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## International Worker Cultural Adaptation: A Qualitative Study

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INTERNATIONAL WORKER  
CULTURAL ADAPTATION:  
A QUALITATIVE STUDY

by

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B.A. University of Central Florida, 2008

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements  
for the degree of Master of Science  
in the Rosen College of Hospitality Management  
at the University of Central Florida  
Orlando, Florida

Summer Term  
2012

## **ABSTRACT**

International workers are a vulnerable population within the hospitality industry. Their challenges, and needs have an impact on productivity, loyalty and satisfaction of international workers towards the organizations that employ them. The social and cultural impacts of labor migration are felt in their new environment by both domestic and immigrant populations. It is important to understand international workers' acculturation process in order to provide them with tools necessary to succeed; it is also important to create responsible practices that translate into positive migration outcomes for both domestic and foreign populations.

This study collected data on the motivations, processes, challenges, and alternatives experienced by international workers when relocating to the United States. It documents the cultural adaptation process followed by international workers laboring in the hospitality industry, and based on the data collected from interviewers' responses, it creates new constructs intended to assist hospitality organizations in their operations.

By providing tools to support international workers in the acculturation process, and by providing new understandings of the cultural adaptation process undertaken by international workers when relocating, it is plausible to convert a challenge and limitation into an opportunity for hospitality organizations to create value out of their international human capital.

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## CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

### Background of the Study

Migration is a phenomenon observed all around the world. It is defined for the purpose of this study as “the movement of persons from one country or locality to another” (Princeton University, 2010). Persons seek relocation for a variety of reasons, one of the most common being the perceived inequality that an individual identifies in their current environment (Goss, 1995). Persons may also seek relocation for reasons such as better labor opportunities, family ties, cultural experiences, and security concerns (Ortega, 2009).

Labor migration refers to the movement of persons from one country to another for purposes of employment (IOM, 2012). Persons who choose to relocate for laboring reasons are subject to rules and regulations that their host country imposes to determine their immigration status, rights and privileges, as well as laboring practices (Maloney, 2011). The economic and legal determinants for migration are impacted by the need industries have for foreign labor and the political regulations that allow labor to flow in and out of a country (Ortega, 2009).

The tourism industry is one of the most labor-intensive industries on the planet, thus becoming one of the largest recipients of labor migration (IOM, 2012). By the late 2000s, it is estimated that one in every 12.9 jobs in the world is supplied by the tourism



industry (WTTC, 2009). This labor-intensive industry is also characterized by its wide use of unskilled labor. Unskilled labor can be defined as labor where workers are not required to be highly educated or to possess specialized training to perform their jobs satisfactorily (Choi, 2000). Both the labor-intensive and unskilled nature of the workers required by the tourism industry create unique challenges that need to be addressed to create successful, and responsible operations that promote employee satisfaction and loyalty.

One of the major challenges faced by the tourism industry in economically developed regions is a shortage of unskilled labor. The gap created by such a shortage is in many cases satisfied by the use of international labor from regions where unskilled and/or skilled labor exists in excess (Choi, 2000). However, the incorporation of international workers into a new society can provide both positive and negative consequences depending on how workers adapt into their new environment (Zlotnik, 1998).

Cultural adaptation is defined for the purpose of this study as the process through which an international worker incorporates and modifies their behavior and ideas to fit their new environment. As the world has become increasingly globalized, companies have already attempted to deal with the new challenges posed by international labor within their organizations. Companies have attempted to provide cultural adaptation tools such as cross-cultural training (CCT) (Dewald & Self, 2006; Hu, Martin & Yeh, 2002; Wei-tang, 2002) or to promote multiculturalism by using cultural awareness theory (Hsu, 2010; Smeral, 2004; Stack, 2009). Still, most of these resources are given to skilled labor

deployed abroad and/or are provided only in organizations where international labor is of exceptional presence within their operations.

### Objectives and Research Inquiries

In most tourism organizations, there are no resources focused to provide cultural adaptation tools to international workers. The lack of resources given to international workers makes this study's findings an important asset and an opportunity to identify specific needs of international individuals who labor within the tourism industry. At the same time, it provides tourism companies the opportunity to take advantage of unique characteristics of international labor to promote satisfaction and loyalty, thus creating employees who perform better and are more likely to remain with the organization for a longer term.

The inspiration for this research project comes from the necessity to create a work environment that promotes the satisfaction and loyalty of international workers; satisfaction and loyalty will add value to the organization investment in foreign labor and will provide a better experience for international workers in general. The objectives of the study will focus on collecting data regarding the motivation for migration, process of adaptation, and challenges presented by international workers when relocating and adjusting to their new environment both professionally and personally.

The research objectives of this study are:

1. To understand the motivations that drive international labor migration.
2. To identify the process through which international workers achieve cultural adaptation.
3. To identify the challenges and success factors that determines a positive work experience of international workers during their tenure abroad.
4. To propose tools that promote cultural adaptation of international workers within their work environment, thus promoting satisfaction and loyalty from international workers to their organizations.

### Need and Significance of the Study

If the tourism industry intends to continue employing international labor, it is necessary to understand the consequences it brings to these individuals and the operations in which they labor, and it is important to create practices that offer corporate social responsibility in order to obtain a return on investment in foreign human capital. Tourism industries need to focus on social and cultural aspects of international workers' adaptation, as the impacts are often forgotten from tourism organizations and academic research yet can be felt dramatically in the success of international employees during their working tenure abroad, as well as in the societies in which they develop.

Tourism companies need to understand the factors that influence international employees, and need to provide them with tools that will facilitate their incorporation to their new environment both inside and outside of the organization. Cultural integration needs to be addressed when studying international labor, as the needs and challenges presented by this group will be different than those of their domestic counterparts. The tourism industry has an incredible opportunity to create value out of the human capital it finds in international labor, and the industry can create higher satisfaction and loyalty from international workers towards the organizations by assessing and catering to the unique needs of this labor group.

The information collected through this study will yield better understanding of how the theories addressed during the research affect international employees' abilities to succeed in their tenure, and how companies can provide tools to international workers in order to increase satisfaction and loyalty. The findings of this study can be proven to be of great importance to maximize labor potential, while at the same time offer institutions in the tourism industry an opportunity to improve their record when it comes to corporate social responsibility and their responsibilities in a more globalized environment.

## Working Definitions

**Migration:** “the movement of persons from one country or locality to another” (Princeton University, 2010).

**Labor Migration:** “the movement of persons from one country to another for purposes of employment” (IOM, 2012).

**Unskilled Labor:** Refers to the workers who perform “labor that requires little or no training or experience for its satisfactory performance” (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

**Labor Intensive:** Refers to businesses that require “having high labor cost per unit of output; requiring greater expenditure on labor than in capital” (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

**International Worker:** A person who migrates from one country to another with a view to be employed (IOM, 2012).

**Cultural Adaptation:** The process through which an international worker incorporates and modifies their behavior and ideas to fit their new environment.

**Cultural Awareness:** Conscious distinction between an international worker’s original beliefs and the belief system in hers/his new location.

**Satisfaction:** Contentment or joy experienced by international workers in response to their work environment and their organization’s policies and procedures.

**Loyalty:** Commitment expressed by international worker to their organizations through their work performance and permanence in the organization.

**Social Capital:** “The existence of a certain set of informal values or norms shared among members of a group that permit cooperation among them” (Claridge, 2004).

**Foreign Human Capital:** “A measure of the economic value of an (international) employee's skill set” (Investopedia, 2012).

**Corporate Responsibility:** Refers to the “duty and rational conduct expected of a corporation; accountability of a corporation to a code of ethics and to established laws” (Dictionary, 2012).

**Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR):** Responsibility towards the community and environment (both economical and social) in which it operates (Business Dictionary, 2012).

**Globalization:** “The development of an increasingly integrated global economy marked especially by... the tapping of cheaper foreign labor markets” (Merriam-Webster, 2012).

**Motivation:** The person’s drivers that encourage and propel labor migration in the tourism industry.

**Process:** The journey experienced by an international worker to relocate and incorporate into a new society.

**Challenges:** Limitations and hindering experiences presented by international workers in their search for better professional opportunities abroad.

**Success Factors:** The resources and practices experienced by international workers that allowed the achievement of integration and success in their new society.

**Labor Environment:** The physical and psychological space in which an international worker performs hers/his work duties.

**Temporary International Worker:** A person who migrates from one country to another with a view to be employed temporarily with the intention to return to their home country (IOM, 2012).

**Permanent International Worker:** A person who migrates from one country to another with a view to be employed permanently with no intention to return to their home country (IOM, 2012).

## **CHAPTER II LITERATURE REVIEW**

### Introduction

The purpose of this literature review is first to investigate and analyze the broad topic of international labor migration through a conceptual assessment, proceeding to narrow the scope by covering labor migration in the hospitality industry. The literature review will then continue to research theories that will be used as underlining foundations for the rest of the study; cultural adaptation, cultural awareness theory, social capital, employee loyalty, and employee satisfaction will be addressed in this literature review. Finally, a review of cross cultural training, a formal tool addressed by international companies to attempt to secure success of their international workers domestically or abroad will also be covered in this literature review.

### International Labor Migration (ILM)

One of the largest and most complex phenomena of the twentieth century has been migration (Zlotnik, 1998). Its expansive reach and particular characteristics in the



last century can be attributed to globalization. Migration implications can be determined in part by a financial redistribution and new economical interconnectedness of countries and geopolitical regions by such revolutionizing process. The age of migration (Zolberg, 2006) is a puzzle in which political and economic concerns merge with social and cultural implications creating a new environment in which international workers and their host countries have fought to find a balance. It can be argued that liberalization of trade for goods and financial services has not been followed by an increase in open labor migration policies, thus creating challenges for worker who find themselves trapped in new social and financial imbalances created by a new international system.

Countries and their governments have found themselves challenged when it comes to migration flows. Creating policies that address the economic, political, and cultural needs of their population has been proven futile, and migration as well as the incorporation of the new migrating populations has become more of a challenge and hindrance to the host society than an opportunity to welcome new individuals into their systems revitalizing their work force and society in a positive manner (Maloney, 2011).

Some of the consequences of not having effective migration policies have resulted in the abuse of international workers who are summoned by the laboring needs of the receiving countries. These abuses can include unfair labor practices such as long hours, inhumane working conditions, and depressed wages for both international workers and the domestic work force of the society in which they are laboring. In the case of illegal international workers abuses can also include threats of deportation and harm to international workers and their families (Allamby, 2011). Regardless of the risks and the limitations presented by international workers when seeking relocation, migration

continues to be a constant phenomenon that affects not only the individuals that seek to migrate but also their host society population, and the work environment that they incorporate to.

The motives and consequences that are attributed to international workers' drive to migrate are complex, and they involve social, political, cultural, and economic variables. Labor migration determinants can be as unique as each person participant in labor migration. For the purpose of this study, the drivers of international labor migration will be examined by using micro (functional) and/or macro (structural) economical approaches (Goss, 1995). Both exemplify the variables that drive international workers to migrate, and each focuses a predominant preference for either the individual or his/her external environment when determining the drivers of international labor migration. This dual approach offers a comparative perspective on the drivers of migration and the variables that have to be considered when studying the subject.

A micro economical approach argues that individuals will seek migration to “improve their life chances (and) respond to real or perceived inequalities in the distribution of economic opportunities by migrating to another place” (Goss, 1995 pp. 318). Migration in this approach will reduce inequalities for the individual and his/her environment, thus also reducing the motivation to migrate presented in the first place. A micro economical approach relies on an expectation that individuals will make rational decisions and thus looks upon migration as a positive factor in international labor distribution.

