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Experiences of Employers of Hispanic Immigrants and the Labor Shortage in the United States

Alba M Mathewson
Walden University

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Walden University

College of Social and Behavioral Sciences

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Alba M. Mathewson

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Review Committee

Dr. Gema Hernandez, Committee Chairperson,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Anne Hacker, Committee Member,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Dr. Kristie Roberts Lewis, University Reviewer,
Public Policy and Administration Faculty

Chief Academic Officer and Provost
Sue Subocz, Ph.D.

Walden University
2022

Abstract

Experiences of Employers of Hispanic Immigrants and the Labor Shortage in the United

States

by

Alba M. Mathewson

MA, Bellevue University, 2013

BS, Bellevue University, 2011

Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Public Policy and Administration

Walden University

February 2022

Abstract

There is a labor shortage in the United States that is ever increasing due to the changes in the immigration policies impacting Hispanic immigrants. Historically, Hispanic immigrants have made significant contributions to United States employers. However, recent changes to immigration policies have restricted the availability of Hispanic immigrants in the labor force due to the reduced number of visas. These changes could continue to diminish the global competitiveness of U.S. employers. Using the human capital theory, this narrative qualitative study investigated the lived experiences of employers regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants and employers' perspectives on the impact Hispanic immigrants have on the labor force. Employers were interviewed using a purposeful interview technique. Open ended interview questions guided the data collection. Data saturation was reached after four purposefully sampled employers participated in semi structured interviews and themes were identified including the lack of workers and immigration concerns. The results of the study support the reality that employers are facing labor shortages which are being created by the changes in immigration policies. The changes are impacting employers' businesses and are presenting a significant barrier to employers' success. The study can contribute to the body of knowledge and impact positive social change by providing policy makers insight into how immigration policies affect business and that changes to these policies are needed to reduce the labor shortage in the United States and allow employers to remain competitive and successful in industry and the global market.

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Dedication

This PhD degree is dedicated to my children, Amy, Anthony, Sarah, Troy and Tiyana. You are my motivation and my “never give up”. You are who I push forward for and I could not have done it without your steadfast support and patience while I worked through the weekends and late into the evenings. My heartbeats. Love you so much!

I dedicate this dissertation to my father, until we meet in heaven, who was a huge proponent of furthering education, which was ingrained by my grandmother, a teacher. I know you're proud of me.

To my mother who always encouraged me to do better and strive further, and to my family, my sisters, niece, and nephew, who kept me in prayer and believed in me all the way. From Los Sures to PhD. Appreciate every one of you.

I want to thank my husband, Tyrone, for his support throughout this journey. Thanks for taking on loads while I worked on my lifelong goal. Much love, my dear.

To all the Hispanic youth who may not have the privilege, the opportunities, the encouragement, or the support to further your education and may have been told you'll never make it: Believe in yourself; you can do it!

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I would like to acknowledge the almighty Lord, my God, for His will and favor over my life. I thank the Lord for being there through all my challenges and carrying me when I felt like giving up. Thank you, Father. ***"I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me" (Phillipians 4:13).***

I would like to thank the members of my committee for hanging in there with me during the difficult times and bumps in the road. Dr. Gema Hernandez, my amazing chair, without who's encouragement I would not have made it. Special thanks to my methodologist, Dr. Anne Hacker, for joining my committee and challenging me to do my best and not throw in the towel. And thank you Dr. Kristie Roberts-Lewis, my URR, for the learning along the way. I would like to thank my Academic Advisor, La Toya Johnson, who provided encouragement and many "you can do this" talks. Thank you all for the opportunity to work with you. I am grateful for the guidance and unwavering support throughout this venture.

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Chapter 1

Introduction to the Study

Introduction

There has been a labor shortage in the United States, and according to a survey conducted by the Associated General Contractors of America (2017), 73% of businesses have had difficulties finding skilled and unskilled workers in industries such as construction; 55% of employers identified this worker shortage as an increasing concern. The Bureau of Labor Statistics (BLS, 2017) reported that, as of October 2016, there were 6,000,000 job openings in the United States. The sectors that lacked the most workers were accommodation and food services, with 94,000 vacancies; construction, with 48,000 vacancies; and real estate, rental, and leasing, with 40,000 vacancies. Although the number of vacancies had decreased in the areas of wholesaling, finance and insurance, information, and manufacturing in the previous year, the number of vacancies in the workforce as a whole was nearly unchanged (BLS, 2017). Those in many industries have been seeking ways to meet consumer demand and retain their workforces to avoid losing revenue.

In this study, I explored how changes in immigration have been impacting the ability of employers to meet demand for services and products in their respective areas. I also explored the experiences of employers hiring Hispanic immigrant laborers during the labor shortage and the outlook of employers on the impact of Hispanic immigrant labor on their industries. The findings of the study can help other researchers explore the relationship between immigration laws and shortages in the labor force.

In this chapter, I present an overview of concerns regarding the growing labor shortage in the United States, the impact of the labor shortage on several industries, and the impact of Hispanic workers on the labor force. I also state the problem studied and the purpose of the study. And I describe the research question, the theoretical framework underpinning the study, and the assumptions and limitations of the study.

Background

Birth rates have declined sharply between 2000 and 2010, and this decline has impacted the labor shortage in the United States (Livingston, 2018). According to Livingston (2018), the number of births in the nation had declined significantly over the previous 20 years from 2018. Birth rates dropped to record lows in 2016. This decline in births will impact the number of future workers and thus the ability of employers to fill vacancies (Young, 2019). According to Perreto (1998), population increase and economic growth are interdependent, and so the decrease in birth rates will impact the economy.

The combination of declining birth rates and rising retirement rates has created a significant public policy problem (BLS, 2017). During the first part of the 20th century, birth rates in the United States were higher increasing to 16 million more than in the previous decade (Hobbs & Stoops, 2002). However, between 2007 and 2019, the birth rate among women aged 15–44 years decreased by over 2% in the United States (Hamilton et al., 2020). Beck and Johnson (2017) predicted the number of retired people in the United States to increase by 87% to over 4,000,000 by 2030. The growing number of retirees will impact the number of vacancies and, according to the BLS (2017), only worsen the existing labor shortage. The decline in the labor force driven by the decreasing birth rate and increasing retirement rate has led to concern among employers

regarding their ability to meet consumer demand (BLS, 2017). If employers cannot hire legal workers who contribute to payroll taxes, the revenue that supports Social Security and support for retirees will fall.

Low birth rates, the aging population, and recent recessions in the United States have created large labor deficits in several industries (BLS, 2017). Some of the most impacted industries are construction, hospitality, agriculture, and nursing (BLS, 2017). Halpin (2015) stated that the labor shortage and need for human capital has driven employers to hire unauthorized workers. However, this practice exposes employers to penalties (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Services, 2019). The use of unauthorized workers has by no means resolved the labor shortage, and employers need permanent labor to increase their productivity and competitiveness in global markets (Halpen, 2015). Peterson (2018) argued that allowing immigrants to enter the country and become part of the labor force reduces the number of jobs available to native-born Americans; however, Batalova (2011) argued that immigrants fill gaps in the labor needs of employers and do not significantly impact employment opportunities for native-born workers. Without policies supporting immigrant labor in the United States, labor shortages will continue to impact the U.S. economy (Halpen, 2015). A reduction of the dependency ratio—the ratio of workers to retirees—is necessary to ensure that worker contributions to Social Security are sufficient to support retirees (Bauer, 2018).

The workforce has declined sharply in size since the start of the 21st century; according to Clark et al. (2020), decreasing birth rates and increasing retirement rates have impacted the economy and contributed to the workforce decline. In the 20th century, the workforce increased substantially in size as more women entered it (Toossi

& Morisi, 2017). This labor growth was instrumental to the growth of industry in the United States, and employers perceived the advantages of a diverse workforce. Inclusion of women in the workforce contributed to economic growth in the first part of the 20th century (Kuan & Yazdanifard, 2015). However, recessions in the 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s contributed to a decline in jobs and a subsequent decline in the labor force as employers laid off employees (Yangan, 2019). The Great Recession that began in 2008 affected blue-collar workers the worst; over 4,000,000 blue-collar jobs disappeared, and job openings declined sharply in the vast majority of blue-collar sectors (Cox et al., 2017; Fogg et al., 2010). The Great Recession caused the labor force to shrink, but recent economic growth and an increase in the number of jobs created have generated a need for human capital, which has led to strong demand for labor.

An increasing number of workers have been aging out of the workforce and leaving long-term positions, and there have not been enough replacements for them (BLS, 2017; Krueger, 2017). Since the Great Recession, the nation has faced a sharp decline in productivity alongside the shortage of eligible workers (Corrado et al., 2016; Fogg et al., 2010; Willard et al., 2012). This sharp decline in productivity has impacted industries across the nation (Haddad & Toney-Butler, 2018; Moore, 2015) and has continued to burden employers, who have been unable to meet consumer demand (Moore, 2015). The recent economic growth in the United States has affected the labor force (Krupnick, 2018). Increased job creation in the trades has led to the creation of more jobs than there are workers to fill them (Krupnick, 2018). The labor shortage has been a source of ever-increasing concern for employers. In the past, the U.S. government met labor demands by allowing immigrants to enter the country and work in industries

with shortages (Clemens et al., 2018; Martin, 2011; Salinas, 2018). With the recent changes in immigration policies, the reduced number of immigrants are not able to meet employers' needs.

Researchers have correlated the economic growth of the nation through the 20th century with the contribution of Hispanic immigrants (those of Spanish descent and origin; U.S. Census Bureau, 2011) with economic prosperity (Clemens et al., 2018; Martin, 2011; Salinas, 2018). Hispanic immigrants have contributed to the economic and social growth of the nation; they made up 27.8% of the labor force in 2015 (American Immigration Council, 2016), 48.3% of the foreign-born labor force in 2016 (BLS, 2017), and have improved the outcomes of employers by providing services for U.S. consumers (American Immigration Council, 2016). The Migration Policy Institute (2021) stated that Hispanic immigrants accounted for over 44% of the immigrants to the United States.

Immigrant workers have for decades impacted labor and industry (Clemens et al., 2018; Krupnick, 2018; Salinas, 2018). Hispanic immigrants have made positive contributions to the U.S. workforce since the turn of the 20th century—this was especially true during World War II, when the demands of combat significantly reduced the size of the domestic labor force (Martin, 2011). Hispanic immigrants with the legal right to work have predominantly worked in agriculture and landscaping (BLS, 2017). Hispanic immigrants made up over 23% of labor in agriculture, a large part of the overall workforce (BLS, 2017). Hispanic immigrants have supported U.S. employers and met consumer and employer needs during times of war. However, after an exhaustive literature search, I found that few researchers have investigated employer perspectives

regarding Hispanic immigrants in the labor force and their impact on U.S. industry. In this study, I explored this is the gap in the literature.

The media have recently portrayed Hispanic immigrants negatively, which has impacted Hispanic people in the United States (Farris & Silber Mohamed, 2018). Ongoing debates in government regarding the need for immigration reform have led to the unrealistic and unfounded portrayal of many immigrants as criminals and drug dealers.

Problem Statement

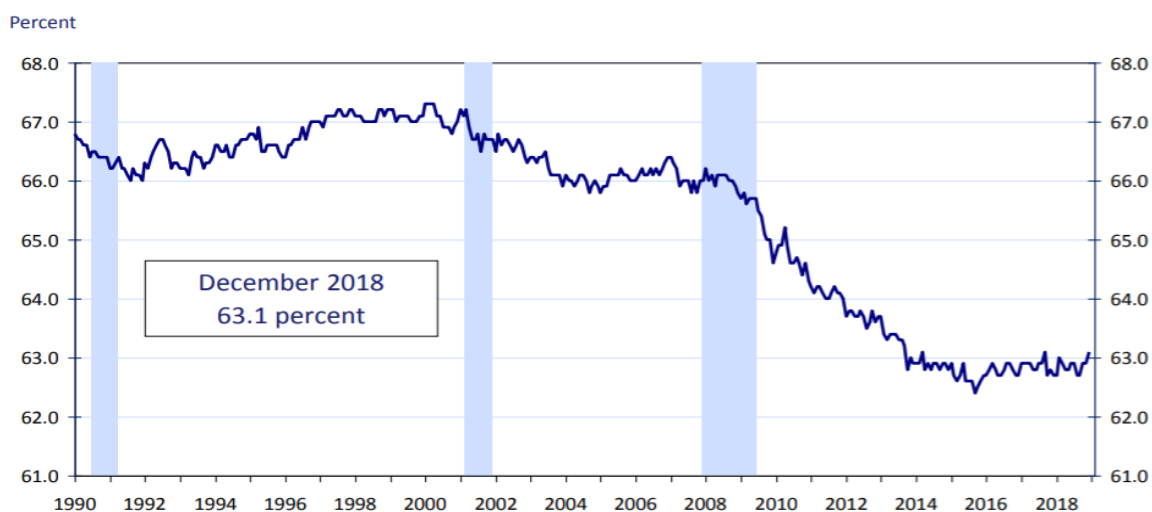
Employers in several industries have been growing increasingly concerned regarding the ongoing labor shortage (BLS, 2021). These employers have found it increasingly hard to meet their labor demands (BLS, 2021), and civilian labor force participation has decreased from 65.7 in 2009 to 63.9 in 2019 (BLS, 2020). Hispanic immigrants have made up a significant part of the U.S. labor force, but new immigration policies may have impacted their ability to remain in the workforce. Preliminary data indicate that immigrants have traditionally done the work in sectors facing labor shortages (BLS, 2016). Hispanic immigrants have made significant contributions to agriculture and landscaping, making up over 83% of the workers (Lopez, 2018), and contributing more labor than any other single group of immigrants to these industries (Lopez, 2018).

The Great Recession of 2008 resulted in job losses across many industries (Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, 2019). By 2019, the nation had rebounded economically

but lacked the labor needed to fill the vacancies created by employers (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Figure 1

Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate, Seasonally Adjusted, 1990–2018



Note. From *Civilian Labor Force Participation Rate* by Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2019, <https://www.bls.gov/charts/employment-situation/civilian-labor-force-participation-rate.htm>. In the public domain.

Employers have had difficulty filling jobs with qualified workers (Faberman & Menzio, 2018). Hispanic immigrant labor has been a determining factor in the ability of U.S. employers to remain competitive (Batalova, 2011; BLS, 2018; Capelli, 2015). New immigration policies, including more stringent screening of applicants and work authorizations, have made it likely that employers will continue to face labor shortages that impact their ability to deliver goods and services (Migration Policy Institute, 2019). Hispanic immigrants have played a role in the labor shortage and made up a part of the

human capital needed by employers to support the growing economy. This study was necessary to document how Hispanic immigrants have contributed to the economic growth of the nation from the perspective of employers, the impact of Hispanic workers on the labor force, and the labor shortage faced by employers. The findings of this study may influence public perception of Hispanic immigrants by promoting their contribution as workers who come to the country and affect its economic growth while countering their negative portrayal in politics and the media. The findings of the study will help identify possible changes to existing immigration policies that are detrimental to the country's competitive advantage.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to improve understanding of the experiences of employers regarding the labor shortage in the United States and hiring of Hispanic immigrants. My goal in improving this understanding was to stimulate further research impacting immigration policies. U.S. immigration policies have allowed Hispanic immigrants to obtain employment and thus provide employers with the labor force needed to stay competitive (Krueger, 2017; Pope, 2016). According to Hanson (2012) and Hanson et al. (2017), immigration generates a surplus of goods through the support of immigrant laborers. Withdrawing legal immigrant labor can negatively impact industries that rely heavily on it, such as agriculture, landscaping, and construction, and prevent employers from remaining globally competitive.

