How Global Migration Changes the Workforce Diversity Equation
ADAPT LABOUR STUDIES BOOK-SERIES

International School of Higher Education in Labour and Industrial Relations

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How Global Migration Changes the Workforce Diversity Equation

Edited by
Massimo Pilati, Hina Sheikh, Francesca Sperotti and Chris Tilly

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# Table of Contents

List of Illustrations ........................................................................................................ viii

List of Tables .................................................................................................................... xii

Introduction: Understanding the Causes, Consequences and Possible Responses to Global Migration Flows ......................................................... 3
  Massimo Pilati, Hina Sheikh, Francesca Sperotti and Chris Tilly

Chapter One: Migration: From a Global Overview to National Cases

Global Migration Flows and Income Differentials ............................................... 18
  Scott Albrecht and Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz

The Relevance of African Diaspora in Britain: Implications for Development in Africa .................... 55
  Akeem Ayode Akinwale

The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: A Particular Case of Integration of Migrants, Foreigners and Crossborder Workers into the Labour Market ........................................ 81
  Franz Clément

Migration of Central Eastern European Physicians to Germany: An Empirical Description of the Field ...................................................... 101
  Juliane Klein

Innovation through Integration: Digital Start-Ups as Employers for People with Immigration Backgrounds ...................................................... 126
  Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès

Temporary Migrant Workers in Australian Horticulture: Boosting Supply but at what Price? ............. 143
  Malcolm Rimmer and Elsa Underhill
# Table of Contents

## Chapter Two: Workforce Diversity: New Looks at an Old Topic

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Why Firms Need Diversity Managers and Task Forces</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Legal Treatment of Banter in National Origin Employment Discrimination Cases</td>
<td>199</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Christina Hatcher</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diversity Management in the Italian Contract Catering Sector:</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evidence from Two Companies</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Massimo Pilati and Francesca Sperotti</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy</td>
<td>249</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Ryan Alan Smith</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter Three: Global Migration Meets Workforce Diversity

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Topic</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Occupational Licensure and Changing Barriers to Immigrant Workforce Incorporation</td>
<td>294</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Koji Chavez and Beth Red Bird</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Trade Unions and Migration in Europe: The Modern Paradox of Workforce Diversity</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Roisin Davis and Olga Jubany</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Migrants and the Different Perspectives on Diversity Management within Trade Unions: The Italian Case of a Trade Union and its Organisational Strategies</td>
<td>345</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Francesca Mattioli and Matteo Rinaldini</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coping with International Migration and Diversity: How do Teacher Teams in Dutch Higher Vocational Education Relate to their Diverse Student Population?</td>
<td>379</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Martha Meerman and Daniel Van Middelkoop</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tensions that Make a Difference: Institutions, Interests, and the Immigrant Drive</td>
<td>399</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Alejandro Portes</em></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
 Competing for Jobs or Welfare? The Material Manifestation of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Belgium and Spain .............................................. 419
Anna Zamora-Kapoor

The Legal Construction of Precarious Migrant Work Relations: A Study of Australia’s 457-visa Scheme ......................................................... 451
Mimi Zou

Contributors ........................................................................................................... 482

Index ...................................................................................................................... 485
LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

Fig. 2-1. Scott Albrecht and Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz. Emigration Rates by Per Capita GDP. Global Migration Flows and Income Differentials.

Fig. 2-2. Scott Albrecht and Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz. GDP Per Capita Growth via National Economic Growth and Migration. Global Migration Flows and Income Differentials.

Fig. 2-3. Scott Albrecht and Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz. Distance, GDPPCsending and the Size of the Migrant Stock. Global Migration Flows and Income Differentials.

Fig. 4-1. Franz Clément. Flow of crossborder workers in the Greater Region in general and in the direction of Luxembourg, in particular. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: a Particular Case of Integration of Migrants, Foreigners and Crossborder Workers into the Labour Market.

