

Cambridge or Silicon Valley, where specialized industries congregate—and where immigrants often come to work. The “productivity of talent workers must be enhanced by proximity to other talented people,” he adds, and “immigrants make up about a quarter of the country’s innovation workforce.” These innovation centers benefit from their connection to the global talent market, and they are highly productive: Kerr estimates that inventors with Chinese or Indian ancestry in the San Francisco Bay Area alone accounted for no fewer than one in every 12 U.S. patents in 2017. (For context, neither the entire population of Massachusetts, nor that of New York, can boast the equivalent.)

The impact of these immigration patterns reaches far beyond the clusters themselves. In an interview, Kerr argued that “the economy as a whole becomes richer” in the long run as a direct result of high-skilled immigration. His research suggests that native-born residents also display more creativity in places where many immigrants work in innovation industries. There can be drawbacks, of course: older workers in information technology may face unemployment, for example, or an influx of innovation workers may price other residents out of the housing market. Nevertheless, Kerr’s economic models indicate that the trend’s overall effects are positive.

Although Kerr thinks the United States should be more welcoming toward immigrants in general, he specifically stresses the need to expand and streamline its procedures to attract and retain more talented immigrants, in order to drive economic growth. Likely candidates generally arrive through employment-driven programs like the H-1B visa program: employers sponsor prospective workers, and the visas are awarded by lottery. This system allows the economy to select for the workers it needs most, but the limited number of visas available and a chance-driven selection method muddle the process.

Suggesting that the country “could align the pipes a lot better,” Kerr proposes several reforms, including guaranteed work visas for non-citizen graduates of U.S. colleges, an increased H-1B minimum wage, better allocation of scarce visas through wage-ranking (prioritizing those immigrants who will receive the highest wages from their sponsoring compa-

“The economy as a whole becomes richer”... as a direct result of high-skilled immigration.

nies), and a preference for immigrant entrepreneurs. “The responsibility for these reforms,” he suggests, “would lie with immigration services, the White House, and Congress,” and the results would be a clearer process, a higher-skilled immigrant pool, and greater economic output.

Polling data suggests many Americans would support such reforms: 60 percent of registered voters in a 2017 national poll by Politico and Morning Consult (a survey-research technology company) agreed that high-skilled immigration should be increased. Far fewer respondents currently endorse expanding the H-1B program specifically, but Kerr believes that increasing

the skill level required of H-1B visa holders could also strengthen support for broadening that program.

He sees an opportunity in these polling numbers—a hint that the United States can chart a path forward even amid the current moment’s contentious immigration debates. Only by doing so, he argues, can the country retain its edge in the world’s innovation economy.

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PLUSH-TOY JUDGMENT

The Teddy Bear Effect

MOST FORTUNE 500 CEOs—roughly 95 percent of them, in fact—are white men. Line up headshots of these leaders and plenty of pronounced chins, square jaws, salt-and-pepper hair, and other physical features suggesting maturity, masculinity, and gravitas are also readily apparent.

But for the handful of African-American CEOs at Fortune 500 firms, portraits reveal

something very different in play, says social psychologist Robert Livingston, a lecturer in public policy at the Kennedy School. His research found that black CEOs often have so-called baby faces: large foreheads, big eyes, chubby cheeks, and button noses—features that call to mind Gary Coleman and Emmanuel Lewis, the diminutive African-American stars of 1980s sitcoms. “There is a leadership advantage for black male leaders



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who appear more docile in physical appearance,” Livingston says. He calls this advantage the “Teddy Bear Effect.”

“Because black males are perceived as being hostile, aggressive, dangerous, hyper-masculine, and a threat, broadly construed, to white-male power,” Livingston explains, those with non-threatening facial features are more likely to climb the corporate ladder. In fact, he found that the more cherubic a black CEO’s face, the higher his salary—and even his company’s revenues.

Livingston’s work builds on results from more than 40 years of research by multiple scholars on the appeal of “babyfacedness”; data show that humans often respond positively to the high face-width-to-height ratio that characterizes the young of many species. His own data, first published in 2009 when he was at the Kellogg School of Management at Northwestern, reveal that although a baby face helps an African-American leader advance, chubby cheeks do not offer the same benefits to white male CEOs. Instead, “there was a negative correlation between babyfacedness and the size of the company and the amount of their bonuses and salary.”

The impact of a baby face was even more severe for white women. “It was a huge liability for women, the strongest effect size we obtained,” Livingston says. Even though women in the general population are more likely than men to have “neotonous” or rounded, child-like features, “women CEOs were much less baby-faced than either black male or white male CEOs,” Livingston explains. “Women are already ‘disarmed’ by virtue of their gender,” Livingston says. “What they need is to be ‘armed’ with physical features that signal competence and ability, rather than warmth and communality, which is already conveyed by their gender.” (With no black female CEOs at Fortune 500 companies at the time of his study, he could not study the effect of their features.)

