Abstract

This paper examines how tourism employment and workplace experiences influence migrant workers' adaptation in the host society. It is argued that tourism employment provides access to multiple social networks, which subsequently supports the improvement of foreign workers' social and cultural competencies. Such networks also help to compensate for the negative aspects of tourism work and migration. In addition, the paper considers how relationships among international workers inform chain migration and influence subsequent recruitment practices and migration experiences. The findings stem from a wider study of the experiences of Polish migrant workers employed in the UK tourism sector using qualitative and quantitative data.

Key words
Migrants, tourism employment, relationships, adaptation
INTRODUCTION

Migrants have historically formed a significant part of the tourism industry workforce (Baum, 2006; Choi, Woods & Murmann, 2000; Williams & Hall, 2000). It has been argued that this ongoing relationship between migration, migrant labour and tourism employment continues partly because a mobile international workforce offers a solution to labour shortages where the local workforce is not willing to engage in low pay, low status and seasonal employment (Choi et al., 2000; Williams & Hall, 2000). Moreover, the relative ease of access to jobs, restricted opportunities in other sectors, a lack of fluency and the willingness to learn or improve the host language constitute major motives for taking up tourism work (Janta & Ladkin, 2009; Janta, Ladkin, Brown & Lugosi, 2011).

The employment of international workers in tourism and related service sectors presents a series of opportunities alongside challenges for migrants, employers and host communities. For example, it has been argued that migrants can be a source of innovation (Williams, 2007) and organisations can benefit from cultural diversity, if it is properly managed (Baum et al., 2007; Devine, Baum, Hearns & Devine, 2007a, 2007b). However, migrants are also a source of community tension, particularly if they are perceived to be a burden on community resources, to represent competition for jobs or if they do not integrate into the host society and thus seem to challenge social norms (Rogers, Anderson & Clark, 2009). Migrants’ lack of integration may be intensified by tourism employment, for example when employment patterns restrict social mobility or when organisations reinforce the formation of ethnic enclaves and social closure. Paradoxically, it is also argued in this paper that tourism employment may offer opportunities for greater social inclusion and help to facilitate migrant adaptation to the host culture.

This paper focuses on a hitherto unexamined dimension of the interaction between migrant workers’ experiences and tourism employment: social relationships. More specifically, this paper considers three interrelated themes: firstly, how tourism employment facilitates the development of relationships between migrants and members of the host community; secondly how tourism employment provides the context for interactions between migrants from different countries; and thirdly, how relationships develop between migrants of the same country of origin. It is argued here that these three types of social relationships and interactions influence the migrant experience of life in the new culture. This paper contends that these relationships can provide opportunities to develop social skills and cultural sensitivities. The development of these and related competencies underpin successful settlement and adaptation, while also informing migrants’ sense of identity as they engage with broader and more diverse cosmopolitan communities. However, we also demonstrate how relationships can reinforce social closure. In addition, the paper considers how relationships inform chain migration practices and their interaction with tourism employment, partly as migrants use contacts to secure employment but may also draw on relationships to negotiate the problematic aspects of tourism employment. This paper thus contributes to contemporary debates about migrant labour (cf, McDowell, 2009) and adaptation (Brown, 2009a) by highlighting the complex ways in which tourism employment mediates, influences and is also influenced by the multiple relationships developed by migrant workers in the tourism industry.

This paper concentrates on the hospitality sector, which occupies a central place in the tourist experience. According to Smith (1994), hospitality is one of five principal components of the tourism product, without which tourist activity could not take place. Furthermore, a
booming domestic tourism industry has led to a blurring of boundaries between other sectors, including hospitality (Tribe & Xiao, 2011). It is for this reason that there is a seeming interchangeability in the varying reference by researchers to the tourism industry and to the tourism and hospitality industry.

Indeed, there is debate as to the appropriateness of the term 'industry' for an activity as fragmented as tourism and as dependent on the operation of a disparate array of sectors and organisations. The hospitality product itself is further subdivided into the hotel, restaurant and bar sectors, the latter two frequented by both locals and tourists. One of the complexities of tourism employment is that establishments that may have a mainstay of domestic and international tourists will also be used by locals, especially during the off season (Lee-Ross & Pryce, 2010, p. 9). In this paper, we treat hospitality establishments (hotels, restaurants, cafes and pubs) as part of tourism employment, in common with many other studies (see Riley, Ladkin & Szivas, 2002; Lee-Ross & Pryce, 2010). The presence in large numbers of migrant workers in such hospitality organisations is of consequence for tourism academics as it carries implications for both destination image and the tourist experience of the destination, the migrant perspective notwithstanding.

The data upon which this paper is based are drawn from a larger study of Polish migrant experiences in the United Kingdom (UK). The size of the migrant workforce in the UK tourism industry increased significantly following the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 (see Home Office, 2009). Since then, Polish migrants and other Central and Eastern European nationals have become an important segment of the tourism and hospitality workforce. In 2007, it was reported that 22% of the UK personnel in hospitality was born overseas (People 1st, 2008). This number is much higher in some parts of the country, for example, in London, 63% of hospitality employees in 2007 were from outside Britain (ibid). In addition, the Labour Force Survey 2006/2007 found that 43% of migrant workers in London pubs originate from Poland (ibid). Poles, therefore, constitute a significant research population with which to explore relationships and interactions in the UK tourism sector.