Fig. 4-1. Franz Clément. Flow of crossborder workers in the Greater Region in general and in the direction of Luxembourg, in particular. The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: a Particular Case of Integration of Migrants, Foreigners and Crossborder Workers into the Labour Market.

Fig. 5-1. Juliane Klein. Development of number of practicing foreign physicians. Migration of Central Eastern European Physicians to Germany. An Empirical Description of the Field.

Table 6-1. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Language of Communication in Organization. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.

Table 6-2. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Top 5 Languages in Organizations. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.

Table 6-3. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Top 5 Motives to Hire Employees with Immigration Background. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.

Table 6-4. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Management Considerations when Allocating Tasks. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.

Fig. 8-1. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev. Change in managerial Diversity. Why Firms Need Diversity Managers and Task Forces.
Fig. 8-2. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev. *Percent of Managers who are White.* Why Firms Need Diversity Managers and Task Forces.

Fig. 8-3. Frank Dobbin and Alexandra Kalev. *Percent of Managers who are Black, Latino, and Asian-American.* Why Firms Need Diversity Managers and Task Forces.

Fig. 10-1. Massimo Pilati and Francesca Sperotti. *Contracts and employment by sex for a sample group of 45,784 employees.* Diversity Management in the Italian Contract Catering Sector: Evidence from two Companies.

Fig. 10-2. Massimo Pilati and Francesca Sperotti. *Cox’s model about organizational outcomes.* Diversity Management in the Italian Contract Catering Sector: Evidence from two Companies.

Fig. 10-3. Massimo Pilati and Francesca Sperotti. *Four steps for successful diversity management.* Diversity Management in the Italian Contract Catering Sector: Evidence from two Companies.

Fig. 11-1. Ryan Alan Smith. *Definition of Leadership Success.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-2. Ryan Alan Smith. *Strongest Leadership Skill.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-3. Ryan Alan Smith. *Most Difficult Leadership Skill.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-4. Ryan Alan Smith. *Degree of Preparedness for Fill Retirement Vacancies.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-5. Ryan Alan Smith. *Self-Identification as a Leader in the Policymaking Arena.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-6. Ryan Alan Smith. *Professional and Civic Life.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-7. Ryan Alan Smith. *Most Important Leadership Development Experience.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig 11-8. Ryan Alan Smith. *Factors Most Important to Career Success.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.
Fig. 11-9. Ryan Alan Smith. *Most Helpful Characteristics of a Mentor.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-10. Ryan Alan Smith. *Race/Ethnicity of Most Co-Workers.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-11. Ryan Alan Smith. *Supervised on the Job.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-12. Ryan Alan Smith. *Race/Ethnicity of Supervisor or Manager.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-13. Ryan Alan Smith. *Most Helpful Network Types.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-14. Ryan Alan Smith. *Means of Acquiring Most Recent Job.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-15. Ryan Alan Smith. *Discrimination in the Workplace.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-16. Ryan Alan Smith. *Type of Discrimination Experienced.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-17. Ryan Alan Smith. *Manifestation of Discrimination.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-18. Ryan Alan Smith. *Strategies for Reducing Discrimination.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 11-19. Ryan Alan Smith. *Responses to Discrimination.* Contributions and Barriers to Developing Black and Latino Leadership in the Public and Nonprofit Sectors of the Economy.

Fig. 12-1. Koji Chavez and Beth Red Bird. *Growth in Licensed Occupation-States, by occupation Education Requirements, 1983-2012.* Occupational Licensure and Changing Barriers to Immigrant Workforce Incorporation.

Fig. 12-2. Koji Chavez and Beth Red Bird. *Correlation Between Proportion of State Workplace Required to Hold a License and Foreign-Born Immigrant Proportion of Workforce in 1994 & 2012.*
Occupational Licensure and Changing Barriers to Immigrant Workforce Incorporation.

