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The Lives of Male Romanian H-2B Workers in the Trump Era: An Anthropological Perspective on Gender and Immigration

By Jade Kluser¹

Abstract

The purpose of this ethnographic study is to describe the effects of the Trump Administration's change in immigration policies on Romanian H-2B workers in South Florida. The effects of administration change on the H-2B program is generally defined within three themes that emerged from my research: The change in the concept of cultural space and how enforcement plays a role in the creation of boundaries; how policy change has an influence on migrant workers' concept of identity and belonging; and lastly, how the program and outlying forces create a culture of uncertainty and fear. The article is based on three months of participant-observation, data from interviews and surveys, and analysis of this qualitative data in relation to the anthropological literature in particular as well as other sources pertaining to the immigration debate. The study of the experiences of this specific population, may help inform policies on foreign migrant workers within the H-2B program particularly, given the current political climate for NGOs involved in the support of immigrant communities; encourage further research within academic realms, and foster an understanding of the experience of this specific population within the visa program.

Keywords: Romanian H-2B workers, Immigration reform, gender and immigration.

Introduction

“That was my plan. I was going to work... do my stuff right.” A desire for an opportunity and a comfortable way of life in the United States hung in Andrei's every reply. “That was my plan, go and come back...have some money in the bank... Just work... you cannot do that in Romania. Unless, you do some [illegal] business or something like that... Working hard and working honest in Romania is not going to get you anywhere” (Interview with Andrei: November 26, 2017).

Andrei is a 33-year-old Romanian male working in Florida under an H-2B visa. He is currently a supervisor for a country club, and desires one day to hold an H-1 visa that would allow him and his family to have a path to U.S. citizenship. Both Andrei and his wife Corina, also a Romanian H-2B worker, are nearing completion of their current visa and need to prepare to go back to their home country in a few months. The uncertainty of being able to return back into the United

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States after they exit the country is something they have to consider each time they max out their extensions. When asked if the process still felt the same after completing ten years' worth of visas, Andrei responded, "You still fear for not getting the visa. I think that's the only bad thing. [It's] the same every time...it's unpredictable. We have been here for so many years, and we have a lot of stuff ... that's the bad part for us" (Interview with Andrei: November 26, 2017). This is their reality... life between two countries. Andrei and his family, which includes his wife and two American-born children, are hoping for an opportunity to stay permanently in the United States.

In the United States, discussions about immigration often focus on populations from Mexico and Central America, the Caribbean, the Middle East, and war-torn parts of Africa. I intended to broaden the scope of immigration discussion by shedding light on the experiences of Romanian H-2B workers. I wanted to better understand why so many Romanians like Andrei have come to America through the H-2B program. I wanted to see how the procedure of obtaining an H-2B visa - involving a multi-step process that includes several interviews, seeking a visa through the U.S. embassy, obtaining a form of employment within the United States, and extending the lengths of their visas within U.S. borders - would alter their way of life. Once in the United States, would their experience be affected by the new White House administration's policies on immigration reform? I sought an understanding to these questions by creating a directed study course at Bridgewater State University, under the guidance of my advisor, Dr. Diana Fox. Ethnographic research is usually informed by personal experiences, and as the researcher, I have a direct connection to my topic population. I had the opportunity to conduct a participant observation study in a private country club in Florida. Over the course of four-months of research, I selected five informants with whom I conducted in-depth interviews and surveys (See Appendixes 2 and 3). I utilized such data to develop an analysis that builds on the existing academic literature on immigration and immigration policy (See a full illustration of my "Methodology" in Appendix 1).

Research on temporary employment, more specifically the H-2B program within the hospitality industry, is limited (Terry 2016). Therefore, the study of the experiences of this specific population, may help inform the United States government on the impact of policies on foreign migrant workers within the H-2B program, and promote further research. In order to better understand the effects of the new policies within this administration on my topic population, it is beneficial to reflect on policy changes that have occurred in the past and present time.