Finally, it is important to acknowledge that tourism labour migration is highly segmented (Williams & Hall, 2000). The pool of workers examined in this study could be classified as ‘unskilled labour’ and these migrants’ experiences are likely to differ from those who enter tourism as entrepreneurs or highly-skilled tourism workers. Despite these challenges and the geographical and national focus of this research, the emerging themes of the paper will be relevant to the study of other national and ethnic groups and other international contexts.

LITERATURE REVIEW

It is important to introduce the historical context of the recent migration from Poland to the UK as it influences individuals’ relationships with others and their employment experiences. At least four generations of Poles have been shaping the migration history between Poland and Britain (see Sword, 1996). The existing community might be expected to play a significant role in the integration of Poles; however, it has been noticed that the traditional agents of civil society such as the Polish Church or voluntary and state organisations have been less prominent in responding to the needs of new arrivals than the profit-driven institutions, created by ‘the migration industry’ (Garapich, 2008).

A significant body of literature focuses on the complex networks that Polish migrants in the UK are involved in. The relationships maintained between those from the original and the
host country lead to both transnationalism, where individuals live between the two spaces (Basch, Glick-Schiller & Blank-Szanton, 1994) as well as chain migration where new members of family and others from migrants’ social network are ‘pulled in’ by those who have migrated before. These networks, of course, impact on how individuals engage in employment. Family relationships of Poles between the two countries are equally multifaceted and raise questions about the dynamics of family livelihood, support, obligation, separation and the new concept of ‘home’ (see Ryan, Sales, Tilki & Siara, 2008; White & Ryan, 2008).

There are surprising contradictions in the portrait of Poles in Britain, revealing that the Polish community in the UK does not constitute a homogenous group. It is suggested that Poles gravitate towards their own community (Brown, 2003; Spencer et al., 2007; White & Ryan, 2008) and celebrate their ‘Polishness’ abroad through traditional food (Rabikowska, 2010) or attendance at Polish church (Burrell, 2006). Interestingly, however, there are clear signs that Poles are creating in and out groups; ‘us’ or ‘them’. Such divisions exist on more than one level; Poles in the UK are divided into the ‘old’ and the ‘new’ migrant groups, creating tension and hostility (Garapich, 2007). A further division is also found in the new migrant group: between the conformist Poles and the ‘loud’ and ‘drunken’ Poles who break social norms (Ryan, 2010). Similarly, in Ireland, Poles are divided by the cultural capital they possess, which usually refers to educational level (Bobek & Salamonska, 2008).

Host language fluency is often considered as an indicator of current and potential integration (Hofstede, 2001). In the case of Polish migrants, employers often celebrate migrants’ ‘work ethic’ but their language skills remain a barrier (Lyon & Sulcova, 2009). Polish migrants’ language skills gained from working in tourism and hospitality are discussed in detail by Janta, Lugosi and Ladkin (2009), who show that those in back and front of house positions take advantage of their working environment. Migrants’ use of language is often debated in the literature as it is related to class and age. Old generations of Poles criticise the ‘dirty, rude and barbaric’ language of newcomers (Garapich, 2007, p.13). In addition, a poor command of either Polish or English results in a hybrid language, ‘Ponglish’ (Zdunkiewicz-Jedynak, 2008). These complex relationships between Poles, their networks and divisions influence migrants’ employment and employers’ hiring practises.

Both the theoretical and empirical literature highlights the importance of relationships during the international sojourn (defined by Ward et al. (2001) as a temporary between-culture stay of between 6 months and 5 year). During the process of transition sojourners commonly experience homesickness and loneliness (Furnham & Erdmann, 1995; Kim, 1988). It has been found that access to a supportive friendship network increases emotional well-being and overall satisfaction with the new country and improves coping ability with everyday and professional life (Furnham & Erdmann, 1995; Kim, 2001). In their typology of friendship, which is still cited today, Bochner, McLeod and Lin (1977) found three categories of friend: the host national friend, who acts as a cultural informant and is an important source of host culture and language learning (Brown, 2009a); the co-national who acts as a comforting reference of values from the home culture and simultaneously inhibits the acquisition of communicative competence (Kim, 2001); other nationality friends who act as a general social network, but who represent the least valuable bond, according to Bochner et al. (1977), offering neither host cultural competence nor emotional succour.

A classification of the various types of relationship strategies that can be adopted by sojourners in the new cultural setting is put forward by Berry (1994). The sojourner may adopt a monocultural strategy, clinging to their own culture. This is the segregation
approach, which implies an absence of substantial relations with the larger society, along with maintenance of ethnic identity, heritage and traditions. The sojourner may become *bicultural*, retaining their own and learning a new culture. This is the integration approach, which implies the maintenance of some cultural identity as well as movement to become an integral part of a larger societal framework. The sojourner may become *marginalised*, renouncing their own heritage and refusing a relationship with the dominant group. This involves feelings of alienation and loss of identity, as individuals lose cultural psychological contact with both their traditional culture and the larger society. The sojourner may become *multicultural*, retaining their own and learning several other cultures. Indeed, this is the adjustment strategy that is often advocated, as it allows individuals to acquire the values that provide the basis for modern pluralistic society such as tolerance, cultural relativism and respect (e.g. Gilroy, 2007; Kim, 2001).

