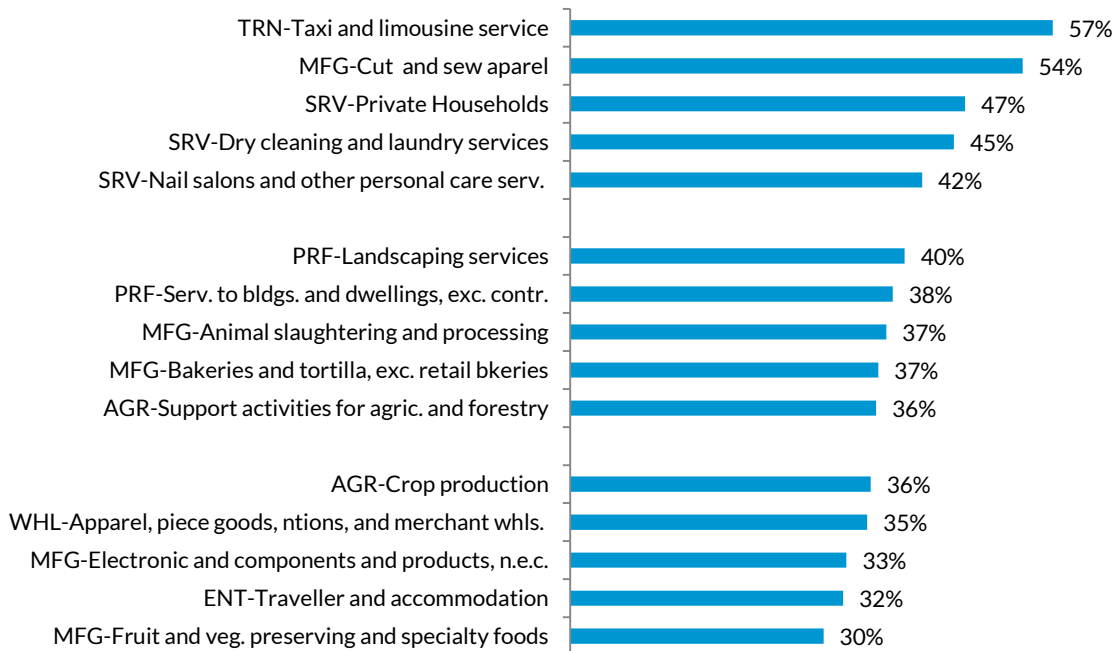
Skill-related characteristic	Percent
Does not speak English or does not speak English well	25
Is not a US citizen	52
Has lived in the United States for five years or less	11
Does not have a high school diploma	26
Has a bachelor's degree or higher	30

Source: Tabulations of 2013 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata from Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010.

FIGURE 2

Fifteen Industries with the Largest Immigrant Share

Industries with 50,000 or more workers, 2013



Source: Tabulations of 2013 American Community Survey Public Use Microdata from US Census Bureau DataFerrett. For more information, see <http://dataferrett.census.gov/>.

Note: AGR = agriculture; ENT = entertainment; MFG = manufacturing; n.e.c. = not elsewhere classified; PRF = professional ; SRV = services; TRN = transportation; WHL = wholesale.

Although immigrants are 17 percent of the workforce, they are only 8 percent of all managers and supervisors (table 2). Ten percent of the immigrant workforce is a member of a union, just 2 percentage points below the corresponding figure for US-born workers.

College-educated immigrants experience difficulties in accessing jobs that use a high share of college-educated workers. In this analysis, occupations in which 33 percent or more of the workforce had a bachelor’s degree are categorized as college intensive. Results show that among US-born workers with a college education, 74 percent are in college-intensive occupations. The comparable figure for the foreign born is 70 percent. There are several reasons well-educated immigrants cannot access those jobs, such as inability to transfer credentials from abroad (such as university diplomas and occupational licenses), a lack of employer understanding about the content of credentials acquired abroad, limited English-language proficiency, and difficulties integrating into America’s corporate culture.

TABLE 2
Work and Occupational Characteristics

Characteristic	Percent
Immigrants among all workers	17
Union members	
Immigrants	10
US natives	12
Immigrants among managers and supervisors	8
College-graduate immigrants in college-intensive occupations	70
College-graduate natives in college-intensive occupations	74
Occupational dissimilarity	
Between natives and immigrants without a high school diploma	31
Between natives high school diploma and some college	20
Between natives and immigrant college graduates	24

Source: Tabulations of 2013 American Community Survey Microdata from Steven Ruggles, J. Trent Alexander, Katie Genadek, Ronald Goeken, Matthew B. Schroeder, and Matthew Sobek. *Integrated Public Use Microdata Series: Version 5.0* [Machine-readable database]. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota, 2010; and Public Use Microdata from US Census Bureau DataFerrett (for more information, see <http://dataferrett.census.gov/>).

Comparison of the occupations of US natives and immigrants by educational level also suggests that immigrants are having problems integrating fully into the workforce. I assessed the occupational dissimilarity between immigrant and US-native workers by education level using a dissimilarity index (table 2). This index takes the absolute difference between the share of all immigrants and the share of all US natives for each detailed occupation, sums those differences, and divides them by 2. The equation is as follows:

$$DI = 1/2 \sum_{i=1}^n \left| \frac{nat_i}{NAT} - \frac{fb_i}{FB} \right|.$$

The result is a number between 1 and 100 that indicates what percentage of workers would have to change occupations to make the occupational distribution of US natives and immigrants equal. The larger this number is, the more dissimilar the occupational structures of US natives and immigrants are.

Immigrant and US-native workers without a high school diploma show the most dissimilarity in their occupational structures: 31 percent of those workers would have to change occupations to make their occupational structures similar. The least dissimilar workers are those with a high school diploma and some college education. The dissimilarity index for workers with four-year college degrees is 24 percent. The larger dissimilarity among lower-educated workers may have to do with immigrants being unable to access the trades that require licensing and lower-skill occupations that require English-language skills.

In summary, foreign-born workers at all education levels face difficulties integrating fully into the workforce, but the challenges are greatest for the least- and most-educated immigrants. The figures reveal opportunities for employers to participate in upgrading the immigrant workforce through workplace-based practices. English-language classes, citizenship education, high school completion, occupational and safety training, and education about the content of university diplomas acquired abroad are some of the areas amenable for employer participation in the development and integration of the immigrant workforce.

What Do We Know about Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration?

What we know about employer engagement in immigrant integration is found in three sources: (1) research on immigrants and their employers, (2) nonimmigrant-specific research about employer practices to enhance productivity, and (3) perspectives of managers and program directors of employer, immigrant, union, and national organizations who are knowledgeable about immigrant integration in the workplace.