Immigration Politics and Policies

In early 2017, Trump was sworn into presidency, replacing Barack Obama and starting a new age of U.S. politics. During this early period of his presidency, Trump and his administration focused much of their energy on changing immigration policies in the United States – policies which were promised throughout much of his campaign in 2016 (Gubernskaya 2017). In the United States, there has been a heightened awareness and desire for immigration reform – although there exist many different approaches on how to address entry of different populations. The concern with immigration is a longstanding one in the U.S., and over the decades there have been a range of related policies, some more friendly to immigrants than others. Today, there is a concern for those residing in the United States illegally, and for those yet to come: what should the policies regarding deportation and entry be? Building a wall, for example, was determined to be the best course of action by Trump and his supporters to physically separate the United States from Mexico, although many have disagreed with this view holding up evidence that building walls is ineffective and costly (Pederson 2017). Trump's presidential campaign and subsequent election into the White

House facilitated the raising of strong sentiments towards immigration from all sides among the majority of Americans, fueling protests by many and support from others (Gubernskaya 2017).

New policies reflecting a preference for skilled and educated immigrants have begun to take shape, challenging over fifty years' worth of immigration policies that focused on family unity (Gubernskaya 2017). In his speech on February 28, 2017, President Trump stated that this new focus on skill and merit-based qualities would improve jobs and wages, and strengthen national security (Gubernskaya 2017). A scorecard system would be employed, allotting "points" to immigrant applicants based on their economic and professional merits. This would give preference for entry to those with "higher merit", and prevent all immigrant applicants with lesser "merit" from obtaining entry (Chen 2014). Extensive research has demonstrated that family-based immigration benefits the economy by establishing strong relationships within communities, fostering growth and prosperity, and positively impacting vulnerable groups (Basok 2008; Czaika 2013; Gubernskaya 2017). Differently, Trump's administration equates family-based immigration to the concept of "chain migration", which, he explained in a weekly address at the White House, has a negative outcome for our nation,

"Under chain migration, foreign nationals can come to the U.S. and bring in unlimited numbers of foreign relatives. Because these individuals are admitted solely on the basis of family ties – not skill or not merit – most of this immigration is lower-skilled, putting a great strain on federal welfare..." (Trump, 2017).

During the economic recession of the 1990s, undocumented immigrants were accused of undermining the rule of law, draining public resources, and failing to assimilate (Coutin 2005). This resulted in the rising anti-immigrant sentiments that promoted numerous changes to immigration law. Throughout history, various bills on immigration focusing on enforcement tactics have been presented to and passed by Congress, thus supporting criminal justice agendas (Coutin 2005; Fassin 2001). The 1996 Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act (IIRIA) was created to enforce border control and made most paths toward legalization more difficult. In 2003, the reorganization of the U.S. Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) as part of the U.S. Department of Homeland Security categorizes immigration as a matter of security (Coutin 2005).

Throughout U.S. history, changing attitudes towards various groups of immigrants have impacted policies and socio-political structures that have defined the experience of immigration. What these policies and structures, such as the size and scope of Immigration of Customs Enforcement (ICE) have repeatedly failed to address adequately are factors that reflect the experience of immigrant workers from their own perspectives. To better recognize the impact that these policies have on the H-2B program, I will overview the program.

H-2B Visa Program

The H-2B visa worker program supports employers in the United States with the hiring of foreign workers to fill temporary non-agricultural positions. There is a national cap on the total number of foreign nationals who may be granted H-2B status during a fiscal year. Currently, "Congress has set the H-2B cap at 66,000... with 33,000 for workers who begin employment in the first half of the fiscal year (October 1 – March 31) and 33,000 for workers who begin employment

in the second half of the fiscal year (April 1 – September 30)” (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service 2017).

The fiscal year aligns itself with the Country Club “seasons”, where the immigrant workforce migrates North and South with the seasonal fluctuations in business within the U.S. The first half of the fiscal year would be focused primarily in Southern states during the winter, and the second half of the fiscal year would be focused in the Northern states during the summer. H-2B workers, prior to moving North or South after finishing the half of the fiscal year at one location, must apply to extend the life of their working visa in order to work in a new location. In total, an H-2B worker can only extend up to a total time of three years. After the maximum time has been reached, the foreign worker has to leave the country for a period of no less than 90 days (U.S. Citizenship and Immigration Service 2017).

