

# Connecting macro sociocultural institutions and the U.S. tourism workforce: A systematic review of the literature

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## Abstract

Tourism's job-creating potential has long been recognized, yet employment remains understudied. This exploratory research attempts to identify research connecting the tourism workforce and macro-level social, cultural, and economic structures in the context of the United States. A systematic review of publications during the years 2000 to 2018 was conducted, categorizing research into micro, meso or macro-focused. Results reveal that although the call for deeper exploration into the tourism workforce began increasing at the turn of the century, researchers have been slow to answer it. Future research suggestions focus on macro-level issues within the workforce that remain glaringly absent.

**Keywords:** Tourism, Workforce, Neoliberalism, Macro, Labor, Sociocultural

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## 1. Introduction

United States (U.S.) tourism workers are increasingly displaying their discontent with issues of low pay, few benefits, job insecurity, safety concerns, and lack of support during external crises such as natural disasters, that disrupt pay, etc., of wage workers. Notable events have increased attention to these issues: Marriot workers protesting for better pay and safer working conditions (see Koerner, 2018; Shoot, 2018; Stinson, 2018); Walt Disney World employees campaigned for raising minimum hourly wages (see Eidelson & Palmeri, 2018; Wattles, 2018); the multiple reports of hourly tourism employees who attempt to navigate the disruption of natural disasters such as Hurricanes Harvey, Florence, and Michael (see Campbell, 2018; Goldberg, 2018); and the continued pressures of gentrification, displacement, and affordable housing in key tourism destinations across the country such as Hilton Head, South Carolina, New Orleans, Louisiana, and Austin, Texas (see Flavelle, 2018; Gotham, 2005; Gotham & Greenberg, 2008; Heffernan & Lurye, 2016; Locke, 2019). These examples reflect a growing awareness of negative workforce issues and conditions that perpetuate the struggle to secure basic human needs, such as food, housing, and safety (see Eidelson & Palmeri, 2018; Velasco, 2018; Mest, 2018).

While the amount of attention gained by the workers is relatively new, the issues are not. These campaigns are rooted in “nearly 100 years of efforts by travel and tourism industries to keep certain types of workers invisible from the people who rely on them the most: tourists” (Camp, 2011, p. 280). The structuring of the tourism workforce as back of the house has largely been intentional in design in the name of creating positive or sanitized tourism experiences (e.g., Edensor, 2001), and one can only hope that the invisibility and precarity these workers face are simply unintended consequences (Baum, 2018; Camp, 2011). However, tourism employee invisibility extends beyond the workplace, as research on the well-being of tourism workers and their connection with social, cultural, and economic structures that shape the workforce in the U.S. is poignantly absent from academic literature. Simply stated, the foundation on which we sustain tourism – the tourism workforce – is not well understood (Marcouiller & Xia, 2008). There is evidence of an increased interest for a more critical exploration in both academic research (see Baum, Kralj, Robinson, & Solnet, 2016; Baum, 2007; Baum, 2015; Bianchi, 2018; Ladkin, 2011; Robinson & MacDonald, 2019), and informal forums such as the recent addition of workforce issues beginning in 2019 to the list of *Ten Important World Tourism Issues to Watch* developed by David Edgell and distributed via the TRINET listserv.

Work is a core element of a community, and is central to individual identity and well-being while locating people within the social stratification system. As the tourism workforce grows, so does its significance in political, economic and social terms, and key issues related to tourism employment will be more exposed to public scrutiny (Baum, 2015). This paper adopts Baum et al.’s (2016) holistic notion of tourism workforce (henceforth, simply ‘workforce’) that extends beyond traditional human resource management definitions. Specifically, workforce is operationalized as,

...the disparate ‘component parts’ of the tourism workforce or employment domain, to include, *inter alia*, the industry’s labor process; human capital policy and planning and labor markets; industrial and employee relations; education, training and the development of talent; service delivery; organizational and occupational cultures, and many others—under the unifying nomenclature of ‘workforce’. (Baum et al., 2016, p. 2)