Fig. 12-3. Koji Chavez and Beth Red Bird. Change in Percent Foreign-Born Between the Licensed and Unlicensed Occupation (with 95% CI), as percent, since enactment. Occupational Licensure and Changing Barriers to Immigrant Workforce Incorporation.

Fig. 12-4. Koji Chavez and Beth Red Bird. Change in Percent Adult-Entry Foreign-Born Between the Licensed and Unlicensed Occupation (with 95% CI), as percent, since enactment. Occupational Licensure and Changing Barriers to Immigrant Workforce Incorporation.

Fig. 12-5. Koji Chavez and Beth Red Bird. Change in Percent Recent-Entry Foreign-Born Between the Licensed and Unlicensed Occupation (with 95% CI), as percent, since enactment. Occupational Licensure and Changing Barriers to Immigrant Workforce Incorporation.

Fig. 16-1. Alejandro Portes. Migration and Change in Host Societies. Tensions that Make a Difference: Institutions, Interests, and the Immigrant Drive.

Fig. 16-2. Alejandro Portes. Immigration and the institutional order. Tensions that Make a Difference: Institutions, Interests, and the Immigrant Drive.

Fig. 16-3. Alejandro Portes. Immigrant labor and the native class structure. Tensions that Make a Difference: Institutions, Interests, and the Immigrant Drive.

Fig. 17-1. Anna Zamora-Kapoor. Percentage of low-income households by region, 2002-2010. Competing for Jobs or Welfare? The Material Manifestation of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Belgium and Spain.


Fig. 17-3. Anna Zamora-Kapoor. Negative effects of immigration in Andalusia, 2005-2010. Competing for Jobs or Welfare? The Material Manifestation of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Belgium and Spain.

Fig. 17-4. Anna Zamora-Kapoor. “Immigrants take away our jobs” by level of education, 2010. Competing for Jobs or Welfare? The Material Manifestation of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Belgium and Spain.
LIST OF TABLES

Table 2-3. Scott Albrecht and Roberto Patricio Korzeniewicz. Control Variables for Table 2. Global Migration Flows and Income Differentials.
Table 3-1. Akeem Ayofe Akinwale. Diaspora’s Perception Of Situations In Africa.. The Relevance of African Diaspora in Britain: Implications for Development in Africa
Table 4-1. Franz Clément. Luxembourgish and foreign Residents (1 January 2011). The Grand Duchy of Luxembourg: a Particular Case of Integration of Migrants, Foreigners and Crossborder Workers into the Labour Market.
Table 5-1. Juliane Klein. Foreign physicians practicing in Germany at the end of 2012 by country of origin. Migration of Central Eastern
European Physicians to Germany. An Empirical Description of the Field.

Table 6-1. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Sample Demographics. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.


Table 6-3. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Antecedents to Promote Successful Employee Integration. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.

Table 6-4. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Most Effective Integration Methods. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.

Table 6-5. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Relevance of Immigrant Employees to the Organization. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.

Table 6-6. Nina Krey and Anabel Ternès. Top 5 Hindrances Pertaining to Hiring Employees with Immigration Background. Innovation Through Integration: Digital Start-Ups As Employers For People With Immigration Backgrounds.


Table 12-2. Koji Chavez and Beth Red Bird. *Fixed Effect Models of the Percent of the Occupation-State-Year that is Foreign-Born, Adult-Entry, or Recent-Entry*. Occupational Licensure and Changing Barriers to Immigrant Workforce Incorporation.

Table 14-1. Francesca Mattioli and Matteo Rinaldini. *Strengths, Weaknesses, Threats and Opportunities of Migrants’ Inclusion within Union Structures*. Migrants and the Different Perspectives on Diversity Management within Trade Unions: the Italian Case of a Trade Union and its Organisational Strategies.


Table 17-6. Anna Zamora-Kapoor. *Interview protocol*. Competing for Jobs or Welfare? The Material Manifestation of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Belgium and Spain.