The types of friendships formed during transition may seem to belong to the private sphere, but Berry (1994) and Brown and Holloway (2008) observe an important connection between interaction patterns and the development of intercultural skills. The mononational bond offers emotional sustenance but in the long-term deters cultural learning (Bradley, 2000; Brown, 2009b; Kim, 1988). Nevertheless, a ghetto pattern is frequently observed by researchers (e.g. Furnham & Bochner, 1986). It is usually acknowledged that friendships with compatriots serve an important function in diminishing loneliness and stress (Bradley, 2000; Ward & Rana-Deuba 1999). Thus for sociocultural adjustment, ties with locals are more beneficial than ties with conationals whose value in improving well-being however cannot be understated. This points to a tension between the desire to improve intercultural competence and to maintain ethnic links.

Even though it is natural that sojourners seek contact with their conationals, especially after their arrival (Kim, 2001), the bicultural bond with the host offers the chance to improve linguistic and cultural knowledge (Hofstede, 2001), a point corroborated in many empirical studies which highlight a desire among sojourners for greater contact with host nationals (e.g. Brown, 2009c; Ward & Dana-Reuba, 1999). Having local friends has been related in many studies to fewer social difficulties and greater life satisfaction and happiness (Furnham & Erdmann, 1995; Ward & Rana-Deuba, 1999).

It has been stated that a lack of host contact is caused by a perceived indifference towards international sojourners on the part of the domestic community (Ward, 2001). In the literature on migrants, the Polish community has shown itself to be willing to form cross-cultural friendships (Brown, 2003; Spencer et al., 2007), though English nationals are usually found to be unapproachable and close friendships are too difficult to establish. Ryan (2010) showed that the English were seen as private and ‘closed off’ but Poles were able to be friends with other nationals such as Irish, Americans and Australians. In rural Scotland, de Lima and Wright (2009) revealed that migrants do not tend to form friendships with local people, nor to engage in social activities with them, the reason being that they found the 'drink culture' off-putting.

A third bond, noted by Bochner et al. (1977) as the least important, is the multicultural friendship network between sojourners of different nationalities, which has been a neglected topic of empirical research. However, a multicultural approach to interaction is credited in the theoretical literature with transformative potential as sojourners can acquire intercultural skills that will aid global understanding (Askjellerud, 2003) and increase their employability (Cushner & Mahon, 2002). Indeed, the development of intercultural
competence is often cited as one of the positive outcomes of the international sojourn (Koester & Lustig, 2003).

However, the development of such a mindset is not an automatic outcome; as Berry (1994) notes, it is dependent on the interaction strategy adopted by sojourners. This paper contributes to the debate in the sojourner adjustment literature by focusing on the interaction strategies and intentions of Polish migrant workers employed in tourism. The majority of studies in the sojourner literature focus on the educational setting due to the ease of access to the research population. This paper is unique in that it uses the experiences of migrants engaged in tourism work to shed light on interaction patterns. It thereby helps to understand the forces that shape the experiences of migrants and the particular and unique role played by the hospitality and tourism industry.

**Study Methods**

The aim of the study from which this paper’s findings are taken was to explore the experiences of Polish migrant workers’ in the UK tourism sector. Guided by past literature and the research objectives, it was decided to combine both qualitative and quantitative approaches by employing three research methods: netnography, interviews and an on-line questionnaire. Netnography was followed by a small number of interviews, leading to the development of an online survey. The next round of qualitative data obtained through netnography further deepened the questionnaire’s findings. Each method was informed by the findings of the former.

The choice of research methods was shaped by the characteristics of the Polish community in the UK, for whom the internet has become a significant channel of communication (Garapich, 2008; White & Ryan, 2008). Moreover, the traffic on Polish websites based in the UK increased nine fold between 2006 and 2008 (Hitwise UK, 2009). Implementing the internet allowed access to migrants across all regions of the UK together with those who are no longer working in the sector and who would not be accessed otherwise. This paper is based on the qualitative data obtained from three research methods: interviews, open-ended questions from the online survey and netnography. Participants of this study are differentiated in the following way: survey respondents are recognised by their gender, age and job location; interviewees are identified by their name and workplace, while online users are separated by the website name and date of entry.

**Netnography**

A netnographic study was carried out between December 2006 and April 2007 in order to collect data on the experiences that Polish employees have in the sector. This method uses original downloads from publicly available online fora, thus the researcher does not direct the topics discussed online. The fora chosen for the study included publicly available sites for Poles both in the UK and in Poland and were analysed following Kozinets’ (2010) guidance. A detailed overview of using netnography as a method to analyse the hospitality and tourism workforce experience is discussed by Janta & Ladkin (2009).