I intended this study to contribute to the literature in several ways. First, I focused on employers' experiences of the contribution of Hispanic immigrants to the labor force in agriculture and landscaping. Second, I investigated what employers knew about the

impact of Hispanic immigrants on employers' growth and ability to remain competitive. Third, I focused on employers' views of the need for Hispanic immigrants as human capital. Fourth, I identified some immigration policy issues that are impacting productivity in several sectors of the economy. I used qualitative interviews to capture employers' experiences regarding these matters and analyzed the collected data to produce findings that addressed Hispanic employees, their impact on their employers, and their influences on the workforce.

Research Question

A single research question guided this qualitative narrative study: What are employers' experiences regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants with legal authorization to work in agriculture and landscaping in the United States?

The purpose of this study was identification of the experiences of employers regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants and the availability of workers given changes in immigration laws. The contributions of Hispanic immigrants to the labor force have allowed employers to remain competitive and profitable in industries such as agriculture and construction (BLS, 2017). Immigration laws may have detrimental impacts on Hispanic immigrants and employers in the United States (Pew Research, 2020). Changes in immigration laws could reduce the number of Hispanic immigrants and therefore the number of laborers available to employers who rely on them. Through this study, I aimed to address Hispanic laborers and employers' perceptions and change policy views regarding immigration.

Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework of this study centered on the phenomenon of human capital. According Pekkan and Cihangir (2014), human capital is the collective skill and knowledge of individuals. According to human capital theory, human capital and contributions to economic growth are directly correlated (Cadil et al., 2014). Liepe and Sakalas (2014) argued that human capital is the primary driver of competitive prosperity and economic wealth. Without human capital, employers cannot maintain competitiveness or create wealth in a global market. Modern human capital theory derives from the work of Schultz (1961), who believed that investment in human capital produced economic growth (Nafukho et al., 2004). Becker (1994) and Mincer and Polachek (1974) expanded on human capital theory, noting that education and income are interrelated. Human capital theory explains the relationship between knowledge and population growth (Schultz, 1994). According to human capital theory, investment in human capital leads to benefits from the greater training and education required. The theory also predicts a correlation between decreased earnings and depreciation of skills (Mincer & Polachek, 1974). Theorists such as Sakamoto and Powers (1995) have argued that increasing attainment and use of skills and knowledge improves opportunities for growth of earnings and productivity.

Employers of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants benefit from the skill set of Hispanic immigrants in agriculture and landscaping, which increases productivity and ability meet consumer demand (Lopez, 2018). This relationship in turn can stimulate the desire of employers to hire Hispanic immigrants (Lopez, 2018). Human capital theory suggests that human capital and economic contributions from human capital are

correlated (Cadil et al, 2014). Based on the interrelation between skills sets and opportunity for growth of earnings, employers may make significant contributions to the economy by hiring authorized Hispanic workers, who can increase employers' productivity and competitiveness in the global market.

Employers rely heavily on adequate human capital to support their needs (Lepak and Snell, 1999). Lepak and Snell (1999) investigated the relationship between employers and human capital and variations in human capital based on specific industry needs; they identified a correlation between success in an industry and the presence of human capital. Dietz and Bozeman (2005) investigated the coexistence of human capital and industry and the importance of diversity within human capital for creating a well-rounded workforce with superior skills and knowledge. They argued that without an experienced workforce, industries and employers would find it difficult to meet demand. Lepak and Snell (1999) and Dietz and Bozeman (2005) argued that an employer's profitability also depends on successful assimilation of the employer's workforce, or human capital. This study used human capital theory because it predicts that employers need human capital to run businesses, increase profitability, and remain globally competitive (Dietz and Bozeman, 2005; Lepak and Snell, 1999).

Green (2013) noted a need for more skilled workers and that the demand for generic skills had waned as employers sought workers with more skills. The need for employers to find workers who match the employers' needs becomes ever more important when demand increases. Human capital theory suggests that migration is an investment (Becker, 1994) with employers investing in businesses through their human

capital and that employers cannot meet demand without adequate and prepared human capital.

Nature of the Study

One potential outcome of this study was an explanation of unintended consequences of changes in immigration law for employers and their ability to compete in global markets. The findings helped identify how immigration policies have affected employment for Hispanic workers and the potential economic implications for employers and industries of losing Hispanic workers.

To investigate employers' experiences of hiring Hispanic immigrants, I conducted a qualitative narrative study. Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to discover meaning in peoples experiences (Connely & Clandinin, 2000). According to Connely and Clandinin (2000), narrative inquiry allows the researcher to hear the stories of participants and understand their experiences.

Data collection targeted employers' perceptions of Hispanic immigrants, the immigrants' effects on their industries and trade, the and the economic and fiscal impacts of the immigrants on the workforce. Semistructured interviews were conducted with employers until saturation point was reached. Narrative analysis used the experiences of four employers of Hispanic immigrants: my data collection method was open ended questions asked during an interview and the analysis used was narrative. The sample size was sufficient for a well-rounded understanding of employers of Hispanic immigrants and the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the labor force.

Definitions

This section includes definitions of terms used throughout this dissertation.

Employer: A person acting as an agent of an employer or self-employed (NLRA, ND).

Hispanic: People with cultural roots in Spain and their descendants who speak Spanish (Pew Research, 2020). This dissertation uses the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably.

Hispanic immigrant: A legally authorized immigrant to the United States from a Spanish-speaking country, especially Latin America countries (Batalova, 2011).

Immigration law: The rules established by the federal government determining who is allowed to enter the country, including temporary workers (HG.org, 2020).

Labor force: The people able to work at any given time (BLS, 2017).

Latino: People who speak languages native to their countries and who are based in Latin America and the Caribbean (Pew Research, 2020). This dissertation uses the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably.

Refugee: A migrant unable to return to their home country because of political, racial, or religious persecution or natural disaster (American Immigration Council, 2018).

Assumptions

Assumptions are statements presumed to be true for a specific purpose such as building a theory (Vogt & Johnson, 2011). I assumed that participants were able to answer the questions posed and knew how many Hispanic immigrants they employed. The need for employers to have Hispanic immigrants in their employ was necessary to demonstrate the employers’ perspectives of the impact of Hispanic immigrant labor on them. I also assumed that no information would be missing such as number of employees and jobs performed after data collection. I collected detailed information to demonstrate

the focus of the study and address the research question. Although this dissertation uses the terms “Hispanic” and “Latino” interchangeably, they are not identical (Caballero, 2007). “Hispanic” refers to people with cultural roots in Spain and their descendants who speak Spanish (Pew Research, 2020). “Latino” refers to people who speak languages native to their countries and who are based in Latin America and the Caribbean (Pew Research, 2020)

Scope

The scope of this study consisted of the experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants. Delimitations are the restrictions of an investigation (Cohen, 2009). For this study, use of purposive selection criteria restricted the participant pool. I included employers of Hispanic immigrants in the agriculture and landscaping industry with the specified states to include Maryland and Virginia. I excluded nonemployers, students, and employers who did not hire Hispanic immigrants.

Limitations

A limitation is a restriction, limiting rule, or circumstance that a researcher has no control over (Hodkinson & Hodkinson, 2001). One limitation of this study was that many employers were unable to participate due to not hiring Hispanic immigrant workers, which impacted the sample size. Other limitations related to interpretation and analysis of the data. I would have preferred exclusively face-to-face interviews so that I could capture both verbal and nonverbal responses. However, the use of internet- and phone-based interviews facilitated participation, so I employed them in the study. Each participant was presented with a limited time available to take part in the study. To

mitigate these limitations, I identified participant availability, and allowed each participant to choose the interview medium they preferred.

Significance of the Study

In recent years, from 2010 through present, Hispanic immigrants have been instrumental in reducing the labor shortage within the United States (BLS, 2016). Hispanic immigrants have contributed to workforce growth in industries such as agriculture, fishing, hospitality, and construction (BLS, 2015). Ongoing changes to immigration policies may increase the impact of immigrants on the labor shortage (Migration Policy Institute, 2019). Changes to requirements or limitations for work visas in certain industries could prevent employers from remaining globally competitive and amplify negative effects of the labor shortage on those industries (Migration Policy Institute, 2019). This study was important because its findings could clarify the connection between changes to immigration policies and economic stability of the agricultural and landscaping industries. The findings could also clarify the role of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants in the economic stability of industries. At the time of writing, few researchers had investigated employers' perspectives on the impact of Hispanic labor.

Social Change

The implications for social change of this study involve the experiences of employers of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants in the labor force and how employer's experiences impact the labor force. Continued understanding of the labor shortage and immigration laws and the consequences of hiring work-authorized Hispanic immigrants to address the labor shortage can impact social change. The understanding of

the Hispanic immigrants' contribution to the labor shortage can impact immigration policies and increase Hispanic immigrant visa attainment. Reduction of the labor shortage by helping employers fill gaps in the labor force has implications for future immigration policies with respect to Hispanic immigrants. Changes to the dependency ratio associated with Hispanic immigrants and their contribution to the economy may impact the field of public administration. The understanding of the Hispanic immigrant contributions to the economy may influence public administrators' perception of the impact Hispanic immigrant labor has on employers.

Summary

In this chapter, I defined the problem of the ongoing labor shortage and lack of understanding of employers' perspectives regarding the hiring of Hispanic immigrants. The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was exploration of the lived experiences of employers who hire Hispanic immigrants and the impact of Hispanic immigrant workers on industry. The research question guiding the study asked what employers' experiences are regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants with legal authorization to work in agriculture and landscaping in the United States. Schultz's (1994) human capital theory formed the theoretical framework of this study. This study is significant because it adds to the limited existing literature on this topic. The study may also result in policy changes regarding immigration reform and the entry of Hispanic immigrants into the United States. Chapter 2 presents a detailed analysis of existing literature related to employers of Hispanic immigrants, the labor shortage, and the impact of immigration reform.

Chapter 2

Literature Review

Introduction

Labor shortages have continued to be a concern for employers in the United States (Livingston, 2018). Employers have had difficulty meeting demand for their products and services because of lack of labor (Sisk & Bankston, 2014). The purpose of this study was to identify employers' experiences hiring Hispanic immigrants, and the impact of immigration policies on the labor shortage and employer's ability to remain competitive. Chapter 2 presents a review of existing literature related to the phenomenon. The chapter explores the theoretical framework of human capital used to ground the study and provides an overview of employers' experiences of hiring Hispanic immigrants and their contributions to the labor shortage and to the U.S. economy.

The literature review provides the context needed to understand the phenomenon of immigration laws and its relation to the labor shortage and the worsening of that shortage that would ensue if migration were slowed. The main review begins with Hispanic immigration and its impact on labor in the United States. Next, the review explores the reduction in the labor force in the United States and its impact on industry and the economy. The final part of the review concerns the U.S. Hispanic population and how Hispanic people have become an essential part of the labor force.

Literature Search Strategies

The methods used to explore the literature included searching for peer-reviewed journals using JSTOR, the National Institutes of Health, EBSCO, government websites such as the Bureau of Labor Statistics, and other sources of information. The literature

review encompassed over 100 peer-reviewed articles, which I used to explore the research problem. The publication scope of the literature review ranged from the early 20th century to the last 5 years.

During searches for applicable research, I made use of the Walden University library, Google Scholar, SAGE Premier, ProQuest Central, Elsevier, and Science Direct. The keywords used in searches included *Hispanic, immigrant, human capital, employer, immigration, workforce, labor shortage, participation, labor force, perceptions, contributions, history, education, origin, agriculture, landscaping, construction, farming, hospitality, minority, statistics, qualitative, population, quantitative, industry, investment, and perspective.*

Human Capital Theory

Human capital theory suggests that education and training produce inherent capabilities in the workforce (Schultz, 1974). The theory formed the theoretical framework of this study, which I used to aid understanding of collected data in relation to the labor shortage, employer's experiences of hiring Hispanic immigrants, and Hispanic immigrants' contributions to the workforce. I applied the theory to the lived experiences of employers hiring Hispanic immigrants and the understanding of employers regarding the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the overall ability of employers to remain competitive in the global market. Human capital theory allows a researcher to look at the skill sets of Hispanic immigrants and how employers view these skills sets when hiring Hispanic immigrants (Kwon, 2009).

The term *human capital* initially found little support because of the negative connotations deriving from its association with using individuals for gain (Kwon, 2009).

However, in economics, *human capital* refers to the utilization of “humans as labor force” (Kwon, 2009, pp. 1–2). Human capital is the “knowledge, attitudes, and skills that are developed and valued primarily for their economically productive potential” (Baptiste, 2001, p. 185). According to human capital theory, human knowledge and skills are related to productivity. Kwon (2009) stated that the use of humans as labor supports increased productivity while supporting the attainment of knowledge and training for the labor force. The core understanding is that human capital can produce desired outcomes and profit for employers.

Speaking the ambient language is the most important skill that immigrants can acquire (Migration Policy Debates, 2014). Ability to use the ambient language, along with other skills, can be of value to employers. Some elements of human capital theory suggest a connection between increase in productivity and human capital attainment (Benhabib & Spiegel, 1994; Onkelinx et al., 2016), which in turn suggests that human capital can increase the yield of an employer’s business. Based on what human capital can deliver, employers can increase output by investing in their workforces (Onkelinx et al., 2016). Human capital theory is relevant to this study because it predicts how altering policy to make it harder for immigrants to work in the United States can impact the workforce and productivity of employers.

The use of Hispanic immigrant labor to help employers meet demand is an example of how investment in human capital can improve outcomes for employers (Kosten, 2018). Many human capital theorists have argued that training the workforce is key to increasing productivity and adaptability (Baptiste, 2001). Adaptability of Hispanic immigrants to new environments is a key skill that results in increased value for

employers. For an employer, the opportunity to develop and increase a worker's knowledge and understanding is critical to augmenting their workplace performance. Acquiring skills in the workplace is essential to increasing worker productivity.

Immigrants come to the United States with a wide range of skills and attributes (Hagan, 2016). Hagan (2016) stated that immigrants apply to jobs needing skills they brought with them when migrating. Unfortunately, employers have considered some immigrants to have lower levels of education and training and have not recognized the potential of these immigrants. Although human capital theory suggests that greater knowledge among the labor force supports employers, employers have not always accurately assessed the value of employees with foreign-earned skills and training (Hagan, 2016). An employer who invests in human capital is more successful in their business not only because they grow their labor force but also because they improve their labor force.

Researchers have linked human capital investment to specialized skill sets, increased productivity, and workforce retention (Manuelli and Seshadri, 2014). Investment in human capital also leads to an increase in a nation's wealth. Manuelli and Seshadri (2014) analyzed human capital in several countries to determine whether a nation's human capital is directly linked to its wealth. They found that the United States obtained high output from its human capital. Less developed countries obtained lower output from their human capital. The less developed a country was, the less it invested in human capital, and the less it produced.