Hospitality literature regarding workforce issues across various tourism sectors (i.e., food and beverage, accommodation, transportation, entertainment, etc.) is within this context as “all tourists must sleep somewhere, and all tourists must eat”; thus those “...workers who provide these hospitality services are as much a part of the tourism workforce as are the workers at other tourism products” (Baum et al., 2016, p. 4). The focus on employment in the tourism sectors is also reinforced by the fact that the tourism industry has matured into a consumer market through increasing global and national competition, market turbulence, and changes in consumer demand. This requires paying greater attention to the quality of products and services (outputs), and human resources (inputs) (see Baum, 2018). Finally it is worth noting the paradox of what this paper is focusing on: in spite of the fact that tourism’s job-creating potential has long been recognized as a benefit of the industry (Mosedale, 2011; Leiper, 1999; Zampoukos & Ioannides, 2011), employment in the tourism industry has been one of the least studied aspects of tourism (Baum, 2018; Baum et al., 2016; Ballantyne, Packer, & Axelson, 2009; Robinson & MacDonald, 2019).

The purpose of this study is to explore the extent to which the current literature focused on the U.S. tourism workforce is explored at the macro-level. A systematic review of the literature (2000 – 2018) was conducted applying Baum et al.'s (2016), three-tiered framework to categorize workforce research into micro (e.g., worker attitudes or commitment to organization), meso (e.g., recruiting and retaining employees or employee manager interaction), or macro (e.g., human resource development policy, labor mobility, unions). While overlap among the three categories does exist when exploring workforce holistically, this paper investigated the extent that *macro-level* workforce issues have been addressed and suggests directions and opportunities for further research. Macro-level sociocultural institutions are the focus given their importance in framing the overall economic and social policies within tourism destinations, which have implications on who enters the workforce and their subsequent well-being. This paper encourages the examination of economic, political, and social relations of power that exist within tourism, and the potential inequalities and working conditions that they create.

## 2. Literature Review

Employment and job creation has long been a primary rationale for increasing tourism promotion and development (Mosedale, 2016). While economic impact reports tout number of jobs created as a marker of success, researchers argue that the reports do not provide information on the actual employment performance of tourism industries (Hudson & Townsend, 1992; Leiper, 1999; Hall, 2000). Aggregate statistics on total jobs and income generated mask important elements needed for a more complete understanding of jobs and related income (Marcouiller & Xia, 2008). While those in favor of using job numbers as a measurement of impact often maintain that residents welcome 'any' job, rights activists believe it is used to take advantage of a community's financial vulnerability, labelling it predatory. They insist that because most menial jobs—or what some label dirty work—are held by minorities, it could be labeled outright racism (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Dirty work, in the broadest sense, "is any job that is viewed as physically, socially, or morally foul" (Mathe and Scott-Halsell, 2012, p.355; also see Ashforth, Kreiner, Clark & Fugate, 2007). A holistic exploration into the workforce structure beyond job numbers is critical to unraveling how nationality, race, and class have continued to shape who does the dirty work in the U.S. tourism economy (Camp, 2011).

Baum et al.'s (2016) systematic review of the top four tourism journals (4,004 articles) and top four hospitality journals (2,445 articles), as determined by impact factor, from 2005 to 2014 revealed that only two percent of the articles in the tourism journals and 15% of the articles in the hospitality journals were dedicated to the workforce. The majority of such workforce articles had either an individual focus (e.g., worker attitudes or commitment to organization) or an organizational focus (e.g., recruiting and retaining employees or employee manager interaction). In a separate review of 12 major tourism journals from 1994 to 2004 (n=2,868), the main topic areas were tourist/visitor studies, tourism planning, destination image and management, and marketing (Ballantyne et al., 2009). While relative to the overall field of tourism and hospitality research, the number of studies dedicated to the workforce remain small, there are some studies highlighting the low-pay, or exploitative nature of positions which could be categorized as dirty work (see Beddoe, 2004; Burns, 1993; Lee & Kang, 1998; Radivan & Lucas, 1997; Wood, 2000). This includes the working conditions of South African tourism guides (De Beer, Rogerson, &