Research about employer engagement in immigrant integration mainly consists of case studies focusing on workplace English-language training. The relevant nonimmigrant-specific literature is spread across the disciplines of economics and management, and it focuses on training, diversity and inclusion, and high-performance work practices. Key informants bring information about what is

happening on the ground and about the elements they see as essential for effective engagement of employers in workplace immigrant integration. Table 3 shows the main topics and findings of the literature and key-informant interviews.

TABLE 3

Main Themes in the Literature and Key Informants' Interviews

Theme and authors	Main findings
Historical Barrett 1992; Carlson 1970; Korman 1965; Loizides 2007; Wegner 2013; Ziegler-McPherson 2009	An unprecedented number of immigrants in the workforce in the first two decades of the 20th century led employers to offer English-language training and citizenship education in the workplace.
Immigration policy Council for Global Immigration 2014; Luthra 2009; Pathways to Prosperity: Canada; Waldinger and Erickson 2003	In countries with skills-based immigration, employers have a direct role in immigrant integration; employers are unlikely to invest in temporary workers; employers make investments in time and resources in immigration-law compliance; and staff members who are knowledgeable about immigration law can have a great effect on the workplace integration of immigrant workers.
Diversity and inclusion Abbasi and Hollman 1991; Ewoh 2013; Fitzsimmons 2013	Management adopts practices to take into account the language and cultural diversity of its immigrant workforce to better integrate them into the workplace; immigrants are assets in a multicultural global economy.
High-performance work practices Appelbaum et al. 2000; Appelbaum, Bernhardt, and Murnane 2003; Blasi and Kruse 2006; Chowhan, Zeytinoglu, and Cooke 2014; Jobs for the Future and National Association of Manufacturers 2006; Pfeffer 1996, 2007; Posthuma et al. 2013	English-language training for limited-English-proficient workers could be part of a high-performance work strategy. High-performance work practices that are related to motivation, such as performance appraisals and compensation tied to performance, enhance immigrants' job satisfaction.
Occupational training Ahlstrand, Bassi, and McMurrer 2003; Bassi 1994; Barrett and O'Connell 2001; Barrett et al. 2013; Becker 1964; Chenven 2004; Hum and Simpson 2003; Jobs for the Future and National Association of Manufacturers 2006; Liu and Batt 2007; Loewenstein and Spletzer 1999; Thompson and Siddiqi 2007; Van den Heuvel and Wooden 1997	Most employers provide on-the-job training; employers invest less on less educated workers than on better-educated workers; employers invest in general training; occupational training is imparted within English-language training; the presence of immigrants in the workplace leads to changes in the way training is delivered; and immigrants receive less training than native workers, especially non-English-speaking immigrants.
English-language training Bernhardt, Dresser, and Hatton 2003; Burt and Mathews-Aydinli 2007; Chenven 2004; Dawson et al. 2014; Jobs for the Future and National Association of Manufacturers 2006; McHugh and Challinor 2011; Bulow Group, Inc. 2005	Case studies of employer practices; employers want to know more about the best ways to deliver training and what resources are available; unions are providing training and can bring together the supply and demand sides of training; good practices include training on the clock, having English classes contextualized to the employment situation, and making English learning part of the business strategy. Those programs are sensitive to economic conditions.
Key informants' views See interviewed organizations in the Methodology section, and summary of conversations in appendix A.	High-road employers are more inclined to provide workplace immigrant integration opportunities to their workers; some of the factors intervening in the adoption of practices are the demographics of the labor market and the customer base, along with economic conditions. Immigrant-serving organizations facilitate employer adoption of workplace integration practices.

The systematic review of what we know about employer engagement on immigrant integration shows that (1) most work on immigrants has been on English-language training with little attention to

other forms of engagement, (2) we know little about how human resources and management practices have adapted to the growing immigrant workforce, and (3) a conceptual framework of employer engagement in immigrant integration is lacking, but previous research and information provided by key informants can guide the development of a such a framework.

Systematic Review of Research Evidence

HISTORY OF EMPLOYER PARTICIPATION IN IMMIGRANT INTEGRATION

The better-known experiences of employer participation in immigrant integration date back to the period of high immigration during the first quarter of the 20th century. Those integration practices were carried out under the banner of Americanization. At that time, the massive number of foreign-born people entering the workforce led employers to adopt practices to foster the workplace integration of immigrants. The most notable of these practices were English and citizenship classes. Frances Kellor, a progressive voice in the Americanization movement, argued for employers to institute English classes for immigrant workers on the basis of efficiency, because it would improve their safety record and lead to a more stable workforce (Carlson 1970). Promoting citizenship was part of a patriotic movement that drew support from both progressives and immigration restrictionists of the time (Wegner 2013; Ziegler-McPherson 2009).

Studies have recounted the experience of employers who offered English classes at the workplace (Korman 1965). Possibly the best-known example is the Ford English School, because it was “one of the most extensive and best organized efforts yet made by an industry for the Americanization of its foreign-born labor” (Loizides 2007, 123). It cannot go unnoticed that sometimes the programs were used as coercive measures and that some employers threatened employees’ removal, withheld promotions, and paid lower wages to those who did not attend the factory classes (Barrett 1992).

Although adoption of English-language programs at the workplace was by no means widespread, state-led outreach was important in increasing participation. In Massachusetts, for instance, enrollment in factory classes more than quintupled thanks to increased publicity, partnerships with industrial organizations, and increased availability of teachers during a period when industry growth was stagnant (Ziegler-McPherson 2009, 129–30).

These programs, however, were sensitive to economic conditions. As the economy entered the Great Depression, English classes were “among the first frills to be cut” (Ziegler-McPherson 2009, 130).

IMMIGRATION POLICY AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT

Immigration policy can be a catalyst for employer engagement. In countries with employment- and skill-based immigration such as in Australia, Canada, and New Zealand, employers get involved in the integration of immigrants, and their engagement could start from before the immigrant arrives in the country. In those countries, employer engagement in immigrant integration is part of a broad range of integration policies articulated at different levels of government. Yet, the Canadian initiative Pathways to Prosperity concludes that although evidence of employer engagement programs exists across the country, employer involvement has not been systematically studied, and no attempt has been made to carefully analyze and disseminate best practices in the field.⁵

Immigration policies regarding temporary immigrants also affect if and how employers engage in immigrant integration. The Department of Homeland Security estimated the number of temporary workers and their families in the United States at 840,000 in 2012 (Baker 2014). Immigration policy determines the length of stay of temporary workers, the conditions for status adjustment, and the wages employers are supposed to pay. Employers are less likely to make investments in workplace changes for a workforce that is temporary (Luthra 2009). Temporary workers are expected to fit immediately into the negotiated position and to have the latest skills without the cost of training (Waldinger and Erickson 2003).