The success of a nation depends on the development of the nation and its investment in human capital (Manuelli & Seshadri, 2014; Schultz, 1974). Human capital

theory supports this study through its claim that an employer's investment in the employer's labor force increases productivity and helps the employer remain competitive (Kwon, 2009). Human capital theory has gained support from economists because of its central idea that growth of an economy depends on the knowledge and skills of its workers—or human capital (Baptiste, 2001). According to Baptiste (2001), human capital must be adaptable and capable of acquiring the skills and knowledge required for advancement. The use of human capital theory in this study reflects employers' need for labor to increase the productivity of their businesses (Kwon, 2009). For workers, the ability to adapt to a changing environment is essential to remaining competitive in the labor force (Hagan, 2016)

History of Hispanic Immigration

Hispanic and Latino individuals have been migrating to the United States for centuries (Patowski, 2014). Although individuals of Hispanic and Latino origin have been in the country for centuries, Hispanic individuals entering the country as immigrants is a relatively new phenomenon that has become a topic of controversy. Hispanic immigration to the United States has its roots in the arrival of Spanish colonists in the 1400s (Potowski, 2014). Since the arrival of the first Spanish-speaking individuals, people of Spanish origin have come from countries such as Mexico, Cuba, the Dominican Republic, and Argentina to the United States in search of better lives and have made a positive impact on the nation.

According to Akresh and Frank (2018), Hispanic immigrants accounted for twenty million Americans at the beginning of the twenty first century. Unfortunately, specific data regarding these individuals—often classified as Mexicans regardless of their

true origin—have been difficult or impossible to obtain. Introduction of uniform standards of identification in the 1970's increased the information available about individuals of Hispanic origin (Borak et al., 2004). The purpose of creating the “Hispanic or Latino” classification was to facilitate collection of data about persons of Spanish descent living in the United States. The census has incorporated this classification for five decades, and “Hispanic” has become the most widely used term to identify those of Spanish descent. The Hispanic classification does not correspond to race; race and Hispanic origin are separate dimensions (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017).

Immigrant Population, 1800s–Mid-1900s

Immigration has always been a controversial topic in the United States, and the controversy has increased over the past decade (Martin, 2015). Immigration has stoked profound disagreement among members of the public (Martin, 2015). This disagreement has made it difficult for individuals entering the nation. During the 19th century, many immigrants to the United States came from Europe. After the War of 1812, immigrants came mainly from Ireland, Great Britain, and Western Europe and were predominantly German Catholic. This was the second wave of immigrants to enter the nation. The first wave of immigrants entered the United States were the Pilgrims seeking religious refuge. In the 1800s, Chinese railroad laborers made up the largest group of immigrants to the United States (Martin, 2011). Mexican laborers also arrived during the latter half of the 1890s. Immigration slowed significantly during the Great Depression but rose again after the end of World War II (Martin, 2015). Immigrants entering the United States after World War II included refugees, spouses of members of the U.S. armed forces, and those seeking political asylum (Martin, 2011). Not all Hispanic people in the United States

descend from immigrants to the country. For example, the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo in 1868 gave the United States territories that were part of Mexico, including Arizona, California, Colorado, Nevada, New Mexico, Texas, and Utah, making residents of those territories U.S. citizens.

Historically, the United States has permitted a small number of immigrants to enter the country, allowing for several decades of assimilation (Martin, 2011). The United States developed criteria for the admission of immigrants into the country based on specific concerns for each group. Immigrants entering the United States have come into the country under a variety of circumstances: Some have entered as refugees fleeing from political or religious persecution, others have come as temporary migrants, and yet others have entered for employment purposes (Alarcón, 2017). Despite these variations, immigrants—particularly Hispanic immigrants—have made significant contributions to the U.S. economy (Rogers, 2015).

Shift in Immigration, Mid-1900s–Present

During the 19th century, the immigrant profile changed. More immigrants entered the country from a wider variety of nations (Martin, 2015). During the next century, an influx of *braceros*—Mexican workers—entered the United States to provide wartime labor (Martin, 2011). Employment and production increased in the United States during the years after the Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965. Many modern economic benefits resulted from the act, which changed the criteria for entry into the country. Would-be immigrants had to meet certain criteria before they could enter the country, such as having relatives in the United States or useful skills (Martin, 2015). The characteristics of immigrants changed after passage of the Immigration and

Naturalization Act of 1965: Immigration averaged only 195,000 people per year from 1921 through 1970. After 1970, the immigrant population reached 40,000,000 by 2010 (U.S. Census Bureau, 2014).

Braceros

Between 1942 and 1964, over 4,600,000 workers entered the United States through an agreement between the United States and Mexico for immigrant labor. During World War II, these arrangements enabled Mexican immigrants to replace domestic workers; the majority of men in the labor force had left for war (Martin, 2015).

The Bracero Program successfully filled jobs and sustained the U.S. labor market for decades (Salinas, 2018). The main contribution of braceros to the labor force was in agriculture. They helped make fields in the United States some of the most productive in the world and the United States a leading contributor to agriculture (Salinas, 2018). Although these workers made large contributions to the success of farming, some people objected to allowing them into the country. Many believed that the braceros depleted opportunities for domestic-born workers, but there is little evidence of this (Clemens et al., 2018).

The exclusion of braceros from the labor market in the 1950s created a baseline investigation of the influence of immigrant workers (Clemens et al., 2018). These investigations arose from the assumption that braceros working in farming during the 1950s reduced jobs and wages available to domestic-born workers (Clemens et al., 2018). However, the results of these investigations indicated that the Bracero Program did not negatively impact the labor market for domestic-born workers and, in lieu of human capital, employers implemented production techniques that offset the need for domestic

workers (Clemens et al., 2018). Efforts to reduce the number of braceros to increase demand for domestic-born labor failed, and this failure illustrated the continued need for immigrant labor.

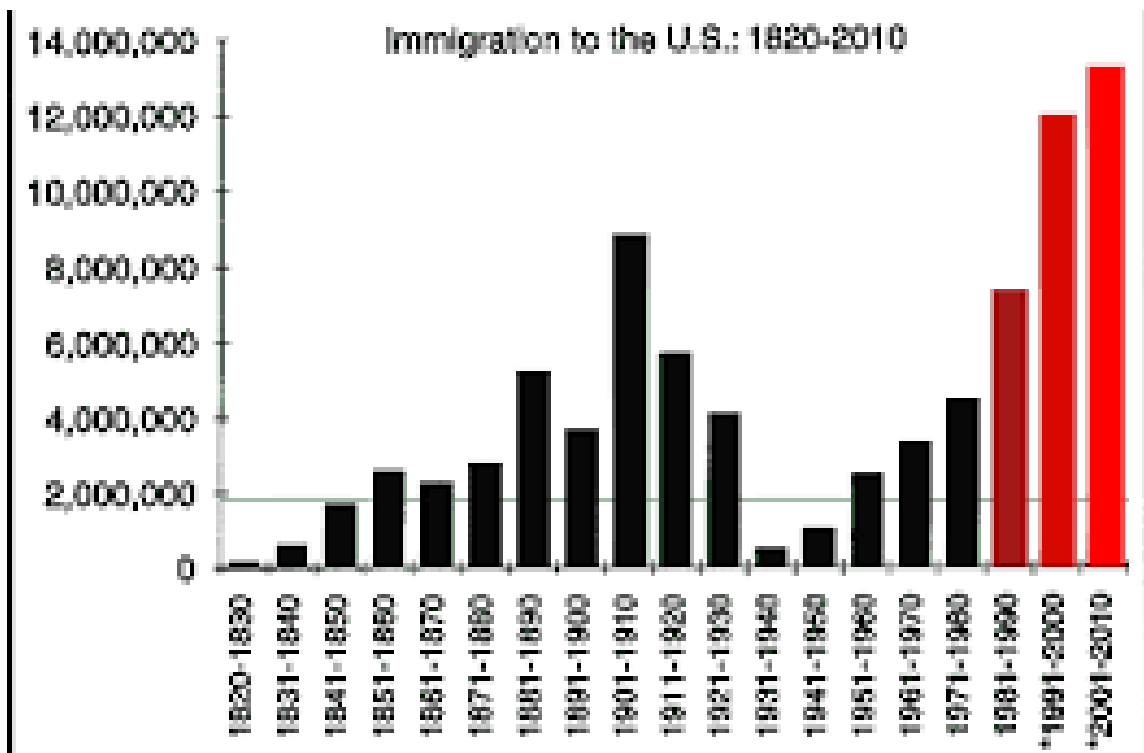
From its inception in 1942, the Braceros Program allowed Mexican laborers to legally enter the United States and offset the need for labor during World War II in exchange for stronger border security (Martin, 2015). However, immigrants continued to cross the border without authorization in search of jobs during this period (Hernandez, 2010). To reduce the number of immigrants entering the country and reestablish labor relations between Mexico and the United States, Operation Wetback began in 1954 (Hernández, 2010). The purpose of Operation Wetback was to deport unauthorized Mexican immigrants and prevent the further unauthorized migration of Mexicans to the United States; however, the need for labor continued, and so employers recruited unauthorized immigrants to support their industries. Immigration continued to be a contentious issue during the 1960s. Civil rights activists called for equal treatment regardless of national origin, and many viewed the quota system, which allowed only a fraction of would-be immigrants into the country each year, as discriminatory and biased (Hernández, 2010). The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 limited immigration according to category rather than national origin, and although the act still placed caps on the number of immigrants, over 18,000,000 immigrants entered the country during the 30 years after the act was passed (Hernández, 2010).

The Immigration and Naturalization Act of 1965 changed the course of migration and significantly increased the number of immigrants entering the United States (Foner, 2000). The major change was that immigrants entered from many different nations

around the world rather than primarily from European nations. During the 1970s, a new wave of immigrants from diverse national backgrounds entered the United States (Foner, 2000). New immigrants entering the nation came from Central and South America and Asia. Between 1973 and 1993, those from Europe made up only 13% of the immigrants entering the country, while those from Asia made up 35.5%, and those from the Americas made up 49.6% (Foner, 2000). **Error! Reference source not found.** illustrates trends in overall immigration.

Hispanic Refugees as Immigrants

Over the past two decades, the makeup of the Hispanic immigrant population has changed in terms of country of origin (BLS, 2017). Between 1960 and 1990 Hispanic immigrants were entering primarily from Caribbean nations such as the Dominican Republic, Cuba, and Mexico. Since 1990's, Hispanic immigrants entering the United States from Central and South American countries such as Honduras, Nicaragua, Venezuela, and El Salvador have increased (BLS, 2017).

Figure 2*Immigration to the United States, 1820–2010*

Note. From *Statistical Yearbook* (p. 10), by U.S. Census Bureau, 2011. In the public domain.

Cuban Refugees

A different wave of immigrants entered the United States in the late 1900s (Pedraza, 1959). Previous immigrants entering the United States were primarily from European and Asian countries (Martin, 2011). With concerns looming over civil unrest and possible regime change, Cuban citizens started migrating to the United States (Pedraza, 1959). According to the 1990 census, there were more than 1,000,000 Cubans living in the United States (Census Bureau, 1992). The influx of Cuban migrants brought a different class of immigrant from Spanish speaking countries to the nation (Pedraza,

1959). Unlike many earlier immigrants, these people were not leaving their country in search of employment; instead, they were refugees forced to leave their homeland involuntarily (Pedraza, 1959). The first wave of Cuban refugees to the United States were wealthy, upper class individuals fleeing political unrest and the economic implications of broken ties between the United States and Cuba. Among those immigrants were over 14,000 children sent by their parents through Operation Peter Pan, a visa waiver program, to protect them from Castro's dissidents (Pedraza, 1959). Future waves of Cuban immigrants were drawn not from the elite of Cuban society but instead from the petite bourgeoisie, and these refugees sought opportunities after losing businesses under the communist regime. The Marielitos, refugees from the lowest classes considered undesirable by the Cuban government, formed the last large wave of Cuban immigrants to the United States. Throughout these waves of immigration, Cuban immigrants became an integral part of U.S. society, and their economic and social contributions have remained nationally significant. Cuban immigrants made up a large number of immigrants making significant contributions to the U.S. economy and workforce.

Central American Refugees

Many have viewed the United States as a nation that upholds and respects human rights (U.S. Department of State, n.d.). This perception has attracted millions of people to the nation's shores (Martin, 2011). The nation's granting of political asylum to those fleeing persecution has driven individuals to enter the country (U.S. Department of State, N.D.). Some large groups of Hispanic and Latino immigrants entering the country to flee political unrest have come from Central and South America and Mexico (Oboler, 1998). Large numbers, thousands of refugees, have come from El Salvador, Nicaragua, and

Honduras. These immigrants came to the United States seeking refuge from war, gang violence, and government persecution. The number of such refugees has increased with the ever-changing political climates in these nations. In the 1970s, Argentinians, Chileans, Uruguayans, and Brazilians attempted to flee civil and economic unrest in their countries, but the United States did not welcome them as it had the Cubans 10 years earlier (Odem, 2016). Immigrants from El Salvador, Honduras, Guatemala, and Nicaragua who fled the wars in their nations were treated not treated as political refugees but as economic immigrants. However, public awareness of the civil wars in these countries and the support provided by the United States to their military regimes led the U.S. government to grant thousands of political refugees from these countries temporary protected status (TPS) after years of debate (Odem, 2016).

Refugees entering the United States have become one of the largest parts of the immigrant workforce because of the asylum status they receive upon entry (Orrenius & Zavodny, 2015). Refugees are immigrants unable return to their home countries because of political, racial, or religious persecution or natural disaster (American Immigration Council, 2018). The asylum status granted to refugees allows them to legally accept employment, which helps employers fill vacancies and reduces the labor shortage. Most refugees entering the country have received TPS, which has allowed them to remain in the country legally, accept employment, become active members of their communities, and contribute to the economy (Menjívar, 2017). The labor force participation of TPS holders, including male TPS holders, has been much higher than that of other immigrants; TPS holders have contributed to the overall health of the economy, with over

89% contributing to Social Security retirement, even though their status prevented them receiving the corresponding benefits (Menjívar, 2017; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2015).

The growing shortage of domestic workers has led employers to rely on refugees and other immigrants to support their businesses (National Immigration Forum, 2018). The National Immigration Forum (2018) reported that refugees made up a large part of the workforce in the United States and had higher employment rates than native-born workers from 2009 to 2011, giving refugees considerable influence over employers. Refugees held 21,000 jobs in the Midwest in 2013. However, changes in refugee policies have reduced the number of refugees entering the nation. According to the American Immigration Council (2018), the Trump administration reduced the annual number of refugee admissions by over 50,000 from initial target of 110,000 as of fiscal year 2018, which may have had a negative impact on the nation's economy and workforce.

Hispanic Immigrants in the Labor Force

Hispanic immigrants have been entering the country for centuries, many seen entering after the 19th century (Martin, 2011). Before the 1970s, there were fewer than 1,000,000 Hispanic immigrants in the United States (Pew Research, 2016). The Hispanic population of the United States has grown steadily for five decades. In the first part of the 20th century, most immigrants to the United States came from European countries such as Ireland and Germany (Abramitzky & Boustan, 2017). In the aftermath of the world wars and associated famine, the number of European immigrants increased: Over 600,000 immigrants entered the United States after World War I, and over 1,000,000 entered after World War II (Abramitzky & Boustan, 2017). In the late 1970s, the

demographics of the immigrant population changed. Hispanic immigrants to the United States started to become leading contributors to the workforce.