Rogerson, 2014), the experiences of room attendants in Norwegian hotels (OnsOyen, Mykletun, & Steiro, 2009), and studies focused on the exploitative employment of migrant labor (see Janta, Ladkin, Brown, & Lugosi, 2011; Terry, 2018). In addition, Baum's (2015) reprisal of earlier work (see Baum, 2007) examining the status of work in tourism, which concluded employment practices in tourism continue to be loosely regulated and have poor working conditions (see also Robinson, Martins, Solnet, & Baum, 2019).

Little has been done however, to make the connection of tourism workforce issues to wider social, cultural, economic, and/or political considerations. Examining the historic materialization of inequality that helped shape the structure of the workforce in the U.S., which reflects a "microcosm of social relations" (Zukin 1991, p. 18) as well as the social stratification of tourism workers along different courses of identity not only adds to our understanding of tourism development, but also to our realization of how such historic formations dictated the present-day marginalization of tourism workers (Camp, 2011). As such, these discussions must focus not only on developing countries, but mature destinations in wealthy countries such as the U.S. to be able to move the industry as a whole forward.

### **3. Methodology**

This article is a systematic review of research exploring the U.S. tourism workforce at the macro-level. Using structured and replicable methods, systematic reviews facilitate the synthesis of literature on a topic and identify directions for future research (Crowther, Lim, & Crowther, 2010; Moher, Liberati, Tetzlaff, & Altman, 2009). The *Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis* (PRISMA) approach was used to develop article selection criteria, determine data sources, and report findings.

#### ***3.1 Search procedures and selection criteria***

Literature search results were generated using combinations of the following Boolean phrases and keywords in conjunction with the terms *workforce*, *labor*, and *employee*: travel, tourism, hospitality, United States (America, U.S. or USA), sustainable tourism, neoliberalism, exploitation, social conditions, human rights, social inclusion, social justice, racism, corporate social responsibility, quality of life, social aspects, empowerment, policy, human resource development, and sex workers (prostitution, or sex industry). This wide range of keywords and phrases were chosen to elicit a broad range of perspectives. *Travel*, *tourism*, and *hospitality* were used broadly to ensure inclusive coverage of the literature. Following the reasoning of Baum et al., (2016), hospitality was included as much of what we classify as the tourism workforce is also classified as hospitality (e.g., food and beverage, accommodation). The remaining terms were drawn from previous workforce literature that approach tourism/ hospitality workforce issues at the macro-level as described by Baum et al. (2016). Using this guideline, articles that situate the workforce within certain political, social, cultural or economic ideologies were found.

Titles, keywords, and abstracts were screened to determine which articles met the search criteria using PRISMA guidelines (Moher et al., 2009). If it was unclear whether an article satisfied the criteria, the complete article and references were examined to ensure the article focused

specifically on the workers and societal contexts, and not micro level organizational procedures. To optimize academic rigor, only peer-reviewed journal articles and conference proceedings published between 2000 and 2018 were included. The call for exploration into the tourism workforce began increasing at the turn of the century and therefore the authors reasoned that looking at the past 18 years of research would provide insight as to whether the call is being answered in the U.S. Because books are not necessarily subjected to peer review, books and book chapters were excluded. Also given the nature of the search and limitations of the authors, only articles written in English were included in the search.

### **3.2 Databases and analysis**

To identify and select articles that complied with the review criteria, EBSCO Host was used to simultaneously search Academic Search Complete, Academic Premier Complete, and Hospitality and Tourism Complete. Also, to ensure the comprehensiveness of the articles collected, a snowball method was employed which involved skimming the references from each article to identify articles that fit the criteria but were not located in the initial searches. Descriptive statistics are reported to indicate the total number of studies that met the criteria, as well as to provide counts for the number of articles by method/methodology. Finally, the articles were analyzed to identify major themes and opportunities for future research directions.