Immigration policy also affects employer engagement in immigrant integration through staff involvement in immigration-law compliance. Complicated immigration laws require significant investment of employers' time and resources. The process of hiring a foreign national requires extensive documentation, letter drafting, preparation of immigration packages, and educating immigrants about the process (Council for Global Immigration 2014). The Council for Global Immigration estimated that employers in the professional, technical, and scientific services industry spent in average 1,619 hours in H1B processes and 739 hours in labor certification processes in 2013.

Staff members who are knowledgeable about immigration-law compliance are gatekeepers of immigrant workers, knowing the exact length of temporary employment, advising immigrants about needed documents, submitting and following up with employment verification, and even sponsoring status adjustments. In this way, employers that are knowledgeable about immigration laws can have a great effect on the integration of immigrant workers. This is similar to Jasso's (2011) assertions that staff members in immigration offices can affect immigrants' opportunities for advancement.

THE DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION PARADIGM

Immigrant workplace integration can fall under the umbrella of diversity and inclusion. Organizations that adapt to a culturally diverse workforce will have the opportunity to attract and retain the most qualified people in those groups and to elicit the best performance from them (Abbasi and Hollman 1991; Fitzsimmons 2013). In a culturally and ethnically diverse workplace, managing and valuing diversity becomes an organization's most valuable asset (Ewoh 2013).

In the diversity and inclusion paradigm, employers make adjustments on the management side to maximize the potential of their workers. The right conditions need to be in place before employers can reap the benefits of their diverse and multicultural workforce (Fitzsimmons 2013). For firms to succeed, managers must know the essential skills for managing multicultural organizations, acquire information about the cultural backgrounds and value systems of immigrant workers, and know how to interact with a diverse workforce (Abbasi and Hollman 1991). This knowledge can be gained through the interaction of three key factors: company leadership, employee empowerment, and institutionalization of practices (Ewoh 2013).

Although there is a large set of literature on diversity and multicultural management, little work exists about management and human resources practices dealing specifically with the growing immigrant workforce. But the diversity and inclusion paradigm is useful because it represents a widely accepted view that employers should take steps to create a more inclusive workplace that considers the increased diversity of workers.

HIGH-PERFORMANCE WORK PRACTICES

Employer engagement in immigrant integration could also be seen through the lens of high-performance work practices (HPWPs), which are designed to enhance organizational performance by improving employee capability, commitment, and productivity (Posthuma et al. 2013). The principle behind HPWPs is that how people are managed affects quality, profitability, productivity, and returns to shareholders (Pfeffer 2007). HPWPs can be broad and are not always referred to as such. They typically include the following practices organized into a coherent system (Blasi and Kruse 2006): (1) having intensive recruitment and selection procedures; (2) sharing information with employees; (3) training employees to perform effectively; (4) rewarding employees according to their performance; (5) conducting performance management; and (6) providing opportunities for employee involvement in changing the way the work and roles are organized.

Only a few employers have adopted HPWPs (Blasi and Kruse 2006). Pfeffer (1996) asks why those practices are not more widespread and suggests that for many employers "seeing is believing."

Moreover, HPWPs too often fall out of the “point of view” or “focus of attention” of most employers and hierarchies, tradition, organizational politics, and financial strategy may take precedent, affecting the decision of employers to engage in immigrant integration (Posthuma et al. 2013; Pfeffer 1996). Employers may also be reluctant to adopt HPWPs because of the lack of a clear and coherent taxonomy that identifies the range of possible practices and their relationship to performance outcomes (Posthuma et al. 2013).

We know little about the use of HPWPs among employers with a large immigrant workforce. In their study of Canadian immigrants, Chowhan, Zeytinoglu, and Cooke (2014) state that immigrants are a segment of the workforce that is understudied in management. Not being proficient in English can limit the ability of immigrants to participate in teamwork, work meetings, and occupational training. Motivation-enhancing HPWPs, such as formal performance appraisals and whether those appraisals affect promotions and wages, have a larger effect on the job satisfaction of immigrants than on that of Canadian natives (Chowhan, Zeytinoglu, and Cooke 2014). The authors suggest it is possible those practices are consistent with immigrants’ expected notions of equality in the host country and that such practices help overcome feelings of being devalued because of underemployment.

A study of employers providing English-language classes points out that firms offering the most promising English training were high-road employers following what could be seen as high-performance work practices (Jobs for the Future and National Association of Manufacturers 2006). Educating employers about possible practices with immigrant workers could lead employers to include integration within a broader range of HPWP (Pfeffer 1996; Posthuma et al. 2013).

GENERAL AND OCCUPATIONAL TRAINING

Possibly the most common way that employers engage in immigrant integration is through on-the-job training. The majority of employers provide formal or informal training to their workers (Barnow and Spaulding, forthcoming). Profit-maximizing employers invest in training because it improves the quality of the firm’s products (Bassi 1994). On-the-job training provides an effective, efficient way to satisfy the demand for skills in organizations characterized by continuous changes in technology and competition (Liu and Batt 2007; Ton 2014).

Training is an investment in workers. Employers are unlikely to invest in training if they cannot recover the investment. On-the-job training could be general or firm specific (Becker 1964). Studies have found that a sizeable portion of the skills that workers accumulate through employer-provided training is general (Loewenstein and Spletzer 1999). Examples of general training are courses in basic math, customer service, and the English language. General training increases worker productivity with

the training firm and other firms as well, and it makes the worker more attractive to alternative employers. To retain the worker, the employer providing the general training must increase wages; hence the employer may have difficulty recovering the training investment (Barrett and O'Connell 2001). The only way the employer can see a return on the investment is if the employee stays on at a wage lower than what he or she could earn elsewhere. The costs of moving from job to job, a sense of loyalty toward the employer who is offering the training, and the difficulty in finding another job reduce the chances of employees quitting and increase the employers' abilities to recover their investment in general training (Ahlstrand, Bassi, and McMurrer 2003).

There is little research into how those training investments are playing out with the immigrant workforce in the United States. Employers may be reluctant to provide training to immigrants, thinking they will leave the country (Barrett et al. 2013). Low educational levels also place a good share of the immigrant workforce at a training disadvantage, because employers tend to provide more training to better-educated workers (Ahlstrand, Bassi, and McMurrer 2003; O'Connell and Junblut 2008).

