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# Creative Based Entrepreneurship: The Impact Of Acculturation On Opportunity Engagement, The Case Of Recent Mexican Immigrants To The United States

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CREATIVE BASED ENTREPRENEURSHIP: THE IMPACT OF ACCULTURATION ON  
OPPORTUNITY ENGAGEMENT, THE CASE OF RECENT MEXICAN  
IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

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2015

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OPPORTUNITY ENGAGEMENT: THE CASE OF RECENT MEXICAN  
IMMIGRANTS TO THE UNITED STATES

by

MICHELLE LYNN WURSTER RUIZ, BA, MBA

DISSERTATION

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## **Abstract**

Opportunity recognition is a fundamental process of entrepreneurship. It is a continuum creative product that goes from the conception of an idea to its transformation into a process of starting and operating a business (Dimov 2007). Its importance comes from the consideration not only of the entrepreneur, but also of the context where he or she operates, the social context where the individual discusses, and evaluates his/her ideas. One of the more neglected aspects of research regarding creative opportunity recognition is the context, both cultural and social, where this opportunity is created and recognized. Among several studies that have examined this aspect of the entrepreneurial process, one has focus in making propositions about creative perspective based entrepreneurship and it is the work by Dimov (2007). Dimov (2007) advanced three propositions about creative entrepreneurship which have been partially validated. This dissertation focuses on the second proposition, which discusses how the immediate context where the entrepreneur shapes his or her thinking and engaging with the individual's knowledge and learning abilities. Based on this proposition, this dissertation looks at one specific context, that of Mexican immigrants in The United States of America and examines the effects of acculturation on potential entrepreneurship opportunity.

The preliminary data analysis shows initial support for the hypothesized relationship between acculturation and engagement in a potential opportunity of entrepreneurship. Data also shows a strong correlation between entrepreneurship intent and other variables such as unemployment and number of community connections in the host country (USA in this case). Other results include a correlation between language preference and community relations, but not with entrepreneurship activity.

Limitation of the research and future potential research is also included in this dissertation.

## Table of Contents

Acknowledgements .....	iv
Abstract .....	iv
Table of Contents .....	vi-vii
List of Tables .....	viii
List of Figures .....	ix
Introdction .....	1-4
Gap in Literature .....	5-8
Research Questions .....	9-10
Literature Review .....	11-31
1.1  Entrepreneuership .....	11-13
1.2  Entrepreneuership Opportunity .....	13-14
1.3  Creativity .....	14-17
1.4  Creativity in Entrepreneurship .....	17-19
1.5  Creativity Context Entrepreneurship .....	19-21
1.6  Networks .....	21-22
2.1  Immigration .....	22-24
2.2  Acculturation .....	24-25
2.3  Social Capital .....	26-27
3.1  Immigrant Job Seeking Behavior .....	27-28
3.2  Variables of Immigrant Job Search .....	28-31
Theoretical Development .....	32-36
Methods .....	37-41
1.1  Procedure .....	37-38
1.2  Measures .....	38-41
Results .....	42-49
1.1  Demographic Data .....	42-43
1.2  Data Analysis .....	43-44

1.3 Tests of Hypotheses .....	45-49
Conclusions.....	50-52
1.1 Practical Implications.....	52
Limitations and Future Research .....	53-54
1.1 Limitations .....	53
1.2 Future Research .....	53-54
Works Cited .....	55-64
Vita.....	65



## **List of Tables**

Table 1.1: Potential Future Research Involving Opportunities.....	6
Table 2.1: Four Factors of Understanding the Individuality of Creativity.....	16
Table 3.1: Three Propositions of Creative Entrepreneurship.....	18
Table 4.1: Respondents' Demographic Data.....	43
Table 5.1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations.....	45
Table 6.1: Effects on US Business Ownership.....	46
Table 7.1: Moderating Effects of Languages on Job Search Information on US Business Ownership.....	47
Table 8.1: Collinearity Statistics.....	48

## **List of Figures**

Figure 1.1: Organizing Framework of Most Recent Topics.....	8
Figure 2.1: Berry's Modes of Acculturation .....	26
Figure 3.1: Conceptual Model .....	33

## **Introduction**

The United States is one of the major destination locations for immigrant entrepreneurs, since regulations have been passed at the local and national level to support entrepreneurship (Chrysostome and Lin, 2010). During economically difficult periods, citizens of the United States have the urge to engage in protectionism and restrict borders to immigrants as a means of protecting jobs, even though this urge is often counterproductive when looking to grow and strengthen the local economy, since this leads to a limitation on new entrepreneurship opportunities by immigrants (Chrysostome and Lin, 2010). Gunter (2012) sees an entrepreneur as an individual who recognizes an opportunity in an uncertain environment and uses the opportunity to create a venture by exploiting the opportunity. Eckhardt and Shane (2003) defined entrepreneurship opportunity as a situation where new goods, services, raw materials, markets, and organizational methods can be introduced through the formation of new means, ends, or means-ends relationships.

One of the fastest growing groups of entrepreneurs in the United States are those who have emigrated from another country and are taking opportunities of entrepreneurship in their host country. Businesses owned by Latin American immigrants are among the fastest growing business segments, up over 80% in the last ten years (United States Census, 2010). Additionally, the Latin American population, defined as a person of Cuban, Mexican, Puerto Rican, South or Central American, or other Spanish culture or origin regardless of race (United States Census, 2010), is the fastest growing population in the United States, growing four times faster than the national growth rate. Mexican immigrants are not only growing in population size, but in their purchasing power and opportunities to engage in entrepreneurship (United States Census, 2010).

Immigrants to the U.S. can bring a fresh perspective that can translate into new ideas for businesses and new businesses for the communities (Kauffman Foundation, 2014).