**Interviews**

Interviews with present and former employees were conducted in October 2007 in a seaside destination in England. The interviews (each pre-arranged, tape recorded and lasting
between thirty five and one hundred minutes) were conducted in Polish with a semi-structured interview guide and took place in a public space such as a cafe or hotel. Six participants were interviewed in this exploratory stage. The small number of interviews chosen for this stage is justified by Patton (2002), and it was deemed to be sufficient as the interviews were used to highlight indicative themes for the development of the survey instrument, the principal method of data collection in the wider study. The protocol of interviews was designed around four headings, so that during the course of the interview participants were asked about: their reasons for entering the sector, career paths, adaptation and experiences of working in the sector. Interviews were analysed using thematic analysis which includes searching for themes across a data set to find repeated patterns of meaning and a constant moving back and forward between the entire data set (Braun & Clarke, 2006). This paper is based upon one research category: relationships, which became one of the major themes to emerge from the interview findings. The codes belonging to this category were the following: working in an international environment, meeting co-nationals, and meeting British colleagues and customers.

On-line questionnaire
A survey instrument, distributed on Polish internet forums and Social Networking Sites (Facebook and nasza-klasa) between February and April 2008, was used to collect data from across the country. It was designed online using the Bristol Online Survey tool and pre-tested among Poles. Two reminders were posted and ‘thank you’ notes were issued to increase the response rate. A total of 420 questionnaires were returned, of which 315 were usable.

Half (55%, N=173) of the respondents were working at the time of data collection while the remaining (45%, N=142) had left the sector. Migrants were employed in tourism establishments across the country: in hotels (58%, N=183), restaurants, bars, pubs and cafes. In terms of their profile, in agreement with other studies and government data, this sample shows that Polish migrants are mostly young, below 34 years old, female, and well-educated (47%, N=147 having either a Bachelor or a masters’ degree). There was a significant number of students studying in Poland (18%, N=58) who had returned to the same UK destination to work in the summer season. In terms of job positions, a third of respondents started their jobs as waiters or waitresses and housekeepers, which changed later on: those who stayed moved to more skilled and more challenging positions.

The questionnaire was divided into five parts, namely: getting a job in the sector, experience of working in the industry, jobs scope, plans/or reasons for leaving the job and demographic questions. Two open-ended questions were included to investigate what employees think they offer the industry and what they think they gain from working in this sector of employment. Developing relationships emerged as a major theme from the data. When asked what they gained from the industry, more than a third of responses related to the development of relationships with others. At the end of the questionnaire, respondents were invited to write their own comments and provide feedback. These data were analysed in a qualitative way: copied to a Word document, thematically analysed and grouped. The findings presented in this study are those related to migrants’ relationships with others.

The use of ‘snowball’ sampling, ‘cold calling’ and ‘opportunistic’ choice of locations in past studies (for example Baum et al., 2007; Spencer et al., 2007) indicates that the random sampling strategy is not viable in researching migrant populations. Previous research methods validate the approach taken in this research. With regard to the generalisability of
findings, it is acknowledged that the distribution of the questionnaire online does exclude those without internet access. Nevertheless, cross-validating of findings with other parts of the data, which took place in the stage of interpretations of findings, increases the validity of the research (Punch, 2005). Thus, it is believed that the findings can serve as an indication of potential patterns and relationships.

MIGRANT RELATIONSHIPS

The findings are grouped into three categories: host, international and conational contact. All three relationship groups are found in the literature on international sojourners, and all three carry implications for the process and outcome of adjustment (Berry, 1994; Brown & Holloway, 2008).

Mixing with members of the host community

In this research, host contact refers to interactions with colleagues and customers, ranging from superficial to more intimate contacts that sometimes led to friendship. 65% (N=205) of respondents to this study’s online survey reported that they socialised with British people: this was felt by many (76%, N=145) to be a step towards better adaptation. This understanding is corroborated by empirical and theoretical research, which equates host contact with improved host culture and language learning.

The development of language skills and the mastery of non-verbal behaviour through everyday communication with British co-workers were cited by the online survey respondents as the benefits of host contact. As Kim (2001) observes, both verbal and non-verbal behaviour can be learned through direct observation and participation in relationships with natives. Indeed, the ability to select an appropriate behaviour in a range of social situations denotes the acquisition of social skills, which are vital in communication (Samovar & Porter, 2001). Participants in the online survey were unanimous in their assumption that the best source of learning about the new culture was members of the host society, and as Spencer et al.’s study (2007) revealed, migrants working in hospitality have more contacts with British than those working in other sectors.

*The way to get to know British culture is to learn it from someone, from a British person. I was lucky; I have come across nice people, British people. I have learnt some savoir-vivre, social etiquette and knowledge of some etiquette.*

(Asia, hotel receptionist)

*Through contacts with the Brits, I have learnt to start chatting in a style: 'how are you', I have learnt how to joke with Brits. I got familiar with customs and morals of Brits.* (Survey respondent 255, Female, age 29, England)

As noted in previous research into sojourner adjustment, access to instrumental support in negotiating day-to-day life in the new culture is important to survival, and it is usually provided by members of the sojourner’s own ethnic group (Kim, 2001). In this study, because the tourism environment offers interactions with British colleagues on an everyday basis, fellow workers were also and uniquely a source of advice, as articulated by Magda, a hotel worker:
I work with English people, so I ask about many things, and they tell me a lot. Lots of people helped me; even with things such as moving houses, they helped me, I met lots of English people, who would advise me, gave me some tips, and told me about the legal things and about Citizen Advice Bureau, about how to find a flat, where it is cheaper, where to get some bargains. So I asked the English people as they would know the most about such practical things. That helped me a lot.