The few studies on immigrants have used data for English-speaking countries other than the United States and have found that immigrants receive less training than do native workers, especially those who do not speak English (Barrett et al. 2013; Hum and Simpson 2003; Van den Heuvel and Wooden 1997).⁶

Low levels of education, limited English proficiency (LEP) and inability to transfer credentials to the United States may call for different approaches to training. The construction industry has a focus on improving safety and recommends appointing bilingual supervisors, using bilingual graphical signage, and pairing new employees with experienced bilingual workers (Thompson and Siddiqi 2007).⁷ Because of language barriers, on-the-job training may have to be delivered in Spanish and other non-English languages. Another approach is the integration of occupational training and English-language learning (Chenven 2004; Jobs for the Future and National Association of Manufacturers 2006).

ENGLISH-LANGUAGE TRAINING AT THE WORKPLACE

Most of the attention on workplace practices for immigrant integration has been on English classes for LEP workers. The classes may be funded by the company or by labor unions, through grants from the US government or foundations or through a combination of funding sources.

Burt and Mathews-Aydinli (2007) identify three advantages of English-language classes offered in the workplace: ease of scheduling, content authenticity, and a positive environment reflected in better interactions in the workplace. McHugh and Challinor (2011) agree that the convenience of workplace

English-language classes arguing that, given the many demands on the time and resources of immigrants, on-site classes that eliminate travel time and that ensure alignment with employer needs are of great interest to those seeking to promote immigrant integration. McHugh and Challinor also describe various employer programs in the United States and abroad and recommend funding workplace instruction through employer partnerships with public providers, using technology to reach workers in different sites to achieve scalability, and providing government-supported technical assistance to employers about best ways to provide English-language training.

Dawson and colleagues (2014) conducted a survey of hotel managers in Texas who were attending a training conference. A total of 130 managers were provided the survey, and 87 completed it. In that study, 46 percent of the respondents said their company provided English-language classes in the workplace. The study focused on how managers communicated with their LEP workers. The study shows that employers' adoption of language practices and policies improves managers' communication satisfaction with LEP workers. The practices and policies that improve communication with LEP workers are (1) the use of bilingual employees for translation, (2) the implementation of official policies on translation, (3) the translation of all important documents in the languages spoken by the workers, (4) the top management's awareness of communication barriers, and (5) the company's encouragement of LEP workers to improve their language skills.

The Bulow Group, Inc. (2005), funded by the US Department of Labor, used a combination of methods to collect information about 161 employers in eight industry sectors. Researchers conducted focus groups, interviews with industry leaders, roundtables, and a survey of small and medium-sized manufactures in Arizona and Mexico. This study found that LEP is a big obstacle to companies that employ a significant number of LEP workers. It was also found that English classes provide employers a way to promote from within. Employers reported not having sufficient tools and training resources and were seeking information about best practices and communication venues to solve the challenges and problems associated with training an LEP workforce.

Chenven (2004) studied eight workplace training and education programs in construction, hospitality, manufacturing, and health care. Labor unions were partners in all the programs. This study concluded that the main challenges facing the programs were funding, assessment of English-language skills, curriculum development, and access to qualified instructors.

Jobs for the Future and the National Association of Manufacturers (2006) interviewed 65 manufacturing firms identified through a canvass of workforce intermediaries, conducted six focus groups with employers, and performed case studies of four firms deemed to have the most promising

English-instruction practices. They found that few employers were offering English-language classes and that employers did not know about resources available to improve their workers' language skills. Some employers find work-arounds to deal with their LEP workers, such as signage and color-coded tasks, but employers report needing workers who can communicate suggestions for product and process improvement and who can speak with coworkers of different nationalities (Jobs for the Future and National Association of Manufacturers 2006).

Employers put less value on generalized English classes than on occupational or firm-specific language training. Jobs for the Future and the National Manufacturers Association (2006) connected English instruction with high-road employer practices. For those employers, English training is part of the business strategy and is tied to competitiveness, funds are earmarked for this purpose in the company budget, and English-as-a-second-language instruction is provided on site and on the clock. Best-practice employers have applied to their immigrant workforce many of the successful practices written about in the literature, such as empowering frontline workers to make decisions and cross-training them to be able to perform different tasks according to demand.

On-the-Ground Perspectives of Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration

Unstructured interviews validated many of the themes raised in the literature and brought out additional aspects for which there is little research.

The conversations with key informants touched on a number of the main themes of the literature: (1) the focus on English-language training; (2) the high-road employers that engage in immigrant integration; (3) the need to educate employers on the benefits of these practices; (4) the employers' unwillingness to invest in temporary workers; (5) the need for skills and its relationship to employer engagement in immigrant integration; and (6) the employer practices within the diversity and inclusion paradigm.

The interviewees also highlighted the roles of the labor and consumer market demographics, the benefits of employer engagement to workers, and the growing involvement of employers in citizenship education. Further, the interviews revealed a critical mass of employers across the country in a variety of industries actively participating in the integration of immigrant workers. Unions and immigrant-serving organizations were revealed as instrumental in creating employer awareness of the need for workplace-integration practices and in facilitating such practices.

EMPLOYER ENGAGEMENT FROM THE POINT OF VIEW OF EMPLOYERS

For interviewees, engagement in immigrant integration has to be seen “from the point of view of the employer.” Employers want to know what the benefit of those practices is for them. After all, as one interviewee stated, “employers are in the business of doing business.” Interviewees mentioned fewer turnovers, better productivity, company loyalty, and the ability to create a managerial class from within as reasons employers engage in immigrant integration. But interviewees also brought up the theme of high-road employers or, as commented by one interviewee, “employers acting out of their good heart.” Some of those practices are used because they are part of the employer’s business model—these are high-road employers that welcome opportunities to foster the integration of their immigrant workers. Informants reported a mix of bottom-line– and high-road–driven employers, possibly using practices associated with high-performance models.

EDUCATING EMPLOYERS

Interviewees communicated the need to educate employers about the benefits of immigrant integration practices. Interviewees in immigrant-serving organization noted that their relationships with employers are “cultivated and nourished.” These organizations do considerable employer outreach. Given limited resources, organizations target employers they think are more likely to produce a successful outcome. According to the interviewees, when employers are educated about the benefits of immigrant integration practices, they are often open to the idea of incorporating these practices into the workplace. Various organizations reported some difficulty in keeping up with demand for the services because of their limited resources. This is reminiscent of the historical experience showing that, when public-private partnerships were created and publicized, the number of employers willing to offer workplace English instruction increased substantially. It also relates to Pfeffer’s (1996) idea that “seeing is believing” and Posthuma and others’ (2013) argument that, by providing a taxonomy of practices, employer involvement in HPWPs can increase. As found in the Bulow Group, Inc. (2005) study, employers are looking for ways to engage and are trying to figure out what works for them.