This differentiation is important when attempting to predict which individual is more likely to become an entrepreneur even though most people fail to see the opportunity (Gunter, 2012). Short, Ketchen, Shook, and Ireland (2010) developed a comprehensive view of the work within entrepreneurship opportunity, beginning with the determination that a large amount of literature centered around the idea that opportunity is a central concept within the entrepreneurship field. Short et al. (2010) summarized that how opportunities are presented, whether as a concrete reality or as an enactment of someone's vision, are the primary methods of seeing an opportunity (Alvarez and Barney, 2007). Eckhardt and Shane (2003) note that researchers are moving away from approaches that focus on identifying which individuals will prefer to become entrepreneurs and are moving towards requiring scholars to explain the role that opportunity plays in an entrepreneurship process. The opportunity component of entrepreneurship is one of the two types of entrepreneurship processes identified by Ucbasaran, Westhead, and Wright (2001). Even though the recognition of an available opportunity is the first step for a future entrepreneur (Christensen, Madsen, and Peterson, 1994; Shane and Venkataraman, 2000), little research has been done on the topic (Ucbasaran, Westhead, and Wright, 2001).

There are many fields interested in what factors surround opportunity, but in terms of entrepreneurship, understanding the recognition of opportunities can help to eliminate the hidden fundamental attribution error. This kind of assumption, the underestimation of the power of situations and situational pressures, is inherent in entrepreneurship literature focused at the behaviors of others (Ross, 1977). Fundamental attribution error of entrepreneurship is

commonly seen in the praise given to the great entrepreneurs for their individual skills and characteristics, ignoring the role that the environment played in the idea development (Dimov, 2007). The recognition of an opportunity, specifically those opportunities that are a great deviation from the norm, is an area of research that is prone to this flawed line of thought. Schumpeter (1934) saw the entrepreneur as someone with a vision for the future, a person who is always searching for ideas that will change the fabric of the world, leaving out the context that the entrepreneur worked within.

Ideas born from entrepreneurship opportunities cannot be fully understood until after the work has been done, since the initial idea and the final product are not the same. The shape and form of these business ideas is changed through the entrepreneurship process and it is unrealistic to think otherwise. The same can be said about the assumption that individuals develop their ideas without influence from the environment around them (Dimov, 2007). Entrepreneurship is a social process that is filled with discussion and interpretation. The entrepreneur goes through many steps in order to polish the idea from the beginning of the process to the final product. A potential entrepreneur does not think and act alone, but are actively engaged in exchanges with the community around him or her. Research must go beyond the single person and single insight explanation for an entrepreneurship opportunity being actualized. Dimov (2007) began to fill this research gap, by developing three propositions which focused on the idea that opportunities in waiting can be shaped by the world surrounding the individual, the current events of the individual's life, and his or her personality characteristics.

This paper expands entrepreneurship research theory and application in two ways: first it will begin to address Dimov's (2007) second proposition, that the individual's context affects how he or she interprets and understands the potential entrepreneurship opportunities and how

the opportunity identification is shaped through the individual's specific knowledge and learning abilities. This paper will explore the impact an individual's context has on his or her decision to engage in entrepreneurship activities. This examination will be conducted by looking at a small portion of the larger population and focusing on potential Mexican immigrant entrepreneurs. As a group, Mexican immigrant entrepreneurs develop entrepreneurial opportunities at one of the highest rates compared to other population groups based on ethnicity (Survey of Business Owners Special Report 2007, 2012). The data gathered from this group could offer an insight into the larger application of Dimov's (2007) second proposition.

Secondly, this paper will add to current entrepreneurship literature by describing how the potential entrepreneur receives information on potential employment opportunities acts as a moderating effect to the larger relationship between an immigrant's level of acculturation and his or her likelihood of identifying an entrepreneurship opportunity. By looking at how information is communicated and understood by Mexican immigrants, this paper adds to the understanding of international effects on entrepreneurship opportunity. Specifically, this paper addresses four fundamental issues: 1. the impact of an entrepreneur's context, 2. the role of moderating factors within this larger relationship, 3. expanding the current understanding of opportunity identification, and 4. the role of immigration on entrepreneurship opportunity engagement. In doing so, this paper shows the implications of creative perspective based entrepreneurship within the field and its effect.

## **Gap in Literature**

There have been multiple calls to fill research gaps in entrepreneurship research of opportunity engagement (Ireland and Webb, 2007; Short et al., 2010; Dimov, 2007). The use of quantitative techniques for understanding why an individual chooses to engage in an opportunity could offer a clearer understanding of the antecedents surrounding the opportunity engagement has been of particular interest (Short et al., 2010). Current entrepreneur research has assumed that entrepreneurs are different, possibly better, at the process used to generate ideas (Dimov, 2007). The common belief is that entrepreneurs see the world through unique lenses (Baron, 2004; Mitchell, Busenitz, Lant, McDougall, Morse, and Smith, 2002; Shaver and Scott, 1991). There are no clarifications, other than assumptions, as to why this belief is held. Alternatively, there is a growing desire to understand how entrepreneurs use mental models to simplify the process of piecing together unconnected bits of information. This helps entrepreneurs identify and develop new products and services, filling a gap in the marketplace (Mitchell et al., 2002).

Dimov (2007) suggested that the biggest gap is the black box between the first insight and when the idea ends up being implemented. It is noted that retroactive accounts of how an entrepreneur developed an idea further adds to this lack of understanding. Previous research has suggested that there is a need to separate the emergence and success of entrepreneurs, search for more proximate or mediating predictors of specific behaviors, to take into consideration situational demands, and finally to acknowledge the inherent diversity among entrepreneurs (Rauch and Frese, 2000; Stewart and Roth, 2001).

This paper adds to the entrepreneurship literature available on the topics of situational context and International effects. An understanding for the creative product and situation surrounding the individual could result in deeper understanding of entrepreneurship research.

Table 1.1: Short et al. (2010) Table of Potential Future Research Involving Opportunities.