A macro economical approach focuses on structural factors that are out of the control of the individual and in the end only respond to “inequalities systematically

reproduced within the global and national economies” (Goss, 1995 pp.318). Under a macro approach, relocation will not produce a positive effect in international labor migration; it will only perpetuate inequalities. The individual is not considered to have any control on the migration pattern, and financial macro structures are used as foundation to explain why international workers migrate.

In either approach, international workers are willing to depart their home and families to migrate into a new society seeking better financial, cultural, social, and political opportunities. When approached from an economical perspective the new global distribution of wealth can be used as a solid indicator of migration flows and as a strong variable on the drivers of migration.

### International Labor Migration in the Hospitality Industry

Labor migration in the hospitality industry has proven to be more of a necessity than a demographic or political consequence of the international system (Choi, 2000; Ortega, 2009). The unique characteristics of the hospitality industry go beyond the individual motivations of international workers and the distribution flow of labor across an international environment. The hospitality industry is labor intensive, particularly depending on unskilled labor to fulfill most of its labor necessities in hotels, restaurants and other service operations that require human capital.

International workers have specific characteristics that make them great candidates for the hospitality industry. International workers, particularly female international workers, (Oishi, 2002) have proven to be widely used by the industry and appear to be in less of a disadvantage versus their male counterparts when it comes to wages and employment rates (Wright, 2005). Still, low wages and work conflict are prevalent in most tourism operations, which creates unique challenges for international workers and the organizations that employ them (Allamby, 2011).

The need of the hospitality industry to find employees that are willing to work for low monetary remuneration, and that are willing to accept the work requirements that are inherent to most tourism organizations jobs is not the only driver to use international labor in hospitality operations. Seasonality in the business creates another variable that affects the labor environment and that makes international workers even more valuable for the hospitality industry (Ivanovik, 2009; Joliffe, 2003). Since the industry needs low wage workers that are willing to work seasonally to maintain its labor cost under control, the use of temporary international workers has become an alternative to satisfy the industry's particular labor market demands.

The hospitality industry's use of temporary foreign-born labor constitutes a large piece of the overall use of international workers. In the United States, the use of temporary labor is driven in part by immigration restrictions and immigration policies that make it more viable to utilize temporary unskilled labor on H2B, J, and Q visas than to import workers on a permanent basis (Taylor, 2009).

The demographic characteristics that make up the faces of international labor within the tourism industry are determined by factors such as language, national origin,

and work attitudes that may facilitate and/or enhance its use by the tourism industry. In some cases, “employers prefer to hire newly arrived immigrants because they are different from the local work force and have the right attitude toward low wages and difficult jobs which are common in the hospitality industry” (Taylor, 2009). In addition to a preference for new immigrant employees, selection of certain international labor groups over others can occur due to the characteristics of a particular labor force, the tourism enterprise’s previous experiences, and the existence of political and logistic organizations that facilitate the temporary relocation of international workers. There is a connection between political and financial entities that orchestrate and facilitate labor migration, and the representation of certain groups and countries over others in the tourism industry.

The constant need for international workers, the political structure of the United States and the previous experiences of tourism companies with the use of international workers have created a new business entity whose only purpose is to recruit, process, and deliver international workers to the tourism industry for a cost. One of the sectors in the tourism industry that has formalized the use of recruitment agencies and changed the way in which it finds their human capital is the cruise industry (Ball, 1997; Raub, 2006; Sunoo, 1997; Wood, 2002).

The cruise industry has added a new dimension to international labor migration that exceeds social, cultural and political phenomena. The formal use of organizations for international recruitment provides ILM with a new dimension that perceives migration as a business. This new form of recruitment is of interest for this study as the procurement of international labor through agencies is becoming more prevalent within the tourism

industry in general, and it dramatically changes the way in which international labor migration occurs, both on a temporary and permanent basis.

### Underlining Theoretical Foundations of the Study

International workers who migrate to a new host country will have a tremendous impact in their new host society and primarily in their new work environment. While political and economical variables affect international labor migration, they are out of the control of most individuals who seek migration or organizations that employ them. The need to address other variables that affect international workers' experience and the experience of their new host society is important. Theoretical foundations on cultural adaptation theory, cultural awareness theory, and social capital are covered in the following section and are expected to offer insight into different variables that affect international labor migration and can be manipulated to modify the experience of international workers who migrate into a new host country.

Cultural Adaptation is achieved through social interactions and other experiences that immerse the individual into their new reality (Stack, 2009). The way in which individuals communicate and participate in social activities will help illustrate how international workers are incorporated to their new environment. In a study regarding cultural adaptation of immigrants into Canadian society (Stack, 2009), it was observed that immigrants found it easier to connect to their new environment when engaged in

leisure pursuits inside their new host society, which facilitated interactions and created new social networks between the host country and their new inhabitants. Providing these kinds of opportunities to international workers is of utmost importance. It can be argued that those whose are provided by their organizations provide them with leisure outlets within their new societies might find it easier to adapt and thus become more successful, loyal and satisfied.

Connection between individuals including international workers has been forever changed by the use of technology as a means to create new channels of communication, but has yet to be documented in an international worker environment. It can be argued that technology will affect how individuals find connections with new environments and maintain attachments to their home communities. In the tourism industry, technology can provide an opportunity to create satisfaction and loyalty within international employees by providing employees with technical tools that can facilitate their acculturation and integration to the new society, while at the same time by alleviating challenges created by their migration to a new society.

Cultural awareness can also be addressed as a vehicle to achieve and measure cultural adaptation. In a study about communication traits and acculturation of Chinese immigrants to the United States (Hsu, 2010), a relationship was found between immigrant's inclination to communicate with members of their new society and length of time spent in the new country. Among other findings, the study identified that as immigrants become less fearful of their new culture and understand it better, they became more comfortable interacting and communicating with others in their new environment. It can be argued that tourism businesses can benefit from providing resources to their

international labor, thus promoting communication and interaction with their new environment in order to enhance their cultural awareness. Cultural awareness resources will drive cultural integration and in the end provide higher satisfaction, loyalty and engagement.

In addition to providing resources that promote cultural awareness, it is important to identify any language barriers that can be considered a limitation on the success of international workers. In a study focused on international nurses laboring in the US (Yu, 2010), it was found that despite their professional competency and their knowledge required for their jobs, nurses found difficulties in performance when language barriers impede them from performing their job. Hence it is not only important for the tourism industry not only to address the importance of language proficiency when recruiting new employees but also to consider how information and resources in different language can be used to communicate with their labor force. Providing resources for the new employee to learn a second language can also be effective in improving communication and cultural adaptation of employees.

Since there is a lack of formal resources in organizations that can increase satisfaction and loyalty of international workers, it is necessary to create values that will enhance the probability of international workers to succeed and become well adjusted. Success of both skilled and unskilled international labor is highly dependent on their adaptation and their perception of the new professional and personal environment in which they are active. The use of social capital can be a resource to create value and address how international workers achieve adaptation without any formal resources provided by their host organizations.



Social Capital defined by Jane Jacobs in 1961 refers to people's ability to associate with one another (Brien, 2010). "Social capital is comprised of networks, norms, and trust, which ultimately increase the organization potential... social capital has a measurable economic contribution to organizations" (Brien, 2010). In recent years, the buzz on the quantifiable value of social capital has grown tremendously, and companies now appear to acknowledge that such resources are important to the organizations and need to be cultivated.

One challenge to create social capital can be seen in the findings on managerial attitudes towards contingent labor and their approach from a rational or humanistic perspective. Among the most important findings, the study found that humanistic practices are lacking in the hotel industry, due in part to the systems in place at such organizations (Brien, 2010). The system requires the employees to support the organization and not the other way around in order to achieve profit. In cases where managers found themselves troubled in following a rational approach versus a humanistic one, the importance of social capital was identified as managers acknowledge that in order to achieve the best out of their employees they needed to provide those employees with an environment in which they felt supported by the organization and their leaders, an achievement difficult to attain when the system does not recognize the employees as assets but tools and provides no support to them (Cohen, 2001; Macbeth, 2004).

The need to create organizations that support their employees as a main objective to attain profit is of utmost importance in the case of international workers as their personal concerns and needs from the organization are exacerbated by circumstances such as isolation, culture shock, transportation, and housing, among the most important.

In addition to theories on the creation and impact of social capital, identification of social capital's beneficiaries is also addressed in previous research. Glover (2006) claimed that even though social capital is a collective asset created by a certain group of individuals, the asset is not utilized equally by all members in the collective but only a few of the participants. This is important because international workers can find themselves in a vulnerable position where they can become contributors of social capital to their organizations but not beneficiaries of it. This can be exemplified by the effects of diversity on the work place, although international workers might contribute to this important asset, only domestic employees are able to benefit from it as international workers do not have the tools necessary to focus on their context and are more concerned with other phenomenon such as cultural shock or relocation challenges.

Apart from social capital driven by the tourism organization and its interaction with international workers, there is also another kind of social capital that can be created outside the organization. It can benefit international workers and their organizations in an indirect way by accelerating and/or easing cultural adaptation by the international worker. Such social capital is provided by the personal experiences and social networks formed by the international worker outside of their professional environment.

Hospitality organizations have to understand that in order to secure and retain the best human capital available for their operations they need to promote satisfaction and loyalty in their employees. Since the industry is incapable of providing monetary incentives or career advancement opportunities to the majority of its international workers, focusing on the particular needs of international workers is the best way to

obtain a competitive advantage and better performance out of the international labor the industry employs.

As employees become more valuable to organizations, companies seek to create psychological attachments and emotional connections (Grant, 2008) to increase employee commitment to the organization. Employee support programs (ESPs) are the response of some companies to boost employee productivity and permanence in the organization. In general terms, companies will build value by providing services to their employees, who in return create an emotional commitment to the organization that translates into loyalty and satisfaction.

Employee support programs face limitations primarily for neglecting to understand the needs their employees are seeking to meet. In the case of international workers, companies appear to constantly neglect the cultural differences and their implications in the needs of their employees (Hatrup, 2008) and the need to understand the cultural necessities of international workers. Hence, it has become paramount to create employee support programs that are effective and create value for the organization.

In addition to programs that create value by offering services to their employees, a new type of program can be offered in order to create emotional connections between the employees and the company that facilitated their participation (Grant, 2008). The basic premise of an employee support program is that community values can be achieved and attached to the company by providing employees with the opportunity to give their resources and time to help other members of the organization. This construct is of particular interest in the case of international workers as the integration process is not only about international workers, but also of their domestic counterparts that are faced

with the new cultural and social reality that foreign workers bring to their work environment.

### Formal Resources Offered to International Workers in Business Organizations

The world is becoming increasingly globalized; the majority of large businesses now operate on an international scale (Dewald & Self, 2006). By the year 2000, more than 50% of the world assets are considered to be owned by companies that have international operations (Lim, 2007). The number of workers that labor in countries other than their own is larger today than ever before, which has forced international workers and organizations to adapt to a new culture and sometimes learn entirely new business philosophies unique to their new host countries (Hu, Martin & Yeh, 2002).