Such support is especially important at the beginning of sojourn when a newly arrived migrant is unfamiliar with local institutions and regulations, and when the stress of the unfamiliar is at its height (Brown & Holloway, 2008). Relationships with British co-workers were also a source of comfort during a time of upheaval, helping to provide some of the succour usually found in the home environment (Brown, 2009b), as the following example illustrates:

I have been working in a restaurant for 2 months and it has been great. I haven’t worked as a waitress before and I was afraid of that, mainly that my English is not brilliant ;) but people are seriously nice (both the girls I work with and customers). I have never come across a bad reaction, even when they have to repeat the same thing four times.  
(ang.pl, 20.08.2006)

I lived in a hotel, where I worked. The owners were great; they treated me like a member of their family. The family was so friendly to me, and I was going out with them, to a restaurant, to parties, I spent New Year’s Eve with them. We stuck together. I am still in touch with them and I visit them from time to time. I spent most of my time there.  
(Asia)

In hotels, there is a nice atmosphere among members of staff. In this hotel, for sure, the atmosphere plays an important role, we go out whether it is someone’s birthday, a football match or a football match on TV. This is like being at school or at university.  
(Marek)

Similar stories are revealed in Kim’s (2009) study of illegal migrants’ working lives in a restaurant in the US. She uses the metaphor of ‘family’ to describe the kinship created among the workers, which has further significance for illegal workers who may tend otherwise to feel marginalized because of their employment status. Within the current study, host contact led to intimate friendship for some respondents, but many others reported the view that contact with the British was limited to the professional sphere, as Jakub, a restaurant worker, commented:

Regarding English acquaintances I don’t have vast contacts; these are casual, working contacts, the type of ‘hi’, ‘nice to meet you’. It is enough for me, I don’t need anything more.

It has been noted previously that Britons were seen as polite but distant and uninterested in making friends (see Spencer et al., 2007). In Marek’s view, his colleagues are just colleagues, and he is aware that these are temporary ties:

I work with people who have been living without me all their lives. These are acquaintances which are there once and then they are gone.
Such contact is described by Bochner (1986) as superficial and task-related: for successful adjustment, meaningful contact that extends beyond the day-to-day must be established.

The second point of contact for respondents was with customers in the workplace. Thus, of particular significance to the tourism industry, interaction between Poles and British nationals takes place not only with colleagues, but also with customers in the undertaking of duties associated with the service industries such as serving meals and taking care of luggage. As a hotel worker, Artur’s assessment was very positive:

*Being a waiter helped me to settle in England. Because of our hotel work, we were able to show to the English who we are, that we are people who can work hard, people who have a certain work ethic, that we are reliable people who learn fast. Finally, we showed this to the customers; in a factory nobody would have noticed all this.*

Working in a service setting allows Poles to be ‘visible’, in contrast with many other low-paid sectors like agriculture or food processing where there is no point of contact between customer and worker. Among the benefits, such contact brought the opportunity to play the role of ambassador of their own country, as is common among sojourners in a new culture (Ward, 2001). It must be noted that of further assistance in successfully negotiating life in a new country is the physical similarity of the newcomer to the host community, while racism is experienced mostly by those who are physically dissimilar (Brown, 2009c).

**Making international contacts**

Ties with an international community were not targeted by participants but they were formed and found to be life-enhancing. Compared with Poland or other Central and Eastern European countries, British hospitality workplaces are multicultural, particularly in London (People 1st, 2008). Previous research conducted before the European Union’s 2004 Enlargement (Brown, 2003) revealed that Polish migrants socialised more with other nationals than with host members. The online survey showed that 68% of respondents (N=214) socialised with colleagues of other nationalities and 68% of those (N=134) felt that this contact was helpful in their adaptation. A further benefit of the multicultural workforce is that participants became part of an international community: their social life was described by interaction not only with British people, but also and sometimes only with other nationality migrant workers. The following comment by Magda, a hotel worker illustrates how a foreign employee may spend their leisure time:

*In my workplace, I have met many people, foreigners, and I go out very often. There are many nations, the group is very mixed, and there are Poles, Portuguese, English, Czechs, and Lithuanians. There are very many nations in our group that we go out for a drink, to a disco, wherever we meet up, even when I go with my brother to watch a football match there are Brazilians, English and Poles. I have very many friends because of a workplace of different nationalities. I spend lots of time with them and the workplace helped me with this.*

A similar comment is made enthusiastically by Asia, a hotel receptionist:

*We go out to clubs, etc. There is a Christmas party every year. I am actually lucky because I’m the only one from Poland (and) there is a half Hungarian, half Slovakian girl, a girl from Venezuela, and an English girl, so there is a mixture. Others who we*
go out with are from South Africa, Malaysia and India, so when we go out there is such a mixture!