The need to educate employers about foreign credentials also was discussed. Recognizing that some immigrant professionals lose human capital upon moving to the United States because they cannot readily transfer their diplomas, licenses, or work experience, organizations are working on credentialing. One aspect of this work is to educate employers about the content of the credentials immigrants bring with them and about ways to assess those credentials and to facilitate conversation of skills to the US workplace.

EFFECTS ON WORKERS

Although this study focuses on employers, interviewees also brought the point of view of workers to the conversation. On-site English and citizenship classes are voluntary but highly attended by workers. Key informants often spoke about what the practices mean for workers. In some cases, they result in better work schedules because workers who speak better English can move to daytime shifts that require more demanding customer interactions. In other cases, they can result in promotion opportunities. One informant said, “Improving their language skills can be life changing for these workers—going from a night to a day shift, possibly becoming a supervisor.” Workers “take the [English-language] training to the doctor, to schools.” It was often said that such integration practices can make workers to feel more loyal to the employer, because they perceive that the employer “cares” for them.

TEMPORARY WORKERS

Immigrants with temporary work permits, such as those in specialty occupations holding H1B visas, were seen as being in a different situation. Key informants related that temporariness means that employers engage in bringing workers here and assisting them with housing, but otherwise make little effort to integrate them into the workforce. As mentioned in the literature, those workers were seen as expected to fit into the workplace immediately and not to have integration problems. It is easy for employers in the information and technology industry to assess and validate workers’ credentials, because those skills are quite objective and employers are often hiring from a network of companies, sometimes their own subsidiaries abroad.

CONTEXT

Employers who report facing problems filling their vacancies were willing to recognize the experience immigrants bring with them, such as the case of information technology workers and immigrants from Mexico and Central America with experience in the apparel industry. Key informants also placed employer engagement in immigrant integration within the context of customers’ demographics. Employers want to buy goodwill with the growing immigrant community, which can be done partly by investing in the immigrant workforce. The large immigrant customer base also demands supervisors who are culturally competent. The retail and health care sectors were mentioned as examples of industries in which the diversity of customers forces the need for a culturally competent workforce. But even within a diverse customer base, key informants stated that workers must be bilingual to move up in the workplace.

Conceptual Framework: Employer's Decision to Engage in Immigrant Integration

One goal of the present study is to develop a conceptual framework to guide understanding of employer engagement in immigrant integration. This conceptual framework draws from the literature review and the interviews with key informants, and it identifies employer motivations, action routes, intervening factors, and outcomes. It refers to profit maximizing behavior and to management practices for achieving business goals. This framework, shown in figure 3, could work for any type of worker investment, but it is developed with specific reference to immigrants.

MOTIVATION

Employers are in the business of doing business. They will invest in an immigrant workforce if doing so improves outcomes such as profits, market share, community standing, and reputation. Employers invest in their workers if they perceive a return on their investment. But the focus need not be on immigrant integration practices. Employers may be thinking more broadly about an integrated set of practices that enhance performance, such as HPWPs, which include fostering the integration of their immigrant workers. Those business principles are the essential reason some employers decide to engage in the integration of their immigrant workers.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

Different units within a company are involved in the development of policies and practices to promote the betterment of immigrant workers: the owner or chief executive officer, the human resources office, the managers and supervisors, and (increasingly in many companies) the corporate social responsibility office (CSRO). The CSRO represents the commitment by organizations to balance financial performance with contributions to the quality of life of their employees, of the local community, and of society at large (Society for Human Resource Management 2007). With respect to immigrants, CSROs (1) do outreach to immigrant communities, (2) participate in activities convened by immigrant-serving organizations, and (3) may even join forces with immigrant organizations about issues, such as immigration reform, citizenship campaigns, and occupational safety and health. Small- and medium-size employers may have a less-structured corporate organization in which those three functions may be performed by the owner or by a few employees.

To be effective, the goal of fostering immigrant integration needs to be supported by the four core units of the company CEO, human resources, management, and CSRO. As described by Posthuma and colleagues (2013), the company's different units should be parallel, which means that their principles,

policies, practices, and products have the same goal or purpose. In the case of small employers, it is incumbent on the owner to provide the leadership for adopting those principles, policies, and practices.

EMPLOYER-KNOWLEDGE BASE AND THE RESOURCES AVAILABLE TO EMPLOYERS

Whether or not an employer engages in immigrant integration practices is determined in part by the knowledge each has about possible practices and what those practices would mean to that employer. For many, investment in workers falls out of the “point of view” or “focus of attention of most employers” (Pfeffer 1996). Hierarchies, tradition, organizational politics, and focus on financial strategy affect the decision of employers to engage in immigrant integration (Posthuma et al. 2013; Pfeffer 1996). Employers may also be reluctant to adopt immigrant integration practices because they lack an understanding of possible practices and their relationship to performance outcomes (Posthuma et al. 2013). Educating employers about the benefits of those practices ranked high among the interviewed immigrant-serving organizations.

Labor unions, immigrant organizations, and publicly funded workforce agencies can inform employers about engagement possibilities and can facilitate workplace immigrant integration. Unions bring together the demand side (employers) and the supply side (workers) and are invested in the success and well-being of workers. Union training and education funds are financing workplace education programs in what one informant called “the best kept secret in workforce development.” Labor unions also support the improvement of on-site learning and help workers identify services outside the workplace.

Immigrant organizations involved in training, job placement, and citizenship education also feed the knowledge base of employers. Those organizations do strong outreach to inform employers about the benefits of the programs. Employers are teaming with immigrant organizations to procure interpreter services, develop training materials, and provide workshops and instructors for English-language and citizenship classes.

Other intermediaries that engage employers in immigrant integration are workforce-development agencies, such as community colleges and agencies under the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act. Employers can draw from those agencies for teaching resources, curriculum development, and diversity training, among other services.

EXTERNAL FACTORS DRIVING EMPLOYER ACTIONS

Employer engagement in immigrant integration in the workplace also depends on local demographics and the local economic context. The larger the immigrant workforce in the local area, the more likely it is that the employer will have to rely on immigrant workers and think about integration strategies.