Table 17-9. Anna Zamora-Kapoor. *Immigrants are greater recipients than contributors to the Spanish welfare state, 2008.* Competing for Jobs or Welfare? The Material Manifestation of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Belgium and Spain.

Table 17-10. Anna Zamora-Kapoor. *Immigrants are greater recipients than contributors to the Belgian welfare state, 2008.* Competing for Jobs or Welfare? The Material Manifestation of Anti-Immigrant Sentiment in Belgium and Spain.


INTRODUCTION:
UNDERSTANDING THE CAUSES,
CONSEQUENCES AND POSSIBLE
RESPONSES TO GLOBAL MIGRATION FLOWS

MASSIMO PILATI, HINA SHEIKH,
FRANCESCA SPEROTTI AND CHRIS TILLY

The past two decades have seen a dramatic shift in the composition of
the workforce as a result of an increase in global migration flows. This
shift has led to national and international debates about migrants in the
labour force. Today, the topic is high on the policy agenda in many
countries, for several reasons. First, labour market integration is arguably
the most important condition for ensuring full and autonomous
participation by immigrants in the society. However, the scale of
migration and racial, ethnic, and religious differences of migrants raise
new challenges. Second, in the context of demographic ageing, many
countries are experiencing labour and skills shortages. To tackle this, it has
become important to better value the existing skills of some immigrants,
and to find ways to upgrade the skills of others. The transferability and
recognition of qualifications and work experience that were acquired in
different contexts in the countries of origin thus become a relevant issue.

Third, there is a persistent perception that migrants compete with
native workers, especially those from less advantaged groups. Finally,
immigrants have been among the groups hardest hit by the difficult labour
market situation following the economic downturn of 2008-09. This is
particularly true in western economies that are major destinations for
international migrants. All of this makes migrant status a major axis of
diversity and inequality within many societies.

Despite the growing importance of migration as a factor in workforce
diversity, the study of migration flows and the study of diversity have
proceeded on separate paths. Thus in May 2013, the University of
California Institute for Research on Labor and Employment (IRLE) and
the Association for International and Comparative Studies in the field of
Labour Law and Industrial Relations (ADAPT) convened scholars with a wider range of academic backgrounds to examine how global migration changes the workforce diversity equation. Scholars, experts and practitioners from the perspectives of multiple disciplines—including economics, history, sociology, political science, labour and employment law, industrial relations, and human resource studies—presented and discussed original research on areas ranging from diversity and discrimination in the workplace to the impact of the integration of high-skilled migrant workers on industries and regional economies.

The convening allowed for a fruitful encounter between the study of migration and the study of diversity. To illustrate how these two areas have followed separate tracks, we will first review the nature of the existing literatures on migration and workforce diversity. Then, we will sketch the research presented at the convening and illustrate the productive encounter and discourse between the two sets of research.

1. The State of the Global Migration Literature

216 million people, or 3.2% of the world’s population, are currently cross-border migrants, making the current wave of global migration, since about the 1980s, the largest in human history, and marking a dramatic increase even since the level of 150 million in 1990.¹ This figure does not include within-country migrants, such as the 200 million migrants to China’s industrial cities who make up the world’s largest single migration flow. Most migrants move from poorer to richer countries, and from less to more prosperous regions, suggesting that the main motivations for relocation are economic.² However, it is not the most absolutely economically desperate who move: for instance, more educated persons are more likely to migrate than their less educated compatriots.³

The existing migration literature focuses, not surprisingly, on international migrants, though there have also been important studies of

within—country migration. The literature also focuses primarily on migrants’ status as migrants. Migration scholars have paid less attention to the racial, ethnic, and gender differences that are the sinews of the workforce diversity literature.

Literature on migration has tended to emphasize national-level effects—though not always the same effects. Labour economists have particularly examined migration’s impacts on native workers in receiving countries, with much of the discussion framed by the debate between George Borjas and David Card about whether migrants are substitutes or complements for native workers. Development economists have particularly studied the impacts of human outflows and remittance inflows on sending economies. Sociologists have especially examined the degree and nature of integration of migrants into the new society and economy.