All of my Romanian informants went through work-abroad programs from their home country that would file for visas and job opportunities on their behalf. The companies set up training sessions (such as English proficiency courses), interviews, and acquired job opportunities with employers in the United States. While in the United States, the work-abroad programs would file for extensions, and serve as the main point of contact for any governmental interaction. Informants all had little to no contact with the government in the United States during their time in the H-2B program. However, these individuals may be affected by their home country’s political relations with the United States– relations that influence the shaping of immigration policies (Coutin 2003).

Brief Overview of Romanian Immigration

In December of 1989, as part of the popular uprisings against Communism throughout Eastern Europe, a violent revolution in Romania overthrew the communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu. The revolution ended the Communist rule of their country that had lasted nearly fifty years (Badescu 2008).

It was in the years following, the relationship between the United States and Romania improved and deepened, as it is reflected by growing economic and political ties (United States Department of State 2017). In 2004, Romania joined NATO, which again strengthened its relationship with the Westernized world. In 2011, Romania and the United States ratified the “Joint Declaration on Strategic Partnership for the 21st Century Between the United States of America and Romania”, an agreement that focused on enhancing cooperation between the two countries. Its primary objective was the development of a mutual political-military relationship, which would improve law-enforcement cooperation, trade and investment opportunities, and energy security (United States Department of State 2017).

This cooperation in trade and investment opportunities paved the way for a free flow of labor, making “migrant workers become, in a sense, resources for their countries of origin, having the potential to influence policies in both countries of residence and origin” (Coutin 2003, page 509). The promise of the United States as an open market for economic opportunity is juxtaposed with the reality of its currently closed migrant work force – distinguishing clear physical and conceptual boundaries that may directly affect the lived experience of foreign nationals working in America (Varsanyi 2008). This raises several questions - has the experience of this specific Romanian population been affected by the historical and structural systems of their home country, and the governmental changes that have occurred in the United States? What is their lived experience like?

Analysis

Three themes emerged from my research: The change in the concept of space and how enforcement plays a role in the creation of boundaries; how policy change has an influence on migrant workers' concept of identity and belonging; and lastly, how the H-2B program and enforcement tactics create a culture of uncertainty and fear among migrants. Although I am presenting these themes as three distinct concepts, their conceptual characterizations overlap in the realm of immigration and are intricately linked in shaping the immigrant perceptions and experiences.

The Reframing of Space and Territories

The concept of space is not defined solely in legal terms, but also expands into the abstract sphere of illegality, where visa programs embody a sense of confinement (Coutin 2010). In the case of the Romanian H-2B visa workers that I interviewed, the concept of space and territories were constantly tested in both physical and conceptual ways. For example, before even entering the United States for work, the migrant workers had to go through an interview process at the U.S. embassy in the Romanian capital city of Bucharest. These “spatial tactics” as Coutin (2010), a cultural anthropologist specializing in immigration, defines it, prevent irregular migrants from accessing the legal rights which are afforded to those with territorial presence and recognition – this would include inspections abroad where travelers ‘enter’ national space before physically leaving their home country.

National territories, and the enforcement policies that are employed to define and strengthen them, resemble detention centers –confining and restricting movement (Coutin 2010). Ionel, who has resided in the U.S. for a little over a year through the H-2B program, illustrated this point through his experience, “I want to do more... You know? And I can’t, because I’m on a visa. I am on an H-2B, and I have to stay like that. I can’t leave the country. I can’t go see anything. I can’t ask for a raise. I can’t, because I have a contract that I signed... They are taking advantage of us. Of the H-2Bs” (Interview with Ionel: November 18, 2017). Once migrants are inside the United States, Fassin (2011) describes a sense of internal spatial conflict, where borders define territorial limits, but the existence of internal ‘boundaries’ establish symbolic differences (between class, gender, or race) and produce identities (national, ethnic, or cultural communities) In addition, a politically defined set of exclusionary practices promote the establishment of these internal boundaries, by denying access to employment, housing, higher education, social services, healthcare, and public benefits, which construct these migrants as “outsiders”, even though they are physically within the United States. (Coutin 2010).