Hispanic immigrants have made significant contributions to the national workforce and economy (BLS, 2017). In 2016, the nation's 27,000,000 foreign-born workers made up 16% of the total workforce (BLS, 2017). Hispanic immigrants accounted for over 48% of those foreign-born workers.

According to Menjívar (2017), integration of Hispanic TPS holders has positively impacted society and the workforce. Among TPS holders, over 94% of men and 83% of women participated in the workforce in 2016, and 80% paid income tax and had contributed to social security for an average of 15 years. Limitations on the number of visas issued for Hispanic immigrants—and a 7% reduction in the overall number of immigrant visas—have impacted the labor force and caused economic challenges for employers (Migration Policy Institute, 2018).

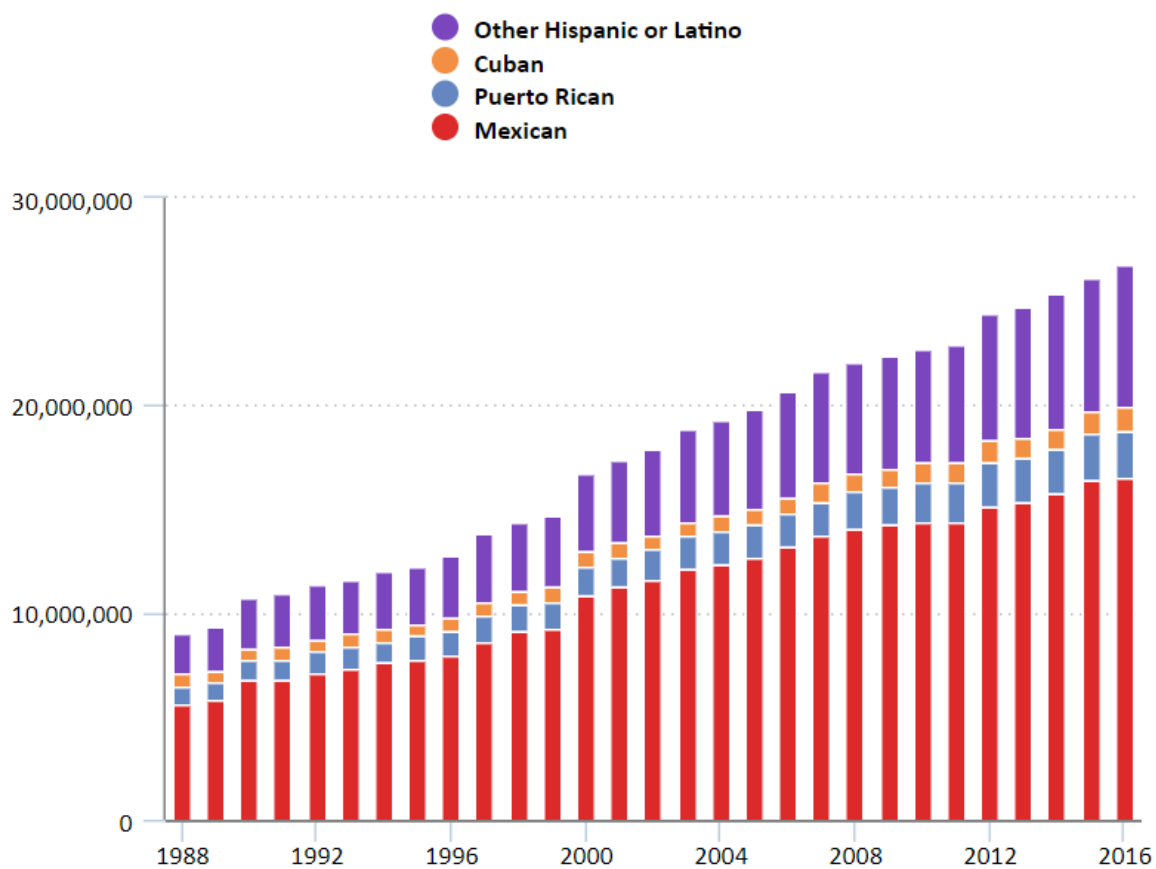
Hispanic people have contributed to labor markets for several different industries, including agriculture, medicine, construction, and hospitality (BLS, 2015). The Hispanic labor force has a diverse and robust background, which affects the work attitudes of Hispanic workers, increasing productivity (Brunette, 2004). The strong work ethic and attitudes of Hispanic workers have made them indispensable in the labor market: There were 26,800,000 Hispanics or Latinos in the U.S. labor force in 2016 (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

The BLS (2015) predicted a significant increase in employment within the next decade, between 2020 and 2030 with expected increases in work in 602 occupations, those health care seeing the largest increases. Most indicators suggest that declining labor

force participation will hinder economic growth during the next decade. One of the main reasons for declining participation in the labor force is the aging population. Older workers retiring will increase the number of vacancies.

Figure 3

Annual Average Civilian Labor Force of Hispanics Aged 16 Years and Older by Ethnic Group, 1988–2016



Note. From *Foreign-Born Workers: Labor Force Characteristics—2016*, by Bureau of Labor Statistics, 2017, https://www.bls.gov/news.release/archives/forbrn_05172018.pdf.

In the public domain.

Hispanic Labor in Construction

Hispanic workers have made up over 18% of the construction labor force (Al-Bayati, 2019). The proportion of Hispanic workers in construction increased from 10% in 1995–1996 to over 1,300,000 by 2001, an increase of 18% (Brunette, 2004). Hispanic laborers made up 34% of construction workers in the United States in 2015. The number of Hispanic workers in the construction industry has increased, with an estimated 2,800,000 Hispanic workers in construction in 2015 (CPWR, 2016).

According to the BLS (2016), construction is one of the most dangerous industries in the United States. Hallowell and Yugar-Arias (2016) found that construction workers in the United States were at a high risk of injury or fatality in 2016, and the risk for Hispanic workers was 48% higher than that for non-Hispanic workers. According to the BLS (2018), Mexican construction workers experienced over 350 fatalities in 2016, and European construction workers experienced fewer than 100 fatalities in the same year in the United States. However, despite the risks associated with construction, the number of Hispanic workers in the industry has continued to grow. Employers in the construction industry hired Hispanic workers in part due to specific skill sets possessed by Hispanic immigrants that made them effective workers in this field.

Hispanic Labor in Agriculture

Agriculture is an important industry in the United States (Agriculture Workforce Coalition, 2016). According to the Agriculture Workforce Coalition (2016), the agricultural sector has been facing significant labor shortages that have impacted crops and led to a sharp decline in fruit and vegetable production. Economic Research Services

(2019) reported that agricultural production dropped by over 20%, from 2018 which led to a rise in imports of fruits and vegetables that negatively impacted the economy.

According to the U.S. Department of Agriculture (2018), U.S. budget cuts impact the labor force and, consequently, economic output. Labor shortages have already had a tremendous impact on agriculture. Continued labor shortages will prevent U.S. agriculture from remaining competitive in global markets (**Error! Reference source not found.**).

Hispanic Labor in Hospitality

Hospitality (including tourism) is one of the most productive industries employing blue-collar workers (World Tourism Organization, 2019). In 2015, the industry grossed more than \$189,000,000,000 (Statista, 2015; World Tourism Organization, 2019). Many hospitality workers have few or no specialized skills, and low wages are therefore common in the industry (World Tourism Organization, 2019). With the hospitality industry expected to continue growing, employers will need to hire more workers to keep up with demand (World Tourism Organization, 2019). Hispanic immigrants made up over 22% of all hospitality workers in the United States (BLS, 2017). The growing hospitality industry and shrinking workforce suggest continued high demand for Hispanic immigrant labor.

Hispanic Labor in Food Service

Hispanic and Latino workers made up 25% of all employees in the food service industry in 2016 (Buchholz et al., 2016). These workers were mostly immigrants with few skills who faced a language barrier. The food service workforce has declined over

the past several years, which has led employers to place higher demands on remaining workers to meet the employers' growing needs.

The Labor Shortage in the United States

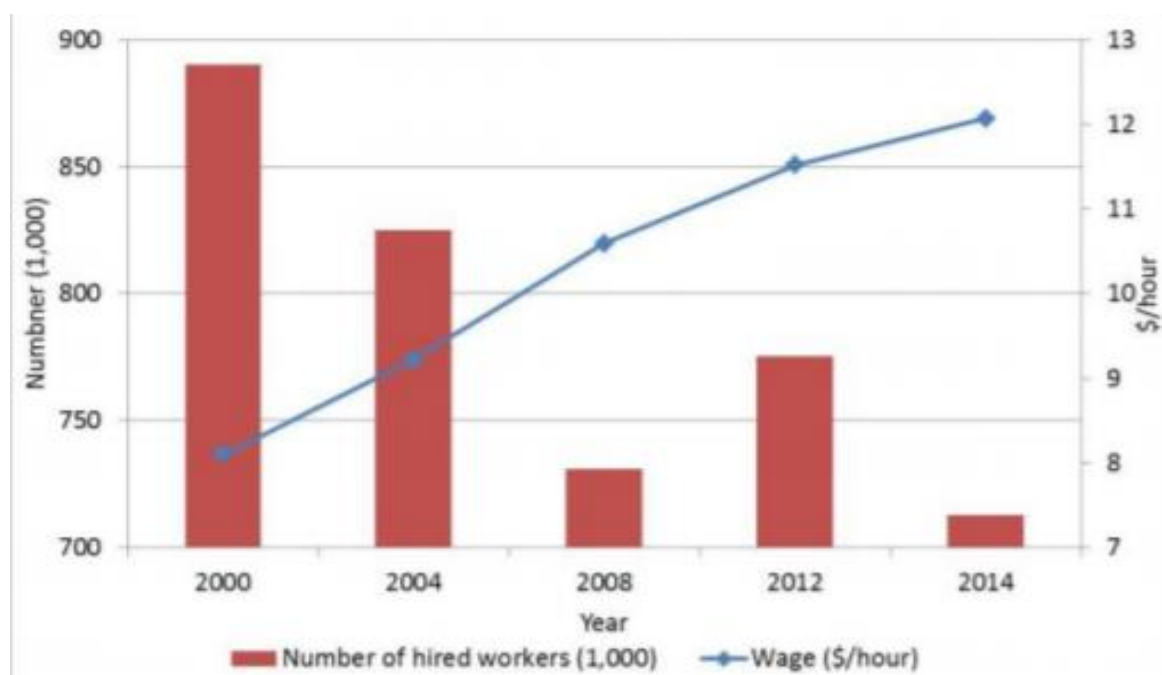
The labor shortage in the United States has been a growing concern for employers, who have begun to worry about their ability to remain competitive (Taylor et.al., 2012). The shortage of workers in U.S. manufacturing has been an issue for many decades. Taylor et al. (2012), Hertz and Zahniser (2013), and Guthman (2017) noted that the shortage of farm labor has increased stress on the agricultural industry for several years and burdened suppliers. Since the early 21st century, the size of the agriculture labor force has declined sharply, which has impacted the ability of farmers to remain competitive in foreign markets (Guthman, 2017). This labor shortage has also provided a significant advantage to workers, who have been able to ask for higher wages.

Employers have been encountering gaps in the labor force due to older adults retiring in large numbers (BLS, 2017). Within the past decade, the loss of seasoned workers to retirement has led to deficiencies in the labor market (BLS, 2017). According to the BLS (2017), the labor force has continued to shrink as older workers have retired. In addition to older workers leaving the workforce, the number of individuals entering the labor force has declined. The civilian labor force declined from the total population from 66.2% in 2008 to 63.1% in 2018 (BLS, 2018). This decline contributed to loss of revenue for U.S. employers. Employers have had to increasingly rely on immigrants to fill vacancies. However, recent immigration reforms have reduced the number of visas available for would-be immigrants, which has worsened the labor shortage (Neumark et al., 2013; Pearlman & Schaffer, 2013; Richards, 2018).

According to Krueger (2017), an aging and shrinking population impacts the number of qualified workers. Workforce participation also affects the supply of skilled workers. As the economy continues to grow and create jobs, one way to fill those vacancies given a shrinking workforce is to increase immigration (Hertel & Zacher, 2015; Krueger, 2017).

Figure 4

Annual Average Number of Hired Workers in U.S. Agriculture (Excluding Service Workers) and Average Wage Rate



Note. From *2014 Agricultural Statistics*, by U.S. Department of Agriculture, 2014.

<http://www.nass.usda.gov/>. In the public domain.

In specific industries, employers have had to increase their use of immigrant workers to offset the labor shortage (Guthman, 2017). However, the lack of workers has

continued to burden employers, who have worried about how to meet their labor demands (Guthman, 2017). The use of immigrant workers has allowed employers to remain productive in industries such as agriculture, farming, and hospitality, but new immigration policies have threatened to reduce the number of immigrant workers allowed to enter the country, threatening the labor available to those industries (Guthman, 2017; Kostandini et al., 2014; Udani, 2016). The labor shortage and consequent reduction in profits will continue unless immigration reform allows more immigrant workers to enter the country (Guthman, 2017; Kostandini et al., 2014; Udani, 2016). Several industries have been experiencing labor shortages, including construction, agriculture, and hospitality (BLS, 2016). The recent reduction in the Hispanic workforce has contributed significantly to reductions in profits and revenues for employers in multiple industries (Canon et al., 2013; Krueger, 2017).

Kim et al. (2020) predicted that many employers would face labor shortages impacting their industries. The labor shortage would affect some states more than others: Sectors such as agriculture on the west coast would experience a reduction in the number of available workers. Hispanic labor is important to construction and agriculture, and shortages of Hispanic labor would make it difficult for employers in those industries to remain competitive (Charlton & Kostandini, 2018; L. Nelson et al., 2015; Torres et al., 2012). Employers in the United States have already been feeling the impact of a reduction in the Hispanic labor force (Guthman, 2017). The deportation of many Hispanic immigrants has led many industries to experience declines in both numbers of consumers and ability to provide services. Industries such construction have experienced a large decline in the size of the Hispanic labor force, which has significantly decreased

their ability to do business (Association of Construction Workers, 2020; Sisk & Bankston, 2014; Torres et al., 2012). If this decline were to continue, employers in these industries would be incapable of meeting demand. This illustrates the critical impact of, and need for, Hispanic workers. Charlton and Kostandini (2018) noted that the Hispanic labor shortage had impacted both the farming and construction industries in recent years. The agricultural sector has grown thanks to higher demand for domestic products than for imported ones. The demand for local products has increased the need for labor; however, recent immigration reforms have reduced the size of the labor force significantly.

Hispanic Immigrants' Impact on Labor

From the initial braceros who entered in the 1940s to more recent refugees from Honduras and El Salvador, Hispanic immigrants have played a key role in the labor force since the middle of the 20th century (Menjívar, 2017). Despite this role, changes to immigration policy have reduced the number of employment visas issued to those from Spanish-speaking countries from over 4,800 in 2016 to 4,200 in 2018 (U.S. Department of State, 2019). Recent reforms directed at immigrants have impacted the nation's overall labor force and made it difficult for employers to conduct business and remain globally competitive (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). The impact of immigration reform on Hispanic immigrants is an important policy issue that deserves to be addressed because of the effects that Hispanic workers have on American employers.