Cross Cultural Training (CCT), according to Dewald and Self (2006), exists because of the need to ensure the success of the foreign workers by bridging cultures. Hu, Martin and Yeh (2002) refer to CCT as a vehicle that facilitates effective cross-cultural interactions. The need to acquire communication skills and other social adaptability skills comes from a new dimension added by the need for foreign workers to perform in a physical, cultural, political and social environment different from their home environments. Even though CCT is focused primarily on skilled labor deployed abroad, CCT can also be used to determine better ways in which both skilled and unskilled foreign workers can be incorporated into their host environment successfully.

Cross Cultural Training can increase the probability of an individual's adjustment into another culture as it relates to living, business, and the perceived importance of other specified attributes (Wei-tang, 2002). Successful cross-cultural assignments have contributed to an increase in the corporation's international reputation and profits, with job satisfaction being the most important factor (Lee & Liu-Ching, 2006).

In a study by Magnini and Honeycutt (2003) it was identified that technical competence is vital for the success of the employees deployed abroad. However, this skill cannot be fully realized until the international worker also receives or possesses a psychological level of development that is referred to as 'learning orientation.' Learning orientation is a set of attitudes that will make the international workers receptive to changes and will facilitate the technical performance of the employee.

It is important to mention that most of the literature found on CCT was directed at skilled professionals scheduled to be deployed abroad. The lack of literature that focuses on unskilled foreign labor used in the hospitality industry is a proof of the importance of this study which expands considerations to what tools can be given to foreign workers working for tourism businesses in the United States.

CCT is a multi dimensional approach that includes all areas of Human Resource Management (HRM) ranging from screening and recruiting, to training and evaluation of performance and goals. All areas are considered to determine whether or not successful foreign workers and professionals can perform to the best of their abilities. The literature review agrees that CCT is undervalued and difficult to justify mainly because companies perceive the its cost as an expense rather than an investment. Researchers also agree that the high rates in failure of expatriate professionals are due to the insufficient or

nonexistent presence of CCT on all realms of HRM (Baber, 2000; Black, 1990; Dewald & Self, 2008; Harrison, 1994; Lee, 2006).

When referring to the aptitudes that make successful international employees, there are different approaches as to which qualities or characteristics are necessary for their success. It is generally accepted that success factors for international workers include interpersonal skills, language abilities, curiosity, tolerance, flexibility and patience (Dewald & Self, 2006).

It can be argued that international workers who are successful in their international tenure have an increased level of acculturation and cultural integration to support their development of skills that promote success, satisfaction and loyalty. These employees have achieved such skills by their participation in the social and cultural environment of their societies and have relied on their experiences to nurture their development. The tourism industry needs to understand the value of social capital and provide resources that promote social interaction as a means to obtain higher satisfaction and loyalty out of international employees working in their organization.

## **CHAPTER III METHODOLOGY**

### Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to describe the methodology used to conduct this study. This chapter will be divided into the following sections: rationale for the research design, research objectives achievement plan, protocol, participants, data collection procedures, and pilot study.

The research design for this study is centered on grounded theory. Hence, conceptual arguments created from the research are addressed in the results and conclusion chapters of this study.

### Rationale for the Research Design

In order to understand cultural values and social behaviors, a method of data collection that is sensitive enough to capture the nuance of human living is necessary (Strauss, 1998). Grounded theory refers to a research method that creates theory grounded on data systematically gathered and analyzed (Urquhart, 2010).

Using Strauss' approach, the data gathering process consists of identifying a problem based on experiences, pragmatism and literature review available on it. Once the

problem is identified, it requires an active relationship with the participants during the conduction of the study, and at the conclusion of the study it evaluates the theory based on the validity, efficiency, reliability and sensitivity of it (Hunter, 2011). The research design for this study is founded on grounded theory because it was considered to be the most significant and appropriate method of research for this study.

The information gathered from participants during the interviews was coded using frame analysis (Goffman, 1974). For the purpose of this study, frames will be defined as propositions, phrases or words that hold a particular significance for the objectives of this study (Scheff, 2005). The major constructs created from respondents' answers will be presented in the results section, and will be structured according to each of the objectives in the study. By using frame analysis, it is plausible to break down general information into specific arguments and organize it in a manner that is efficient and significant to the study.

The study gathered information to create conceptual arguments that promote investment of hospitality resources in the integration and acculturation of international workers. In order to substantiate the claims made in the study, the use of theoretical foundations covered by the literature review serves as comparison and support of the findings and recommendations.



## Research Objectives Achievement Plan

The study's objectives began with identifying the motivations that drive international workers to migrate. A thorough review of International Labor Migration (ILM) literature helped understand the basic concepts of labor migration and the specific characteristics in which migration occurs in the tourism industry. The data gathered through the interviews of the study's participants was used to identify the motivations for migration of international workers in the tourism industry.

The study proceeded to gather information about the process through which international workers migrate and adjust to their new professional and cultural environment. A review of literature on Cultural Adaptation Theory, Cultural Awareness Theory, and Communication Theory created the theoretical foundations used to understand how international workers adjust to their new environment. Through interviews, the study gathered enough information to determine whether the theoretical foundations covered all constructs involved in the cultural integration process experienced by international workers. Finally, an analysis of the experiences acquired from the data collection process yielded ideas on how hospitality organizations can facilitate the process of cultural adaptation for international workers.

The second objective of this study focuses on the challenges and success factors that face international workers; the information gathered through the data collection created conceptual constructs that illustrate some of the challenges and limitations presented by international workers and their organizations.

Finally, all the information gathered was used to create tools that can facilitate the chances for hospitality organizations to obtain successful returns from their investment in international labor by increasing satisfaction, commitment, and loyalty of international workers to the organization. The literature review on cross cultural training was used as a comparison base to identify successful and unsuccessful practices when looking to achieve better adapted international workers.

### Protocol

The study was conducted through an interview protocol administered to international workers that operate inside the tourism industry of Central Florida. The data collected was coded, and then divided into four different sections aimed at the four major research objectives.

The protocol (Appendix A) is divided into 4 sections, one for each research objective with a range of 4-5 questions per section. The protocol provided guidance for the researcher to conduct the data collection. However, the researcher's ability to interview the subjects was paramount in obtaining the best results from the interview by using follow-up questions and focusing on valuable data for the study.

In addition to the protocol, an exempt form explaining the purpose of the study (Appendix B) was delivered to all participants. The purpose of this form was to explain objectives of the study and the potential implications for the interviewees. One-on-one

interviews helped obtain substantial data about the experiences of international workers when migrating for laboring reasons.

### Participants

The study collected 30 valid interviews from participants working in the hospitality industry. All of the respondents worked in the food and beverage department of a 1500 rooms convention resort. Participants included front and back of the line employees as well as 3 operations managers from the location where the study was conducted. Front of the line employees worked for a full table service restaurant in the location, while back of the house participants worked on a quick service restaurant as well as a full service one. The number of participants was determined by the respondents' saturation point, which was reached once responses appeared to consistently repeat themselves in the participants' answers.

Subjects were required to meet specific criteria in order to participate in the study. The criteria included: to be foreign born and raised, to be employed by a hospitality organization, and to be able to understand English. Subjects who did not meet one or more of the criteria were denied interview participation.

## Data Collecting Procedures

The company supporting the study allowed interviews to be conducted on site during employees' breaks or whenever the operation allowed them to leave their position for a brief time to conduct the interview. The data was gathered using one-on-one interviews; interviews were sometimes recorded with the permission of the participants and all responses from participants were captured in writing on the protocol used to conduct each interview.

Responses were reviewed and coded according to each of the four objectives sections of the study. New participants' responses were added to previously coded responses; the findings were organized to address one or more objectives of the study separately.

The final constructs created a list of recommendations aimed to help international workers achieve cultural adaptation within their organization. The recommendations are directed at hospitality organizations, and provide tools to support international workers. The findings presented similarities with results encountered in previous studies covered in the literature review, and offer new data to expand the body of knowledge on the subject of international workers' cultural adaptation.

## Pilot Study

In order to narrow the scope of the study and to create the protocol, a pilot study was conducted. The main objectives of the pilot study were to test the interview protocol, and to obtain some basic information about the population the study intended to use. In a series of casual, non-structured interviews, the researcher asked participants questions about their experience as an international worker in the hospitality industry. The interviews also covered the challenges presented in their organizations and recommendations international workers wanted to share to improve their working conditions.

The results of the pilot study found new data on the experiences lived by international workers and how these affected their ability to achieve cultural adaptation. During the pilot study it was found that most individuals appeared to have different experiences according to the length of time they have been an international worker in the US and the particular circumstances that surrounded the organizations in which they labor.

The findings appear to be in line with previous research that suggest that individuals will experience acculturation based on the length of time they have been at their new location (Hsu, 2010; Stack, 2009); individuals who spent more time in the United States and in their current organizations appeared to be more incorporated than those who have recently relocated. Participants with language barriers reported the most

challenges, suggesting that individuals with better proficiency of English as a second language also found it easier to incorporate themselves into their new societies.

Another finding from the pilot study was the drastic difference in opinion of respondents who belonged to an organization where more people of their cultural background worked, and those who appeared to be relatively isolated from the rest of individuals in the organization. This suggests that the findings in the literature review about social capital and the creation of organizational support networks is a direct determinant on employees' commitment to and satisfaction with the organization, an achievement that can express itself in more permanence and better productivity.

Overall the interview and protocol were well received by the participants: answers were positive and respondents were more comfortable when the questions were given in a conversational approach with follow-up questions asked based on the responses of the participants. On the other hand, respondents were more intimidated and tended to provide shorter answers when approached with the structured protocol rather than in a casual conversation manner.

## CHAPTER IV RESULTS

The study's results reflect information processed after gathering data from 30 valid interviews provided by hospitality workers with an international background. All respondents work in the hotel industry within the food and beverage department of a convention resort.

The first section of the results is intended to showcase demographic characteristics of the participants: gender, nationality and/or country of origin, length of stay in the United States, marital status, and job description of the respondents. Demographic information is expected to showcase the diversity of the sample and its significance for the study's results. Through gathering information from a diverse sample, it is argued that the findings presented are representative of the population that constitutes the international labor force in the hospitality industry today.

The second section of the results focuses on the responses given by the participants with respect to the four objectives of the study. Using frame analysis (Goffman, 1974; Wu, 2011; Li, 2011), it is intended to showcase the major constructs presented in the respondents' answers; responses are coded according to the four objectives of the study.

Participants were asked if there were any tools or procedure they would like to see implemented at their organizations in order to have better professional experiences. Final constructs are created from international workers' responses regarding recommendations or ideas to improve the professional environments. The recommendations are intended

for hospitality organizations, and are expected to create value to the organization's human capital.

### Profile of Participants

Demographic data collected is presented in the table below; it includes: national origin, gender, marital status, length of stay in the United States, and occupation. Each participant is given a number to identify her/him through out the results chapter. Table 1 will be used as a reference to quote participants and to help identify their answers within the major themes found in this study.