The hospitality industry, relying heavily on the influx of temporary foreign labor, actively participates in this structure, by working with foreign companies, such as the work-abroad programs that my informants participated in, and the U.S. government, to attain more migrant workers. Policies within the United States are developed in response to an increasing number of immigrants. Due to a large portion of this population being illegal (approximately 11.1 million undocumented migrants), policies have been strategically created to prosecute and punish these individuals (Terry 2016). These enforcement policies employ harsh tactics, culminating a culture of fear (Coutin 2015). Perhaps in response to such enforcement tactics, temporary legal and illegal migrants, who would like to stay in the United States long-term but do not have the opportunity to do so, are more likely to stay in the United States past their visa expiration or attain documentation under false pretenses (Coutin 2005; Culic 2008; Motomura 2008). Although illegal, it is more advantageous for these migrants to remain in the United States illegally than to leave and risk not having access

back into the country, thus losing the rights that they have acquired (Coutin 2010; Gubernskaya 2017)

Territories and space may be altered and defined by both larger overlying structures and also shape the behavior of migrant workers in the H-2B program. Enforcement policies on immigrants and migrant workers define conceptual boundaries of what is and what is not legal – constructing a physical reality of “confinement” (Coutin 2010). This conceptual experience goes hand-in-hand with the idea of transnationalism and perceived “belonging” that I illustrate below.

Transnationalism and Belonging

Migrant workers often have to “navigate multiple allegiances towards different political systems, societies, and claims on their identity... [challenging] hegemonic constructs of national identity” (Ciocea 2016, page 7). Immigration policies, with a focus on citizenship and belonging, therefore, construct temporary migrant workers (and their lived experience) as ‘others’ (Coutin 2013). Temporary migrant workers, when entering the United States as a foreign national, enter a “transnational social space”, which involves “the circulation of ideas, symbols, and material culture in the context of migration, and the social life, values, and meanings that are born from a transnational context” (Ciocea 2016, page 10). Their social space includes, “kinship groups as well, to account for various remittances, and transnational circuits, around which various economic ties are structured” (Ciocea 2016, page 10). This inter-connected, and highly multifaceted structural complex, plays a key role in the definition of migrant workers’ sense of ‘self’ within the H-2B program. Coutin (2013) described this experience as membership “in the breach”, where citizenship is constantly changing and individuals can move between categories of self, redefining themselves as insiders rather than outsiders. It is this movement, she suggests, that creates both a formal citizenship “regime”, where demarcations are clear, and a “shadow regime” where people move regardless of formal membership ties.

Horatiu, one of my informants, had just applied for permanent resident status, a process that is extensive and does not guarantee that he will obtain a green card at the end. “I’m [still] in the process [of obtaining my permanent green card]. Which apparently is going to take longer than expected... It’s all good, but I just want to have it.” Though Horatiu has strong social ties within the United States, having married an American citizen and having an American-born child, and is in the process of obtaining a green card to stay in the United States long-term, he still feels a strong sense of identity with his home country, “I will never be an American,” he said. “I was born and raised until the age of 29 in Romania. How can I be an American now?” (Interview with Horatiu, December 3, 2017). Horatiu may be living in a reality of “intersocietal convergence” (Faist 2015), where migrants pull one society onto the territory of another state, creating an informal conceptualization of ‘dual citizenship’, linking ‘here’ and ‘there’. This also challenges the official models of naturalization in the United States, which suggests that a “clean break” is necessary for creating generic citizen-subjects (Coutin 2003).

One of the broader constructs of identity within the program is the idea that Romanian reputation in the United States is different than it is in the European Union, helping to forge the migrant’s stronger sense of belonging within the United States. Andrei stated, “This is one of the few countries [where] you don’t get stigmatized. You tell people you are Romanian here, and they are like ‘Oh good, that’s nice.’ Totally different. It’s a different attitude than in Europe...I have friends in England [that say] as soon as they hear you are Romanian, they kind of push you away...we have a bad reputation” (Interview with Andrei: November 26, 2017). He went on to

illustrate in detail how the enforcement policies that construct border control around the United States bar “gypsies” whom, he explains, may be the source of their stigmatization in Europe. He believes that because American people are physically separated from the bad behavior of these “gypsies” (Roma and Sinti people from Romania) in Europe, that they do not associate their behavior as being reflective of Romanian people in general. He believes this helps to maintain a good reputation for Romanians in the United States. Andrei may feel a stronger sense of positive identity within the United States as a result, combined with his privileged immigration status of being a European white male from a former communist country. He is more likely to find moral support for his immigration among American citizens than non-white immigrants from stigmatized countries who are the target of harsher immigration policies.