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10 Bloemraad, I. 2006. “Becoming a Citizen in the United States and Canada:
Political scientists and political sociologists have analyzed the determinants of national-level immigration policies.\textsuperscript{11} Despite the primacy of the national scale, some researchers have scaled up to the transnational or global level,\textsuperscript{12} or scaled down to individual labour markets or occupations.\textsuperscript{13} A final generalization about the predominant strains in the existing migration literature is that most authors tend to frame their analysis in terms of rights and opportunities for migrants, impacts on the well-being of natives, or the balance between the two. This is an area of research in which key social objectives are widely seen to be in conflict.

2. The State of the Workforce Diversity Literature

Migration flows are just one of the main factors contributing to population and workforce diversity. Historically, the term diversity has been first employed with reference to the increased share of women within the working population. In 1911, it was Mostyn Bird who in his book Women at Work provided a description of how women occupying administrative positions were transforming cities. The higher share of women in the workforce became more evident in the 1970s and 1980s, raising new issues such as gender discrimination, gender equality and gender gaps. Women now account for about 40-50\% of the total labour force and constitute a larger share of the overall government workforce (56\%) in OECD Countries,\textsuperscript{14} yet these issues still remain unsolved.\textsuperscript{15} More recently, diversity has been investigated with reference to other minority groups, which became an important component of the workforce in the


marketplace: people with disabilities, older people, ethnic minorities and lately lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders (LGBT).

Currently, people with disabilities make up approximately 15%\textsuperscript{16} of the 7-billion-people world’s population,\textsuperscript{17} of which 785 million are of working age. The review of the relevant literature indicates that even though a legal framework for disability and employment has been devised in several countries, improvements concerning the recruitment and the integration of this group in the workforce are far from deserving the name and often depend on government priorities in this area and senior management commitment.\textsuperscript{18} In fact, when compared to non-disabled persons, people with disabilities are less likely to be in full-time employment, more likely to be unemployed or economically inactive (ILO). The second group—older people (i.e. over 60-year-olds)—now represents 11.7% of the total population—rising from 1990 when they were 9.2%.\textsuperscript{19}

This demographic change has resulted in further pressure due to the sustainability of social benefit schemes worldwide: increases in public spending concerning the pension system, long term-care as a share of GDP, and public health issues. The higher levels of public expenditure with slower rates of economic growth expected in the years to come can be prevented, for instance through increases in labour productivity, higher rates of immigration and increased fertility—yet labour market participation of older people is certainly a crucial element of any policy response. For this reason, studies and research started to investigate the working conditions of older people and to what extent it is possible to improve their participation into the labour market.\textsuperscript{20}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{17} United Nations, Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division. 2012. \textit{World Population 2012}. ST/ESA/SER.A/332.
\item \textsuperscript{18} Public Service Commission of Canada. 2011. \textit{Recruitment of Persons with Disabilities: A Literature Review}.
Ethnic minorities have been a more recent research topic (except in the United States), although the literature does not consider their migration status. Conversely, studies on LGBT are few and far between, an aspect indicating that further investigation is needed in this connection.

Existing literature on diversity management is mainly focused on the company level. In addition to so-called affirmative action in the recruitment and selection stage, companies have developed human resource practices to support minority groups in the workplace and to resolve employee conflicts that are unrelated to the job and based on personality traits. Most studies focus on a single dimension of diversity—e.g., age, sex, race—in a domestic (typically U.S.) context. More recently, some innovative studies have begun to consider multiple dimensions of diversity such as race, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation and nationality.
Numerous studies have demonstrated that diversity management has a positive effect on firm performance in terms of reducing costs, better competition in relation to skills, less conflict, more effective marketing policies in response to customers who are themselves diversified, etc.  