## **4. Results**

Initial searches returned 1,818 articles, however after eliminating duplicates and a more robust screening, 146 articles remained (Table 1). Preliminary screening of keywords, titles, and abstracts resulted in 32 potential articles, and further analysis eliminated an additional 13 articles that focused on how societal issues effects the financial bottom line of the business rather than the people who constitute the workforce. Following this, the 19 articles were reviewed more closely; two were removed because the U.S. was one of multiple countries included in the study and thus findings were drawn from a larger global scope, and three were removed as they were found to be more ‘meso’ than ‘macro’ level issues that were the focus for this project. As a result, 14 articles were reviewed and analyzed for discussion in this paper.

### **4.1 The current state of U.S. tourism workforce literature**

A review of existing literature focused on workforce issues in the U.S. at a macro level provides a telling picture regarding sectors of focus, geographic areas studied, methods utilized, and the ways in which the study connects to larger societal issues, policy, and social phenomenon (Table 1).

**Table 1.** Articles by Sector, Geography, Methodology, and Connection to Macro-level Structures

Author	Tourism Sector	Geographic Scope	Methodological Approach	Macro-level Connection
Camp (2011)	Accommodation sector (hotels)	Southern California	Qualitative	Historic policy affecting well-being of workers where historical marginalization of Southern California’s hotel industry helps to understand today’s stratification of hotel workers.

Canziani (2006)	Food service sector (restaurants)	National	Qualitative	Explored language policies and workers' rights, issues of employment discrimination
Demovic (2016)	Food service sector (bars/restaurants)	New Orleans, LA	Qualitative	Normative tourism discourse that promotes alcohol sales and eroticism sets stage the sexual economy
Hsieh et al. (2016)	Accommodation sector (hotels)	Southeastern United States	Qualitative	Well-being among Latina housekeepers and the issues of psychosocial hazards that they face in their hotel work environment
Jones & Kloss(2012)	Accommodation sector (hotels)	San Francisco, CA	Qualitative	Policies affecting labor unions in hotels
Kitterlin et al. (2016)	Foodservice industry	Southeastern United States	Quantitative	Using social learning theory, considered well-being among workers in hospitality specifically related to bullying in the foodservice industry
Lozano (2017)	Accommodation sector (resorts)	Palm Springs, FL	Qualitative	Considered how certain forms of tourism work (i.e., the Afromobile) reinforced racial hierarchy and controlled black mobility
McGinley et al. (2017)	Accommodation sector (hotels)	National	Quantitative	Perceptions towards hospitality work and concerns of remuneration, career advancement, and work-to-life balance that affects attitude towards the type of work. Hospitality work is treated as the social phenomenon.
Ooi et al. (2016)	Accommodation sector (resorts)	Rocky Mountain Region (Steamboat Springs, CO)	Qualitative	Worker well-being outside of the workplace and in the ski resort communities; the issues of seasonality and community
Parnett (2012)	Street performers (musicians)	New Orleans, LA	Qualitative	The impact of new media production policy that shifts tourism development and creates implications for who benefits through jobs

Syndor-Bouso et al. (2011)	Accommodation sector (hotels) and Food Service sector	North central region of the U.S.	Quantitative	Investment in the workforce can help increase resiliency
Terry (2016)	Accommodation sector (hotels)	North and South Carolina	Qualitative	Immigration policy and the use of guest workers under temporary visas and how this interacts with labor hiring structures
Terry (2018)	Accommodation sector (hotels)	North and South Carolina	Qualitative	Immigration policy and the precarity of guest workers
Youn, et al., (2010)	Restaurants (all types)	Oklahoma	Quantitative	Explores how a specific immigration policy in Oklahoma affects restaurants

Almost half the sample (n=7) conducted their studies within hotels, with another two studies focused on the resort setting. Approximately a third of the sample (n=4) dealt with the food-service industry, which included study settings of fast food, casual sit-down dining, and bars. One study focused on street performers, and another attempted to deal with the hospitality industry as a whole, though those samplings drew primarily from hotels and foodservice. Even with the small sample of studies considered here, it becomes apparent that the formalized sectors of the tourism industry tend to have the vast focus of research. While there is less presence of an informal tourism sector, there is a large sector that needs study consideration such as the way Parnett (2012) considered the street musicians in New Orleans and how media production and urban development policies effected hiring and employment trends.