Similar findings were produced in Kim’s (2009) study of friendships among restaurant workers, which showed how illegal workers at Mama’s, a Korean-Japanese restaurant in the US, built strong relationships and socialised together outside working hours. Furthermore, it has been observed that the hospitality working environment, is usually young and sociable, and that this is a source of satisfaction that compensates for commonly low wages in the industry, as pointed out in a study of pub workers (Riley et al., 1998).

Participants were excited about the opportunity offered by the culturally diverse workplace to meet with and learn from people from all over the world. Research by Eade et al. (2006) notes that Poles are unused to a multicultural workplace, but this study shows that they were quick to identify the positive outcomes of such contact as an increase in cultural knowledge and the development of openness and tolerance:

*It was a place like a melting pot. Diversity in restaurants is so wide; it is a great place for communication with people coming from all over the world.* (Jakub, ex restaurant worker)

*I know a Filipino boy very well. He invited me for a trip to London once; he showed me the Filipino cuisine. People do tell many stories, for example, how they spend Christmas in different countries.* (Marek)

*I got to know different cultures (and) ways of spending leisure time.* (Survey Respondent 67, Male, age 25, Jersey)

*It was good meeting people from all over the world, getting to know different cultures and religions.* (Survey Respondent 109, Female, age 31, Wales)

Such commentaries point to identification with cosmopolitan citizenship (Molz, 2005) where self identity is increasingly constructed in relation to a mobile global community. Moreover, as highlighted elsewhere, exposure to diversity is also linked to the development of intercultural competence (Gudykunst & Kim 2003; Koester & Lustig, 2003). According to Gudykunst and Kim (2003), such change is necessary for adjustment to an increasingly globalised community and for the resolution of global conflicts. It is also acknowledged as an important employee attribute in the tourism industry which requires a flexible and tolerant workforce, reflecting the cultural diversity of its clientele (People 1st, 2009). However, deviance from this position of tolerance and enthusiasm is revealed in a comment made by a survey respondent, who stated that work in the industry has given her:

*Nothing, apart from prejudice towards Indians.* (Survey Respondent, Male, age 21, Scotland)

This is one of a few exceptional comments in this study; and it is included here because hostility of Polish migrants toward this particular nation was noticed in another study (McDowell et al., 2008). Elsewhere Wilczek, Donnelly & Freedman (2009) found a tension between Polish workers and their Romanian colleagues in a food processing factory. As
Bochner (1986) warns, over-exposure to migration of different forms may increase enmity rather than increasing international culture competence.

**Gravitating towards fellow nationals**

As discussed in the literature section, migrants are involved in multifaceted ties with their co-nationals both in Britain and back home. During a time of stress and upheaval, which describes the experience of transition, it is expected that sojourners will seek out contact with members of the origin culture who are a source of reassurance and comfort (Gudykunst & Kim, 2003). As Kim (2001) points out, this is particularly important at the beginning of the sojourn when newcomers to a new society are struggling to cope with the unfamiliar. It was not surprising then that this study’s online survey found that two thirds (64%, N=201) of participants socialised with other Poles, and of these, 55% (N=101) believed that this contact was helpful in their emotional well-being and the survival in a new culture. As Artur (28), a former hotel worker, pointed out: “I came here for emigration, and I want to feel like at home, so as soon as possible I started making contacts with other Poles”. He did this, initially, through attending church. Conational interaction thus brought a sense of belonging for Artur, and other participants, which was cemented through involvement in various community activities such as the church. Another respondent, Jakub, echoed Artur’s points, while stressing the importance of maintaining these relationships alongside managing the pressures of tourism employment:

*My life here in England, what gives me joy is meeting up with other Poles, with people from our church community, with people I used to live with. We were flexible enough to organise time for each other, so regardless of the working hours, I would always manage to meet them.* (Jakub)

In addition to developing contacts with Poles living in the UK, establishing networks often involved chain migration. Artur claimed he ‘pulled in’ others, a phrase recurrent among participants. He went on to note that: “after a year I had my friends here, family members, well, just great conditions.” Contacts with existing friends and family members often helped facilitate fellow nationals’ migration and adaptation. The results of the online survey suggested that many of the respondents (N=113) obtained their jobs through family and friend networks.