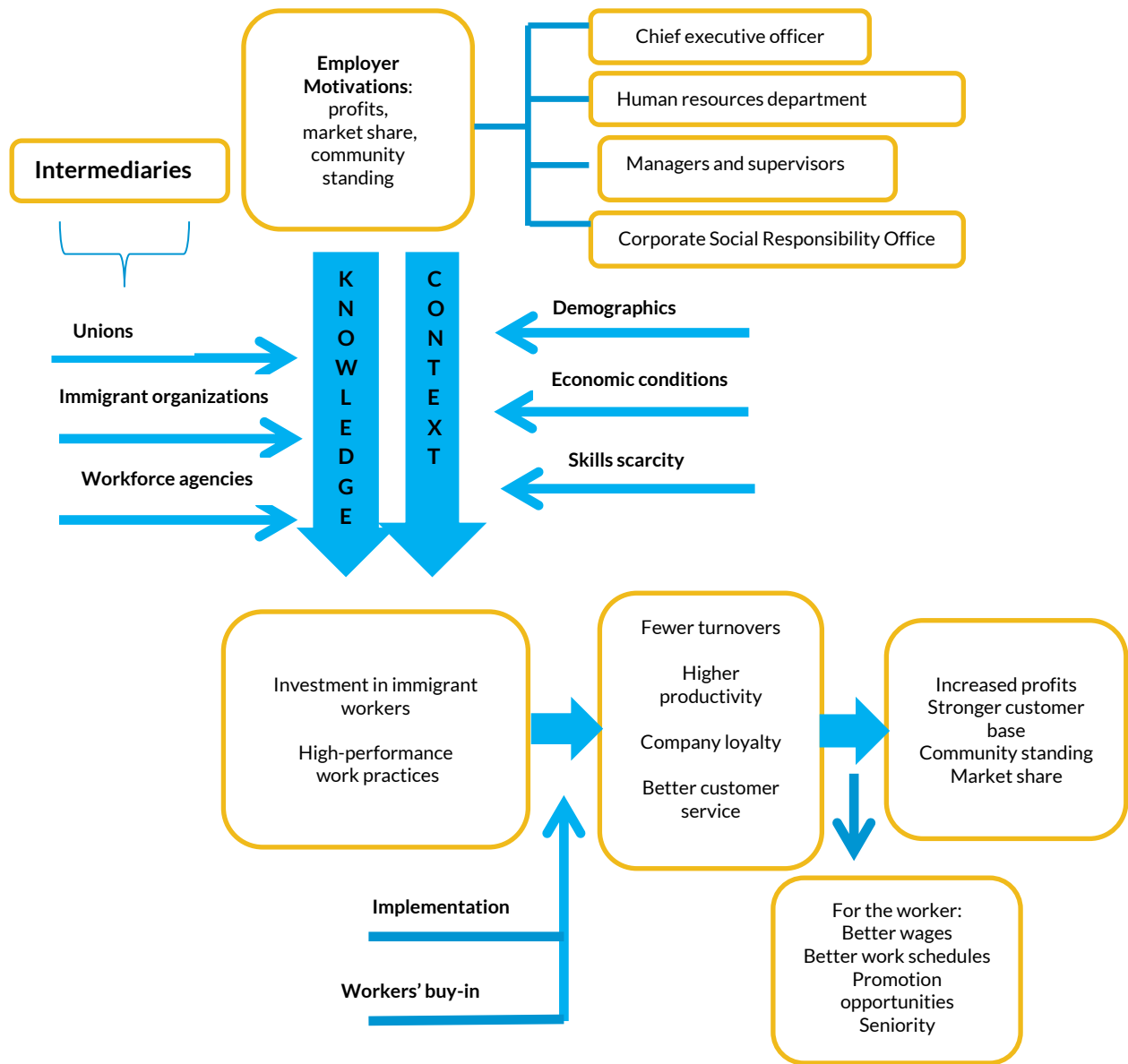
Demographics also play a role through the demand for products, because companies must cater their goods and services to immigrant communities. Employees are bona fide ambassadors of the companies where they work. Investments in immigrant workers will strengthen the customer base and create community goodwill. Customers see the interaction of employers with their immigrant workers as a source of respect, and evidence of exclusion leaves customers rankled (Waldinger and Lichter 2003). Workplace immigrant integration practices can give sellers a competitive edge in the product market.

Another external factor affecting whether employers adopt immigrant-integration practices is the condition of the labor market. When labor markets are tight, employers are less strict with worker qualifications and are more willing to fill skills gaps through on-the-job training. Those labor shortages can be extrapolated to the medium- and long-term forecast of employers' need for a managerial class created from within. Employers confronting labor shortages may be willing to train their immigrant workforce with an eye on later filling managerial positions.

Lastly, investments in immigrant workers are also sensitive to economic conditions (Ziegler-McPherson 2009; Bernhardt, Dresser, and Hatton 2003). Economic difficulties threaten the continuity of employer integration practices unless those practices are strategically immersed within the company's performance goals.

FIGURE 3

Conceptual Model of Employer Engagement in Immigrant Integration



A company, through its chief executive officer or owner, human resources department, CSRO, and managers and supervisors, and informed by intermediary agencies and the demographic, economic, and labor market contexts, decides on practices to foster the integration of the immigrant workforce. Those practices affect intermediate worker and employer outcomes that could result in (1) reduced turnover, (2) loyalty toward the company, (3) higher productivity, (4) increased job satisfaction, and (5) improved relationships with immigrant customers.

Workplace integration practices require the buy-in of workers. Immigrant workers generally support the engagement of their employers, seeing it as evidence that the employer cares. Good implementation is critical (Pfeffer 2007). It involves accountability, follow-through, assessment of the best resources for implementing integration practices, and evaluation for continuous improvement.

The desired outcomes of those practices are better profits, higher market share, expanded customer base, stronger competitive position, and community goodwill. The worker also wins because opportunities for promotion open up, better work schedules can be accessed, and the worker can perform a broader range of tasks.

What Can Employers Do to Foster the Integration of Their Immigrant Workers?

This section provides a taxonomy of what is possible in workplace immigrant integration practices. The practices described were generated by the systematic review of the literature and the interviews with key informants. A detailed list of practices identified by key informants can be found in the appendix.

Workplace Language Programs

Holding workplace English classes for LEP workers is one of the most common workplace practices used to foster immigrant integration. Employers can benefit from better dissemination of good practices and better information about intermediaries that could offer workplace classes. Although there has been no evaluation of results, several factors have been named as essential for effective workplace English learning: (1) English classes contextualized to the work experience; (2) training provided on the clock; (3) classes at hours that are convenient to workers; (4) meticulous curriculum development; and (5) classes designed to match business goals. New teaching technologies open opportunities for workplace English, such as webinars, online classes, and software training that

workers can do at home. A corollary practice to English-language classes identified through the interviews was the pairing of a worker with a corporate volunteer to practice conversational English.