**Table 1 Profile of Participants**

Participant No.	Nationality	Gender	Marital Status	Length of Stay	Occupation
1	Brazil	Male	Divorced	10 years	Manager
2	China	Female	Married	16 years	Server
3	Mexico	Female	Single	7 months	Hostess
4	Cuba	Female	Married	5 years	Cook
5	Ireland	Male	Married	18 years	Manager
6	Russia	Female	Single	12 years	Server
7	Colombia	Female	Divorced	37 years	Server
8	Morocco	Male	Single	6 years	Food Runner
9	United Kingdom	Female	Married	12 years	Server
10	Mexico	Female	Single	1 month	Cook
11	Mexico	Female	Single	4 months	Cook
12	Puerto Rico	Male	Single	5 years	Cook
13	Haiti	Female	Married	4 years	Cook
14	Italy	Male	Married	17 years	Server
15	Brazil	Female	Married	2 years	Hostess
16	Morocco	Male	Married	22 years	Server
17	Puerto Rico	Male	Married	9 years	Manager
18	Argentina	Male	Married	12 years	Server
19	Vietnam	Female	Married	16 years	Hostess
20	United Kingdom	Male	Married	9 years	Server
21	Cuba	Female	Single	12 years	Bartender
22	Morocco	Male	Married	9 years	Server
23	Ukraine	Male	Married	8 years	Server
24	Colombia	Female	Married	7 years	Cook
25	Mexico	Male	Married	16 years	Server
26	U.S.V.I	Female	Married	19 years	Dishwasher
27	Puerto Rico	Male	Single	6 years	Cook
28	South Africa	Female	Single	12 years	Hostess
29	Mexico	Female	Divorced	18 years	Server
30	Morocco	Female	Married	17 years	Server

Table 1 illustrates the wide diversity within international workers. The profile of the participants is discussed in detail on the following paragraphs starting with national origin, followed by length of stay and ending with marital status and occupation of the participants. The significance of demographic data extracted from the profile of participants is intended to support the study's validity and its significance. 17 different nationalities were found in the profile of participants, while the length of stay in the

United States ranged between 1 month and 37 years. The diversity in the background of the participants is considered an asset to the study's results.

Culturally diverse populations are a phenomenon that affects most economically developed regions on the planet (Devine, 2007). The impact of an individual's values, customs and habits is dramatic and can make the difference between positive and negative migration to another country (Choi, 2000). International workers that immigrate to another country with similar cultural and social characteristics to their own society will have better chances to succeed and become culturally adapted.

Participants in the study represented a wide variety of nationalities. The culturally diverse background of the participants is an asset to this study and showcases how different cultural backgrounds achieve their acculturation process. In the study, participants 2, 6, 8, 13, 16, 19, 23, 30 answered to have experienced the most cultural dissonance when they moved to the United States. Their challenges can be attributed to belonging to some of the most different cultural backgrounds to the United States: their nations included China, Russia, Morocco, Haiti, Vietnam, and Ukraine. The limitations of this particular group are explained in detail on the following sections of this chapter.

The nationalities represented in this study are determined in part by political, cultural and geographical factors that make individuals from those countries more likely to migrate to the United States than nationals of other entities. Respondents 12, 17, 26, 29 migrated from Puerto Rico and the U.S.V.I, they were given the opportunity to reside in the US due to their state's status as free territories of the United States, a status that granted them automatic citizenship upon migration.

Other participants, including 6, 8, 16, 22, 23, and 30, were citizens of one of the following countries: Russia, Morocco, and Ukraine, making them eligible for the United States lottery for permanent residency. Participants 4, 13, and 21 all were citizens of either Cuba or Haiti, countries with whom the United States has refugee arrangements (USCIS, 2012) allowing them to gain permanent resident status upon arrival. The rest of the respondents were from countries with deep cultural and political connections with the United States, and in the case of Mexico a close geographical proximity, all factors influencing the ability to migrate to the US.

In addition to the role cultural, political, social and geographical connections between participants' home countries and the United States played in their migration journey, the acculturation process of international workers is impacted by length of stay of participants in the United States. The differences between their expectations and objectives varied greatly according to the amount of time residing abroad. Participants 2, 7, 16, 25, 26 all exceeded the 10-year residency mark, and all reported that their expectations were met or exceeded after relocation. Participant 7 declared "America is a land of opportunity," a phrase repeated by some of the other participants, particularly those who have been in the United States the longest tenures.

Even though some of the participants with the longest tenures appeared to have positive images of the United States and their migratory experience, participants who have recently moved to the United States reported less positive views to the United States and their migratory experience.

Participant 3 described her experience as less than positive: she intended to gain professional experience while doing a cultural exchange and professional practice in the

US, but was quoted saying “I wish I got a chance to do a more professional practice, instead of the roles that I was assigned to.” She was referring to her assignment as front-of-the-line employee in a restaurant and her inability to rotate within the operation to gain professional experience in all aspects of the operation.

Participants 10, 11, and 15 who reported the shortest length of residence also reported mixed feelings about their experience in the United States. Their discontent with their experience can be attributed to the management of their professional internship and the lack of consistency between the expectations promised to them prior to arrival at their work location and the actual working conditions they were presented upon arrival. Most of the participants with mixed or negative experiences in the United States were also on a temporary migratory status, which can be argued as a cause for their lack of opportunities and their inability to change their working conditions.

The migratory status of the participants can influence their acculturation process in the United States. Participants’ marital arrangements can influence their migratory status and thus their marital status is also evaluated in this chapter. Marital status responses appeared to be skewed, with only 8 of the respondents answering to be single. This can be explained in part by the impact of marriage in an international worker’s immigration status, which in some of the respondents cases became permanent when they got married to a US citizen or permanent resident. The impacts of marriage in an international worker acculturation process are covered in detail later in this chapter under international workers acculturation practices.

The acculturation process of international workers can be influenced by their occupation and professional environment. Participants’ professional environment can

make the difference by providing them with an environment that is challenging and diverse, the overall abilities of an international worker will ultimately be determined by the professional environment in which they developed and the tools that were given to them to succeed in the professional career.

The occupation of the participants for this study is concentrated in the food and beverage operation of a convention resort. Their roles included front and back of the house hourly entry-level positions and three managerial respondents who helped understand the organization of their company from a perspective different than the one given by the hourly employees. The lack of support from hospitality enterprises made it impossible to gather information from other departments of their operations. However, the diversity in roles and also the inclusion of both front of the line and managerial employees will serve as a comparison point of what a positive or negative professional environment can be and how hospitality operations can make the difference for international workers.

## Protocol Results

The data collected in this study have been divided into four major themes that complement the four objectives of the study. The four themes are motivations for international labor migration, international worker's acculturation practices, challenges to international workers, and alternatives to create value out of international workers. Using frame analysis, the answers of the respondents have been coded and separated into constructs attached to each of the themes mentioned. All information provided by the respondents including quotes is used as supporting evidence of the constructs created and is listed below.

### *Motivations for International Labor Migration*

International Labor Migration (ILM) is complex (Goss, 1995; Oishi, 2002; Ortega, 2009). The motivations that drive international workers to immigrate to another country will vary according to the context in which the individual operates in her/his home location. During the interviews, participants identified the following reasons as the drivers to immigrate into the United States: social mobility, educational aspirations, professional growth/experience, travel aspirations, experiencing a new cultural environment, and family relocation. Participants had one or more drivers for migration

and the constructs illustrated on Table 2 are considered to be the most prevalent in their responses.

The motivations for migration reported by the participants are discussed in detail in the following table and addressed in detail with supporting evidence found in the respondents' answers in the analysis below the table. Table 2 begins with social mobility, educational aspirations, and professional growth/experience. Then follows with travel aspirations, experiencing a new cultural environment and family relocation.

**Table 2 Motivations for International Labor Migration**

Motivations	Description
Social Mobility	Social mobility refers to the movements of individuals in order to seek a change in their perceived social, and economical status. The majority of respondents acknowledge social mobility as the main driver for migration.
Educational Aspirations	Educational aspirations included international worker's desires to achieve educational development in order to achieve more professional and social opportunities. Several participants listed this as a reason to seek migration.
Professional Growth/ Experience	Professional growth/experience encompassed the desire of international workers to climb the professional hierarchy and to achieve more experience to support their professional development. Participants who were here temporarily acknowledge this as their main reason for migration.
Travel Aspirations	Travel aspirations concerned international worker's desire to travel, and achieve new cultural and social experiences to develop personal growth goals. Younger participants listed this as a motivation for migration.
Experiencing New Cultural Environment	Experiencing new cultural environments included international workers' desire to immerse in the cultural practices of their new environment merging their own costumes with those of their domestic hosts. Younger participants listed this as motivation for migration.
Family Relocation	Family relocation concerned the migration of participants who did not have a personal interest in relocation but were migrated by their families due to the family's interest in achieving any of the perceived benefits of migration. Most respondents that acknowledged this driver of migration arrived to the US at a very young age.

International workers who perceived inequalities in their own environment (Goss, 1995), and who identify profits in their cost-benefit analysis of moving to another country (Ortega, 2009), will seek social mobility by relocating. According to the international workers' abilities, and the social, cultural, and political context of their locations, they will face different challenges and limitations in the opportunities given to achieve their goals. Domestic workers will have an advantage in their new location, length of time residing in their new country and their level of cultural adaptation and development will determine their success in achieving their goal of social mobility (Pichler, 2011).



The majority of the participants acknowledged some kind of social mobility desire that propelled their migration to the United States. Participant number 7 mentioned that although she moved to the United States at the sponsorship of her sister who came with the goal of becoming a nurse, once here she felt motivated by her sister's progress and what she called a 'life changing opportunity' to achieve social mobility for herself as well.

Elevating an individual social status or their perceived wealth was also considered a driver found under the construct of social mobility. Participant 27 explains his desire to move to the United States to elevate his social status and to obtain more opportunities than he would have in his native Puerto Rico.

Economic limitations and lack of opportunities in the home countries of the majority of the participants are listed as a major driver to move to the United States. The financial limitations encountered by participants in the home countries can be attributed to their desire to seek social mobility by moving to another country. Participant 25 mentioned that in addition to obtaining more opportunities by migrating, he also was motivated by the social structure and what he called "the American way of doing things" and considered them positive influences in his desire to migrate to the United States.

Educational aspirations and the opportunity to achieve educational development in the United States is also considered a driver and a positive influence in an individual's desire to move to the United States. Participant 17 mentioned he moved to the United States to attend school, and he is still considering finishing his education. In his particular case, he deviated from his original path to become a manager in one of the locations used for the study but shared his desire to become a clinical psychologist in the near future.

Other participants also shared similar stories to that of participant 17, listing their intentions to move to the United States to advance their educational career and the change of plans after their arrival. Financial limitations experienced by international workers can be attributed as the reason why some participants labor in the hospitality industry, despite their professional interests in different disciplines outside of tourism management.

Participants 20, 5, and 14 all listed their first driver for migration as the achievement of educational development in the United States. Still, as with participant 17, they all took different paths after moving and became part of the hospitality industry, a move that was not on their original professional paths.

Professional growth and educational aspirations can be correlated as the main drivers of migration for some of the respondents. They can also be linked to international workers' desire to achieve social mobility through the achievement of their educational goals or professional development. Participant 9 mentioned she moved to the US to achieve more experience as a professional dancer and to pursue her career in the entertainment industry. She later disclosed having been part of the talent crews for cruise companies such as Princess and Royal Caribbean before retiring and moving to the US permanently. In her case, the professional journey she took allowed her to move from one tourism industry to another, and finally achieve her desire of social mobility by permanently moving to the United States.

Some of the participants answered they were fully committed to the hospitality industry even prior to their relocation in the United States. Participants 3,10,11, and 15 all moved to the US to achieve professional experience in the hospitality industry as their degree majors were in culinary or hotel administration. They all expressed their desire to

gain professional practice in a world-class company to use when they returned to their home countries. In the case of participants 3,10,11 who were in the United States on a temporary work assignment, the idea of achieving professional experience in what they called a 'world class environment' and to be able to list that as their previous professional experience is enough to motivate them to move temporarily, hoping to achieve social mobility upon their return to the home country.