Field	General Focus of Research on Entrepreneurship	Possible Research Questions
Accounting	Information disclosure and auditing during the IPO process	How does the relative attractiveness of a firm's opportunities shape how information is framed during disclosure?
Anthropology	The relationship between cultures and entrepreneurship	How is the concept of opportunity conceived of in different cultures and different languages? How do these different conceptions shape subsequent entrepreneurship behavior?
Economics	The relationship of institutions and economic growth with entrepreneurship	How do opportunities at the national level of analysis shape opportunities at the firm level?
Finance	The relationship between financial capital and entrepreneurship	Is the relationship between the attractiveness of an opportunity and the investment funds available to support the opportunity linear, exponential, or of some other form?
Organizational behavior	Diagnosing the cognitions and behaviors of entrepreneurs and their employees	Does an individual's tendency to interpret trends as threats or opportunities predict his or her success as an entrepreneur?
Human resource management	Staffing of entrepreneurship firms	How do applicants assess their own and the firm's future opportunities when deciding whether to join the firm?
Marketing	The relationship between market orientation and entrepreneurship	Does an "opportunity orientation" exist and if so does it interact with market orientation?
Operations management	The internal processes of entrepreneurship firms	Are certain types of supply chains better structured to capitalize on opportunities than others?
Political science	The influence of public policy on entrepreneurship	What public policy approaches create opportunities? Under what conditions should additional emphasis be given to these approaches?
Psychology	Understanding entrepreneurs' personalities	To what extent do key personality features such as locus of control and tolerance for ambiguity influence the tendency to detect and enact opportunities?
Sociology	Understanding the societal context within which entrepreneurship takes place	How does the concept of opportunity differ across time and across different types of social systems?



There is also a call to fill an entrepreneurship literature gap in terms of cross-disciplinary approaches to research on opportunities (Ireland and Webb, 2007; Short et al., 2010). Short et al. (2010) said that some cross-disciplinary approaches are better suited for some domains, compared to others. In the case of entrepreneurship, these different approaches are not only useful, but essential for the further development of entrepreneurship theory. Ireland and Webb (2007) developed a series of other social science fields that could offer a benefit to entrepreneurship theory and many of those topics have been taken up by researchers, which Short et al. (2010) put into a table (see Table 1). One of the areas of cross-disciplinary application for entrepreneurship missing from the series developed by Ireland and Webb (2007) was International Business. Keupp and Gassmann (2009) developed a framework outlining the counts of literature published within International entrepreneurship, as a means to show what areas are still in need of further development (see Figure 1). This cross-disciplinary gap is explored in this paper, specifically how an immigrant's level of acculturation can impact their willingness to seize opportunities as framed by their context. By looking at a smaller portion of the larger population (Mexican immigrants), this paper begins exploring the validity of Dimov's (2007) second proposition. Using survey data collected by the Pew Research Center, the effect of acculturation on entrepreneurship opportunity engagement is assessed using the number of familial ties the immigrant has in the area he or she lives in and his or her fluency level in the language of the host country. The determination of whether the immigrant engaged in a potential opportunity of entrepreneurship is determined by whether the respondent is a current business owner. The survey data only captured current business owners, so immigrants who owned a business which might have failed or immigrants who were unable to operationalize an entrepreneurship opportunity were not identified.

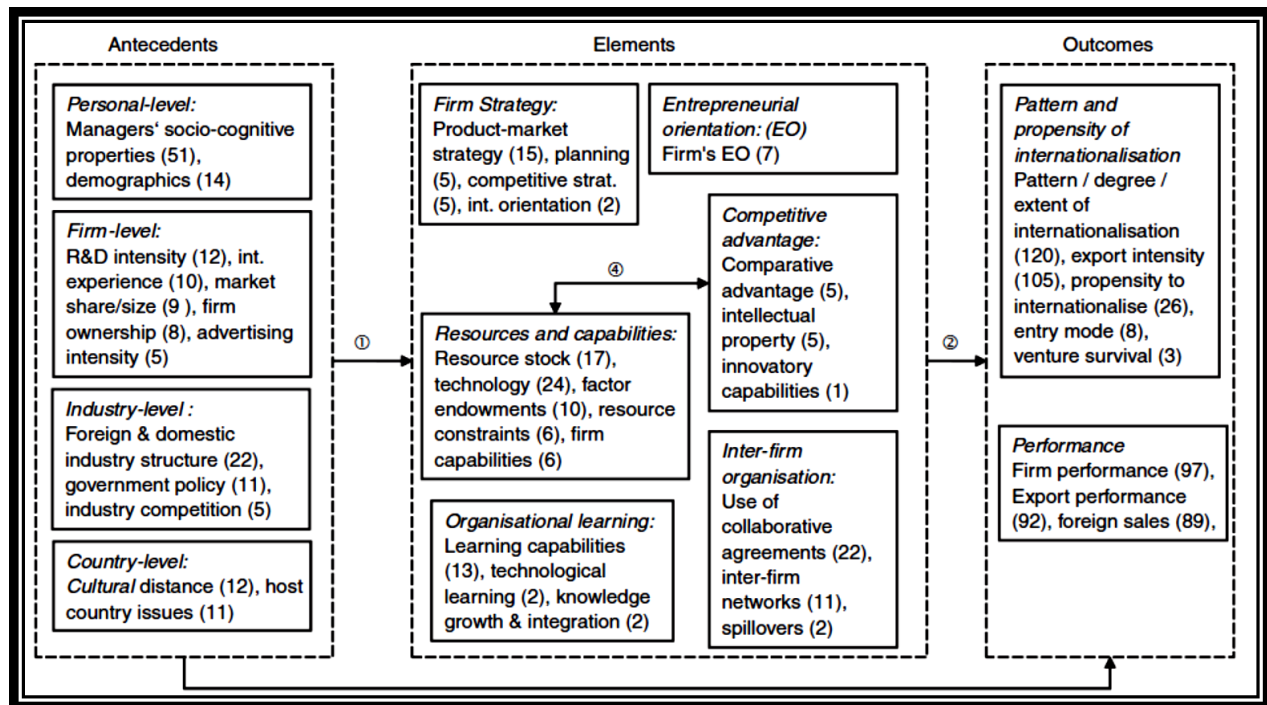


Figure 1.1: Organizing framework of most recent topics.  
From: Keupp, M. M. and Gassmann, O. (2009)

This paper continues to bridge the research gap of international entrepreneurship by looking at the effects of information distribution as a moderating variable. Typically, seen as an independent variable in research models, using modes of information distribution to determine the impact on the strength of the primary relationship adds to the understanding of International Business and International Entrepreneurship. By looking at the moderating effect of how immigrants acquire information about potential job opportunities shines light into an area where there is a current lack of research, this allows further understanding of the effects of the access an immigrant has to information about employment opportunities.