Andrei also found his sense of identity defined in transnational terms, as he explained his experience of traveling back home to Romania as having reverse-cultural shock. “We adapt[ed] to [the United States] very well – it’s like home now. It feels like we live more here, than [Romania]. It feels like it’s the other way around now. That’s why we wouldn’t mind to stay here. It’s more comfortable now. If you go home, you have to re-adapt, you know. We are adapted here now” (Interview with Andrei, November 26, 2017). These clear distinctions of identity and belonging are affected by policies that dictate their sense of stability within the H-2B program when they are continually reminded of their “temporary” status, they develop a culture of uncertainty and fear.

Temporality and Fear

The H-2B visa, in its most basic sense, is a temporary work visa. Due to governmental policy, migrant workers in a work abroad program cannot exceed the time of three years for their visas. In order to return to the United States for further work, they first have to go back home and reapply. Furthermore, the process of obtaining a new visa is not guaranteed. For an H-2B worker like Andrei, who has been in the United States for a total of ten years, this temporary status and fear of not being able to return are felt every time he applies to renew his visa.

I have been [here] too many years. Theoretically the H2-B is for 6 years... they say after 6 years you have experience. So, you have to move on... So, it’s the same fear that [you will have to stay home] ... That’s what we don’t like, because it’s unpredictable. We have been here for so many years, and we have [created a life here], you know?” He later on described the overall process, “... [Say,] I didn’t do anything wrong. [My employers in the United States] want me back.... There are no reasons - no reasons - why I shouldn’t get the visa, but you still fear not getting the visa. I think that’s the only bad thing (Interview with Andrei, November 26, 2017).

Ideally, the mutual respect between Romania and the United States would tend to favor immigration exchange between the two countries; yet this this relationship is heavily influenced by larger social and political structures, as Andrei explained,

...we were lucky. Especially the first seasons, because they [the relationships] were harsher, and then Romania joined NATO, and then it became a little more flexible... [I]t’s a scary process... it’s unpredictable. Very unpredictable. Even though, you didn’t do anything wrong. You came back. You paid taxes. You did

everything perfect. You respect your contract. Still, they can pull something, or say it's not good because they don't like your face (Interview with Andrei, November 26, 2017).

The fundamental forces in creating this culture of uncertainty and fear are the larger political, legal, economic, and cultural structures affecting the immigration complex, which the temporary migrant workers both legally and socially. (Chen 2014).

Andrei and his family, which includes his wife and two children, live in the United States under the temporary work program. For years, Andrei has been developing his skills and building a life for his family. However, "...highly skilled migrants often experience downward mobility post-migration because their foreign degrees, credentials, and work experience are not directly transferable to the US job market" (Gubernskaya 2017, page 423). Although Andrei started his Economics of Tourism degree back home in Romania and never finished, there is some doubt that his degree would have sufficed to get him a higher position, making him eligible for an extended work visa and a pathway to citizenship. Even when a migrant worker obtains an H-1 visa, there is still a heightened sense of fear attached. "Although guaranteed to have jobs after arrival, employment-based immigrants in the United States (e.g. H-1 visa holders) may be reluctant to change jobs or ask for raises or promotions for fear of losing their legal status, which is tied to their current employment" (Gubernskaya 2017, page 424). The H-1 visa holder will continue to work for the employer in order to keep a good status. The initial process of obtaining a permanent resident card, or a green card, is directly related to making it through the initial long phase of temporary status. After temporary status has been achieved, a long and unreliable pathway towards permanent status stands in their way, "the worker has to rely on the employers' willingness and ability to sponsor their immigration... this may force them to [take lower] wages for the green card" (Gubernskaya 2017, page 424).