Participants may decide to relocate on a temporary basis or just for a brief period of time with intentions that are less financial or professionally driven. Participant 2 had one of the most unique experiences as she mentioned that her primary reasons to move to the United States were traveling and experiencing a new cultural environment while on a temporary professional practice here in the United States. She expressed her difficulty to adapt to the new culture coming from China and how she stayed for the chance of better opportunities, a driver she acquired after arriving in the United States. She moved to the United States 16 years ago, and when asked if she would like to return to China, she answered that although she would like to return, she believed her country had gone through tremendous change and she would not be able to integrate herself into their society if she chose to come back.

Participant 2's story is of great interest to this study as she is a clear example of how drivers of migration can change and are influenced by both the receiving country and the home country of the international worker. Perceived inequalities or limitations can make an international worker move to a new country, but once those limitations are gone in their home country, individuals would sometimes rather not have departed from

their home societies in the first place, yet they decide to remain in the new countries based on cultural, social and professional limitations.

Family bonds are important determinants in migration drivers: participant 2 decided not to move back in part because of her family attachments to her country of immigration. Other participants experienced family relationships as the drivers to their relocation or as a factor that determined their cost-benefit analysis of departing their home countries in search of better opportunities.

Family relocation that involves participants moved to the United States by their family members, sometimes without their own personal consideration, was the personal experience of participants 5, 7, 18, and 21. All participants mentioned being brought to the United States as children by their relatives, who either found sponsorship in the United States through work or marriage to a US permanent resident or citizen.

Their migration drivers were determined by their families' desire to maintain unity between their members. It is important to note that those participants moved to the US by their families at an early age expressed less difficulty adapting to their new environment, and appeared to be in better remunerated positions than other respondents of this study, which would suggest that better adapted individuals would have better opportunities to succeed in their new societies (Hsu, 2010; Magnini, 2003; Stack, 2009).

As an overall recap of the findings regarding motivations for international labor migration, each participant mentioned at least 1 construct illustrated in table 2 during their responses, and the majority of the respondents answered social mobility, professional growth and education as the main reasons to move the United States. Only a minority of respondents listed travel aspirations and experiencing new cultural

environment as their main drivers for migration, and it is important to note that those respondents were in the United States as temporary workers whose main focus was gaining new professional and personal experiences through professional practices and using their new found skills in their home countries.

Participants' stories and motivations are unique, and they involved several of the constructs listed on table 2. Each individual had a unique story to tell, and their decisions were influenced only in part by the major drivers found in this study to be causes of international labor migration. Their ultimate professional outcome and opinion about their experience abroad is discussed in the rest of this chapter and it includes their journey and limitations presented through their tenure in the United States.

### *International Worker's Acculturation Practices*

International worker's acculturation affects employee performance (Ea, 2010). International workers that integrate to their society are more likely to be successful and to obtain better opportunities than those who decide to isolate themselves from the rest of their environment.

Measuring the acculturation level of immigrants has been widely documented (Archuleta, 2012; Baker, 2011; Magnini, 2012). Results indicate that the cultural background of an individual and its similarities or differences from their new cultural environment, in addition to length of stay, will determine the level of acculturation of international workers and affect their physical, mental and professional development.

Participants were asked to recapitulate the behaviors and activities they engaged to incorporate into their new society. From the answers collected, the concepts presented on table 3 were found to be the most predominant methods of acculturation for international workers participating in this study.

**Table 3 International Worker's Acculturation Practices**

Acculturation Practices	Description
Socializing in Their Work, and/or School Environment	International workers acknowledge involvement in social interactions at their professional environment. Activities included meetings, social events or activities that international workers engaged in their new work or school environment.
Socializing with Locals on Public Venues	International workers participated in social events that occur outside of their professional environment, meeting did not involve persons with whom they engage in professional activities.
Joining Groups of Similar Cultural Background to Their Own	Some participants acknowledged participation in social activities that include only members of their own cultural background, and that exclude themselves from other social groups.
Marrying and Joining Social Groups of US Citizens or Permanent Residents	International workers reported finding themselves in a new cultural environment due to their romantic relationship with US citizens or permanent residents; these participants acculturated according to the experiences they faced in their spouse's social nucleus.
Media	Participants reported exposure to media and other forms of cultural expressions in their new society, including but not limited to: music, cinema, TV, internet, social media, advertisements. The majority of participants recognized media as an influence in their acculturation process.

International workers sometimes find their first social interactions with the domestic population of their new environment by engaging in social interactions at work or school after their relocation. Their participation in activities such as meetings, social events sponsored by their professional institution or activities that occur within their professional environment are some of the practices international workers use to acculturate to their new place of residence.

During the interviews, participants 1, 3, 5, 10, 11, 23 expressed having their first social interactions at work or school after their relocation to the United States. Participant

5 recalled his first social interactions at school after his family relocated to the United States. In his case he achieved cultural adaptation through his interactions at school.

It is often the case that their employer sponsors their relocation, thus interactions with the population of their new environment occurs first in a professional environment. The majority of the participants agreed to have engaged themselves in social interactions with coworkers or members of their professional environment. These first interactions are great opportunities for hospitality organizations to create corporate values and to promote an environment where international workers and their domestic counterparts acculturate to their multi-cultural environment and thrive on it.

Some of the participants acknowledge not only participating in activities within their work environment, but also finding personal long-term relationships in their work locations. Participant 9 acknowledged having met her husband at work and that the majority of her friendships were also derived from her professional environment. Other participants, particularly those whose cultural background is represented in the work environment, acknowledged having interactions with other workers with their same background in and outside of their work place.

The familiarity between people of the same cultural background, in addition to sharing values and customs, makes these interactions popular among international workers. In the case of international workers who have recently arrived at their new place of residence, interactions with people of the same cultural background form a good bridge between their own cultural environment and their new one. In cases where the other individuals have resided for a long time abroad, new international workers can benefit from their interactions and acquire new social skills that they can later apply with



people residing in their new environment but that are not of their same cultural background.

Some of the participants, including participant 27, mentioned only gathering with other workers from their own nationality. Participant 27 describes that it is easier to find connections with people that have a similar background than those who do not. He also mentioned that other cultural groups appear to isolate themselves as well and mostly interact with people of their own cultural background.

International workers will not only seek activities within their professional environment, the engagement in social activities in public venues was acknowledged in the responses of the participants, and it offer a new way in which international workers achieve cultural adaptation. The majority of the respondents agreed to participate in social activities in public venues outside of their professional environment.

Participants who have been residing in the United States for a longer period of time mentioned participating more in social activities in public places, while participants who have recently moved to the United States listed limitations such as transportation or language challenges as the reasons that they were not engaged in public activities very often. There was another distinction between older and younger participants: younger participants answered being more eager to engage in social behaviors in public places, while older participants appear to rely more on their families and work for social interactions.

The participation in social activities outside of their work environment does not guarantee that participants will interact with members of their new society that do not belong to their cultural background. Participant 7, who is Hispanic, mentioned being

involved with social groups in her community and mentioned those groups were populated by people of her same cultural background, language and personal values; those characteristics appear to be important determinants to decide with whom international workers associate.

The isolation into groups of their same cultural background, language, and values appears to be more pronounced in those who had the biggest language limitations and whose nationality was well represented in the area where they resided. Respondents 6, 14, 23, 28 are under represented in their places of residence and answered being more inclined to join other social groups outside of their cultural background as well as to participate in public activities often. This suggests that although language and cultural dissonance can act as challenges for international workers to integrate, ultimately, convenience provided by having a number of their own cultural population to socialize with is what will determine whether or not these individuals will overcome their fears to engage with people from their new environment or would rather isolate from the domestic population of their new environment.

International workers often find themselves in a new cultural environment due to their romantic relationship with persons from a country different than their own; these persons will acculturate according to the experiences they face in their spouse's social nucleus. Participants 9, 18, 23, 20, 28 mentioned their spouse's social nucleus as their bridge between their new society and their own cultural background. Participant number 2 mentioned being socially engaged in activities involving her new cultural environment because of her family, particularly her children.

Other participants also acknowledge incorporating themselves into their new society because their children are being raised in the United States or their spouse has family connections to the country. These participants appear to achieve acculturation through the interactions they had with their families and their families' social environments.

During the interview, participants were asked if media influenced their perceptions about their new cultural environment and also if they have influenced their pre-conceptions of their new society. All respondents agreed that media played an important role in how they perceived their new cultural environment and participants also acknowledged that their perceptions of values and acceptable behaviors were in part drawn from the media exposure that they face prior to and during their tenure abroad.

Television, cinema, printed materials, social media, music, internet all fed into the respondents perceptions of their new cultural environment and also provided a starting point into understanding their new environment, its values and customs. Participant number 19 also mentioned that media affected the perception of the domestic populations towards her and her cultural background, and although her cultural background is Vietnamese, she mentioned that customers where she works would refer to her as Chinese and expect certain behaviors out of her based on that assumption.

Discovery and acculturation through the media appears to be inevitable for both domestic and international populations. However, misconceptions and stereotyping can lead to international workers and their domestic counterpart finding limitations when trying to engage in social behaviors in or outside of their professional environment.

Overall, new discoveries were found linking the form in which international workers achieve their migratory status and the process through which they acculturate to their new environment. A strong connection was found between the way international workers obtained their migratory status and the answers they gave as the ways in which they adapted to their new environment.

Participants who responded that they immigrated to the United States through temporary work recruitment or school and professional practices recruitment answered being more eager to socialize in their work/school environments as well as to engage with locals in public venues. Several participants answered that although they began their migratory status as temporary professional/educational participants, they stayed in most cases after marrying a US citizen or permanent resident, thus finishing their acculturation process by joining the social groups of their partners.

Participants who answered they obtained their migratory status through family sponsorship or US government sponsored migration program appeared to be more reluctant to engage in interactions with people native to their new environment and in their majority expressed their predisposition to join culturally similar groups in their new localities, thus isolating themselves in part from the rest of the society to which they migrated.

All respondents mentioned some kind of media exposure that created awareness or provided some kind of adaptation skill to their new cultural environment. Respondents primordially mentioned experiences in which they were exposed to images of their new environment in the United States through media such as television, music or cinema prior to their migration and that this exposure affected their perception of their new society and

made them more aware of customs, values and major social characteristics of their new environment even before they arrived.

Finally, it was found that the longer the length of stay the more likely it was for participants to engage with their new social surroundings and to cross cultural barriers experienced in the beginning of their acculturation process.

### *Challenges to International Workers During Acculturation*

Challenges to international workers in the hospitality industry are wide ranging. Policy limitations and immigration rules make the assimilation process of international workers unique and complex (Carmel, 2012; Hochman, 2011; Valenta, 2011).

International workers' ability to integrate to their new environment becomes even more complicated when cultural implications are introduced. The skills given to international workers in the hospitality industry can make the difference between positive labor migration (Farahat, 2009; Pichler, 2011) and international labor exploitation (Valencia, 2012; Valenta, 2011).

Table 4 contains the major challenges identified in the responses of international workers and includes: language, cultural differences from personal background, stereotyping, detachment from their social nucleus, transportation, education and financial limitations. The constructs showcase the importance of cultural factors in international workers' acculturation practices.

The results found in table 4 are analyzed in detail in this section and focused on the major limitations presented by international workers when achieving cultural adaptation. It is important to note that some of the limitations experienced by international workers can be corrected through the support of the hospitality organizations that they belong to. Hospitality organizations can increase the value of their international employees by providing them with the tools necessary to succeed in their professional and personal environment.