A baby face is just one of an array of so-called “disarming mechanisms” that aid black leaders in appearing “less threatening and more palatable,” Livingston reports. These include wearing glasses to appear studious, smiling frequently, and speaking softly. “We’re wired to judge people very, very quickly,” he points out, “and people utilize physical appearance very heavily to form social judgments.”

He says some people misunderstand the aim of his research; he doesn’t suggest that

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African Americans undergo plastic surgery to look more baby-faced, or wear glasses if they have 20/20 vision, or make an effort to speak softly. He's not warning mature-looking black men away from C-suite roles. "I think we should focus on dismantling the hierarchical structures and systems that keep people out and produce phenomena like the Teddy Bear Effect," he explains. "I want people to realize that we don't live in a meritocracy, that we are judged by different standards. A quality that could be an asset in one group could be a liability in another." And because people make many choices and decisions "outside of awareness, intent, or control," prompted by cues they often don't notice consciously, Livingston says it might be helpful to change hiring and promotion practices to avoid such blind spots involving physical appearance.

He warns that many recommendations can seem "facile," given these complex problems, but notes that some studies show benefits to masking an applicant's identity during the hiring process. "There's research that shows that people named Jamal or Lakeisha get fewer callbacks than people named Greg or Becky," he says, which could be addressed, for example, by removing nonessential information such as job candidates' names or addresses from dossiers.

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IDEAS-STUDIO/ISTOCK

He also suggests assembling diverse hiring committees: "Make sure that you don't have groupthink." Companies might consider introducing additional metrics for assessing job candidates as well, such as their skill in handling diversity issues in their former jobs. "That way," he says, "you get away from physical appearance altogether. Hiring should be based on whether the candidate has done something that the company or society sees as important."

Livingston's distinct findings for white men, white women, and black men in the Teddy Bear Effect study led directly to his current research on the heterogeneous nature of social disadvantage. The data, he says, reveal nuanced differences in the way these groups are perceived: "black men are stigmatized" or regarded as conspicuous in a nega-

tive way; "white women are subordinated" or seen in a positive light "as long as they maintain their subordinate position in society"; and "black women are marginalized," seen as neutral but irrelevant. These nuances are important, but largely unnoticed, he emphasizes. "We know that black men, black women, and white women are all socially disadvantaged, but my research is looking at how those disadvantages are different," he says. One of his goals is to help organizations understand that people from diverse backgrounds might experience distinct and even opposing challenges, he explains. "One size does not fit all." ~ERIN O'DONNELL

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CONFERRED IMMUNITY?

People Who Don't Get AIDS

IN EARLY 1995, a hemophiliac walked into the clinic of physician-immunobiologist Bruce Walker and announced something astonishing: he'd been infected with HIV during a blood transfusion in 1978, had never taken any anti-HIV medications, and yet had never developed AIDS. Walker tested him and found no signs of the virus itself, only a robust immune response to it, confirming that the man was infected. In fact, Walker recalls, it was the most vigorous immune response he'd ever seen.

Walker discovered that the man was one of a small number of HIV-infected persons (one-third of 1 percent of all carriers) who remain healthy, without anti-HIV medications, even decades after infection. And he

began to wonder: could understanding how these "elite controllers" beat the virus on their own lead to a functional cure for the 37 million people who are infected worldwide?

The human immunodeficiency virus is a tough opponent. Different strains can vary genetically as much as 40 percent from each other and mutate rapidly. The virus not only attacks and cripples the immune system itself, undermining the body's own ability to fight back, but is also surrounded, Walker explains, by "a heavy sugar coating that blocks the access of immune-system-generated antibodies, which normally would clear this kind of infection."

But perhaps the biggest challenge is that HIV integrates into DNA, becoming part of

a host cell's genome. Here it lies silently, unaffected by the front-line medicines—antiretroviral therapy (ART) now used to control the infection—that have made HIV a treatable but not curable disease. Even years of treatment with the most potent ART cocktails won't eradicate latently infected cells. (These cells do die eventually, but so slowly that even after more than 40 years of treatment, only half will be gone.) As a result, if ART is withdrawn, activation of a single one of those infected cells turns the virus on and can lead to a renewed, full-blown infection within weeks. In stark contrast, Walker says, some elite controllers may be on the verge of eradicating their HIV altogether, because even the most sensitive tests now available fail