Respondents also highlighted that tourism employment subsequently reinforced connections with other co-nationals:

*I got to know all these Poles due to the hotel. My best friends like Andrzej, I met in the hotel, people from different places, mainly from Łódź district. (then) I started meeting other people through the people from the hotel (...). After a while, more and more Poles started working there. Many of them were from Łódź, from two suburbs. Those Poles were very nice, it turned out that we get on well. One of those boys was an ethnology graduate from Łódź University and I had a very good contact with him. We could talk a lot during breaks. (...) Andrzej was a person from whom I got lots of information about how much I can achieve in this country, not only in this hotel because Andrzej met a Polish girl, also in this hotel, who later got a job in JP Morgan.* (Artur)
Artur was able to meet others of similar status to his own. However, as Artur’s description suggests, it is important to recognise that common nationality or even shared work experience in low status work alone may not be enough to build longer and closer ties. As Lugosi (2003) has argued, closer physical, social, emotional and intellectual ‘proximity’ is mediated by, and thus relies on, other factors such as similarities in education, interest and common points of reference regarding life experiences. In Artur’s case, perceived social compatibility, a willingness to invest in the relationship and the opportunities afforded by employment patterns, underpinned a sense of proximity, and his common bond was a source of succour and support. Such contacts, alongside those established through church attendance, often compensated for the negative aspect of working in a restaurant:

*When you work in a restaurant, the money is not great. I don’t allow myself expensive trips or exotic holidays. What makes me happy is meeting up with Poles, spending time together.* (Jakub)

The negative consequences of conational contact for integration into life in the new country is revealed in the fact that the comfort of mixing with other Poles led to Artur’s decision to give up his mixed-nationality accommodation for a house accommodated solely by Poles, despite the acknowledged negative consequences for English language proficiency:

*At the beginning I lived with 8 people which was convenient because I had to speak English. Now I live in a house that is ‘invaded’ by other Poles.*

A poor grasp of English is noted in studies of migrant workers by Lyon & Sulcova (2009), and this is also observed in this research. Marek, who became an assistant manager, responsible for recruiting casual workers, recalls interviewing Poles:

*My opinions about Poles have changed radically. It can really upset me if they are coming here and asking for work but they cannot even put one sentence in English together.* (..)

The conflict between the pull of comforting ethnic ties and the deleterious consequences for integration is clear, and has been revealed in other studies of sojourner adjustment. For example, Brown (2009b) found that the fulfillment through conational contact of emotional needs for comfort and reassurance was often at the cost of the development of sociocultural competence that is usually achieved through interaction with host nationals. After arrival in the new culture, migrants may gravitate toward their ethnic community. In the shorter term, it helps with releasing stress and uncertainty, but in the longer term, ethnic communication reinforces migrant’s ethnicity, particularly, if it is not supplemented or replaced by communication with host nationals (Kim, 2001).

Notwithstanding the emotional benefits of access to the Polish community, this study has not established the importance of ‘territorial aspects of community’ that have been relevant to previous generations of Polish migrants (Burrell, 2006). After World War II, the Polish community in the UK had a geographical presence: Burrell (2006) indicates that the Polish community in Leicester, for example, was settled in a specific area of town and had its own churches, delis, clubs and doctors. This was not found in this study. Interestingly, the existence of a Polish community in the UK is now questioned by scholars (Brown, 2003; Eade et al., 2006; Garapich, 2007; Górny & Osipovic, 2006) who argue that different generations of Polish migrants do not create one community and the established elite is challenged by
waves of new migrants (Brown, 2003; Garapich, 2007). This suggests that the unifying force is not nationality but shared heritage in identical circumstances.

Though a territorial community was not found in this study, the presence of an online Polish community was evident, and this is typical of the post-2004 generation (Garapich, 2008; Janta & Ladkin, 2009) exchanging information between each other. The internet has become the prime medium of communicating between Poles. As pointed out by Hiller and Franz (2004), both migrants-to-be and settled migrants tend to create such online communities in a new destination in order to receive instrumental and emotional support.

CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the interactions between migrant relationships and tourism employment, with particular reference to the impacts these have on migration experiences and adaptation. Three types of relationships were identified, and the paper examined a series of outcomes and implications of the different types of relationship. Firstly, international relationships were created, as a direct result of the multinational make-up of the workforce. The data suggest that access to cultural diversity was a prized aspect of work in the industry, credited with an increase in inter-cultural knowledge, and acting as an important source of social support. These relationships also shaped migration experiences and thus contributed to the construction of a sense of cosmopolitan citizenship where individuals are connected to a diverse network of international people.

Secondly, the paper highlighted the importance of strong conational ties among migrant workers. These were often facilitated by workplaces, alongside the church. Ties with conationals were sources of enjoyment, but these relationships also provided emotional support, compensating for the negative aspects of service work. Conational ties with people already living in a destination also provided instrumental support, including access resources and employment. Moreover, Poles were involved in complex relationships with conationals living in Poland, which encouraged and facilitated chain migration. Strong conational ties were useful, particularly in the early stages of migration, helping new migrants to settle and adjust, but sustaining them also led to decreasing attempts to integrate or adapt.

Thirdly, participants developed contact with members of the host community, either through interaction with British colleagues or with customers in service encounters. A key finding of this research is that employment type, in this case, positions of intensive customer contact, was important in ensuring host contact, which was seen as key to improving linguistic and cultural competence: these in turn were important in easing adjustment. It is apparent that the characteristics of tourism work, that is the sociable and multicultural environment and the opportunity to use the host language and interactional competencies at work, influence migrants’ integration into a new society.