## **Research Questions**

The research questions presented in this paper attempts to answer the multiple calls for additional research and fill the gap in current entrepreneurship theory. The primary research question addressed in this dissertation reflects on the second proposition referenced by Dimov (2007), specifically: In what ways does the situational context of a Mexican immigrant influence his or her engagement in entrepreneurship activity? This type of research is necessary, not just for the larger theoretical implications that come from a greater understanding of the research application, but also for the opportunities utilized in policy development of immigrant legislation; as well as the larger social ramifications that occur when immigrant entrepreneurship is not well understood.

RQ1: How does an immigrant's situational context impact his or her ability to take advantage of entrepreneurship opportunities?

The secondary research question approached in this dissertation relates to the access to information about potential job opportunities and how this information can influence the immigrant's likelihood of engaging in entrepreneurship activity. This research question is important on many levels. From an International Business application, understanding the role that availability of information plays on immigrant entrepreneurship is a topic of much current discussion (Adamuti-Trache, 2013; Guerrero and Rothstein, 2012; Lindemann and Kogan, 2013; Delander, Hammarstedt, Mansson, and Nyberg, 2005) . Managerial applications are seen in terms of recruitment and employment seeking applications. Through the role that the variety of outlets for information about potential employment opportunities play as a moderator, hiring

managers can have a greater understanding of how their actions play a role in the type and number of potential applicants they are reaching. Finally, at an individual level, if an immigrant understands the effects of information availability on potential employment opportunities changes the likelihood of seeking opportunities in entrepreneurship, then he or she might be able to take steps to gather additional information.

RQ2: What role does the distribution method of information concerning potential employment opportunities play in the situational context of a potential entrepreneur?

The next sections of this dissertation will look at where these research questions fit into the current literature and the hypotheses that guide the research. Methodology and data testing will follow after that. The paper will conclude with the findings, conclusion, limitations, and suggestions for future research.

## **Literature Review**

This literature review includes the research impacting the variables of interest in this dissertation in order to further understand the reasoning behind the relationships studied in this paper. Beginning with the foundations of entrepreneurship, then opportunity entrepreneurship, the role creativity plays in identifying these potential opportunities, with a special focus on the role of creativity in entrepreneurship context. Next, this paper will explore immigration research and look at the distinctions between acculturation and assimilation. This research leads into the final section of the literature review, which focuses on immigrant job search behavior and the factors that surround an immigrant job search.

### **1.1 Entrepreneurship**

Entrepreneurship is a multidisciplinary field (Ibarreche, 2013). Sociology, industrial organization, management, and microeconomics have all added to the research in an effort to understand the roots of a new business's success or failure (Gunter, 2012). Entrepreneurs are major drivers of economic activity and without entrepreneurs efficient economic activity and growth would be negatively impacted (Gunter 2012). Reasons for the success or failure of a business is a well-researched stream, trying to predict what leads a new business to succeed or fail (Watson and Everett, 1996; Watson, 2003), but even with this intense focus only half of new ventures ever become a thriving business (Aldrich, 1999). The basic nature behind entrepreneur innovations is uncertain. Gunter (2012) sees entrepreneurship as the missing link between an individual's knowledge accumulation and economic growth. The value of the innovation can vary based on the entrepreneur, because of the combination of the inherent uncertainty and the individual's perception. This fluctuation makes assessing an accurate prediction of the true

economic value of an innovation and whether there is a significant return difficult (Gunter, 2012).

Iverson, Jorgensen, and Malchow-Moeller (2007) see entrepreneurship as complex activities that exhibit considerable variation in the associated processes and outcomes. The field of entrepreneurship is fundamental to the regional economic development and the policies of entrepreneurship should look at the dimensions of different regions (Tamasy, 2006, Glaeser, Kerr, and Ponzetto, 2010; Friere-Gibb and Nielson, 2013). The development of employment opportunities and innovative effects can be seen as a result of entrepreneurship (Schumpeter, 1934; Acs and Audretsch, 1988; Acs, Desai, Hessels, 2008). The impacts of entrepreneurship can vary depending on the institutional context and level of economic development (Acs et al., 2008).

A practice based on the insights of the participants, entrepreneurship is encouraged at many corporations, where the purpose is to create an environment that encourages intrapreneurship (organization driven entrepreneurship), but even in this supported setting, failure is common (Baumol, 2010). Although, in an intrapreneurship situation, there is a larger company's backing, support and infrastructure, a division of labor exists between the individual entrepreneurs engaged in innovation. The supporting firm also has the power to identify which (if any) the products to move to the mass market (Gunter, 2012). The individual intrapreneur is still operating under the same level of uncertainty that is synonymous with entrepreneurship. Entrepreneurship is characterized by business-related judgmental decisions where no perfect answer exists and accessing information is costly (Cantillon, 2001, Casson, Yeung, Basu, and Wadeson, 2006).

A full understanding of the factors that precede an entrepreneurship engagement have not always been taken into account in prior research studies. Most studies are set in urban areas, which could have a positive impact on entrepreneurship. There are elements in an urban setting that are more conducive to entrepreneurial types of activity (i.e. higher economic performance, exponential growth) (Glaeser et al., 2010). The environment within any given area shapes the economy and can dramatically change the dynamics of entrepreneurship. Interdependencies between economic development and institutions can impact the quality of governance, access to resources, and the perceptions of entrepreneurs (Acs et al., 2008).

## **1.2 Opportunity Entrepreneurship**

This section will look at how an entrepreneur identifies a potential opportunity of entrepreneurship has been explored at an empirical and theoretical level. The current definition of entrepreneurship opportunity, developed by Eckhardt and Shane (2003), identifies situations where new goods, services, raw materials, markets, and organizing methods can be introduced through the formation of new means, ends, or means-ends relationships.

Various conceptual frameworks have been used to explain entrepreneurship opportunity. Lumpkin and Lichtenstein (2005) developed their own framework using organizational learning and built three approaches (behavioral, cognitive, and action learning) to develop a creativity based model of opportunity recognition which included the discovery and formation phases of the process. Dimov (2007) built on the work from Lumpkin and Lichtenstein (2005) and proposed that the generation of opportunities is a function of contextual and social influences, rather than just the insights of an individual.