Naturalization Assistance

One informant indicated that “the benefits of citizenship for the worker and the country are irrefutable,” and another stated, “Even people [who] are anti-immigrant are pro-citizenship.” Naturalization can make a whole new workforce available to a select group of occupations, not only within the government but also in the private sector, such as occupations that require a strict security clearance. Practices identified in the interviews to assist in naturalization included citizenship orientations in the workplace, one-on-one orientations, and civics classes to prepare for the citizenship exam. Workplace citizenship classes and orientations have also allowed employers to participate more directly in the citizenship goals of their workers. Employers are offering interest-free loans to pay citizenship fees, and those loans are paid with payroll deductions. Employers are even matching workers’ contributions to citizenship fees and making donations toward the fees if workers attend citizenship classes.

Occupational Training That Workers Understand

With a large immigrant workforce, employers have to rethink the way they train workers. To tackle the challenge of training LEP workers and workers with low levels of education, employers can offer training in the workers’ native language and can use bilingual trainers and graphical materials. Global companies can also use translated materials developed for their overseas branches. Important documents should be available in the languages that workers understand. In sectors where seasonal and temporary work is common, such as construction, employer consortia are joining together to train workers and facilitate their movement between employers according to demand. Employers can also integrate occupational training with English-language training.

Assessment of Foreign-Acquired Skills

When interviewing a job candidate, employers have to assess the skills, experience, certificates, and educational credentials often listed in a résumé. This assessment is sometimes difficult because employers do not always have complete information about the worker. When workers acquire skills,

experience, and credentials abroad, assessing their qualifications is even harder. Thus, some immigrants end up taking jobs for which they are overqualified, and employers do not take full advantage of their skills. Employers can foster the integration of immigrant workers by learning more about how to assess skills, experience, and credentials gained abroad. Employers can train staff members in assessing foreign-acquired skills, partner with immigrant credentialing organizations, and develop company-specific guidance and interview protocols geared toward eliciting more information about the content of foreign-acquired credentials.

Human Resources and Legal Staff Members Who Are Equipped with Knowledge about Immigration Laws

Immigration laws are complex, and the hiring of immigrants takes time and resources. Staff members who do the hiring should be trained in immigration laws, temporary worker visas, status adjustments, and sponsorship requirements. Employer knowledge of immigration laws can expedite the employment of immigrants, avoid layoff spells, and help to place immigrants in positions that best fit their skills. Staff members who are trained in immigration-law compliance can assist workers with filling forms, obtaining required documentation, and providing services for family members, thereby facilitating workplace integration of those employees.

Diversity Management Practices

Diverse workplaces such as those with a large immigrant workforce demand culturally competent supervisors and managers. Managers may have to adopt practices to incorporate immigrants and boost their productivity. Practices in managing diversity could involve (1) work teams that include persons with different backgrounds; (2) supervisors who speak the languages of the workers; (3) diversity, inclusion, and cultural competency training for supervisors; and (4) language classes for employees and supervisors. Companies with a multinational presence can tap into their international supervisors to help design workplace integration programs for immigrant workers.

Immigrant-Conscious Employee-Assistance Programs

Employee-assistance programs provide a range of services to help workers deal with a variety of difficulties in their daily lives, including everything from behavioral or mental health issues, to financial

difficulties, to finding child care and summer camp options.⁸ Employers could seek out employee-assistance programs for services to immigrant workers, such as information about providers of English-language training, counseling programs from immigration lawyers and bilingual mental health professionals, and referrals to ethnic and immigrant-serving organizations. Use of services enhanced by employee-assistance programs could be publicized among the immigrant workforce.

Immigrant Sponsorship for Status Adjustment

In fiscal year 2012, 143,000 immigrants were awarded legal permanent residence through employment-based preferences. Of those awarded permanent residence, 126,000 were given status adjustments, meaning they changed their status from a temporary visa holder, or even undocumented immigrant, to legal permanent resident. Those changing status already reside in the United States. Employment-based immigrants have to be sponsored by an employer. This means that many employers are helping their employees gain permanent residence. Employers can also sponsor immigrant workers by providing affidavits of support. (An affidavit of support is a legally binding document that needs to be presented by family-preference immigrants as part of their documentation to become permanent lawful residents. It states that their sponsor will provide financial support to the immigrant during the first five years of his or her residence or until the immigrants accumulate 10 quarters of work.)

A Seat at the Bargaining Table

Education and training funds are being negotiated in some labor contracts as part of workers' benefits packages along with wages and pensions. Union training funds are being used to provide technical training and education to members, including English-language instruction to immigrant workers. Labor-based training helps to bring the demand (the employer) and the supply (the worker) together. The union, the employer, and the worker are all invested in the success of the training, boosting training success.

High-Performance Work Practices with an Immigrant Lens

Immigrant integration practices could be part of HPWP. When adopted, HPWPs should be attentive to the needs of immigrant workers. Employers could address whether immigrant workers can succeed in their HPWP system and should be attentive to the role of cultural attitudes in manager-worker

relationships. HPWP practices, such as intensive training, effective teamwork organization, better performance assessments, and employee involvement in how work is organized, present opportunities for promoting the workplace integration of immigrant workers.

Cultivate Relationships with Immigrant Organizations

Many opportunities exist for employers to partner with immigrant organizations that provide employment services. Those organizations offer a suite of services that employers can tap to foster the workplace integration of immigrants. Employers can partner with immigrant-serving organizations to find English-language instructors, improve curriculum development, build translations capacities, and develop culturally competent work-related materials. Employers can work with the job placement of immigrants by helping organizations with interview preparation, participating in job fairs, performing mock job interviews, placing job applicants, supplying vocational equipment, and providing instructors for job-specific training and workplace cultural adaptation workshops.

Conclusion

Considering the growing share of immigrants in the workforce, this study sets out to learn what we know about the practices employers adopt to integrate immigrants into the workplace.

The literature review suggests there is little knowledge about management practices with the immigrant workforce and a lack of a conceptual framework to guide such knowledge. Yet, the disparate and variegated literature suggests that (1) immigration policy matters for employment engagement; (2) staff knowledgeable of immigration laws can have a great impact on the workplace integration of immigrants; (3) the diversity and inclusion paradigm and high-performance work practices present opportunities to foster the integration of immigrant workers; and (4) characteristics of some immigrants, such as low levels of education and a lack of English-language fluency, may limit their access to occupational training. Several studies have focused on workplace English-language training. Examining the practices of selected employers, these studies show that employers are interested in learning more about best practices to impart English-language training to their workers and that good practices include training on the clock, having English classes contextualized to the employment situation, and making learning English part of the business strategy.

Interviews with organizations familiar with employer engagement in immigrant integration complemented the knowledge gained from the literature. Interviewees underscored the role of the economic and demographic contexts in employers' decision to adopt immigrant-integration practices. They also highlighted the relevance of these practices to workers and the importance of intermediaries such as unions, community colleges, and immigrant-serving organizations in making it viable for employers to adopt such practices.