Although the reforms have particularly affected male Hispanic immigrants, employers have also depended heavily on Hispanic women. Hispanic individuals made up a large proportion of North Carolina's labor force. However, recent immigration reforms have reduced the number of Hispanic women in the state's labor force, which has

impacted industries in this region (Flippen, 2014, 2016). The same phenomenon has occurred in other areas of the country.

Employers have remained in need of labor. The number of open positions has recently exceeded the number of workers seeking employment. Immigration reforms have impacted U.S. employers (P. B. Nelson et al., 2014; Stuesse & Helton, 2013; Valentine, 2017), and these reforms and their effects on employers warrant investigation. An example of the recent changes in immigration policy and how these changes have impacted employers is the denial of visas to immigrant workers, which has caused a severe shortage of labor in hospitality. Employers have had to attempt to meet consumer demand without the necessary workforce. Continued shortages would impact the ability of employers to provide services and meet demand.

Immigrant labor is cheap and flexible, and immigrants thus contribute enormously to the economies of their new countries (Orrenius et al., 2020). Many immigrants who enter a country and take root make significant contributions to the economy, not only because of their participation in the labor force but also because of their contribution to domestic demand. Hispanic immigrant labor is one of the main reasons U.S. industries have been able to remain competitive (Coulombe & Gil, 2016; P. Martin, 2013; Paret, 2014). Without the Hispanic labor force, employers in the United States would not be able to remain in business and stay competitive in global markets.

Immigration reforms have continued to contribute to reduction of the labor force and impact the ability of employers to remain competitive. The recent enforcement of immigration policies by agencies such as Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Customs and Border Protection, and local and state law enforcement, has worsened the

labor shortage and impacted the ability of employers to remain competitive. Some have argued that recent changes in immigration policies targeted Hispanic immigrants and that continued enforcement of these new policies would reduce the Hispanic population and create disparities among immigrants (Jaggers et al., 2014; Orrenius & Zavodny, 2014; Valentine, 2017).

The need for skilled labor has been increasing in the United States, and the way to increase the number of skilled workers available to an industry is to ensure that employers can hire immigrant workers and provide them with adequate training. Unfortunately, the reduction in the number of immigrant workers has made it difficult for employers to meet the demands of their industries. Several other groups of immigrants have been significant in the U.S. labor force (Sherman et al., 2019), but Hispanic immigrants have made the greatest impact, especially in the South, where the sectors impacted by the shortage of Hispanic immigrant workers include agriculture, construction, and hospitality (BLS, 2019a).

Hipsman and Meissner (2013) argued for reform to ensure the availability of an immigrant labor force to U.S. employers. Employers running immigrant-supported businesses have supplied the nation with billions of dollars in revenue (Kosten, 2018). However, the decline in national population growth and the decline in the labor force since the Great Recession of 2008 (Hotchkiss & Rios-Avila, 2013; Toossi, 2015) have led to a shortage of human capital. Without the ability to maintain their labor forces, employers may not be able to produce the goods and services that create revenue.

Employers have depended on the availability of immigrant labor to meet demand; however, recent immigration reform has threatened employers' access to immigrant labor

(Arestis et al., 2013; Canon et al., 2013; Krueger, 2017). The decline of the labor force within certain groups has contributed significantly to employers' inability to meet consumer demand (Hall & Petrosky-Nadeau, 2016; Valletta, 2013). The lack of workers and inability of employers to meet demand have left employers vulnerable globally.

The Hispanic labor force has become crucial to the ability of employers to remain competitive. Immigration reform needs to include regulations that support the needs of employers and their industries. This includes the needs of Hispanic immigrants, whom these employers have come to depend on. Processes that deter immigrants from applying for work do not support employers during a labor shortage and prevent employers from remaining competitive in global markets (Guerrero & Posthuma, 2014; Lopez, 2013). Employers have been facing severe labor shortages; to remain competitive in global markets, they need to be able to reliably employ immigrants.

Summary

The literature review demonstrated that a labor shortage has been impacting U.S. employers and industries. Researchers have found that Hispanic immigrants could help reduce the labor shortage and that new immigration policies could impact competitiveness of employers and allow employers to remain viable. Employers need to consistently deliver services and goods, but employers have been finding it hard to meet demand due to the shortage of labor, especially skilled labor.

The literature indicates that Hispanic immigrants have been contributing to the economy and helping employers meet demand and remain relevant in their industries. In industries such as construction, hospitality, agriculture, and food services, Hispanic

immigrants have continued to contribute to and support the needs of the industries and their employers.

The literature review highlighted the need for additional labor to ensure that employers can meet demand. Researchers have reported that labor shortages have been impacting employers and their ability to operate. The inability of employers to meet demand may affect their overall revenue. The labor force is important to the success of the nation's employers. Although the labor shortage and the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the labor force have both caused concern, no researchers have investigated employers' perceptions of Hispanic immigrants' contributions to the workforce and industry. The employers' lived experiences are necessary to understand the need for the participation of Hispanic immigrants in the workforce.

The literature review also indicated the need for a shift in immigration policy to allow Hispanic immigrants to enter the United States to support the increasing demand for human capital. The immigration policies that impacted Hispanic immigrants the most were the reduction of the number of visas issued to Hispanic immigrants and changes to TPS. These two immigration policies have had a tremendous impact on the number of immigrants entering the United States.

Although Hispanic immigrants have been important contributors to the labor force, few researchers have studied employers' perceptions of Hispanic immigrants in the workforce. In this study, I explored the experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants and their perceptions of Hispanic immigrants' impact on their industry.

Chapter 3 describes the research method, design, population, and sampling. The chapter also presents the methods of data collection and analysis in detail.

Chapter 3

Methodology and Research Design

Introduction

The labor shortage has continued to worsen in the United States. Employers have been unable to meet demand due to lack of workers and have had difficulty remaining competitive in the global market. In this study, I addressed, from the perspective of employers, the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the labor shortage and the ability of employers to remain competitive. In this chapter, I review the qualitative research methodology, narrative research design, instruments, selection of participants, methods of data collection and analysis, and my role as the researcher. The methodology chosen was the most appropriate for the topic explored and provided the desired results, which indicated how Hispanic immigrants could help employers meet their increasing demands for labor.

Research Design and Rationale

This study used was qualitative in nature. Qualitative research is based on an individual's experience and perceptions (Reiners, 2012; Snyder, 2012). Using qualitative research allows an individual to share their understanding of a situation as it applies to them (Creswell, 2009). It enables a researcher to plan their research. The narrative approach to research involves understanding the experience of an individual by telling their story.

A single research question guided the study: What are employers' experiences regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants with legal authorization to work in agriculture and landscaping in the United States? I explored employers' experiences of the impact of

Hispanic immigrants on the labor shortage and the ability of employers to meet demand due to the changes in immigration policies.

Narrative inquiry utilizes the philosophy that people and experiences can be illustrated through their stories (Wang & Geale, 2015). The primary objective of narrative inquiry for me was to understand the experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants. I wished to study the experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants regarding the impact of Hispanic immigrant labor on employers. A case study design would have allowed exploration of the issue rather than the lived experiences of individuals (Creswell, 2007). Although the grounded theory approach has similarities to the phenomenological approach, the grounded theory approach is geared more toward explanation “of a process, action or interaction shaped by a large number of participants” (Creswell, 2007, p. 249). In grounded theory research, a researcher accumulates participants’ experiences and formulates a theory from them. A narrative inquiry study was the best choice for understanding the experiences of employers of immigrant workers and obtaining first-hand information about the experiences employing immigrant workers. Experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants were better suited for this study versus other methods of research in order to establish an understanding of the employer’s views on Hispanic workers and their contributions to the employers’ workforce. Therefore, I selected a narrative analysis design so that I could understand the lived experiences of the employers of Hispanic immigrant workers and the impact these workers have on their industries.

Narrative inquiry begins with asking participants to re-tell their stories and share their experience (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). A narrative inquiry design was the best way

to understand what employers experience with their Hispanic immigrant laborers and how they perceive Hispanic immigrants impacting the labor shortage. Quantitative methods would have been inappropriate because they cannot capture lived experiences, and rather focus on variables and hypotheses to test theories (Creswell, 2002). According to Moustakas (1994), participant selection is directly related to the research methods used. Merriam (2009) noted that qualitative research provides opportunities to recognize aspects of a research topic in advance. In this manner, a researcher can choose appropriate participants for a given research topic. The qualitative narrative inquiry allows for the sharing of lived experiences (Clandinin & Huber, 2010) and thus differs from quantitative approaches, which focus on a group's outcomes rather than their experiences (Creswell, 2002).

I collected data by interviewing employers of Hispanic immigrants in the agricultural and landscaping industries. Hispanic immigrants have worked in record numbers in the agricultural and landscaping industries for several decades, so I focused on these industries. I conducted semistructured interviews via telephone and Zoom at agreed-upon times and recorded them to ensure accurate interpretation of data. For employers who did not want to be recorded, I captured data via detailed notes.. The sample consisted of three employers. Patton (2002) suggested that sample size can increase to reach saturation, if necessary. This sample size permitted a well-rounded understanding of employers of Hispanic immigrants and their perceptions of the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the labor force.

Role of the Researcher

My role as the researcher was to conduct an unbiased examination of the lived experiences of participants via narrative methods. In a qualitative study, the researcher becomes the instrument of research, facilitates interactions between the researcher and participants, and ensures that participants feel safe sharing their experiences (Pezalla et al., 2012). I had no personal relationships with the participants in this study. I had no bias regarding, or power relationships with, the participants. There were no unresolved ethical issues related to the study.

Methodology

Researchers conduct narrative inquiry in order to study experiences through telling of a story (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). Narrative inquiry allows a researcher to understand and look into experiences through collaboration between researcher and participant (Connely & Clandinin, 2000). Using this research method, which allows the participant to tell their story, a researcher can capture experiences through the lens of the participant. Wang and Geale (2015) discuss how previous experiences of participants allows the researcher an inside view on the topic.

Narrative analysis focuses on personal conditions and social conditions simultaneously (Clandinin & Huber, 2010). According to Clandinin and Huber (2010), narrative inquiry allows participants to share their experiences and the impact of the lived experiences had on their lives. Moustakas (1994) argued that participant encounters are essential to describing the overall experience of a phenomenon.

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research allows a researcher to study the experiences of individuals to understand a phenomenon. Qualitative research provides

insight into the reasons people engage in particular actions (Rosenthal, 2016). Using this research method, a researcher can investigate individuals' lived events in depth and understand their perceptions. Because qualitative research focuses on the perceptions of participants, a qualitative researcher must maintain objectivity to ensure that the data are authentic (Berg, 2001). A qualitative researcher commits to preserving the dependability of the data collected.

According to Szyjka (2012), the purpose of qualitative research is to understand and interpret a situation. Qualitative research allows a researcher to explore issues in depth without formulating theories; the researcher instead understands the experience through participant perceptions and the perspectives of individuals who encountered the experience. Qualitative methods allow both researchers and their audiences to gain a more comprehensive understanding of participants' viewpoints than by conducting quantitative research (Szyjka, 2012).

Narrative inquiry approaches are ideal for studies that focus on the stories of participants experiences and their perceptions of those experiences (Creswell, 2007). In this narrative inquiry study, I explored the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants. Narrative inquiry was the method best suited to explore this experience in order to capture the understanding of those who have lived the experience and address the encounters of employers who hire Hispanic immigrants. The study, being a narrative exploration of a theory, may impact future studies addressing immigration issues, by understanding the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants in the workforce and the demand employers are facing and may demonstrate the need for policy reform to address the labor shortage.

Although narrative research has its origins in literature, history and anthropology, different fields have used the approach in research (Creswell, 2007). Narrative inquiry research methods “begins with the experiences expressed in lived and told stories of individuals.” (Creswell, 2007). Narrative research looks at individuals’ lives and the focus is on the events as lived and relayed by the individual who lived the experience (Clandinin & Huber, 2015). When the participants relay their stories, they are reliving the events and may be in the midst of ongoing occurrences which are impacting their lives.

When a researcher uses a narrative inquiry, they are entering the lives of the participants (Clandinin & Huber, 2015). The purpose of narrative research is to discover how experiences have been lived by participants and the impact they have had in their lives. This type of research allows the researcher to capture the meaning of the experiences from the participants’ perspectives. A narrative inquiry researcher uses the lived experiences of participants, which allows the researcher to obtain a profound understanding of those experiences.

Participant Selection

The target population of any study is the group of individuals a researcher can recruit for the study (Creswell, 2009). The participants and sampling method—the method of selecting participants—affect the outcome of the study (Creswell, 2007, 2009). The sampling method used was purposive sampling. The needs of a study should drive participant selection. For this investigation, I chose to study employers of Hispanic immigrants in the agricultural and landscaping industries in Maryland and Virginia. I asked these employers to share their experiences of employing Hispanic immigrants and their perceptions of the contributions of Hispanic immigrants to U.S. enterprises. The

employers had hired and would be hiring employees who either had work permits for these industries or were legal permanent residents. The employers studied had hired employees who either had work permits for specific industries or were legal permanent residents of the United States.

Target Population

The participants selected for this study were employers of Hispanic immigrants in the agricultural and landscaping industries. The criteria for participant selection derived from the stated problem—that employers have been having difficulty filling vacancies in the agricultural and landscaping industries—and the research question, which relates to the lived experiences of employers hiring Hispanic immigrants. The selected employers in the agricultural and landscaping industries, met the required criteria for the study. I selected employers based on their record of having hired Hispanic laborers and their willingness to participate in the study.

The participants were employers located in Maryland, Virginia, and the District of Columbia. The employers selected were from several different industries and enterprises. I also considered employers of a variety of ages and races to ensure the sample was diverse and unbiased. The participant pool included owners of agricultural and landscaping companies that employed Hispanic individuals. The pool also included employers who are not owners but who employ Hispanic immigrants in their workforce. The rationale for sampling this diverse group of employers was to expose the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants in the agriculture and landscaping industries. To ensure an unbiased narrative of the impacts of Hispanic immigrant workers, I restricted the study to employers in the specific industries already mentioned

who each have at least 50 employees. By interviewing employers who have at least 50 employees, it included employers who had not only Hispanic immigrant employees but also non-Hispanic employees within their workforce. Selecting employers from the agricultural and landscaping industries and employers who have at least 50 employees, increased the diversity of perspectives available. I tailored the interviews based on the number of employees and the industry.

Potential participants all received a description of the study and its purpose. I obtained participants' informed consent and promised to maintain confidentiality in writing before they took part in the study; I required participants to understand the nature of the study prior to participation. I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Sampling Method and Sample Size

In quantitative studies, sample size considerations depend on the need to make statistical generalizations from the sample selected (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). Qualitative research involves experiences shared by participants, and so sample size has less impact on obtaining desired results. Creswell (2002) stated that considerations regarding sample size depend on the type of research conducted. Although qualitative research can involve large samples, the number of individuals sampled should reflect the needs of a study (Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2005). For this narrative inquiry study into the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants, I targeted a sample size of 3 employers. The sample size derived from the narrative nature of the study. Creswell (1998) suggested that "sample size is not straightforward in a qualitative research" (Butina, 2015). I selected different employers for this study based on the sizes of their

companies, their hiring practices, and their availability. The sampling criteria disqualified multiple employers. I recruited participants using the criteria set for the study. The sample represented the target population of the study. According to Creswell (2009), a sample should reflect the specific population that a researcher wants to represent.