Andrei, found himself stuck within the H-1 visa process after the firing of his original sponsor. The new management at his workplace hesitated to sponsor him through the process. He stated, "It's not hard for them to say yes or no. I just told them, just tell me yes or no. You know? That's it. It's not going to affect anything... it's the worst giving hopes that I am going to get it, and then just you know [not get it] ... [I just want to] be done with it" (Interview with Andrei, November 26, 2017). The uncertainty that he felt during this process undermined his social capital in the United States, providing further ambiguity to his identity and sense of belonging to the United States (Coutin 2013).

Following the recent change in the U.S. government, I detected an overall heightened sense of fear of being sent home among legal immigrants. This feeling is even more pervasive amongst undocumented migrants, where the fear of being deported is a common experience in spite of somebody's racial and national origin (Coutin 2015). Ionel stated, "I was here in Florida when Trump was elected president... I was afraid at one point that they were going to send me home. Especially in the summer with the extension. I was afraid at one point. I was waiting for the extension, and it took like one month, I was asking myself, 'Am I going to get it or not'" (Interview with Ionel, November 18, 2017). Marcella added, "I just hope that this new administration that you have in the White House right now wouldn't affect things so much for us coming... That it wouldn't make the process more difficult. For absolutely no reason... So, I really hope that they are not going to do any of that. But who knows...you can only hope" (Interview with Marcella, November 21, 2017).

Conclusion

Through an ethnographic focus on Romanian immigration that centers immigrants' own stories, I was able to harness the anthropological case study approach to unveil additional intricacies of the immigration debate within the United States, and to demonstrate that immigration policies may have a direct influence on the lives of foreign migrant workers who are not typically taken into account in popular views of the immigrant landscape. I was able to bring a voice to several Romanian migrant workers within the H-2B program, and illustrate how the program has had an effect on their lives. The H-2B visa program within the United States need to be heard from an individual level: The father who is attempting to earn money for his family, the mother seeking an environment that fosters growth and security for her family, or the world traveler who wants to connect with people from other cultures are all given voice and perspective in this account. Individuals who have the power to shape policies directly affecting H-2B visa workers and the H-2B visa program need to have the ability to view the immigration system as encompassing larger social structures that may have a direct impact on the individual level. Hearing these stories from the individual level then, may have an impact on the way policymakers develop and plan the H-2B program in the future.

It is my hope that my paper will promote further research of migrant workers, like my population of Romanian H-2B workers. There is an increasing call for anthropologists to pursue research in immigration, particularly in the context of policy. “[Anthropologists] know that when people lack influence on the policies that affect them, which is often the case for migrants, the results can be disastrous in both practical and conceptual ways, for both the short and long term” (Haines 2013, page 77). Such firsthand accounts such as those that I have collected, which are the specialty of anthropologists make important contributions toward richer understandings. Due to the limited sources within the context of immigration in the H-2B program (Baba 2013; Terry 2016) and the currently changing structural influences of policy, particularly those promulgated by the new administration, further research on the subject of H-2B visa workers in the United States in relation to U.S. immigration policy can be useful not only to academics, but to those NGOs, policymakers, and immigrants themselves seeking humane improvements of immigration policy. With more longitudinal, in-depth ethnographic studies, we anthropologists can help shape the way that new policies are considered and developed, and bring new voices to understand better the international workforce within the H-2B program in the United States.

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APPENDIX 1

Methodology

I began my research by reviewing academic sources on immigration and immigration policy. After identifying relevant topics in the scholarly sources, I coded them and created a map to obtain a visual understanding of the nature of immigration. This promoted the formulation of key themes that guided my ethnographic data collection. I then conducted participant observations, interviews, and a survey with five selected informants representing my target population in order to gain access into the lived experiences of H-2B Romanian immigrants. My participant observations were all conducted within the H-2B work environment in Florida. I gained access through key informants, and worked alongside them in their work environment. I was able to gather data by observing their interactions with other individuals within their cultural group in the country club setting, as well as with workers from other countries.

Interviews took place within the last two months of my study, after I had acquired enough knowledge to formulate specific questions. All interviews were approximately 40 minutes long, and consisted of a set of pre-selected questions, ranging from initial visa application processes, to reflections on the H-2B program, and interactions with the U.S. government and Americans in general (See Appendix 2). All interviews were kept anonymous (pseudonyms were used in place of informants' real names) and were recorded solely for the purpose of transcribing the information in document format. Data collected from the interviews were then coded and used in my analysis.