Broadly, the geographic scope of the previous work is diverse: a third of the studies were conducted in the Southeastern U.S. region (n = 5); including the major tourism states of Florida, North Carolina, and South Carolina, two studies represent California and two are specific to New Orleans, Louisiana, both states known for having significant tourism economies. Additionally, one study was conducted in Oklahoma, another in Northcentral U.S., and one undertakes the ski resort community of Steamboat Springs, Colorado in the Rocky Mountain region. Three studies sampled across the U.S. With regard to research approaches, two-thirds (n = 10) of the papers are qualitative in nature and the remainder are quantitative research studies. The qualitative studies used methods such as in-depth, semi-structured interviews, participant observations, archival research, and secondary and legal document analysis. The quantitative studies largely relied on survey methods. No mixed-method designs or conceptual papers were identified.

Finally, with regard to focus area and connection to macro-level issues, there was a diverse set of topics explored, mostly being articulated into studies of certain policies. For example, three articles: Terry (2016; 2018) and Youn, Woods, Zhou and Hardigree (2010), considered immigration policy. Specifically, Terry (2016) examined the use of guest workers under the notion that labor shortage in the U.S. tourism industry has led to reliance on the H-2B and J-1 visas. The visa program can address labor shortage, but also requires a rigid recruitment timeline that subsequently creates a perpetuating cycle of dependency on guest workers. Terry (2018) conducted interviews with guest workers under a lens of precarity, finding that given the

structural nature of the arrangement, the guest workers are vulnerable to inadequate housing, uncertain employment practices, lack of support from program sponsorship, and occasionally, human trafficking. Youn et al., examined the effects of HB 1804 immigration policy on the Oklahoma restaurant industry.

Canziani (2006) explored what kinds of language policies tend to be implemented in the food service sector. The authors found a perceived divergence between the employers' right to set language policies and requirements in the workplace, and the preservation of the civil rights of employees and affected others. Camp (2011) evaluated how historic policy helped to explain the stratification of hotel workers in Southern California and the affects that continues to have on their well-being. Finally, Jones and Kloss (2012), using grounded theory, investigated the policies influencing the degree of polarization among a San Francisco hotel labor-relations stakeholders.

Three articles delved into the larger connection of cultural reproduction to and from tourism. Demovic (2016) used Appadurai's *mediascape* to investigate the intersection of sex work and alcohol sales that has long been a normative part of the discourse on the sexual economy of the French Quarter in New Orleans, Louisiana. Similarly, Parnett (2012) also looked at cultural representation in the media in New Orleans where the changes in media culture and urban renewal policies had profound implications for tourism production and employment within the industry. Lozano (2017) studied the afromobile and how it became an enactment of benign racial hierarchy and subsequently created another mechanism of social control over Black mobility.

Hsieh et al. (2016) centered concerns regarding Latina hotel workers' occupational health, safety, and overall quality-of-life as they connected to work practices that affected their well-being. Likewise, Kitterlin et al. (2016), framed by social learning theory, considered the phenomenon of bullying in the foodservice sector. In another worker well-being article, Ooi et al. (2016) examined the barriers to seasonal workers becoming more permanent residents in a ski resort community. In this case, they used social capital theory to study the interactions of seasonal workers and the rest of the residents, finding the workers were caught in the middle ground of being neither strictly tourists nor workers, causing a sense of exclusion in the community. Syndor-Bouso et al. (2011) examined the impact of natural disasters on industry jobs, considering how the disasters effect employment and wages. The economic recovery of destinations with regard to restabalizing the job market can be very important for tourism worker well-being. Finally, McGinley et al. (2017) studied perceptions of hotel employment among individuals with no past or current work history in hospitality, specifically focusing on whether perception of remuneration, career advancement, and work-to-life affected attitude towards working in the industry.