I used purposeful sampling. According to Patton (1990), purposeful sampling allows a researcher to select participants whose lived experiences can enrich the researcher's study. A qualitative researcher analyzes data while the investigation is ongoing. Data saturation is not easy to predict; one study may reach saturation with fewer participants than another study. For this study, I purposefully chose participants who represented multiple industries, wide experience of employers of Hispanic immigrants, and understanding of the labor shortage. I identified, contacted, and recruited the participants myself. I identified potential participants by researching employers in the designated study area and contacting them via telephone and email to request their participation.

Sample

I selected a purposeful sample of four employers. After collecting data from the four employers, it was determined the study provided the rich information needed for a narrative inquiry study. This sample size was ideal for the qualitative narrative approach used and allowed me to obtain significant data. The four interviews with employers allowed me to gain in-depth understanding of the research topic and better analyze the data collected (Patton, 1990) The sample size initially included 15 employers of Hispanic immigrants and was intended to be a phenomenological study, however, due to difficulties finding participants for the study and resistance from employers to discuss the

topic of Hispanic immigrant laborers, the study was changed to a narrative inquiry and the final sample size of four employers provided saturation of the data. The sample size was selected in order to better understand the experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants legally authorized to work in the country. The sampling did not include employers who do not hire Hispanic immigrants and did not include employers of minors. The sampling was appropriate for this study and achieved data saturation.

The sample represented the population of employers in a variety of industries who employ Hispanic immigrants. Many of the participants shared industries, which allowed me to uncover different perspectives on the same topic from employers with similar industrial backgrounds. I interviewed four employers, each of whom

- was a business owner or manager,
- hired Hispanic immigrants,
- was a provider in the service industry, and
- had a business in the District of Columbia, Maryland, or Virginia.

I invited employers to participate via email and phone calls after identifying them in the business pages. I collected demographic data from the participants to aid understanding of the sample and appropriate representation of the population.

Instrumentation

According to Creswell (2009), a researcher is important to their research because they collect the data and analyze it. Researchers must therefore identify their own biases, personal values, and assumptions so that they can interpret data accurately. According to Kvale (2006), qualitative interviews allow a researcher to investigate the human

experience and understand a participant's point of view. Face-to-face semistructured interviews are the best choice when a researcher wants to allow the participants to express opinions about the subject matter. Other means of data collection, with rigid instrumentation designs, do not allow participants to share their lived experiences.

According to Alshenqeeti (2014), interviewing is a valid, acceptable, and valuable instrument for data collection. Interviewing participants allows the participants to express opinions in their own words. Open-ended interviews formed the instrumentation of this study. I conducted these interviews via telephone (Creswell, 2009) using open-ended interview questions that I developed myself, which allowed participants to share their lived experiences without feeling confined to give definitive answers. The design of the interview process supported the structure of the study (Alshenqeeti, 2014).

Data Collection

Pseudonyms helped protect the anonymity of the participants. I also kept the locations of participants' businesses confidential, unless participants granted permission to identify their businesses or the locations of their businesses. I recorded the audio of the interviews and took notes during data collection. For participants who did not want to be recorded, I captured data with detailed notes of the interviews. Participants all received a description of the study and its purpose. I obtained participants' informed consent and promised to maintain confidentiality in writing before they took part in the study; I required participants to understand the nature of the study prior to participation. I informed participants that they could withdraw from the study at any time.

Conduct of the interviews proceeded as agreed by myself and the participants. I interviewed each participant in either one or two sessions, based on their availability. I

provided potential interviews times each participant, and we then agreed on a time and date. If one session did not provide enough time to interview a participant, we scheduled a second session. I allotted 60–90 min to each participant. Participants varied in the amount of time they needed to answer the interview questions and the manner in which they answered the questions. I tailored the interviews to the needs of the participants.

I recorded the interviews to ensure accuracy of the interpretation of the details. For participants who did not want to be recorded, I captured interview data via detailed notes. I noted any questions the participants had during the interview process, which helped me when analyzing the interview data and allowed me to review any additional relevant information. For participants I sent all participants thank-you letters after their interviews.

Narrative inquiry allows the researcher to ask questions which will help interpret the experiences of the participants (Wang & Geale, 2015). Data collection for narrative inquiry research involves the researcher getting an “insider view” into the experiences of the participants (Wang & Geale, 2015). Qualitative data collection usually occurs via in-depth interviews with open-ended questions. In this study, I used semistructured face-to-face, Zoom, or telephone interviews to address the research question. This method of data collection has enjoyed wide use in qualitative narrative studies. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them using NVivo (Version 11). For participants who did not want to be recorded, I captured data via detailed notes. Participants had the opportunity to review their transcribed interviews. I kept interview data in a secure location to maintain participants’ privacy.

According to Merriam (2009), data analysis is the process of understanding the data. Qualitative data analysis involves classifying events. A qualitative researcher examines sources of information and assesses all data collected based on their research questions. Data collection and analysis of participants' perceptions helps ensure study validity (Creswell, 2009).

Data Analysis

I used NVivo (Version 11) to sort and analyze the data gathered to find trends and patterns. Data analysis is the process through which researchers review and analyze collected data and interpret them to generate findings (Merriam, 2009). Data analysis provides a researcher with a way to understand complex data collected via interviews. Several methods of analysis allow rigorous analysis of data based on primary accounts of a phenomenon obtained from interviews with participants (Morrow et al., 2015). Gaining familiarity with the data, identifying statements relevant to the study, formulating meanings related to the study and bracketing, clustering themes, developing exhaustive description, producing fundamental structure, and seeking verification of the fundamental structure.

Data analysis allows a researcher to separate the data collected into sections that facilitate interpretation. Creswell (2009) suggested categorizing and labeling data with terms to facilitate the coding process. This helps the final interpretation of the findings. I categorized the data gathered using keywords and codes. I also created some categories—such as “Hispanic,” “labor,” and “customers”—to facilitate analysis and interpretation of the data. The keywords and codes were identified by the statement and words used by the

participants. I grouped data gathered by type to facilitate interpretation and understanding.

Narrative analysis allows a researcher to examine data collected from sources such as interviews. This form of data analysis focuses on the lived experiences of participants to address a research question. I used narrative analysis to address my research question.

Data analysis helps a researcher to interpret data gathered during research.

According to Giorgi (2009), data analysis is meant to uncover a phenomenon based on individual experiences and identify themes based on commonalities among experiences.

Data analysis allows researchers to understand in great depth what they have studied.

According to Dey (1993), coding plays a key role in analysis, which involves subdividing the data and assigning categories to the parts. Several coding methods help researchers notice patterns and commonalities in data. Preliminary coding focuses on characteristics of a theory supporting a study. Table 1 shows the preliminary coding used in this study.

Table 1*Preliminary Coding*

| Parent code ^a | Child code | Interview questions |
|--------------------------|---------------|---------------------|
| Skills sets | Contributions | 1, 2, 4, 7 |
| Assets | Earnings | 2, 3, 9 |
| Employee | Productivity | 1, 2, 3, 4 |
| Employee value | Retention | 3, 4, 5, 6, 7 |

Note. These codes correspond to the lone research question: What are the experiences of employers hiring Hispanic immigrants? The theory guiding the study was human capital theory.

^a Characteristics of the theory.

Missing data and associated discrepancies during data analysis were possibilities. Missing data can impact the outcome of a study negatively and requires immediate attention (Scheffer, 2002). To address discrepancies due to missing data, a researcher may delete records that are incomplete. Researchers may also impute values to replace missing responses. For this study, I addressed missing data by imputing values using NVivo. After completing the interviews, I analyzed the interview data with respect to immigration issues, perceptions of immigrant labor, likely access to employment for immigrants, and the ability of employers to hire immigrant workers.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness depends on validity and reliability (Shenton, 2004). To address concerns regarding the trustworthiness of this qualitative study, in this section I consider the study's credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability.

Credibility

Questions of credibility can arise in any research. According to Shenton (2004), validity of a study depends on ensuring that the tests performed are intended. A researcher must examine their sources of data to build a credible justification for their findings. To ensure credibility of this study, I implemented specific strategies. One strategy was to have prolonged contact with participants: several communications with participants to determine interest in participating in the study. I interviewed participants extensively and collected the results of those interviews.

Verifying participants also helps establish credibility. To support the reliability of the data collected, I verified employers before interviewing them by checking the legitimacy of their businesses. The employers' businesses were verified using Google as the internet search engine. This helped with gathering information from a diverse group of participants. I recorded interviews and transcribed them verbatim. For participants who did not wish to be recorded, I captured interview data via detailed notes. I also captured participant observations during interviews. This allowed for a better depiction of the data collected and supported deeper analysis. Reliability derives from triangulation. These methods allow detailed reporting of processes and allow future researchers to learn which research methods and instrumentation a researcher used (Shenton, 2004).

Transferability

According to Merriam (2009), transferability is an indicator of how well the findings of a study apply to other situations. Transferability depends on the nature of the conclusions and the population investigated. Saldana (2016) suggested that researchers should draw from the words of participants and capture the intrinsic meanings of

participants' experiences. To ensure accurate transfer of data collected, I recorded the interviews to ensure I captured them accurately. For those participants who did not want to be recorded, I captured data via detailed notes. I transcribed the interviews accurately and exactly. The purpose of using a participant pool specific to the study was to make the findings of the study transferable. Participant selection focused on the employers of Hispanic immigrants instead of selecting employers who did not employ Hispanic immigrants legally authorized to work in the country.

Dependability

Establishing dependability relies on reporting the processes of a study in detail, which enables future researchers to repeat the work (Shenton, 2004). I kept audit trails to ensure the study findings were dependable.

Confirmability

Confirmability corresponds to the objectivity of a qualitative study (Shenton, 2004). A researcher must ensure that their findings result from the experiences and ideas of the participants rather than from the characteristics and preferences of the researcher (Shenton, 2004). Reflexivity supports confirmability by allowing a researcher to identify biases regarding their research via reflective journaling; this process reduces investigator bias. To increase the confirmability of this study, I applied reflexivity methods, such as maintaining a reflexive journal.

Ethical Procedures

The validity and reliability of a researcher's study depend on the ethics of the researcher (Merriam, 2009). Ethics are an essential component of credible research. To ensure adherence to ethical standards of behavior, I required participants to sign consent

forms. I did not coerce participants to take part in the study, and participants were free to withdraw at any time. I also distributed confidentiality agreements to participants and stored collected data in a secure location. I avoided potential ethical issues related to data collection by ensuring confidentiality of the data collected.

I submitted a proposal to Dr. Gema Hernandez, committee chair for approval. The IRB approval number 08-25-20-0455691 was issued for this study. The IRB application included an overview of the study, the data collection tools, and a description of the research participants. The IRB approved the study validating my application of ethical standards.

Summary

I selected a qualitative narrative inquiry research design to study the labor shortage and the hiring of Hispanic immigrants from the perspective of employers. The research consisted of interviewing four employers of Hispanic immigrants legally authorized to work in the country. The data collection was conducted via in depth interviews with the employers. Data analysis consisted of identifying themes within the data via narrative analysis which allows researchers to focus on the lived experiences of the participants. My role as the researcher was to develop the interview questions, investigate the phenomenon, conduct interviews, and report the findings. Chapter 4 reports the findings.

Chapter 4

Results

Introduction

This chapter presents the findings based on the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants derived from interviews with such employers. A single research question guided this study: What are employers' experiences regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants with legal authorization to work in agriculture and landscaping in the United States? The purpose of this study was to address the research question from the perspective of employers. The experiences of these employers could impact immigration policies affecting Hispanic immigrants.

I explored employers' experiences using a narrative inquiry method, which allowed me to focus on employers of Hispanic immigrants, a group that researchers had not previously investigated. In order to explore the of the employer of Hispanic immigrants, the employers understanding of the experience needed to be explored. Phenomenological inquiry was the original design for the study. Phenomenological research surrounds the researcher describing the phenomenon as accurately as possible (Groenewald, 2004). This allows the researcher the opportunity to obtain data. The object of phenomenological research is to describe (Groenewald, 2004). The phenomenological approach was thought to be adequate for the research when initially planned due to the opportunity for employers to "describe" the experiences they had in hiring Hispanic immigrant workers. I intended to conduct research using a phenomenological method approach. However, due to lack of participants, the method of inquiry was changed to narrative.

Narrative inquiry methods allow participants to tell their story and share experiences (Creswell, 2007). Narrative inquiry allows for the researcher to explore the experiences of individuals as seen through their lens. Clandinin & Connelly (2000) state that narrative inquiry is “a way of understanding experience”. The experiences of the employers interviewed for this study are critical in identifying the issues faced during the labor shortage and the experiences with hiring Hispanic immigrant workers. Narrative inquiry is also seen as able to “transcend” numerous approaches to inquiry such as biography, autobiography, life stories, and life course research (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). The use of narrative inquiry appeared to be the most appropriate methodology for this study in order to address the research question from the perspective of the employer and the lived experiences. This chapter discusses the data collection, demographics of the participants, the data analysis, and the trustworthiness and results of the study.

Research Plan

I interviewed four employers of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants using narrative inquiry as the methodology for the study. I originally intended to use a phenomenological approach, however, due to lack of participants and the reluctance of participants to discuss the Hispanic immigrants they employ, the methodology was changed to a narrative inquiry. Narrative inquiry is a recognized approach to research (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000; Creswell, 2007) and it allows a researcher to explore the lived experience of participants through the telling of their stories. I targeted a sample size of four participants for this study. The COVID-19 pandemic made face-to-face interviews untenable. To ensure the safety and well-being of myself and the participants, I instead conducted interviews via telephone and Zoom, following their preferences.

Demographics

The participants were all employers of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. The employers were either owners of businesses or managers or hiring managers within businesses. All participants took part voluntarily. I interviewed the participants over the course of 2 weeks over; the longest interview lasted 50 minutes. The interview questions were open-ended. Interviews took place over the phone and via Zoom in the participants' offices or homes. Table 2 gives the demographics of the participants.

Table 2

Participant Characteristics

| Employer | Position | Industry | Gender |
|----------|----------------|-------------|--------|
| 1 | Owner | Landscaping | Male |
| 2 | Hiring Manager | Agriculture | Male |
| 3 | Manager | Landscaping | Male |
| 4 | Hiring Manager | Landscaping | Female |

Data Collection

I found participants through internet searches and cold calling. I conducted interviews via telephone and Zoom with the four participants. Interviews lasted 30-50 minutes. The data collection took 2 weeks to complete because of the difficulty finding participants willing to discuss hiring Hispanic immigrants.

I used NVivo (Version 12) to transcribe interviews. I used reflective journaling to record my experiences and impressions during the interviews. Microsoft Word is a computer program used to type and save documents. After each interview, I reviewed the recording of the interview several times. I also reviewed the recording to ensure that I had transcribed it verbatim into a Microsoft Word document. After verifying the transcripts, I uploaded them into NVivo for organization, coding, and further analysis.

The COVID-19 pandemic meant that employers were in their homes or remote work locations during the interviews. This posed only a slight limitation, however, because employers could take part in the interviews despite not being physically at their businesses. The participants reported that the pandemic caused them to experience strain and challenges. The pandemic may therefore have influenced participants' responses.