Although there is a view that ‘there has been increased labour mobility, both sectorally and spatially, that has contributed to the geographical dispersion of friendship and family networks’ (Williams & Hall, 2000, p. 8), this study reveals that social relationships are created and maintained through workplaces. Furthermore, the findings point to the existence of ‘occupational communities’, caused by irregular working hours, which form between tourism employees who work, live and socialise together (Lee-Ross, 1999; Riley et al., 1998). Migrants are forced to mix with host nationals at the workplace and beyond, and
this research illustrates how international workers may take advantage of this in settling, adapting and learning during their time abroad.

A further possible explanation for the formation of specific relationships between fellow workers and conationals is that relationships morph into ‘communities of coping’ (Korczynski, 2003). These are informal, dense cultures among the workforce created to cope with abuse from customers. Service workers cope communally and socially; they bond to the job and to other workers. Such a conceptualisation can be further explained by recent debates in the labour relations literature related to ‘teaming up’ at work (van der Broek et al., 2008). This form of interaction has a potential to not only ameliorate the impact of customer abuse but also to undermine the strict pacing of work.

What is clear is that those migrants employed in this sector of employment experience something that is absent in other settings. Tourism employment differs from other low-paid working environments, for example factories (see Wilczek et al., 2009), which offer much more limited host contact. Tourism work gives newcomers a chance to integrate into the wider society as migrants’ social, personal and professional lives are interlinked through their working environment. Furthermore, their language and cultural competencies are increased, thereby aiding their adaptation, although they may ultimately decide to adopt a monocultural strategy (Berry, 1994).

It is also important to stress that the migrant tourism workers that form a significant part of this study’s sample (i.e. mostly young, well-educated with relatively limited family obligations) can mobilise numerous forms of social, cultural, educational and physical capital. This inevitably influences their networks, networking practices, and their engagement in tourism employment. More specifically, such migrants encounter others of similar age and life-cycle status. The social proximity between these migrants can provide opportunities to establish and develop new networks, either through tourism employment, or outside of work as a way to cope with the stresses of tourism labour. As the data suggests, engagement with peers of similar status may subsequently lead to the development of particular social activities, adaptation strategies and mobility patterns.

Moreover, the relative absence of financial burdens brought about by family obligations are less likely to impede this type of migrant worker’s ability to accept low status work, albeit often temporarily as a form of investment. The absence of such social and financial obligations may also underpin further labour mobility as migrant workers can move between different geographical locations, change tourism employers and, in many cases, move out of tourism employment, once sufficient linguistic, social and cultural capital is developed. Again, such mobility may be underpinned or even driven by access to networks, which provide employment opportunities or other forms of emotional and instrumental support.

Access to physical, linguistic, educational, social and cultural capital is also likely to influence the type of positions these kinds of migrant workers may assume, both in the early stages of their sojourn and in subsequent stages when deciding to develop careers either inside or outside the tourism sector. The ability to engage in physically intensive, high-contact service work not only provides opportunities to develop social and cultural competencies, but also increases the likelihood of contacts with others who either have or are also developing these capabilities – thus reinforcing networking patterns among migrant workers. This also raises the question of whether other migrant workers, who do not fit this profile e.g. older, less well educated, with fewer educational or linguistic capabilities, are excluded from particular
areas of tourism employment, which may reinforce further their exclusion from networks or networking opportunities.

The experiences of this particular migrant workforce carry a number of long-term implications for migrants themselves. For example, migrants may develop confidence in negotiating cross-cultural encounters, thus enabling them to relocate to other countries that are not their place of origin. Migrants’ choices of location for living and working has broadened (Williams & Hall, 2000), and expansion in migrant networks and chain migration may lead to an increase in migrant mobility at multiple scales, i.e. locally, regionally, nationally and internationally. It may also drive and shape future VFR tourism.

Increasing migrant mobility and the presence of greater numbers of migrants in the labour market will also carry consequences for the industry in terms of the product and experience offered to tourists and the image they cultivate of a destination. Baum, Hearns, & Devine (2008) for example, showed how migration led to discrepancies in the popular image of Ireland. Migrants employed in front of house positions interact with the host community as well as domestic and international tourists. Interestingly, those workers play the role of ‘host’ for international tourists. In the case of new arrivals, migrants play a double role: they are ‘the migrant-guest’, but they are also ‘migrant-host’ to those they serve. As noted previously, relationships and interactions in multicultural environments may help develop human capital from which employers, destinations and visitors may benefit. Conversely, chain migration may lead to the importation and reproduction of ‘foreign’ cultural norms and values, which are reinforced through the adoption of monocultural strategies. Such strategies may also continue to inhibit the development of linguistic and intercultural competencies, which, in turn, may undermine the quality of the tourism product and tourists’ experiences. Finally, it is also important to recognise that failure to develop bicultural or multicultural adaptation strategies among migrant workers may lead to further social exclusion and social fragmentation.

The emerging themes of this study can help to understand the consequences of the interaction between tourism employment and migrant relationships. This paper can inform organisational decisions about the value of drawing on migrant pools of labour and encouraging existing migrants to secure positions for conationalists. It can also help to evaluate and consequently nurture the positive contributions that co-workers and networks can make to working practices and employee wellbeing. Finally, it can inform policy and academic debates about the dynamics and outcomes of networks and interactions in helping new and existing migrants to adapt to the host society.

REFERENCES