As these articles show, it is not suffice to point out the precarity of tourism work in an ahistorical manner. The articles discussed begin to uncover the ways in which the industry is inextricably enmeshed with sociocultural institutions that determine who does the dirty work in the U.S. and what that work entails. It is notable, then, that many articles turned to study social and economic policy – a low-hanging but necessary approach to considering how macrolevel issues intersect



with the daily lives of workers. The discussions confirm Ladkin's (2011) contention that tourism, and the workforce, has much to contribute to wider societal debates.

Although there is momentum in exploring tourism workforce concerns, this research supports the call for deeper exploration into the interactions between the workforce, structural forces and sociocultural institutions (Bianchi, 2009; Mosedale, 2016). Potential research agendas for such exploration are discussed in the following section.

## **5. Discussions**

U.S. tourism and hospitality workforce research has focused almost exclusively on the micro or meso level through a business or management lens; filtered from this study via the search criteria, were the tremendous number of articles that considered factors such as organization culture, management practices, human resource management, and worker motivation. Such results mirror the tenets of neoliberal policies, supporting the warning that neoliberalism is 'in here' (the academy) as well as 'out there' (industry) (Peck, 2003). Tourism worlds are contrasting: "ugliness-beauty, pain-pleasure, toil-relaxation, poverty-luxury; fear-comfort, hate-love, sacredness-profanity, and despair-hope" (Pritchard, Morgan, & Ateljevic, 2011, p. 957), and our research should be reflective of this. In the next section, four themes are discussed that are notably absent in the literature yet provide rich opportunity for future research.

### ***5.1 Community structure and public service***

Tourism development's disruption of community in New Orleans and Rocky Mountain ski towns, indicates a need to investigate the neoliberal policies that contribute to gentrification, affordable housing, and accompanying issues that affect the workforce. While Ooi, Mair, and Lang (2016) explored the social barriers to seasonal tourism workers entering a community, there is a overwhelming need to study how capitalist pursuits degrade communities and affect the workforce. The following questions can assist this inquiry:

- What role does community play in a tourism employee's well-being – especially if the individual is seasonal, transient, or otherwise being brought into the community from the outside?
- Do short-term rentals such as Airbnb/VRBO affect a community's social structure? Not only should the sharing economy be considered with regard to accommodation market share, but how it is a factor contributing to gentrification and the affordable housing crisis.
- How are private/non-profit community organizations utilized in maintaining or strengthening social safety nets for the local workforce?
- What is the history of either covert or overt racism in regard to those working in the industry? What role does this play in the social geography of the destination?
- How does any of the above concerns affect the mobility of the workers?

### ***5.2 Workforce policy***

As tourism-related job numbers continue to grow alongside reports of labor shortages in the U.S. (Terry, 2016, 2018), we see a need for further exploration into the relationship between national policies (e.g., immigration, collective bargaining, minimum wage) and the tourism workforce. In order to address workforce needs, we must understand the history and structure of how work in the industry was shaped by macro-level policies. Some examples of how to approach this include:

- How have immigration policies changed and what are the affects on workforce in various U.S. tourism destinations?
- What is the history of organized labor in tourism destinations? Are their models for tourism labor unions (e.g., Las Vegas)?
- How do state policies impact job quality in tourism destinations (e.g., Right to Work)?
- What are the technical/human, social, institutional, and financial capacities needed to address labor shortages at both the national and regional level? Where does the power to access these capacities reside?
- What training is needed to prepare for entry into the workforce as well as upward mobility? What barriers to provide such training exist?