Dimov (2007) focused on the creativity rooted in the opportunity identification and the contextual events surrounding the entrepreneurship decision and attempted to establish a new

conceptual ground for the study of entrepreneurship opportunity. By looking at gradual development of opportunities and combining creativity with entrepreneurship, stronger entrepreneurship ideas might be developed. Dimov (2007) conceptualized the presence of uncertainty and the need of the individual to act, emphasizing the situational and social influences, which direct attention, provide new information, interpretations, and reinforce beliefs. Dimov (2007) explained that the entrepreneurship opportunity goes beyond the single person, single insight, explanation previously relied on in entrepreneurship theory. Opportunities can be seen through a stream of constantly developing ideas, which can be shaped through social interactions, creative insights, and various other actions.

Opportunity recognition and idea formation were found to be complementary (Chiasson and Saunders, 2005). The idea that opportunities are not developed independently of the world around them was explored by Sarason, Dean, and Dillard (2006) who saw opportunities arising from coevolution between the entrepreneur and the social systems. Aldrich and Cliff (2003) worked on a similar idea and found that transformations in the degree of family embeddedness may lead to the emergence and recognition of new entrepreneurship opportunities. Eckhardt and Shane (2003) developed a typology was presented for opportunities to manifest themselves within three areas: changes in the product/service markets, different sources of opportunity, and how actors initiate change in opportunities. Oviatt and McDougall (2005) determined that entrepreneurship opportunities are the starting point that drives a model of International entrepreneurship and determines the speed of internationalization.

### **1.3 Creativity**

The role of creativity and creative thinking in identifying a potential opportunity of entrepreneurship has been explored as a primary factor of what allows one individual to see an



opportunity, but another individual does not recognize the value. De Bono (1969) wrote that there are two types of information systems, passive and active. Most systems used by individuals are passive, since the information is recorded on a surface and remains passive in its existence until the point of utilization. In an active system, information and the surface are both active. This information changes the surface, which then changes how the new information is received, ultimately leading to a self-organizing system; De Bono (1969) uses an example of rain falling onto the ground, since eventually the rain will organize itself and flow into larger bodies of water.

These self-organized systems turn into patterns, typically asymmetrical patterns. The majority of people follow the main path, without giving pause to the noise to the side of them, but in this noise lies the creativity which can be only be seen as logical in hindsight. Only by appreciating these ideas in hindsight, the inherent patterns from self-organized systems can be lost in the mainstream way of thinking. De Bono (1969) describes cutting across these patterns as lateral thinking, a form of thinking which goes beyond natural brain behavior. He concluded that creativity is not a natural process in the brain, since creativity goes against the flow of natural thought processes. Understanding how individuals come to realize “creative decisions” is important for the larger understanding of decision making in entrepreneurship, since the ideas developed by potential entrepreneurs cut across the established patterns of thinking to envision new ways of approaching a topic.

Creativity is an instrumental component of identifying opportunities in entrepreneurship. Each of the four factors helps to understand the creativity of an individual are key components to entrepreneurship (refer to table 2). Personality is accepted as an important predictor of entrepreneurship behavior, when specific mediating factors are considered (Baum, Locke, and

Smith, 2001). The specific personality factors of interest are the need for achievement, locus of control, risk propensity, and tolerance for ambiguity (Begley and Boyd 1987; Brockhaus, 1982; McClelland, 1961; Shaver and Scott, 1991).

Table 2.1: Four factors of understanding the creativity of an individual.

Personality	Personality traits have been used as a one of the oldest research traditions in entrepreneurship. The factors include a variety of variables that have been used to identify the personality of creative persons or great leaders.
Intrinsic Motivation	Intrinsic motivation has been determined as fundamental for achieving creative outcomes. It is inconceivable to think that people would recognize opportunities if they do not value entrepreneurship as a career option.
Knowledge	Knowledge may be a component for the recognition of opportunities. Knowledge is intertwined with the way it is applied and extended in particular situations.
Cognitive Skills and Abilities	Beyond individual differences, creative cognition in opportunity conception may involve conceptual combination, analogy, and initial problem formulation. Previous research has focused on how entrepreneurs use simplifying mental models to piece together previously unconnected information that helps them to identify and invent new products or services, and to assemble the necessary resources to start and grow businesses.

Adapted from: Dimov, D. (2007).

Intrinsic motivation is fundamental for achieving creative outcomes, in a way that it is not possible to think that people would recognize opportunities if the individual does not value entrepreneurship as a career option (Dimov, 2007). Shepard and DeTienne (2005) found that when there was a promise of financial rewards, the innovativeness of the ideas was based on the prior knowledge held by the individual. Suggesting that the effect of incentives may be based on

either the intrinsic motivation one has, or the specific situation in which the individual finds themselves (Dimov, 2007).

Prior knowledge has been linked to the construct of alertness, showing the positive relationship between knowledge and creativity in entrepreneurship research (Kirzner, 1985). Knowledge itself may not be a sufficient condition for the recognition of opportunities and could be would be dependent on the application in specific situations (Weisberg 1999; Dimov, 2007). There is evidence to support the belief that too much knowledge could limit an individual's ability to develop new and unusual solutions (Frensch and Sternberg, 1989) and that creativity could be limited by detailed knowledge and opportunity, based on the individual's method of learning (Corbett, 2006; Dimov, 2004; Ko and Butler, 2006).

Finally, an individual's cognitive skills and abilities have been found to be associated with creative outcomes in entrepreneurship research (Dimov, 2007). Entrepreneurs use heuristics more often than managers (Busenitz and Barney, 1997) and cognitive biases are essential components of risk perception and the decision to start a venture (Keh, Foo, and Lim, 2002; Simon, Houghton, and Aquino, 2000). The different learning styles of entrepreneurs help them absorb and process information differently, which could lead them to be more sensitive to some opportunity types over others (Corbett, 2005, 2006; Dimov, 2004; Ko and Butler, 2006).

