Introduction to “Realizing Immigrant Contributions to Workgroup and Organizational Performance”

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Early in the twenty-first century’s third decade, the role of immigrants in the United States is one that generates much controversy and has been an important issue considered by many voters in recent elections. According to data released in 2017 from the American National Election Study, Donald Trump’s hardline opposition to immigration during his campaign was crucial to motivating Trump voters and helped to propel him to the US presidency in 2016. It should be noted, however, that those voting for Trump did not only include those opposed to undocumented immigrants living in the nation but also comprised those voters who wanted to restrict all immigration. This negative view of immigrants persists among a large segment of the population even though immigrant workers have positively impacted the nation’s businesses and the US economy. According to the Center for American Progress, in 2013, immigrants contributed \$1.6 trillion to the total US Gross Domestic Product. Additionally, economists have indicated that immigrants are not substitutes for native-born workers but rather act as complements which results in a raised living standard for all Americans. Moreover, because immigrants are consumers, they create a demand for goods and services in communities which helps small businesses and benefits the economy. Finally, some immigrants have become entrepreneurs which has led to technological advancements and the establishment of new businesses.

In this well-written, interesting, timely and thought-provoking “Perspectives” Section article, Dr. Marcus A. Valenzuela, Assistant Professor of Management at Palm Beach Atlantic University; Dr. Sean Rogers, the Spachman Professor of Human Resources and Labor Relations at the University of Rhode Island and Faculty Fellow, Admiral James M. Loy Institute for Leadership, US Coast Guard Academy; Dr. Carol Flinchbaugh, Associate Professor of Management at New Mexico State University; and Dr. Fernanda Wagstaff, Associate Professor of Management at the University of Texas at El Paso, acknowledge that although immigrants are instrumental to work organizations, there has been minimal scholarly attention to the role they play in workgroups, specifically how immigrants’ “unique characteristics” enhance the functioning of workgroups and increase organizational performance. As such, this conceptual article attempts to address this deficiency in the literature by demonstrating immigrants’ contribution to organizational performance through utilizing the ability-motivation-opportunity (AMO) framework. The authors contend that “for

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immigrants to become strategically beneficial human resources,” managers must remove obstacles that interfere with immigrants achieving their full potential in the workplace which includes language problems, difficulties regarding culture and adjustment as well as bias directed against immigrants within the work group. The authors conclude that if these barriers can be successfully overcome, organizational performance can be maximized by taking full advantage of immigrants’ workplace skills and abilities.

If any of the journal’s readers are interested in responding to any essays published in the “Perspectives” Section or would like to write articles on any topics in the field of employee relations, please do not hesitate to contact me with your proposal. I welcome both practitioner-based and scholarly-based articles written from any one of a variety of theoretical perspectives. I hope that you enjoy this article and find it most illuminating.

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