**5.2.1 Sector** The majority of U.S. workforce research focuses on the food and beverage or hotel sectors, which is important, however, there is a broad spectrum of sectors not being addressed. For instance, there is ample research from the business (see Guttentag, 2015) or legal (see Kaplan & Nadler, 2015) standpoint on sharing economy models such as Airbnb, however the informal sharing economy workforce has not been studied. While touted as entrepreneurial in nature, we are beginning to see instances such as Uber drivers earning paid holiday and sick leave (Butler, 2018) and unemployment insurance (Siu, 2018), and Airbnb hosts required to pay lodging taxes (see Blair, 2018; Edgemon, 2018), which begs the question as to how informal the workforce of the informal sharing economy truly is? Beyond the informal sharing economy, there has been an increase in the use of temp agencies, and contract labor (Chen, 2016) that must be explored. The following questions can serve as a roadmap for furthering this line of inquiry:

- What defines U.S. tourism's informal sharing economy workforce?
- What are the barriers to entering and exiting the informal sharing economy workforce (e.g., ownership of a car or home)?
- Is the informal sharing economy undermining or supporting worker well-being in tourism destinations?
- How has neoliberal policies shaped tourism employee-employer agreements (e.g., use of temp agencies or subcontractors)?
- How does the use of subcontracted or temporary employees affect job quality (i.e., wage, benefits, security) and attitudes of other employees?
- How does the U.S. sex economy and tourism destinations coincide?

### **5.3 Vulnerability and Precarity**

While there are studies exploring precarious work in the industry (Hsieh et al., 2016; Terry, 2018), the growing number of examples appearing in news stories such as those outlined in the

opening of this paper remind us the topic remains grossly underrepresented in academic literature. Three topics within vulnerability and precarity important to address are: (a) physical and emotional violence, (b) economic instability/insecurity, and (c) resiliency to man-made and natural disasters. These topics may be better informed by the following questions:

- Who inflicts physical or emotional violence on tourism workers (e.g., tourists, management, co-workers, law enforcement)?
- Who is vulnerable to physical or emotional violence (e.g., women, undocumented immigrants, people of color, the impoverished)?
- How does the intersection of tourism development and neoliberal policy affect economically vulnerable communities?
- How does the structure of the industry affect tourism workers' mobility—both lateral and horizontal—within the U.S. labor force?
- How are tourism workers affected by man-made and natural disasters? What barriers exist to preparedness and recovery? How resilient are communities within tourism destinations given the policies that perpetuate precarity within the workforce?

Research exploring the industry within the U.S. has primarily considered the workforce from a micro or meso standpoint. The above questions outline a path to better understanding the various complexities of the tourism workforce, and how they relate to broader social, cultural and economic institutions that shape the lived experience of workers. In addition, an overarching theme across the literature is the alarming absence of the workers' voices. When pursuing the above questions, researchers should include participatory research methodologies, which will provide insight into the lived experiences and how they shape, and/or perpetuate stereotypes within the industry.

## 6. Conclusions

This article creates a baseline of the current state of macro-level U.S. workforce research and suggests future research directions and guiding questions. This study was limited to articles that fit the defined search criteria pertaining to the tourism and hospitality workforce and its connection to wider social, cultural and economic institutions. While the literature addressing this topic is increasing internationally, U.S. specific research is needed due to the size of the U.S. industry as well as its global influence. There are important limitations to systematic reviews to be aware of, including that they are influenced by the authors' subjectivities, which subsequently affects the interpretation and meaning-making of each articles' findings (see Mallet, Hagen-Zanker, & Duvendack, 2012). However, to increase consistency, the authors sought agreement among interpretation of article findings and overall themes (Moher et al., 2009).

Tourism remains a sector where very poor employment practices persist, and changes over the past 30 years have allowed tourism work and employment to remain at the margins of many societies. Tourism scholarship in the U.S. should leverage the ambiguities within the social fields, taking a critical look toward the social, cultural and economic policies and institutions that continue to shape the industry. First however, we must acknowledge our operation within the neoliberal system, and the ways in which we may or may not be internalizing the discourse, as we need free and critical thought on the issues. This is important for our own morality and the industry's

sustainability. As popular destinations such as Myrtle Beach, SC and Jackson, WY struggle with labor shortages, and businesses in Key West, FL are closing due to slow recovery from a natural disaster, we can no longer approach the industry in positive isolation and must investigate these intricacies looking critically at the industry to maintain and elevate the benefits it is capable of providing the workforce.

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