#### **1.4 Creativity in Entrepreneurship**

Dimov (2007) developed three propositions to focus on the role that creativity played in the process of opportunity identification and how the contextual events surrounding the entrepreneurship decision can affect the likelihood of opportunity engagement (see Table 3). Dimov's (2007) first proposition frames opportunity as the progress along a continuum of idea development for starting and opening a business. This idea and action combination described in

the process is what can help distinguish between a small insight and a fully shaped idea. Dimov (2007) sees the expressed ideas as an end in themselves; a necessary, though not sufficient condition for an opportunity. To be sufficient, there needs to be a continuous accumulation of evidence and conviction of: 1. commercial viability, 2. existence of a potential market, 3. ability to generate profit, and 4. ability to sustain this profit even with additional competition in the market. An opportunity is seen when the idea made to be a reality.

Table 3.1: Three propositions of creative entrepreneurship.

Proposition 1	Opportunity, as a creative product in entrepreneurship, is the progress (idea + action) along a continuum ranging from an initial insight to a fully shaped idea about starting and operating a business.
Proposition 2	The individual's immediate context—task environment and the information and attention it affords—affects the processes of intuiting and interpreting through shaping the individual's thinking and engaging (enhancing or impeding) with the individual's specific knowledge and learning abilities.
Proposition 3	The social context—the social audience with which individuals engage to discuss their ideas—affects the processes of interpreting and integrating through providing information, interpretation, resources, and reinforcement that help shape/develop the individuals' ideas.

*Adapted from: Dimov, D. (2007).*

Dimov's (2007) second proposition is the focus of this dissertation and will be discussed at greater length in the next section of this paper. This proposition is based on the belief that how an idea is developed should not be the entire focus and that the individual's context plays a role previously unrealized. By looking at how the context and social influences of a potential entrepreneur interact, these contextual influences show the role that the individual's environment and social influences play in the entrepreneur's interactions. Dimov (2007) used those two

influences as drivers for the idea development process, so that contextual and social influences direct attention, provide new information, develop new interpretations, and reinforce the beliefs held. This combination gave the new entrepreneur the information that could help him or her resolve uncertainty at any of the stages in the opportunity development.

The third proposition Dimov (2007) explored was the idea of social influences on idea shaping. Dimov (2007) held that entrepreneurs work to explain where the beginning of the idea comes from. The entrepreneurs interact not only with their immediate network, but with a larger social network to include potential stakeholders in the process of developing the idea (Greve and Salaff, 2003). Dimov (2007) said that the initial idea could change shape depending on who the entrepreneur selects into his or her group of influential people. Dimov (2007) saw these influences playing a possible role in the following ways; first other people can provide pieces of information, not currently possessed by the entrepreneur. This information could offer benefits, such as giving access to diverse or novel information (Burt, 1992), referrals (Shane and Cable, 2002), and timeliness (Gargiulo and Benassi, 2000). Secondly, the larger the knowledge base the entrepreneur can access, the wider the interpretations that the idea could be seen through. The social influences have the potential to increase or decrease the scope of the initial idea (Shane and Cable, 2002; Stuart, Hoang, and Hybels, 1999). Finally, the social circle of the entrepreneur may become instrumental in motivating the entrepreneur to further develop the initial idea. This additional prodding could be done through the group's social rules, standards, and expectations of members (Dimov, 2007).

### **1.5 Creativity Context Entrepreneurship**

The second proposition suggested by Dimov (2007) is the focus of this dissertation. Based on the idea that the creative portion of idea shaping in entrepreneurship is not enough,

Dimov (2007) held that the context the potential entrepreneur is in during the idea conception and development plays a large role in the shaping. Woodman and Schoenfeldt (1989) developed an interactionist model of creativity, which showed how contextual and social influences create the creative context. The contextual influences show the more immediate task conditions of entrepreneur and the social influences represent the larger interactions the entrepreneur exists within. Dimov (2007) took those two influences as drivers for the idea development process. Contextual and social influences direct attention, provide new information, develop new interpretations, and reinforce the beliefs held, essentially arming the new entrepreneur with knowledge that could help to resolve uncertainty at any of the stages in the opportunity development.

The difference between the continuous shaping of an idea and the belief itself in the idea needs to be separated. It is the belief itself that depends on the interpretations and meanings surrounding the idea, the diversity which helps generate the ideas themselves (Kirzner, 1985; Mir and Watson, 2000). Meaning from an entrepreneur's prior experiences can give shape to the opportunity development process (Weick, 1979). Individual learning can move past the individual entrepreneur and into a level of social learning when the entrepreneur seeks out other people as a means of engaging and organizing in the opportunity development process (Dutta and Crossan, 2005; Ravasi and Turati, 2005).

It is not just the pressures of the context that can shape the opportunity recognition; the characteristics of the task environment, the external environment of an organization which affects its ability to reach business goals, can also influence an individual's ability to generate ideas (Amabile, 1988; Oldham and Cummings, 1996). What this means is that an individual's reaction to an idea will be different depending on the situation he/she is in when the idea is

conceived. An individual's idea and reaction to the idea will depend on not just what the individual knows, but how it is interpreted in the context of his or her situation (Bontis, Crossan, and Hlland, 2002; Dimov, 2007; Weisberg, 1999). The recognition of an opportunity has been connected with an individual's affect and this has been correlated with his or her cognitive processes. These affective processes then possibly drive aspects of the entrepreneurship development (Baron, 2008). What separates this concept from previous research is how the future entrepreneur is not separated from the context of the situation where he or she is present.

## **1.6 Networks**

Research has pointed to the role that familial and social networks play when looking at the context of an entrepreneur. Freire-Gibb and Nielsen (2013) found that entrepreneurs are more likely to follow through with start-up ideas in urban areas, than in rural communities, even though the urban areas are more competitive. This result is believed to stem from the fact that urban areas offer a stronger social network opportunity. Freire-Gibb and Nielsen (2013) also concluded that the social networks that exist in rural areas are due to stronger communal ties and fewer supporting institutions. The idea of working within partnerships and networks was also looked at by Lockett, Jack, and Larty (2013) who found that issues surrounding communication and performance expectations are part of any individual's reality. There are methods which can be used to overcome the difficulties in communication, but those solutions are often short lived and do not resolve the longer term issues. By focusing on social relations and the effects of networking on idea development and production, entrepreneurs can work in partnerships ensuring resources are used appropriately, and create an environment that is conducive to long term entrepreneurship.