A follow up voluntary survey was given to informants to gain more insight into their lived experiences, and allow for an opportunity to reflect on their experiences in an anonymous manner. Survey questions were either open-ended or true-and-false, and focused mainly on the H-2B program and interaction with the United States government (See Appendix 3).

All of the informants that I chose for the interviews were observed in my participant observation and selected by purposive sampling. Out of the Romanian migrant workers I worked with during my observations, I chose five main informants with various backgrounds to conduct in-depth interviews and surveys with. I chose these five informants because I had developed good rapport with them, and because they were interested and willing in assisting me with my research project. The length of time within the program was one defining factor for choosing this specific population: all informants have been within the United States for a period between one and ten years. This gave me the opportunity to acquire descriptions from varying levels of experience within the H-2B program. My informants were also all between the ages of 25 and 35, and held varying levels of employment status within their hospitality industry, from bussers to supervisors. Though the study sample was smaller in size, there were large variances within their lived experiences that make the study unique in its application and valuable.

I must clarify that this study suffered from certain limitations. Having to be constrained with the length of one semester, the study was performed under a short period of time, approximately four months, and, therefore, is limited in the depth of data that could potentially be accumulated over the course of a longer period. The study also focuses specifically on the Romanian H-2B population in Florida, which can limit the scope of data that could be analyzed from a larger population. Interviews were also limited to H-2B workers only. Over the course of data review, it became apparent that further interviews with management and program directors could be beneficial to understanding the process of interaction with the current government. However, due to the sensitivity of the subject, and the need to provide anonymity to my informants, I could not interview the persons responsible for my informants' employment.

In addition, immigration is a rapidly changing field of ideas, policies, and laws. The larger amount of new data generated by the recent policy changes by the new administration is still not reflected in the academic literature that informs this paper, as new works were being produced concurrently.

APPENDIX 2

Interview Questions

1. How did you become interested in working in the United States?
2. Can you describe your application process for the visa to work abroad?
3. Can you describe your interaction with the United States government concerning your visa and visa renewal process?
4. Can you describe your experience entering into the country?
5. Can you describe your most recent location where you work in Florida?
6. What is your experience in regards to interactions with Americans in general?
7. What are your thoughts on other Romanians interested in coming to the United States to work?
8. What are your plans upon completion of your work visa in the United States?
9. Do you have any other comments that you would like to make in regards to your experience as an H2B worker?

APPENDIX 3

Survey

Participation in this survey is completely voluntary and anonymous. Pseudonyms will be used in place of names for this survey, any of the documents relating to this survey, and the ethnographic paper that will outcome from the use of this data. Your identity will only be known to the researcher. Information gathered will be used solely by the researcher for use only in the academic course. There are no known risks and/or discomforts associated with this survey. This survey was created to gather more information relating to the experience of Romanian H2B workers in the United States. You are not obligated to share any information you do not wish to share.

1. Have you ever traveled to the United States previously? Yes No
2. If so, when and for what purpose?
3. Did you use a company to come to the United States to work? Yes No
4. Did you travel here by yourself? Yes No
5. If no, whom did you travel with?
6. Before you came to the United States, did you have any initial ideas of what it would be like in the United States? Please describe in the space provided.
7. Why did you choose to emigrate to the United States?
8. Is there anything that you miss about your home country?
9. What conditions of life are improved by working in the United States?
10. Do you feel like what you were offered, was what you received in terms of job employment? Yes No
11. If not, why not?
12. Do you enjoy your place of employment? Yes No
13. Please identify two features of your work that you enjoy and two that you find difficult.
14. Were you in the United States during the presidential race of 2016? Yes No

15. Do you feel like there has been any change in regards to the visa process with the new government? Yes No
16. If yes, please explain.
17. How do you feel your experience with the government in the United States has been on more general terms?
18. If you could give the United States any suggestions in regards to visa workers in the U.S., what might they be?
19. Would you come back to the United States to work on another H2B visa? Yes No

By Completing this survey, you consent with full knowledge of the nature and purpose of the procedures. Once you have completed this survey, please mail it back to the researcher in the envelope provided. Thank you for your participation!