The interviews and the comprehensive review of the literature helped development of a conceptual framework of employer-led workplace-based immigrant integration practices. This framework goes beyond the traditional profit-maximizing behavior of employers to explain engagement in immigrant integration by emphasizing the importance of leadership and unity of purpose of the different segments of the company, the mediating roles of intermediaries and the economic and demographic contexts. Integration practices can be part of high-performance practices that enhance productivity and lead to better bottom-line outcomes.

Some employers are engaged in workplace immigrant integration although this study cannot attest to how common this practice is. The literature and interviews with key informants unveiled many

examples of workplace practices and suggested areas amenable for integration from naturalization services to contextualized English-language training to immigrant sponsorship.

By systematizing the knowledge about employer engagement in immigrant integration and identifying what can employers do, this study can be a tool to employers looking to foster the integration of their rapidly growing immigrant workforce.

Appendix A

Summary of Unstructured Interviews with Employer Representatives, Immigrant Organizations, and Labor Groups

Information generated through conversations with the 13 key informants is presented below and is grouped by major theme.

1. What motivates employers to engage in immigrant integration?
 - Employers engage in workplace integration if it improves their bottom line. We have to “look at employers from the point of view of the employer.” “Employers are in the business of doing business.”
 - Employers buy goodwill in the customer base when most of their customers are Latino.
 - Employers engage in immigrant integration because it creates more loyal and more productive workers and allows for a formation of a managerial class from within.
 - “Some employers are good employers, and worksite immigrant integration is part of their DNA.” “Out of their good heart.” “Maternalistic employers.”
 - Employers retain talent and promote good workers.
2. What is the knowledge base of employers about immigrant integration opportunities?
 - Immigrant organizations dedicate a lot of resources to employer outreach. It is important to cultivate relationships and keep employers engaged.
 - Employers must be educated about the benefits of such programs and practices.
 - Upon being approached by immigrant organizations, many employers are receptive to engaging with immigrant organizations so they can jointly promote workplace integration.

- Employers with a large immigrant workforce are receptive to programs that improve the language skills of immigrants.
3. What factors intervene in whether or not employers engage in immigrant integration?
- The demographics of the labor force: Where are employers drawing the workforce from, and what is the immigrant share in the workforce?
 - The demographics of customers: What is the ethnicity and language of customers?
 - The “grinding forces of capitalism:” A harsh competitive environment means employers are cutting back on training.
 - The economic conditions and skills scarcity.
 - The chances that the immigrant will stay with the employer.
4. What are the opportunities for employer engagement in immigrant integration?
- Employers can take advantage of the “sticks” (rules, laws) to introduce immigrant integration, including ServSafe certificates and compliance with the Occupational Safety and Health Administration’s safety regulation requiring employer compliance and.
 - Tight labor markets in some health occupations can help employers.
 - The patriotic sentiments of some employers make offering citizenship classes attractive.
 - The company can use and enhance its diversity and inclusion efforts.
 - Corporate social responsibility offices can reach out to immigrant communities.
 - The employer can use the labor-management bargaining table.
 - The idiosyncrasy of the company may be driving immigrant investments. Some employers are maternalistic and tend to invest in their workers.
 - Adult Basic Education is growing rapidly because of immigrant needs.
5. What are the logistics involved in employer engagement in immigrant integration?
- Employers need to know what resources are available (e.g., interpreters, public funding, best models to deliver English as a Second Language classes).

- It takes time to organize the classes, and there is a lot of demand.
 - Organizations do not have the resources to deploy across many states to meet demand.
 - Employers can partner with unions, immigrant organizations, or community colleges to bring resources to the workplace.
 - Employers have to determine what works for them; let employers come up with their own solutions.
6. What are the industry-specific aspects of employer engagement?
- The apparel industry is facing challenges in getting workers who know how to operate sewing machinery; they need workers with the skills to generate a managerial class.
 - Assessment of skills is relatively easy in information technology; fewer problems exist in assessing the content of résumés and foreign experience.
 - Health care has a big push for cultural competency in service delivery. English-speaking workers are being trained in how to deal with immigrant patients and patients who do not speak the language.
 - Immigrants face problems in validating their skills in the health care industry and have to start from entry-level positions despite having more experience.
7. How common is employer engagement in immigrant integration?
- There is critical mass of employers investing in immigrants, but we do not have much information about them.
 - This is a “sleeping giant.” This issue should have more visibility.
 - Employers need to know what other employers are doing about integration.
 - Unions are reaching many workers with training funds. Boston, Chicago, Los Angeles, New York, and Seattle have union-run programs. Union education funds are a powerful tool to promote upgrading worker skills, including those of immigrants. Labor, management, and the immigrant are invested in the success of such training programs (e.g., Healthcare Career Advancement Program). Union education funds are the best-kept secret in workforce development.

- Sharing best practices among employers can increase employer engagement.
- It is easier for medium- or large-size companies to adopt integration practices.

8. What integration practices do employers adopt?

- English-language classes
- Work-contextualized–English classes
- Occupational training in Spanish
- Corporate volunteers who are conversational partners to limited-English-proficiency (LEP) immigrants
- Citizenship orientations and services in the workplace
- Employer matching of citizenship fees
- Exchange of vacation time for citizenship fees
- Payroll loans for citizenship fees
- Education regarding credentialing of college degrees earned abroad
- Valuation of the experience that immigrants bring with industrial machines,
- Placement of workers from immigrant organizations, (12) t
- Transportation of workers to and from work
- Worksite training to groups of potential workers from immigrant organizations
- Employer donation of sewing machines for immigrant organizations to do training
- On-site access to trainers who speak the workers' language
- Retention of interpreters to provide services as needed
- Organization of affinity groups of immigrant workers
- Match-up of immigrants with comparable native workers for mentorship
- Support of immigrant workers to acquire legal permanent resident status

- Employment of staff members who are trained in immigration law
- Negotiation of training and education funds
- Match-up of LEP workers with non-LEP workers for work tasks
- Bilingual supervisors
- Training for English-speaking workers in dealing with non-English-speaking customers
- Retention of the services of international credentialing agencies to assist in understanding diplomas and transcripts from abroad
- Employment of experienced supervisors from abroad
- Implementation of diversity and inclusion efforts

Notes

1. Tabulations are based on 2013 American Community Survey from US Census Bureau, The DataWeb DataFerrett <http://dataferrett.census.gov/>. For more information about the survey, see <http://www.census.gov/programs-surveys/acs/>.
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