3. Points of Overlap, Points of Divergence

As these profiles suggest, these two sets of literature—migration and workforce diversity—and the academics engaged in them, generally “talk past each other” and do not engage with one another. The social science literatures on, and understandings of, migration and workforce diversity have important areas of overlap, but also areas of divergence, and the contributions in this volume reflect this ambivalence. In the domain of institutional settings, the two literatures are fairly closely aligned. Both consider “outsiders” (migrants from elsewhere; members of gender, ethnic, racial, or other outgroups), and tend to examine a central triad: exclusion/marginalization, integration, and opportunity. For example, in their chapters, Underhill and Rimmer, like Hatcher, probe marginalization; Clément parallels Dobbin and Kalev in scrutinizing integration; Albrecht and Korzeniewicz as well as Smith study opportunity. This triad characterizes both institutional structures and institutional processes.

In the domain of intergroup relations, the literatures overlap, but are quite distinct. Both pay much attention to intergroup relations of exploitation and vulnerability. But the workforce diversity literature extends from there to particularly look at antipathy (in terms of attitudes) and discrimination (in terms of actions); for instance, Pilati and Sperotti analyze these relations in their chapter. The migration literature, on the other hand, is framed not just by ingroups and outgroups, but also by sending and receiving countries. So it considers competition between migrants and natives, but extends analysis in a different direction, studying relations between countries, such as dependence of richer countries on migrants from poorer ones (see Klein’s chapter) and the “brain drain” or “brain gain” impacts of out-migration on the development of the sending country (see Akinwale’s chapter). This nonparallelism in the analysis of intergroup processes is perhaps the most striking gap between the

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Where are we now and where are we going?” Human Resource Management Review No. 19(2009):117–133.

literatures on global migration and workforce diversity; our volume goes some distance toward addressing this gap.

Importantly, the conceptual boundaries between diversity and migration vary by country. For example, in settler countries like the USA and Australia with long histories of assimilation of migrants from varied nationalities, diversity issues extend well beyond migrants to long-established racial and ethnic divides. In more historically homogeneous countries where assimilation is difficult (Germany, Netherlands, Luxembourg), migration and national origin may be the main axis of diversity.

4. Encounters Between Workforce Diversity and Global Migration

Particularly interesting for our purposes are the analytical points of encounter between the two phenomena of workforce diversity and global migration, and the important lessons the two lines of study can teach each other. There are four main points of encounter. The first is that both social inquiries dig into how macro social, economic, and political structures shape and are shaped by diversity—itself socially constructed (particular dimensions among the many aspects of human diversity only become salient within particular social contexts)—and by migration. Albrecht and Korzeniewicz examine this process for migration at a global scale, tracing how economic structures create huge inequalities of opportunity, and how migration provides a channel for, at least in part, overcoming these inequalities. Portes and Smith focus on this interaction with macro structure at the societal level in the United States, for migration and diversity respectively; Clément studies the very unique case of Luxembourg. Chavez and Red Bird consider it at the level of occupations, in which licensure may bar immigrant access or advancement.

A second and third point of encounter address the domain of intergroup relations. In the second, researchers study how attitudes, racialization processes, and discrimination are directed toward migrant groups. Here European analysts stand out in this volume. Zamora-Kapoor analyzes the elements of anti-immigrant sentiments in two distinctive subnational areas in Europe; Jubany and Davis, in a related analysis, widen the scope to six European countries and a variety of social actors. Meerman and Van Middelkoop study a more specialized case of how teachers in Dutch vocational higher education view and relate to a diverse student population—and particularly to migrant and migrant-descended groups.
The third point considers migration status as one aspect of intersectional identities that structure economic and social opportunities—as with the women physicians from Eastern Europe under consideration by Klein, or the broader set of women migrants analyzed by Jubany and Davis in one part of their paper.