The role of networks was explored by Cennamo, Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) in terms of family firms. By looking at the role of socioemotional wealth, defined as the stock of affect-related value available to the firm, Cennamo et al (2012) found that there are situations where the fundamental motives explaining the adoption of a stakeholder management approach are normative, but in other situations instrumental motivations are more likely. These dual ways of thinking often coexist in family firms in such a way that, stakeholder engagement activities may have short term benefits for the socioemotional wealth, while simultaneously impacting the family firm's ability to produce innovative ideas or general long term value.

Socioemotional wealth was supported as a dominant paradigm in the family business field. Berrone, Cruz, and Gomez-Mejia (2012) theorized that what separates family firms from other organizations is the family firms' is the socioemotional wealth, and this is what moves a family firm to behave differently. Gomez-Mejia, Haynes, Nunez-Nickel, Jacobson, and Moyano-Fuentes (2007) challenged the idea that socioemotional wealth motivates family based entrepreneurs to avoid losses more typically experienced by other firm types. Family firms are willing to accept risk based on performance, but at the same time the inherent network avoids riskier business decisions which might increase the risk. Through secondary data from family owned olive oil firms in Spain, Gomez-Mejia et al., (2007) found that family firms are simultaneously risk adverse and risk willing in their decision making.

## **2.1 Immigration**

The other variable of interest that is explored in this paper is how the level of an individual's acculturation moderates the relationship between the context of the opportunity and his or her likelihood of seizing it. Acculturation refers to minorities in community who adapt of some aspects of the host country culture while still retaining elements of culture from the



individual's home country (Teske and Nelson, 1974). Looking closer at the work of immigrants in entrepreneurship will give a stronger understanding of the larger relationship that exists between acculturation and entrepreneurship. Applying the role of an individual's immigration status or culture to entrepreneurship has been explored in recent literature. Previous research has shown that immigrants become entrepreneurs much more often than their locally born counterparts, suggesting that this occurs since the immigrant is excluded from the mainstream labor markets, due to work restrictions, local laws, and various hiring practices (Bogan and Darity, 2008; Minniti and Nardone, 2006).

The home country of the entrepreneur is believed to also be a part of the explanation of which immigrant takes on an entrepreneurship opportunity (Busenitz and Lau, 1996; Knight, 1997; Tiessen, 1997). The culture and environment of the host country may have some influence on the perceptions of entrepreneurship potential; the difference between the cultures of the entrepreneur's home and host countries may create a perception of risk (Cangioni, 2010). Aliaga-Isla and Rialp (2012) found that the discovery process is based on the relationship between information had by the individual and the experiences the individual gained during their migration period. The knowledge gained by the individual in his or her country of origin was supplemented by the information acquired in the host country, through fine tuning and supplementation. Aliaga-Isla and Rialp (2012) also found that immigrants trust information coming from their social environment and consider that information sufficient when making entrepreneurship decisions.

There has been a general failure in the established business community to recognize the value and challenges an immigrant might bring to a firm. There is an inherent gain when diversity is added to a workgroup, but if the individual is struggling to assimilate this could

challenge his or her ability to complete the work (Irwin and Scott, 2010; Jones, 2004; Ensign and Robinson, 2011). Foreman-Peck and Zhou (2013) used two measures of entrepreneurship culture to look at the role of an immigrant's country of origin culture. The first of the measures examined the chance that a member of a migrant group will be an employer, while the second measure is the effect of the country of origin on the probability of the immigrant becoming an employer. The second measure showed persistence of some cultures and change of other cultures, using immigrant data from 1910 and 2000. Foreman-Peck and Zhou (2013) found that northwestern Europe cultures were more stable, but there were not unusually strong entrepreneurship propensities.

## **2.2 Acculturation**

How acculturation is viewed and defined has developed over the years. Acculturation has been defined as the cultural and psychological change that an individual experiences when moving between two cultures (Sam and Berry, 2010). In the case of Latin Americans living in the United States, acculturation is what merges the tradition of the Latino culture with the U.S. independence and ambition is at the core of the Latino middle class and the growing ranks of the wealthy Latino community (TRPI, 2007). Acculturation is often seen when a strong ethnic identification remains, even though change may exist (Penaloza, 1994).

This change does not necessitate that the immigrant behaves similarly to the people of the new culture. Jun, Ball, and Gentry (1993) see acculturation as a phenomena of people from different cultures coming into constant first hand contact with people of the host culture. This consistent contact leads to changes in the cultural patterns of the cultural groups. Acculturation has also been defined as the degree of acquisition of the customs of an alternative society (Mendoza and Martinez, 1981; Mendoza, 1989) and the degree of retention of one's home

culture norms (Laroche, Ueltschy, Shuzo, Cleveland, and Yannopoulos, 1997). Acculturation may not account for the adaption of people raised in an ethnic family from another country, such as second generation Mexican Americans (Maldonado and Tansuhaj, 2002).

Berry (1980) presented a typology of acculturation based on the mix between the degree of home country cultural identity retention and the positive link with the host country culture. Within this typology there are four modes of acculturation: assimilation, integration, rejection, and deculturation (see figure 2). These four modes of acculturation were derived from two basic issues that all immigrants who are in the acculturation process face, one's orientation toward his or her own group and one's orientation towards other groups (Berry, 1980). Since there is no one way to go through the process of acculturation, there are large variations in how individuals engage in the process; these different paths of acculturation are termed acculturation strategies (Berry, 1980). The strategies are general comprised of two components, an individual's preference about how to acculturate and the activities an individual engages in, that are seen in daily intercultural encounters. Constraints on these components are often imposed by the dominant group of the host country, in such a way that individuals are not entirely free to act as they might choose (Berry, 1980). Berry recognized the importance of the immigrant's choice in how far he or she is willing to go in the acculturation process.