Data Analysis

Participant interviews and reflective journal entries were used to gather data. To interpret the data captured by the participant interviews, I implemented a qualitative analysis technique that involved asking participants specific questions. I thoughtfully crafted the questions to ensure that the participants would accept them and that they would elicit answers to the research question. Once all interviews were gathered, I reviewed the data to ensure understanding and proceeded with data analysis. I used NVivo (Version 12) qualitative data analysis software to assist with analysis of the data collected. NVivo helped with identification of variables, themes, codes, categories, patterns, and meanings. The research question focused on the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants legally authorized to work in the country. After transcribing the interviews, formatting the transcripts, and reviewing the transcripts

several times, I began coding the data to identify patterns within them. During coding, I took care to note whether participants answered each question presented, whether participants' responses to one question answered any other questions asked, and the themes that emerged from the responses. Narrative analysis was used to identify the themes emerging from the study. Themes formed were based on the recurring words and language found in the participant data. NVivo supported analysis of the frequencies and nature of the codes and allowed me to extrapolate from the transcripts the meaning of the participants' responses. Subthemes also emerged for each theme.

Evidence of Trustworthiness

This section describes how I established trustworthiness of the study by establishing its credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability.

Credibility

Validity of a study depends on ensuring participants are verified and tests on the data collected are performed. I established credibility by checking employer's legitimacy and gathering information from different employers. I also discussed the summary of the study with the participants and provided participants with copies of the interview questions for their personal records on request.

Transferability

I established transferability by reviewing participants' responses extensively to ensure accuracy of the data collected. Data analysis provided evidence of the phenomenon, which allows transferability of the findings to future studies. Interviews with participants and the nature of the conclusions contributed to transferability of the study. The participants interviewed were employers of Hispanic immigrants legally

authorized to work in the country and the interviews were captured accurately. The purpose of using a participant pool specific to the study was to make the findings transferable.

Dependability

I established dependability of the study by thorough review of the data obtained from the participant interviews. Manual line-by-line coding of the interview transcripts provided dependable results. The results addressed the research question. I generated audit trails to ensure dependability of the study.

Confirmability

I established confirmability of the study by addressing my biases and assumptions. To remain objective, I focused on the responses obtained from the participants regarding their lived experiences. I focused on the data collection process to ensure that I collected detailed data and organized all documents. I also used reflective journaling to ensure I addressed biases and assumptions.

Study Results

The results fulfilled the purpose of the study and filled gaps in existing research. Saldana (2009) said that research questions explore the perceptions of participants. Most participants, over 90%, agreed that the labor shortage has impacted the ability of employers to hire qualified personnel. The participants indicated that Hispanic immigrants played a significant role in the workforce and that the human capital provided by Hispanic immigrants was essential to maintaining adequate business functions. The participants also stated that there was an impact of Hispanic immigrant workers on their industries and on the ability to remain competitive. Many of the participants indicated

that most of their workforces consisted of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants.

Participants also said that they employed Black, White, and Asian American workers.

Participants said that they employed work-authorized Hispanic immigrants as managers, day laborers, general laborers, field personnel, field supervisors, and project managers

According to the participants, Hispanic immigrants made up over 80% of their workforce and over 80% of qualified job applicants. Participants said that the percentage of job applicants who were qualified had dropped from 86% in 2019 to less than 34% in 2020. Participants reported that this drop had impacted their ability to operate.

Participants also reported that recent changes in immigration policies had led to significant delays in the processing of visa renewals, which had contributed to a reduction in the number of qualified workers available. Participants discussed concerns regarding their ability to produce quality work, remain competitive, obtain new business, and retain customers due to the lack of workers.

The responses provided by the participants were analyzed and several themes emerged from the data: labor shortage, immigration, hiring experiences, and loss of business. The themes and subthemes appear in Table 3.

Table 3*Emerging Themes*

| Theme and subtheme | Occurrences |
|-------------------------------|-------------|
| Labor shortage | |
| Lack of workers | 3 |
| Fewer applicants | 4 |
| Immigration | |
| Fewer visas issued | 4 |
| Fewer immigrant applicants | 4 |
| Workers unable to renew visas | 3 |
| Hiring experiences | |
| Difficulty hiring | 3 |
| Employee visas expiring | 4 |
| Customer concerns | 4 |
| Loss of business | |
| Fewer customers | 3 |
| Reduction in revenue | 3 |
| Total | 35 |

I used NVivo to collate data, which allowed me to identify related words, statements, and comments and develop categories and themes based on the data. I grouped words and statements from the interviews with similar content into categories to identify patterns in the responses. I then identified the patterns in the data and grouped into themes pertinent to the research question. The responses the participants provided were analyzed and several themes emerged, structured by the interview questions:

1. The number of workers has decreased, and there are fewer qualified applicants (labor shortage).

2. Immigration policies have impacted the number of immigrants authorized to work (immigration).
3. Employers have lost workers and found it hard to hire qualified workers (hiring experiences).
4. Employers have lost business due to lack of workers (loss of business).

Theme 1: Labor Shortage

Participants said that the labor shortage has impacted their productivity and, at times, their ability to operate at all. Several participants indicated that they experienced the labor shortage through reductions in the number of qualified workers applying for jobs:

- “Im not getting qualified applicants for the jobs” (Participant 1).
- “Not as many people applying for the jobs” (Participant 3).
- “Having a hard time finding people to work” (Participant 4).

The above responses received from the study participants were analyzed and the theme which emerged from these answers indicated that participants agreed the labor shortage had made it challenging to obtain qualified personnel.

Theme 2: Immigration

Theme 2 related to the issues surrounding immigration policies and the ability of immigrants to obtain work authorization. Participants described several barriers faced by Hispanic immigrants when obtaining work visas. According to 75% of participants, the labor force had been impacted by limitations to the number of visas issued to Hispanic immigrants and delays experienced by existing visa holders when obtaining visa recertifications:

- “My workers are not able to renew their visas” (Participant 3).
- “Immigration process is taking much longer, up to years to approve visa renewals” (Participant 1).
- “I need to make sure workers are able to work” (Participant 3).
- “Workers cant get their permanent resident status” (Participant 9).

Fifty percent of participants faced challenges regarding the reduction in the number of workers available because of work visa problems. Fifty percent of participants said that their workforces had shrunk since the introduction of new policies regarding visa renewals for Hispanic immigrants. Participants said that the recertification process for work visas had become more difficult. Three participants said that their employees were unable to afford to renew their work authorization. Participants described employees approaching them to express concern regarding the costs of renewing their work authorization. Some participants had helped employees with these costs. Other participants had worked with community organizations to help their workers apply and pay for work visa renewals. The main concerns participants expressed included the length of time required for visa renewals and the fees associated with visa renewals, which had impacted the availability of qualified workers.

Theme 3: Hiring Experiences

Eight participants identified barriers to hiring qualified workers during the labor shortage. These barriers included delays in immigration processes, the number of applicants, and the lack of qualified workers. Participants said that their hiring experiences ranged from not having qualified applicants for open positions to not

receiving enough applications to meet their customers' needs. Participant responses included the following:

- “I don't have workers to get the jobs done” (Participant 1).
- “The people that apply don't stay for long” (Participant 3).
- “A lot of workers don't realize the work is hard” (Participant 2).

Interview questions addressing skills requirements elicited responses ranging from “I get people that don't know the job” (Participant 3) to “people don't want to work” (Participant 2). Participants also indicated that the lack of qualified workers affected overall customer service.

Theme 4: Loss of Business

The final theme that emerged from the data related to the loss of business experienced by participants. 75% of participants said that loss of business had become a major concern. Participants attributed their loss of business to the lack of qualified workers and the labor shortage. 75% of participants described concerns regarding loss of revenue. 50% of participants indicated they were unable to acquire new business because of a lack of qualified workers. Participant responses included the following:

- “I don't have the workers to meet customer needs” (Participant 1).
- “Customers go with who can do the job” (Participant 3).
- “I don't look for new business because I don't have the workers” (Participant 6).

Participants' concerns included loss of revenue caused by a lack of qualified workers, overworking of their existing workers, and the need to pay overtime to their employees to meet demand. All four participants in the study identified the lack of qualified workers as

their main business concern. Participants indicated that the labor shortage had forced them to reduce promotion of their businesses because lacked the labor force needed to serve additional customers. Participants also said that the lack of workers had impacted customer satisfaction. Participants considered the labor shortage to be a main cause of loss of business.

Summary

This chapter described the data collected and the results based on analysis of those data. The results indicated that participants faced a labor shortage that negatively impacted their businesses and revenue. Participants identified lasting negative economic impacts on their businesses due to the lack qualified workers. Participants also described their experience with the workforce and immigration policies and said that the lengthy processing and high costs of renewing work visas had reduced the number of qualified workers available.

Chapter 5 provides interpretation of the research findings, recommendations for employers of Hispanic immigrants, and the limitations of the study. Chapter 5 also includes recommendations for further research and the discusses implications of the study for policy and social change.

Chapter 5:

Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

Introduction

The purpose of this qualitative narrative study was to identify the lived experiences of employers of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants and the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the labor shortage and how changes in immigration laws are affecting employers. I obtained data by conducting semistructured interviews of four employers of Hispanic immigrants in the agriculture and landscaping industries in the District of Columbia, Maryland, and Virginia. Initially, the study was intended to be a phenomenological study which would address the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants. However, due to lack of participants and the reluctance of employers to be interviewed regarding Hispanic immigrants in their employ, the study was changed to a narrative study which identified the experiences of four employers of Hispanic immigrants and the challenges they faced during the current labor shortage. The narrative approach was selected to capture the stories of the participants (Taylor et al, 2016).

In the interviews I explored the lack of labor, the impact of immigration policies, visa renewal processes, and the ability of employers to remain competitive during the labor shortage. A single research question guided the study: What are employers' experiences regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants with legal authorization to work in agriculture and landscaping in the United States? Participants' responses addressed their experiences hiring Hispanic immigrants, how immigration policies are affecting the hiring of Hispanic immigrants, the lack of qualified workers, and the impact of this

shortage on their businesses. The participants also discussed immigration policies that have affected their ability to maintain their workforces.

Interpretation of the Findings

The review of the literature identified the lack of studies surrounding the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants and the labor shortage. Further, I identified a gap in the literature surrounding Hispanic immigrants viewed through the human capital theory lens. Most of the previous research focused on the Hispanic immigrants' contributions, however, there is a gap in the literature addressing the Hispanic immigrant employers' experiences with hiring, changes in immigration policies which have impacted the hiring practices and the human capital attributes of the Hispanic immigrant employee. This study addressed the employer experience regarding hiring Hispanic immigrants during labor shortage. While there have been multiple studies on the Hispanic immigrant in the workforce, there is still much to explore regarding the employer experience.

Theoretical Framework

Human capital theory focuses on the economic benefits of investing in people (Sweetland, 1996). This theory also suggests that human capital impacts economic affluences of an organization (Becker & Woessmann, 2009). Human capital theory explores the relationship between business owners and the acquisition of new business due to the accumulation of knowledge and skills via their human capital (Unger et. al, 2011). This study explores the experiences of Hispanic immigrants' employers in the landscaping and agriculture industries and captures the views and the experiences of

employers hiring Hispanic immigrants as viewed through the lens of human capital theory.

The human capital attributes of Hispanic immigrants is not only seen in established businesses in the country but in entrepreneurial Hispanic immigrants. According to Moon et. al, (2016), Hispanic immigrants' contributions to the economy consisted of new businesses established by immigrants. Hispanic immigrants as human capital continues to impact the face of the economy (Moon et.al, 2016). Kallick (2012) discusses how immigrant small businesses are impacting the economy. According to Kallick (2012), more than 15% of small business owners originated from Mexico or Central America and immigrant businesses have provided employment for some 4.7 million people (Kallick,2012). Hispanic immigrant human capital continues to increase the economy in the United States.

The findings of this study identified how employers view having adequate human capital and investing in their labor force. Participants in the study discussed the impact the lack of workers and adequate personnel had on their businesses. Employers were experiencing significant difficulty in finding not only workers but skilled laborers to execute tasks and jobs. The theory of human capital focuses on the collective skills and knowledge of individuals (Pekkan & Cihangir, 2014) and how human capital is the primary driver of competitive prosperity and economic wealth (Liepe & Sakalas, 2014). Human capital is key in employers remaining competitive and establishing presence in global markets (Cadil et al., 2014). Participants in this study defined the needs for human capital with the skills necessary to perform the jobs and the outcomes of having inadequate human capital in their labor force. Some of the concerns were loss of clients,

decreased revenue, lack of business and overall profitability due to not having the human capital necessary to meet consumer demands. The theoretical framework selected for this study adequately provided the groundwork for this study as the theory identifies the importance of human capital and the benefits employers derive from investing in their employees. The findings of this study uncovered how employers view the need to invest in their labor force and increase their human capital. The participants interviewed for this study addressed not only the need for additional workers but the need for these workers to have the necessary skills to adequately perform the tasks and positively impact the employer customer-relationship. Laborers without the necessary skills affect the quality of work performed and due to the labor shortage employers are unable to obtain the labor force with these competencies.

Employers interviewed for this study recognized that changes in immigration policies have been significant in their ability to remain competitive. Participants discussed the lack of Hispanic immigrant workers as a key factor in their productivity and without the Hispanic immigrant worker's availability due to changes in immigration policies, employers were unable to continue growth and competitiveness in the global market. The human capital which employers require in order to fulfil customer needs and demands is not accessible and employers are experiencing the effects of the scarcity of these individuals.

The study results were obtained by analyzing narrative transcripts data gathered during semi structured interviews with four employers of Hispanic immigrants legally authorized to work in the United States. This section shows the interpretation of the

findings including the themes derived from the interviews in response to the research question.

Participants addressed the research question by revealing their lived experiences hiring Hispanic immigrants and facing challenges due to the labor shortage as a result of changes in immigration policies. The research question allowed the employers to discuss the Hispanic immigrant contributions to the workforce as human capital. The participants' experiences included having access to limited numbers of qualified workers, having difficulty retaining employees because of immigration laws, and losing business because they had too few workers.

The sample included both male and female employers in the agriculture and landscaping industries. Many of the participants indicated that a large part of their workforces consisted of work-authorized Hispanic immigrants. Participants also said that they employed Black, White, and Asian American workers. Participants said that they employed work-authorized Hispanic immigrants as managers, day laborers, general laborers, field personnel, field supervisors, and project managers.

Employers' Experiences of the Labor Shortage

Participants indicated that they were experiencing the labor shortage, which was impacting their workforces. Participants were unable to meet demand because they lacked workers. According to the BLS (2016), Hispanic immigrants had been providing employers with the workforces needed to maintain productivity and meet demand. In addition, the Hispanic immigrant workers contribution to the Social Security fund is important to supporting retirees (Bauer, 2018). However, changes to immigration policy had limited the number of Hispanic immigrants entering the United States, and

participants had faced reductions in the numbers of workers available and challenges meeting demand.

Key findings in the literature review revealed employers have experienced labor shortage which has impacted their business. According to Menjivar (2017), Hispanic immigrants positively affected the workforce. Over 27,000,000 foreign-born workers made up 16% of the total workforce in 2016 (BLS, 2017) and of that workforce, Hispanic immigrants accounted for over 48% of those foreign-born workers. The literature identified that the Hispanic worker has contributed to several different labor markets including agriculture, medicine, construction, and hospitality (BLS, 2015). With the current labor shortage, production in the agricultural industry has dropped by over 20% which has led to a rise in imports of fruits and vegetables and in turn negatively impacting the economy (Economic Research Services, 2019). The findings from this study identified that the employers interviewed were among those affected by what the literature revealed; the reduced number of immigrant workers have impacted the overall labor shortage employers are facing.