A final point of encounter is the organizational spaces where migration status is a salient dimension of diversity. A number of the papers—such as Dobbin and Kalev or Pilati and Sperotti—look at companies as the unit of analysis. Krey and Ternès expand the notion of a company to consider high technology entrepreneurship. Others—Mattioli and Rinaldini, Chavez and Red Bird—set their sights on representative structures such as trade unions and professions. Meerman and Van Middelhoop scrutinize service organizations—in this case schools—with migrants as clients; Smith considers the flip side of that analysis, the opportunities for leadership by members of historically excluded groups in the public sector organizations providing the service.

The two areas of research can indeed provide valuable lessons for each other. One set of lessons resides at the level of broad economic structures.

The phenomenon of migration, and the literature that has grown up to understand it, reminds us of the value of a global perspective, which is often absent from the workforce diversity discussion. The debates over sending country development (or not) and receiving country dependence (or not) suggest ways that development and dependence may be useful concepts for thinking about racially and ethnically segregated populations even when no international boundaries are involved. Analyses like those of Zou, and of Rimmer and Underhill, point out that sometimes the most likely alternative to exclusion is exploitation—an important lesson for domestic workforce diversity as well. Finally, both of these literatures highlight the weight and impact of employer-driven restructuring of labour markets, and examples from each literature can fruitfully inform the other.

Another set of lessons highlights organizational processes. Both one-on-one interaction and company-level processes of integration or exclusion are consequential, as a comparison of Hatcher’s work with that of Dobbin and Kalev points out. Comparing Pilati and Sperotti’s analysis of firms with Mattioli and Rinaldini’s consideration of trade unions and Chavez and Red Bird’s analysis of occupations forcefully reminds us that approaches to diversity management vary across types of organizations, as well as across individual organizations. And those developing strategies for immigrant integration would do well to heed the finding, discussed by Smith as well as Dobbin and Kalev, that successful diversity management depends above all on strong, committed leadership.
At the same time, this volume does leave some notable gaps. We know that in many countries, migrant populations are deeply involved in self-employment and entrepreneurship, but Krey and Ternès’ paper is the only one to scan this entrepreneurial landscape, and in fact only one small part of it. The papers focus almost exclusively on the situation of migrants in receiving countries, though Akinwale considers the issue of African development, and Korzeniewicz and Albrecht spotlight the economic gaps and human flows between sending and receiving countries. The volume is also stronger on identifying problems than on proposing policies to address them, though certainly many of the authors make suggestions about best practices on policy.

5. Organization of this Volume

The volume begins with a section on “Migration: From a global overview to national cases.” Korzeniewicz and Albert provide the global perspective, describing a deeply unequal global economy in which where one is born powerfully structures one’s economic opportunities. They forcefully argue that this economic inequality is the mainspring driving global migration, and that in fact migration represents the most important avenue of upward economic mobility available to large numbers of residents in low and middle income countries. Akinwale takes a closer look at one particular set of flows, from Africa to the United Kingdom. He places this migration in the context of a series of diasporas from Africa (including the highly destructive forced diaspora of the Transatlantic slave trade), and then shifts the focus to Britain to examine the mixed experiences of African migrants in their new countries. Clément presents a rather different case: the city-state of Luxembourg, which is so small that much labour literally commutes into the country, which has occasioned a unique set of institutional structures built around daily migration. Klein, Krey and Ternès, and Rimmer and Underhill, finally, analyze particular employment areas within particular companies. Klein (looking at physicians in Germany, at the high end of the occupational spectrum) and Underhill and Rimmer (examining agricultural workers in Australia at the low end) find disturbing patterns of marginalization and exclusion. But Krey and Ternès argue that the startup culture of new digital enterprises in Germany is actually quite hospitable to skilled migrants.