**Table 4 Challenges to International Workers During Acculturation**

Challenge	Description
Language	Participants expressed limitations on their abilities to process information in a language other than their native one.
Cultural Differences from Personal Background	Dissonance between personal beliefs, and cultural practices in regards to those of their new cultural environment were prevalent in the responses of some participants.
Stereotyping	Preconceived notions of domestic populations in regards to international. Participants acknowledged being stereotyped by their practices and behaviors. Participants also acknowledged stereotyping their new environment's domestic population.
Detachment from their Original Social Nucleus	Emotional and physical hardship presented by international workers due to their separation from their families and social nucleus was encountered in the answers of the participants.
Transportation	Stress created by the lack of practical/efficient public transportation systems and financial limitations to purchase a personal vehicle were identified in the answers of the participants.
Education	Participants acknowledge a lack of higher education, and the resources to achieve higher education in their new cultural environment. Participants identified lack of higher education as a professional limitation.
Financial Educational Limitations	Poor literacy on financial practices, and bad habits brought from their domestic background were identified in the answers of the participants and are considered a limitation on international workers' development.
Gender Discrimination	Abuse or segregation of a certain group of international workers due to their gender was identified; individuals belonging to their new cultural background as well as people from their previous cultural background were identified as perpetrators of discrimination.

Language challenges are described as limitations on the abilities international workers have to process information in a language other than their native one. Language limitation was listed as the top limitation presented by international workers, the speech deficits that some of the participants presented was also linked to their lack of

professional progress in their new society. A strong connection was found between the position of the participant and her/his language abilities.

The vast majority of respondents listed language as the most difficult challenge to overcome when they moved abroad. Acculturation with a language barrier can limit international workers' opportunities to succeed in their new society (Pichler, 2011). Participants 6, 13, 19, and 24 all presented extreme language limitations during their interviews and their professional progress also reflected those limitations.

Proficiency in the language spoken in their new cultural environment will help international workers become more efficient, acculturate faster, and have better opportunities to succeed in their new society. Language limitations are thought to place international workers at a disadvantage relative to their domestic counterparts (Ehrich, 2010). Respondents 1, 5, and 17 had great control of the language and all three were also employed in a managerial role, showcasing the imperative necessity of language proficiency in order to achieve professional progress.

Respondents migrating from English speaking countries did not acknowledge any limitations presented by language; their limitations and challenges were focused on detachment from their original social nucleus, transportation and stereotyping. Participant 9 answered having difficulties leaving her family in the United Kingdom, but also acknowledged maintaining communication and interactions through technology and also by travelling back and forth between the two countries.

Distance and geographical limitations affected some of the participants who do not have the opportunity to travel between their home country and the United States



easily. Participant 8 answered to maintaining his relationship with people from his home country only through telephone, and Internet.

In addition to language and detachment from social nucleus, the cultural differences between a participant's home country and the United States also played an important role in the challenges presented during her/his acculturation process. Respondents arriving from Russia, Morocco, China, and Vietnam answered to experiencing a strong dissonance between their personal background and their new cultural environment, and such dissonance was identified as a challenge during their acculturation process. Participant 2 mentioned that it took years for her to become comfortable with some of the traditions and customs of her new environment. Participant 16 explained some of the challenges she experiences while raising her kids in the United States, and she expressed that her values are different than those of her new society in the US, and her kids are constantly wedging between their current environment's behavioral expectations and those of their family.

Some cultural differences are driven by religious diversity, and some respondents, particularly those from Morocco, expressed their limitations when integrating to US society. Dietary concerns and religious practices were mentioned as difficulties when performing their jobs, as their organization did not have the necessary resources to accommodate them.

In reference to cultural and religious practices, participants from countries like Morocco listed stereotyping as one major challenge. Participants from other cultural backgrounds also mentioned being stereotyped by the domestic populations. Participant 1 expressed dislike at being clustered with other Hispanic minorities, and cited the

misconceptions of his country's background and culture when approached by domestic employees about his cultural background.

It can be argued that religion, personal values and cultural customs can limit the ability of international workers to integrate into their new cultural environment, specially if those are very different than the ones in their current environment. Individuals with cultural backgrounds that resemble those of their new locations will acculturate faster and become more effective as the transition will occur in an easier manner.

Participants 3, 11, 14, 25 and 29 all responded that customers within their professional establishments stereotyped their cultural heritage. Participant no. 3 recalls incidents in which certain customers made comments about her cultural background, and her ability to be effective at her job. She mentioned customers complaining about the lack of organization to process them into the dining room and that it had to be due to the lack of organization that Latin people in general have.

Stereotyping can work to the advantage of some the respondents if their cultural background is positively associated with their role and industry. Participant 14 from Italy mentioned that he never had problem finding employment, while participants 20, 9, and 5 all expressed no concern about discrimination or stereotyping: all of these respondents were from a European background.

A major concern for most participants in the study was detachment from the original social nucleus, particularly in the case of individuals who relocated to the United States as adults. With the exception of participants 5, 18, 21, and 29 who were relocated by their families at an early age, all respondents agreed they missed their families and

friends back home and acknowledged they communicated with relatives and friends through technological advances.

The main forms of communication were telephone, email, Skype and travelling back and forth between their home countries and the US. The use of technology has given international workers new ways to deal with the challenge of separation. Communication and technology have radically changed the way in which individuals in general connect and have changed the manner in which international workers achieve cultural adaptation.

It can be argued that technology makes it easier for international workers to adapt to their new environment by providing them with tools to access information about their new environment and by creating a bridge during their transition from the home countries to the United States. At the same time it can also create limitations by preventing international workers from interaction with the domestic population of their new environment, and allow them to isolate themselves by communicating with people from their home countries.

According to the participants, technology was viewed as a positive tool for their transition, and it appeared to alleviate some of the stress and anxiety created by their new environment. Participant 11 mentioned that although she missed her family greatly, having the chance to talk and email with them often made her feel more comfortable and allowed her to be more positive about her experience in the United States.

Positive or negative experiences by international workers were in part determined by one physical limitation acknowledged by many of the participants: their lack of transportation and the lack of public transportation to commute to and from work. Participant 13 explained that her husband has to drive her into work every day and that

sometimes she is not able work due to conflicting schedules between her husband's schedule and hers. Participant 15 mentioned her limitations when she did not have a vehicle and how some employers even reject her application for the lack of reliable transportation.

Transportation appeared to be an issue prevalent among participants who either have just recently moved to the United States, were working on a temporary basis, or had strong language and cultural limitations and had chosen to isolate themselves from their environment in the social nucleus. The last group of participants is the most interesting as it shows how the lack of cultural integration hinders the opportunities and professional progress of individuals in the long term.

Although the level of education was not specifically asked, several of them listed their lack of higher education as a limitation for them to achieve better professional development and to integrate into their new society. Participant 19 said that her husband was a pharmacist and that although she wanted to attend college and graduate she was not allowed to get her higher education after marrying and having children. She explained also her desire for her children to achieve higher education in the United States, and the importance it had in her decision to join the work force.

Participant 8 was the only participant who mentioned that he was working while he attended school for a degree that was not in hospitality. He explained that he is attending school for an engineering degree and that his current job offers him the flexibility to finish school while producing income. Unfortunately, the rest of the participants did not mention any personal educational goals, and if mentioned they were

past expectations or future expectations for their offspring to achieve higher education in the United States.

Their educational deficiencies are a combination of their lack of acculturation, language limitations, financial limitations and their time demanding employment.

Participant 8 was an exception. However, he was only working as a part time employee and had great control of the language as well as previous education from his home country of Morocco.

International workers identified financial education literacy as one the challenges presented during their acculturation process. When questioned about their financial plans or expectations the majority of the respondents were not able to give an objective and detailed answer of what they will do to achieve their desire of social mobility or economic progress.

Participant 12 answered he moved to the United States to have better labor and financial opportunities, and when asked if he had achieved his expectations after moving he answered yes. However, when asked follow-up questions as to whether he had achieved the purchase of a vehicle or a home, he did not have an objective answer on his plans to achieve any of those purchases.

Finally, in addition to financial literacy limitations, gender discrimination was the last challenge identified by the responses of the participants. Gender discrimination is defined for the purpose of this study as: Abuse or segregation of a certain group of international workers due to their gender; discrimination can be inflicted by their domestic counterparts and the individuals belonging to their new cultural background.

None of the participants mentioned being discriminated against at work for their gender, but some of the participants acknowledge discrimination from their external environment. Participant 7 mentioned she was discriminated against during the early years of her tenure in the United States, explaining that she was unable to obtain credit when she needed to purchase a vehicle and that when she was finally able to save enough for the purchase, the sales person would not negotiate the price with her and asked if she had a male companion to talk numbers about the vehicle.

Discrimination is not always exemplified by abuse; it sometimes can be experienced subtly through segregation or isolation of certain groups because of their sex. Participant 5 said the he had never been discriminated against for his gender but he acknowledged the difficulty for his sisters to achieve professional employment after moving and the social limitations they faced to achieve cultural integration because of their gender.

### *Alternatives to Create Value out of International Workers*

Human capital is one of the most important investments for the hospitality industry (Haslbelger, 2009), and the need to achieve the most out of international workers becomes a priority when globalization offers an opportunity to attract employees to the industry at a price that is financially attractive (Hickman, 2011). The effectiveness and

commitment of international workers will be determined in part by their skills and abilities to adapt to their new environment (Ciccone, 2009; Cooke, 2007; Cooke, 2012).

Hospitality enterprises need to acknowledge their opportunity to add value to their organizations and their corporate social responsibility towards international workers who seek employment within the industry. The vulnerability of international workers (de Vroome, 2010) is particularly important as it creates unique challenges to organizations and international workers alike. Technology (Cooke, 2007), the laboring needs of the industry (Ciccone, 2009) and the characteristics of the migrant population (Azarnert, 2012) all contribute in determining the best strategies to provide international workers to achieve cultural adaptation and to become successful and valuable assets for their organizations.

Table 5 is a collection of constructs gathered from the suggestions international workers gave about what tools and resources they would like to see represented in their organizations. Some of the constructs have been refined using the literature review as supporting materials on what practices and tools are best for international workers.

**Table 5 Alternatives to Create Value out of International Workers**

Alternatives	Description
Language Learning Tools	Participants acknowledged the importance of providing them with learning tools, and resources to become proficient at their jobs.
Educational Development	Creation of programs that support the educational development of international workers was proposed. International workers showed a particular interest in including their dependents. Financial assistantship, and tuition reimbursement are thought to be the best programs for this objective.
Marketing to International Workers	Participants were unaware of the programs offered by their organization. It is important to create effective ways to communicate with international workers about the existence of these resources. It was often seen that participants were unaware of the resources already provided by their organization.
Financial Education Programs for International Workers	Financial literacy tools for international workers were identified as positive tools. These resources can include: printed materials, seminars, lectures and partnerships with financial institutions to promote financial literacy.
Financial Assistantship Programs	Assistantship directed to auto purchase, and home renting are the two main concerns presented by international workers. Other financial assistantship programs were also identified, and are covered under educational development section of this chart.
Anti Gender Discrimination Programs	Anti discrimination and harassment policies are already implemented in most organizations. However, resources should be directed to inform international worker's female populations on the resources available to them for preventing discrimination, and harassment in the work place. Most respondents acknowledged the issue to exist outside of their organization and listed it as limitation.
Cultural Integration Programs	A multicultural work force is a reality to most hospitality operations, programs directed to integrate international, and domestic workers are recommended to achieve the best of multiculturalism. Participants acknowledge the importance of knowing other people's culture and customs.
Homeroom Teams	Creating liaisons between international workers, and the rest of the organization to promote communication. Smaller groups supervised by an operations leader can promote better communication between workers both domestic and international and their organizations.