The participants indicated that their workers required specific skills to do their jobs. Of the study participants, 75% expressed concern regarding the lack of qualified workers. Participants said the labor shortage posed a significant challenge and expressed concerns regarding their ability to remain competitive as a result of the labor shortage. The participants recognized the need for additional human capital, including immigrant workers, to address the labor concerns.

Employers' Experiences of Immigration

Recent changes in immigration policy have reduced the number of work visas issued to Hispanic immigrants (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). The literature review revealed that the influx of Temporary Protective Status (TPS) holders has positively impacted the workforce (Menjivar, 2017). However, due to recent changes in immigration policies, the number of Hispanic immigrants including TPS holders had decreased. There were limitations in the number of visas issued with over a 7% reduction for the overall number of visas which has impacted the labor force and caused economic challenge for employers (Migration Policy Institute, 2018). The literature indicated that of the industries which are most marked by the Hispanic immigrant labor force were agriculture and landscaping, hospitality, construction, and food service. (BLS, 2015; Al-Bavati, 2019; Statista, 2015). With the decreased number of visas being issued, employers have been facing shortages in human capital in these areas of business.

Study participants identified problems retaining employees caused by the delays immigration policy changes have created in obtaining visa renewals for work-authorized employees. Over 50% of the participants said they had lost employees because the employees could not renew their work visas. Visa renewals for work-authorized Hispanic immigrants have become slower and costlier, which participants said has deterred Hispanic immigrants from renewing their work visas. Of the four participants, 25% said that they had helped their employees to renew their visas in order to have them remain employed. Participants said that problems with visa renewals and overall immigration policy changes had impacted the ability of employers to obtain qualified workers. The study participants also discussed concerns regarding their ability to sponsor visas and to

obtain visas for work purposes. 75% of the participants interviewed stated that they were not able to obtain the same number of H2-B visas which had provided employers with seasonal workers as in past years. According to USCIS (2021), “Congress has set the H2-B visa cap at 66,000 per fiscal year”. Only 33,000 visas are issued in the first half of the fiscal year (October 1-March 31) and the other 33,000 in the second half of the fiscal year (April 1-September 30). The lower number of petitions accepted in addition to the increased cost of processing the filings, have made obtaining visas for employers harder than in previous years. 50% of employers stated that the lower number of available visas had impacted their overall workforce and number of workers.

Employers’ Hiring Experiences

75% of the study participants discussed how difficulty finding workers continued to impact their ability to meet demand. Employers indicated that their human capital had decreased significantly impacting the ability for employers to meet consumer demands. This result confirms the findings of other researchers that the labor shortage has impacted the ability of employers to remain competitive and meet demand (Batalova, 2011; BLS, 2018; Capelli, 2015). The literature review identified there is a growing concern for employers regarding their ability to remain competitive due to the labor shortage (Taylor et.al, 2012). Employers experienced significant reduction in the number of qualified workers, making it difficult to remain competitive in global markets (Gutman, 2017). Employers have been experiencing difficulties hiring to fill the number of vacancies left by retiring older adults which has led to deficiencies in the human capital within the labor market (BLS, 2017). According to Neumark et.al., (2013), immigration reforms have also played a part in the decreased the number of eligible workers. Recent immigration

reforms have impacted the number of visas provided to applicants which in turn has worsened the labor shortage in the nation. The literature identified that employers have faced increased number of vacancies in their human capital due to the lack of qualified individuals which is directly impacted by the number of older workers retiring, the decreased number of visas for would-be immigrants and the difficulties in renewing visas for current visa holders.

Participants in this study identified similar concerns as found in the literature review with their hiring experience. Employers who could not meet customers' needs reported the necessity for labor as their main concern. Participants discussed the issues they faced, such as being unable to hire workers, the qualified worker shortage and the limited number of applicants for jobs. The responses of the participants indicate that it is vital for employers to have enough workers to meet demand and remain competitive in global market. Participants stated the immigration policies currently in place have had a negative impact on their ability to hire, retain employees and have adequate numbers in their workforce. All of the interviewed participants indicated the difficulties they had experienced regarding retaining workers due to expired visas, not able to petition H2-B visas for their workers and the low number of visa renewals their workers have been able to obtain.

Employers' Experiences of Loss of Business

For participants reliant on Hispanic immigrant workers, the labor shortage had impacted the ability of participants to provide adequate services to their customers and had thus reduced their profits. Employers have experienced significant losses due to the lack of workers and not being able to meet consumer demands (Moore, 2015). The

literature reviewed discussed the impact of labor shortages on employers' ability to remain in business. The nation has faced a sharp decline in productivity alongside the shortage of eligible workers (Corrado et al., 2016; Fogg et al., 2010; Willard et al., 2012) and this decline in eligible workers has impacted the employers who are not able to meet consumer demands (Moore, 2015) and subsequently, loss of business. Krupnick (2018) discussed how increased job creation has affected the labor force. Employers have been faced with increased number of aging workers and increased number of jobs. Without sufficient workers, employers cannot remain competitive and face loss of business and revenue (Guthman, 2017; Kostandini et al., 2014; Udani, 2016). According to Canon et al., (2013), the recent reduction in the Hispanic labor force has lessened the profits and revenues of employers in multiple industries. The literature review also discussed the impact of the labor shortage impacting some states more than others (Kim et al., 2020). The shortage in some areas of the country make it difficult for certain industries to remain competitive and subsequently, lose business and customers due to not being able to meet consumer demands.

Participants in this study stated that their customer numbers had decreased significantly because they lacked the workers needed to meet all their customers' needs. Participants' concerns regarding the lack of workers and customers ranged from losing their livelihoods to losing profits. Participants addressed the lack of skilled human capital as being part of the reason they had decreased number of clients. Lack of skilled workers in addition to the high turnover of workers has affected employers' opportunities to increase new business and maintain competitiveness. Participants' responses support the finding of the BLS (2018) that revenue for employers due to the "civilian labor force

declined from 66.2% in 2008 to 63.1% in 2018”. According to the participants, their continued business success depended on their ability to provide adequate customer service. To do this, participants needed a sufficient number of workers, and skilled human capital which they could not find because of the labor shortage. Participants argued that continued immigration policy changes were impacting their ability to maintain adequate workforce, subsequently impacting customer service. Immigration policy continued to impede work-authorized immigrants from renewing their work permits and continuing their employment in the United States.

Summary of Findings

The labor shortage in the United States has been affecting businesses, business owners, and the overall economy. Becker & Woessmann (2009) demonstrate the impact of human capital on the economic affluences of an organization. Moon et. al. (2016) discusses the Hispanic immigrant assets and their impact as human capital for businesses that rely heavily on skill sets and attributes. With the increased labor shortage, employers are finding it difficult to find adequate human capital to support their businesses. The findings of the study identify the obstacles employers are facing hiring during the labor shortage. The study findings also demonstrate that employers not able to meet customer demands due to labor shortage and lack of human capital in their workforce. In addition, the study findings discuss the economic impact on employers due to lack of qualified and skilled workers.

The study drew on employers’ experiences of hiring Hispanic immigrants and their perceptions of the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the labor force and immigration issues impacting the Hispanic immigrant worker using narrative inquiry.

The initial methodology was intended to be phenomenological in nature. However, the study was changed to a narrative study in order to better capture the lived experiences through a narrative approach. Narrative inquiry allows participants in research to relay their experiences via their perspectives (Savin-Baden & Niekerk, 2007). The use of the narrative methodology interprets the versions of the participants stories through their understanding. In research, the interviewer identifies individuals for a study based on the relevance and experiences the participant has which is related to the research question. This method of selecting participants for studies allows the research question to be answered and the researcher provide insight and add to the body of knowledge.

Initially, the methodology which was going to be utilized for this study was phenomenological. Phenomenological studies view the responses of participants and captures the perspectives of the lived experiences from the participants (Creswell, 2007). The phenomenological approach is used to capture the perception of a phenomenon by the participants. Although the phenomenological approach addresses the lived experiences of a phenomenon by a group of people, there are other approaches that capture the experiences of individuals such as narrative, which is what I selected for the study.

Narrative inquiry supports findings from a “story telling” perspective of the participants in a study (Connely & Clandinin, 2000). The opportunity to allow participants to share events from an encountered perspective is ideal for a study discussing lived experiences of employer hiring Hispanic immigrants during the labor shortage.

Viewed through the lens of human capital theory and from a narrative inquiry perspective, the participants' responses regarding lack of labor, loss of revenue, declining customer service, and inability to remain competitive in global market indicate a need for immigration reform.

Limitations of the Study

This study had some limitations, and readers should interpret the findings based on these limitations. The limitation of this study included the number of participants willing to share their experiences hiring Hispanic immigrants. Concerns over the nature of the study which address the Hispanic immigrant population was one of the obstacles to obtain a larger sample size and therefore the study was changed to a narrative study instead of the intended phenomenological study originally intended. In addition, the COVID-19 pandemic affected the sample size by impacting the number of participants available for interviews. Another limitation caused by the pandemic was my inability to conduct interviews in person. I adjusted the data collection process and conducted Zoom and telephone interviews instead of face-to-face interviews. This limitation impacted personal interactions during interviews and impeded my ability to capture every aspect of the interviews and the true essence of the research question. Participants' pandemic experiences (and my own experiences) may also have altered the data obtained from the interviews. In order to reduce the impact of the pandemic on the data obtained, I asked participants to describe overall experiences regarding hiring Hispanic immigrant workers instead of focusing their experiences on hiring Hispanic workers during the pandemic.

Recommendations

The results of this study indicate that Hispanic immigrants impact employer's ability to remain competitive in business. Participants identified significant contributions made by work-authorized Hispanic immigrants and how the changes in immigration policies are driving the Hispanic immigrant contribution to industry. Most of the study participants indicated their business and the number of clients they have and are able to retain has been impacted by the labor shortage. Many of the participants stated that out of the workforce they have, many are Hispanic immigrants, and their contributions were necessary for the employers to remain in business and competitive in industry. Employers also noted that the Hispanic immigrant human capital was essential since many of the Hispanic immigrants employed had the necessary skills to perform the jobs and remained in the positions longer than other employees they contracted. Participants who employed Hispanic immigrants consider those immigrants to have supported their competitiveness in industry. Further research is needed using larger samples in different industries in order to identify the Hispanic immigrant contributions in other industries and corporations. Future researchers should explore more deeply the immigration policies restricting Hispanic immigrants' entry into the country, which has been affecting employers. The reduced number of petitions for H2-B visas in addition to the ability to obtain renewals on current visas for Hispanic immigrants have been identified as barriers for employers to be able to complete jobs and meet customer demands. Future researchers should also explore the issues employers have faced during the COVID-19 pandemic and how it has affected the labor shortage.

There were several recommendations from the study participants for this study. Some of the recommendations suggested included changes in time frames for visa renewals, the reduction in costs for the visa renewal process and overall changes in immigration policies which impact the ability of employers to remain competitive in global industries. Employers discussed the concerns regarding these issues and their overall productivity and ability to maintain competitiveness in industry. Several study participants discussed providing financial support to workers needing visa renewal. Although many employers were willing to provide funds required to renew visas for their workers, concerns loomed over the timeframe for these visa renewals. Many participants discussed the inability to keep these workers employed due to expired visas which rendered their workers unable to continue employment with companies due to undocumented status. Other employers were concerned about the time frames for visa renewals and return on investments for their contributions to their employees' visa renewals. Employers interviewed recommended changes in the timeframes of immigration visa renewals would benefit not only the employees renewing work authorizations but also employers' ability to retain employees and keep their workforce intact.

Several other recommendations surfaced from the participants interviewed. Some participants supported the extension of visas from the current one-year authorization for agricultural workers to possible six-year authorization currently afforded to H1-B visa holders. Other participants discussed the importance of automatic renewals for workers based on employer needs. In addition to these recommendations, employers suggested that visa renewal fees be waived, and immigrants be granted the opportunity to pay the

costs of visa renewals with tax deductions while employed. Overall, the consensus from all of the study participants reflected the impact immigration policies and current processes impacted businesses and bottom line.

Implications

The results of this study provide knowledge regarding Hispanic immigrants' contribution to U.S. employers and the ability of those employers to remain competitive. In addition, the results of this study provides insight into the concerns employers of Hispanic immigrants face in regards to the ability to hire workers due to processes in petitions for H2-B visas. Based on these results, the labor shortage fueled by changes in immigration policies is the primary barrier to employer success in the United States and globally. Hispanic immigrants provide employers with the workers needed to remain competitive and successful in their industries. Existing immigration policies—including limitations on the numbers of visas issued and renewals of existing visas—are preventing Hispanic immigrants from entering or staying in the country, which in turn is preventing those immigrants from supporting U.S. employers in their efforts to remain globally competitive.

Social Change

My findings, along with those of other researchers, indicate the impact of immigration policies on employers' industrial success and global competitiveness. Positive social change can take place when policy makers change immigration policies impacting the entry of Hispanic immigrants and recognize the importance of Hispanic immigrants to the U.S. labor force and the success of U.S. employers. In addition,

Hispanic immigrants entering the United States and obtaining employment will impact the contributions to the Social Security system and retirees.

Conclusion

The ability of U.S. employers to remain competitive depends on the availability of workers to support their industries. The ability for employers to remain competitive is credited to the human capital attributes of their employees. Human capital theory suggests the success of business relies heavily on their human capital (Moon et al. 2016). Through the literature review, we see the Hispanic immigrant contributions to the labor force via qualities such as work skills and ability to adapt culturally and socially. With the evidenced contributions of the Hispanic immigrant to the labor force in the United States, policy makers should consider the implications of the labor shortage for employers and change immigration policies that affect the ability of employers to find the workers needed to conduct business. Immigration policies should ensure that enough immigrants can obtain work visas to support employers throughout the nation.

Hispanic immigrants make up a large part of the labor force and have a large impact on the success of U.S. employers as well as play a role in the number of employees paying into the Social Security system. I reported in detail on the lived experiences of employers of Hispanic immigrants and how employers view the contributions of Hispanic immigrants and immigration policies changes to their continued success. My findings contribute to the body of research on the impact of Hispanic immigrants on the labor force and industry and how immigration policies affect employers. The findings provide insight into the changes needed to immigration policies to help employers remain competitive and successful. Changes that would impact

employers would be increasing the number of immigrant visas entering the country, reducing the visa renewal processing time, and providing additional financial resources for immigrants renewing visas.

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Appendix A: Interview Guide and Questions

The following question will be asked of each participant:

- Tell me about your experience with the labor shortage.
- Tell me about your experience remaining competitive during labor shortages.
- Tell me about any temporary workers you have had to address your labor shortage
- How many temporary workers have you hired before and now? Has this changed?
- Have you utilized temporary visas to bring temporary workers?
- Tell me about how changes in immigration laws have impacted your ability to hire Hispanic workers
- Can you tell me which laws or sections of the employment laws have impacted you most in hiring Hispanic immigrant workers?

The following probes will be used to illicit more detailed responses from the participants:

- Give me an example.
- Would you explain further?
- Anything else that you would like to add?