The second section, “Workforce diversity: New looks at an old topic,” highlights new perspectives on workforce diversity. There is no doubt that in the future, current racial and ethnic minority groups will constitute the majority of the population and workforce in many countries. However,
workplaces are not yet prepared to deal with this change. In this respect, the paper by Pilati and Sperotti presents the case of Italy by focusing on the contract catering market, which is already experiencing relevant levels of ethnic, cultural and linguistic diversity in the composition of its workforce. Sadly, only rarely do companies include diversity among their core values and action plans. In this respect, focusing on the U.S. context, Hatcher’s paper examines hostile work environment cases and workplace banter. Minority groups in the workplace, like immigrant and native-born racial and ethnic workers, are more likely to experience adverse treatment from supervisors and co-workers. Research has shown that subtler forms of harassment on the job pose significant obstacles to social inclusion for minority groups. One solution to these shortcomings might be to assign central, managerial responsibility for diversity to individual diversity managers, teams of managers operating in diversity task forces or councils, and to affirmative action plans and officers, an aspect highlighted by Dobbin and Kalev’s work. In this sense, quantitative evidence shows that diversity managers and task forces have positive effects on managerial diversity at company level and that affirmative action plans have weaker effects. Smith’s paper provides another response. According to him, in order to change the approach to diversity, non-profit and public agencies will have to recruit, retain, and promote women and minorities, assigning them positions of leadership and decision-making authority.

The third and longest section of the book, “Global migration meets workforce diversity,” includes papers where the two central phenomena bump up against each other. Chavez and Red Bird, Jubany and Davis, and Mattioli and Rinaldini all look closely at the role of membership organizations. Chavez and Red Bird delve into professions and the role of occupational licensure, finding strong evidence that licensing creates obstacles to entry of immigrants into particular job categories. The other two of these papers focus on trade unions. Davis and Jubany draw on in-depth interviews with migrant workers, trade union officials, employers, and country experts in six countries, as well as a review of literature and policy in each country. They conclude that the key actors, business managers and trade union leaders, for the most part do not appreciate the growing importance of diversity management, though there are important advances and best practices in more isolated cases. Mattioli and Rinaldini zoom in on one Italian trade union, a metalworkers’ union that is grappling with insufficient integration and representation of migrants within their ranks, and identify key helpful and harmful processes with respect to the goal of migrant integration.
The remaining papers examine the dynamics of migrant incorporation and the impact of “otherness” in a variety of structures. Portes paints the broadest canvas, drawing on decades of research on the U.S. immigration experience to highlight, as he puts it, both the structural importance and the change potential of migration in societies. He analyzes key alternative paths for the central pairings in these processes: the sending and receiving countries, employers and native workers, migrants and the society receiving them. Zamora-Kapoor links economy with ideology, using case studies of Andalusia and Wallonia to argue that a shift from labour shortage and consequent migrant recruitment, to labour surplus underlies and structures particularly sharp anti-immigrant sentiments in these regions. The remaining pair of papers limits their attention to particular institutional domains. Zou parses how Australia’s temporary visa scheme creates “hyper-precarious” work relations for migrants, extending Rimmer and Underhill’s analysis. The Dutch vocational education classroom is the arena for Meerman and van Middelkoop’s research, which finds that most teachers lack clear conceptions of cultural diversity and how to manage it, and, not surprisingly, signals the important role of teachers who are bicultural themselves.

This set of papers suggests a few of the ways that a dialogue between diversity researchers and migration researchers can deepen the understanding of both. It hopsscotches across economics, sociology, political science, labor relations and legal studies, demonstrating that the value of this dialogue cuts across disciplines. The volume particularly underlines the challenges faced in host societies—exclusion to the point of “hyper-precarity,” anti-migrant attitudes, widespread organizational indifference to the importance of diversity management. But it also points the way to possible solutions, from exemplary corporate and public sector diversity management programs, to proactive trade union engagement with the incorporation of migrants, to legal reforms to mitigate exclusion and facilitate integration—and to the political choices that could move these solutions forward. We hope this step toward a broader understanding that encompasses both global migration and workforce diversity will help stimulate further research—as well as action to confront the challenges and diffuse solutions.
References


Introduction