The basic objective of learning tools is to provide international workers with learning tools and resources to become proficient at the jobs. Language learning tools are



a top priority for companies that seek to make international workers more valuable. International workers in the United States find themselves limited when they do not have proficient knowledge of the English language and when organizations limit their professional growth because of it. It is important to focus on international workers' ability to process information and giving them a chance to obtain professional skills by providing them language learning tools and materials.

Participants 4, 7, 13, 19, and 21 all presented severe difficulties with language proficiency, and they also held some of the lowest paying jobs in the study and show the least amount of mobility in the professional careers. Participants, 1, 5, 8, 9, and 12 possessed excellent control of the English language and are examples of the importance of language proficiency to achieve professional development.

In addition to language learning tools, other educational resources defined as programs that support the educational development of international workers are important tools to offer international workers. Because of the answers of several of the participants, it is recommended that education resources should not only include international workers but also their dependents.

Participants acknowledge the importance of their education and professional development, especially for their children. Tuition reimbursement is thought to be the best program for this objective. It is highly recommended for organizations to offer programs specifically tailored to international workers and their families, providing them with educational resources in language, job performance skills and/or even educational programs such as high school completion assistantship, GRE or any other higher education assistantship of the worker's choosing for her/him and their offspring. It is

expected that such an offering not only will increase the profile of the organization regarding corporate citizenship but also increase commitment and satisfaction from international workers to their organization.

This study found that within the organization where the study was conducted there were programs of this nature already available to employees and that the company already offers some limited educational incentives and language resources. However, none of the respondents appear to know of their existence or mentioned using any of the resources offered by the organization. Creating awareness of the offerings made by organizations is imperative to create effective programs that yield results. In addition to the programs listed on table 5 it is important to create effective ways to communicate with international workers about the existence of these resources. It was often seen that participants of this study were unaware of the resources already provided by their organization.

Several respondents mentioned financial limitations and hardship due to pay, lack of transportation, and housing problems. Participant 3 answered she would like to have better remuneration, which was an opinion echoed by several other participants. Participant 13 explained the hardship of not having transportation when travelling to and from work, and the limitations it created when fulfilling her schedule. Participant 24 and 27 both mentioned their desire to change their living arrangements but acknowledged the limitations presented by their lack of resources.

Since it is unlikely that the industry will change the pay scale of these workers in the near future, companies have the opportunity to create value by providing assistantship programs to international workers helping them obtain transportation or secure a rental

lease. This will dramatically affect the perception of international workers towards their organization and will increase commitment and satisfaction of international workers.

The amount of resources available to international workers is only part of the issue they face. Financial literacy is another limitation identified, and it correlates with the subject of pay and financial assistantship offered to international workers. It is important for companies to understand that in order for them to obtain the most return on investment for human capital, they need to educate their employees on how to use the resources available to them to become financially responsible.

Financial literacy tools for international workers are imperative for international workers. These resources can include printed materials, seminars, lectures and partnerships with financial institutions to promote financial literacy. Companies that provide their employees with those materials are likely to see a high return on investment in employee's productivity and satisfaction.

Providing a discrimination free environment is a priority in most hospitality organizations. However, in the case of international workers, discrimination can take place outside of their employment, and it can hinder the performance and productivity of international employees if not assessed properly. Resources should be directed to inform international worker's female populations about the tools available to them for preventing discrimination and harassment inside and outside the work place where most respondents acknowledged the issue to exist.

During the interviews, some female respondents expressed concerns about gender discrimination. Due to the lack of cultural adaptation of female international workers, it is unlikely that women will seek support for gender discrimination within their new

environment. It is extremely important for organizations to create channels that allow workers to express their concerns without feeling scared of the consequences of bringing such claims to the organization.

The creation of homeroom teams and leaders to address international workers concerns is a good starting point in opening the communication channels between international workers and their organizations. It can serve as a vehicle to market any programs offered to international workers and it can become a vehicle between international workers and the organizations to voice their concerns or interests.

Finally, cultural integration will yield tremendous results in assimilating international workers and domestic workers to their new multi cultural environment. Providing spaces and activities that are aimed at the integration of both domestic and international workers can be a great opportunity for organizations to create value and offer workers the opportunity to achieve cultural adaptation faster in their work environment. This will ultimately increase the commitment and satisfaction of international workers towards their organizations, while adding value to the organization's corporate citizenship profile.

## CHAPTER V LIMITATIONS AND CONCLUSION

### Limitations

The field of hospitality employs unskilled labor extensively, particularly international unskilled labor (Choi, 2000; Ortega, 2009; Smeral, 2004). However, its commitment to serve these employees and to understand the unique needs of international workers as a labor group is not always a high priority for hospitality organizations. Challenges, as well as missed opportunities, plague an industry whose commitment to employees should equal the commitment to customer service and customer satisfaction.

The study conducted is a case study; its sample of convenience does not represent the entire population of international workers in the hospitality industry and does not intend to generalize any of the findings. The study is an advance into the body of knowledge of international labor and the journey taken by international workers in their search for cultural adaptation.

During the conduction of the study, a limitation was the lack of resources and support from any member of the hospitality industry to complete the data collection. An extensive number of formal requests were made to various hospitality organizations before obtaining the support of Palmas Inc. to conduct the study. The lack of commitment, and in many cases the convoluted structure of most hospitality

organizations, made it impossible to obtain support and limited the significance of the study.

Once support was secured by a hospitality organization, the lack of commitment by some operations managers made it difficult to conduct the study. Operations managers appeared bothered, and in some cases flat out refuse to support the study. Some of the operations managers argued that they needed to focus on the challenges of daily operations, and did not have the time or intentions to accommodate the study. Their lack of analytical skills created a challenge and showcases the need to create better labor practices in order to make daily operations more efficient.

The study required participants to be international workers, and the criteria also required international workers to have emigrated from another country. Finally, participants also needed to be employed by a hospitality organization in order to participate in the study. Finding participants with such characteristics who were willing to cooperate within the organization was a challenge. Even though there appeared to be a large population of international workers in the organization, hesitation of some participants to be part of the study showcased the fear and isolation that some international workers feel when it comes to integrating to their organizations and their new environment.

Participants' language skills posed a challenge and sometimes limited the amount of information that could be extracted. In the case of participants who spoke Spanish as their native language, it was possible to bridge some of their responses by collecting some of their answers in their native language, then translating them in the interview protocol and transcript to English.

In addition to limitations presented by participants, and the organizations that employed them, the lack of formal research on the subject also acted as a limitation. When it comes to unskilled international workers cultural adaptation, there is a lack of formal research about the subject, this case study can be considered a contribution to the body of knowledge on unskilled international workers cultural adaptation.

The lack of formal research limited the scope of the literature review, and forced the study to consider other research subjects such as cross-cultural training, international labor migration, and cultural adaptation theory as foundations for the framework of this study.

The broad nature of the study focusing on cultural and social aspects of international employee's success presented a challenge when attempting to narrow the scope of the project. This limitation makes future research paramount, and the data collected in subjects related to international workers' cultural adaptation will help understand their acculturation process, and offer create tools to provide them with support through future research.

The resources given to the study limited the data gathered. More financial resources and support from the hospitality industry will help achieve more significant data and provide a solution to data gathering limitations in future research. A larger more varied sample and the support of multiple organizations can certainly increase the significance of future studies.

The use of one-on-one interview was both a challenge and an opportunity, as it allowed the study to gather extensive information about the participants, yet required the researcher to address and decide the direction of each question and follow-up question,

since the answers can vary from respondent to respondent. There were limitations on time per interview and on the ability of participants to communicate with the researcher to provide the necessary answers.

The time given by the company supporting the study presented a limitation, as did the need to complete the study by a certain deadline, The need to process the information within a certain time frame created challenges and limited the scope of the study. Financial resources were also limitations when conducting the study, as there was no financial support given by the organization or any external source to conduct the study, which limited the amount of information that could be gathered.

Despite all the limitations, the information and data collected through the conduction of interviews was sufficient to create new information about international workers cultural adaptation. There is no intent to generalize any of the findings and the study is just the starting point of future research in the future. A special mention needs to be given to the support of the business organization that allowed this study to be conducted on their premises, and to their employees; their support made possible the conduction of the study.

The findings of the study have provided new questions on how international workers adapt and what can be done to make them more successful. Future research will be necessary to address different topics that appeared from the data collection and its interpretation. Other segments of the hospitality industry, and a larger sample will also prove to be beneficial in creating new data to help international workers succeed in their professional environment.



## Conclusion

International workers arrive in the United States with a dream of better opportunities. Their desires of social mobility and their expectations to experience different cultural and/or professional environments were deterred from the participants in this study by limitations such as lack of language skills, lack of financial literacy, lack of higher education, and discrimination. Although these limitations are not created by organizations that employ them, the opportunity to create value out of international human capital is a motivation for hospitality enterprises to offer resources aimed to international workers.

Hospitality organizations utilize unskilled international labor in their operations extensively. The need to find workers willing to take jobs often characterized by low wages and long hours is satisfied in part by the use of international workers whose expectations may differ from those of domestic workers. However, without the proper tools, their lack of skills and other limitations hinder their effectiveness and potential within the organization. International workers are vulnerable populations, and they require special considerations to make their migration a positive phenomenon for them as well as the communities that they migrate to.

It is necessary for hospitality organizations to provide international workers with support and tools in order to increase their return on investment in this labor group. Hospitality organizations may employ international workers out of necessity; however,

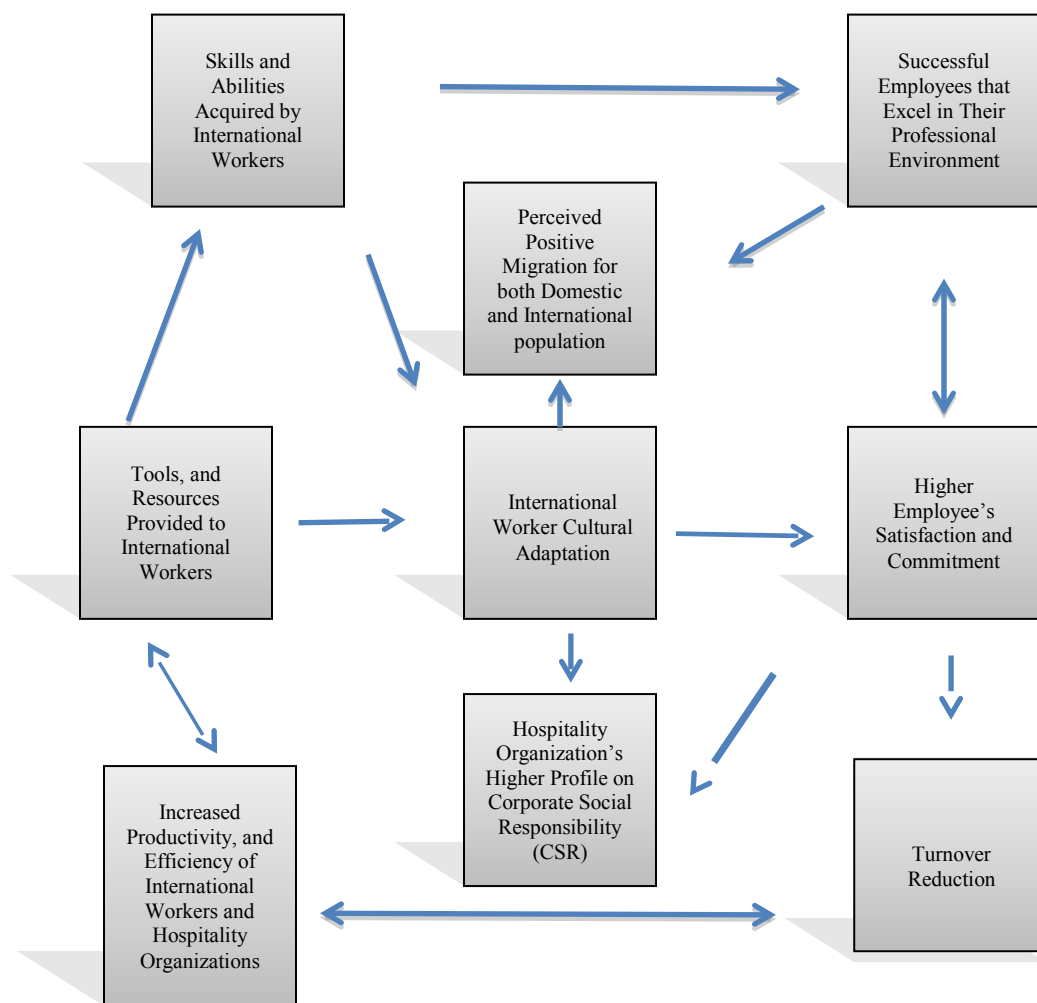
the corporate social responsibility and the opportunity to find efficiency and productivity out of this vulnerable population is enough reason to support international workers development and to provide them with all the resources necessary to excel within their organizations.

The symbiotic relationship created between international workers and hospitality organizations can solve some of the problems of both entities by helping international workers achieve cultural adaptation, and hospitality organizations reduce their turnover rate, create more efficient and productive operations, and increase employment satisfaction and commitment. All by providing assistance specially directed to international workers.

By understanding the unique needs and characteristics of the international worker population, it is plausible to achieve a balance between the needs and expectations of international workers and hospitality organizations. This study utilized the responses of its participants to illustrate a new construct intended to showcase the relationship between international workers, hospitality organizations, and the resources it provides for them.

The following diagram intends to illustrate the connections found in the study about the impact of offering international worker resources aimed to achieve cultural adaptation, as well as the potential return for hospitality organizations if they increase their investment in international human capital. The diagram is not intended to generalize all international workers experience and its significance is limited to the information and interpretation offered by the research. The diagram attempts to showcase the connections between international workers' cultural adaptation, turnover reduction, increased productivity and efficiency, and corporate social responsibility.

It is expected that by providing international workers with resources to achieve cultural adaptation, they will acquire skills necessary to succeed in their professional and social environment. Successful international workers are considered positive migration in their new environment, and they improve the profile of hospitality organizations regarding social corporate responsibility.



**Figure 1 Relationship Between Resources Given to International Workers and its Impact in Their Professional and Social Environment**

The previous diagram shows the researcher's interpretation of the relationship between international workers' cultural adaptation and the resources provided by their employers. It also exemplified the potential benefits of providing those resources, and how they can impact the social and professional environment of international workers and the hospitality organizations that employ them.

The need to offer international workers resources to achieve cultural adaptation is of the utmost importance for hospitality and tourism enterprises. Their use of foreign labor has created new challenges that need to be addressed in order to obtain the best results out of foreign labor and to create new models that prove beneficial from a business and social standpoint.

The industry has a corporate responsibility to attend the needs of their international labor. The vulnerability of this group needs to be acknowledged and assessed by the tourism industry if it intends to keep employing international workers. In order to obtain positive results both in the society in which the industry operates as well as in the society from where the industry outsources the labor, the hospitality industry needs to acknowledge the importance of cultural adaptation and provide the tools and resources necessary to facilitate the adaptation process.

International workers face a more vulnerable position, and they require special attention from their organizations in order to reduce the impacts of cultural shock, relocation limitations, and other challenges previously identified in the results section of this study. The success of international workers will depend on their ability to adapt and develop the necessary skills to thrive in their new environment. It is important to understand the variables that affect the chances of international workers to become

successful in their new society and to provide them with the tools necessary to achieve cultural adaptation.

Besides selecting the right candidates, the industry needs to provide an environment where international workers are given an opportunity to interact with and immerse themselves in their new social context. In particular, it is important to identify the communication channels of international workers and to provide resources that fit such criteria. Since the hospitality industry does not provide formal resources for international workers to achieve cultural adaptation, it is necessary to focus on modifications to the operations internal structure to enhance social capital and provide an environment where workers feel inclined to seek cultural integration.

This is an explorative study, and the data collected has provided the foundations for organizations to create tools that are necessary for international workers to adapt to a new environment. Companies have an opportunity to create new corporate values that benefit individuals regardless of their nationality, and they also have a responsibility to offer positive outcomes in the societies in which they operate by enhancing its social environment.

The study's findings provide the industry with a set of recommendations listed on the results chapter on how to manage and address the essential needs of their international workforce. It is the key objective of this study to provide new knowledge regarding cultural adaptation of international workers, and this study will be a starting point on new research aimed to narrow the scope of concepts addressed in this important topic.

**APPENDIX A PROTOCOL FOR INTERNATIONAL WORKER INTERVIEW**

## **PROTOCOL FOR INTERNATIONAL WORKER INTERVIEW**

### **Introduction**

The purpose of this interview is to gather information about the process taken by international workers to achieve cultural adaptation. The interview is also intended to address the respondent's attitude towards their organizations resources or lack of resources offered to promote cultural awareness and cultural adaptation, it will also allow the respondent the opportunity to offer their opinion on what can their organizations offer to provide resources on cultural awareness and cultural adaptation. I have prepared a few questions and your opinions and ideas can be centered on these questions. If you do not mind, this discussion will be recorded so that I can retrieve content of our discussion if necessary. Your personal and company information will be kept confidential.

**Company Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Employee Name:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Position/ Title:** \_\_\_\_\_

**Home country/ Country of Origin** \_\_\_\_\_

**Length of time residing in the USA** \_\_\_\_\_

**Marital Status** \_\_\_\_\_

**Date:** \_\_\_\_\_

Study objective 1

To understand the motivations that drive international labor migration.

1. What motivate you to move abroad?

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2. Were there perceived inequalities in your home country that might have motivated you to move? If so, can you describe them?

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3. What were your expectations for your new country of residence when you departed your home country?

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4. Could you tell me about expectations that were met when you relocated? Any of your expectations changed after relocation? How so?

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Study objective 2



To identify the process through which international workers achieve cultural adaption.

1. After relocating to your new country of residence, how did you feel about your new cultural environment?

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2. Were there external agencies or institutions that facilitated your cultural integration process?

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3. Could you mention any ties you have in the locality where you migrated? Could you tell me about people or things that attracted to this particular location?

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4. Did you experience any difficulties both off and on work during the beginning of your of your time residing outside your home country? If so, what were they?

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To identify the challenges and success factors that determines a positive work experience of international workers during their tenure abroad.

1. In your opinion, what were the biggest challenges that you experienced in the work place after you moved?

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2. How did you adapt to your new cultural environment after relocation?

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3. Do you maintain a strong relationship with family members and friends from your home country? If so, how do you maintain those ties?

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4. At your work location did/do you face any challenges due to your cultural background? If so, please tell me about them.

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Study objective 4

To propose alternatives that promote cultural adaptation of international workers within their work environment, thus promoting satisfaction and loyalty from international workers to their organizations.

1. What would make your work experience better in your work area? What can be done to make you feel more welcomed and that your needs are taken care of?

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2. What have you or your organization done to facilitate your integration to your new work environment and how successful would you say it has been?

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3. If your company would provide tools and/or experiences towards helping you adapt to your new work environment, how would you feel towards the organization?

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4. If your organization provided you with tools that will address your particular needs as an international worker, how would you feel towards the organization you work for?

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## **APPENDIX B EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH**



## EXPLANATION OF RESEARCH

Title of Project: International Worker Cultural Adaptation: A Qualitative Study.

Principal Investigator: Luis A Romero Valenzuela

Faculty Supervisor: Youcheng Wang PhD

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Whether you take part is up to you.

The purpose of this research project is collecting data regarding the motivation for migration, process of adaptation and challenges presented by international workers when relocating and adjusting to their new environment both professionally and personally.

Participants will be asked to answer a series of questions and follow up questions in a face-to-face interview at the work place. The interviews will be recorded by audiotape and only the investigator listed in this form will have access to them, recordings will be kept secure inside the investigator computer. Finally recordings will be erased after the study is completed. As a participant you may opt out from recording your interview in which case you accept the investigator to make notes on your responses which will also be kept confidential, secure and will be destroyed after the study is completed.

If you want to opt out of having your interview recorded please mark your initial here:

\_\_\_\_\_ I want my interview not to be audio taped.

The participant is expected to engage on the interview anywhere from 15 to 30 minutes depending on the conversation and answers.

You must be 18 years of age or older to take part in this research study.

**Study contact for questions about the study or to report a problem:** If you have questions, concerns, or complaints please contact: Luis A Romero Valenzuela, Graduate Student, Hospitality and Tourism Management Program, College of Sciences, phone: (352) 978 4967 or Dr. Youcheng Wang Faculty Supervisor, Department of Tourism and Attractions at phone: (407) 903 8039 or by email at Youcheng.Wang@ucf.edu.

**IRB contact about your rights in the study or to report a complaint:** Research at the University of Central Florida involving human participants is carried out under the oversight of the Institutional Review Board (UCF IRB). This research has been reviewed and approved by the IRB. For information about the rights of people who take part in research, please contact: Institutional Review Board, University of Central Florida, Office of Research & Commercialization, 12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501, Orlando, FL 32826-3246 or by telephone at (407) 823-2901.

## **APPENDIX C IRB APPROVAL OF EXEMPT HUMAN RESEARCH**



University of Central Florida Institutional  
Review Board  
Office of Research & Commercialization  
12201 Research Parkway, Suite 501  
Orlando, Florida 32826-3246  
Telephone: 407-823-2901 or 407-  
882-2276  
www.research.ucf.edu/compliance  
/irb.html

## Approval of Exempt Human Research

From: **UCF Institutional Review Board #1  
FWA00000351, IRB00001138**  
To: **Luis A. Romero Valenzuela**  
Date: **February 01, 2012**

Dear Researcher:

On 2/1/2012, the IRB approved the following activity as human participant research that is exempt from regulation:

Type of Review: Exempt  
Determination  
Project Title: International Worker Cultural Adaptation: A Qualitative Study  
Investigator: Luis A Romero Valenzuela  
IRB Number: SBE-12-08187  
Funding Agency:  
Grant Title:  
Research ID: N/A

This determination applies only to the activities described in the IRB submission and does not apply should any changes be made. If changes are made and there are questions about whether these changes affect the exempt status of the human research, please contact the IRB. When you have completed your research, please submit a Study Closure request in iRIS so that IRB records will be accurate.

In the conduct of this research, you are responsible to follow the requirements of the Investigator Manual. On behalf of Sophia Dziegielewska, Ph.D., L.C.S.W., UCF IRB Chair, this letter is signed by:

Signature applied by Joanne Muratori on 02/01/2012 01:37:47 PM EST

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Joanne Muratori'.

IRB Coordinator

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