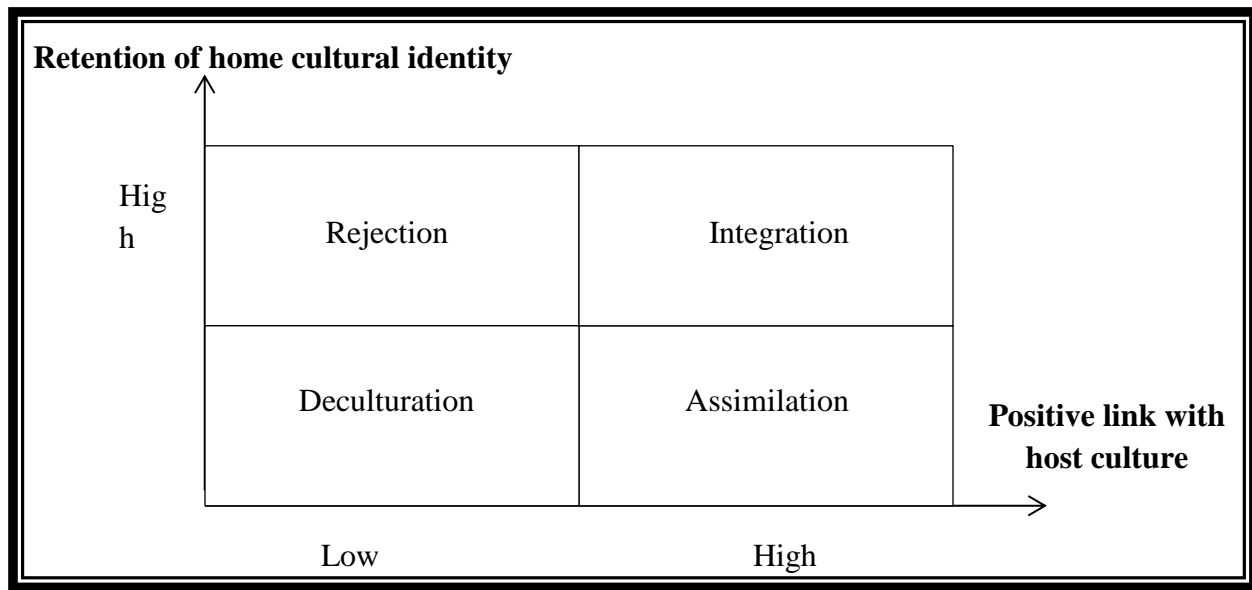


Figure 2.1: Berry's modes of acculturation (Berry, 1980).

## 2.3 Social Capital

Building on the concept of social ties as an indicator of acculturation levels, Putnam (2000) looked at the different ways an immigrant can acculturate to the host country. Using the concept of social capital, the expected benefits stem from the preferential treatment and cooperation between people and their groups. By dividing social capital into *bonding* and *bridging* networks, Putnam developed a framework to differentiate between the ways an immigrant creates network ties. Although these are concepts that are often mistakenly used synonymously, bonding ties refer to people similar to the individual, whereas bridging ties refer to people who are different from oneself (Ferlander, 2003). Bonding social capital is developed through inward looking networks, which reinforce exclusive identities and promote homogenous groups. Bridging social capital are networks that are open and outward looking. These types of networks encompass people from co-ethnicities (Putnam, 2000).

Bonding networks can be based on aggressive exclusion, to the point of limiting acculturation to the larger community. Portes (1998) found bonding social capital in the Vietnamese community in New Orleans. The members of the community developed an exclusive relationship with each other, but this prevented the immigrants from entering into the wider society. Stone, Gray, and Hughes (2003) found positive links between bridging capital to job and employment prospects. A person's social capital also reflected on his or her access to more resourceful networks, which was found to depend on the individual's reputation, material wealth, and position in the community (Lin, 1999).

Walseth (2008) looked at the effects of bridging and bonding on second generation immigrant athletes. The multi-ethnicity of the sports clubs in Norway made bridging social capital easy to develop, since the nature of the clubs forced the athletes to develop relationships with people of other ethnicities. Building from this research of benefits from group membership, Urwin, Pietro, Sturgis, and Jack (2008) found that just being a member produces a level of positive economic return, since it might give a positive signal to employers.

### **3.1 Immigrant Job Seeking Behavior**

There are many instances that individuals face situations when they find themselves looking for new job opportunities. Employees face employment transitions when they graduate from an educational program (Turban, Stevens, and Lee, 2009), retiring from the military (Baruch and Quick, 2007), or changing career paths (Ibarra, 2004). These employment transitions are typically done by individuals who have the same home and host country (Hakak, Holzinger, and Zikic, 2010), so that an understanding of a new culture, adoption of a new language, and general country transitions do not have to be balanced with the stressors inherent in job search activities. Immigrants are believed to face similar struggles that are seen by

expatriate employees (Suutari and Brewster, 2000), since they must deal with different host country norms, cultural changes, lack of connections in the community, and possible new languages. Immigrants who are from less developed countries face the possibility of opportunities they might not have had in their home country (Baruch, Budhwar, and Khatri, 2007).

Job search behavior is important to look at when examining how immigrants transition from a home to host country, since a job search can be a major disruption in the life of an individual. Reitman and Schneer (2005) found that an individual has lower earnings for many years after a career disruption has occurred. Little research has been done to look at the challenges immigrants face in their career (Carr, Inkson, and Thorn, 2005) or in their organization (Bell, Kwesiga, and Berry, 2010). Differences are looked at through ethnicity, but there are other differences which are left unaccounted for such as the cultural change and language difference (van Hooft and DeJong, 2009). Being a member of the host country brings a number of potential job search difficulties for the immigrant, trying to assimilate into a different culture and adopting a new language often leads to limited access and understanding of information available and social network support in the host country (Hakak et al., 2010). Hakak et al. (2010) found that limited access to information, smaller social networks, and discrimination acted as barriers to employment opportunities to Latin American who were looking for employment.

### **3.2 Variables of Immigrant Job Search**

There are a number of variables that can play a role in the effectiveness of an individual's job search. Hakak, et al. (2010) found that social networks, language, and culture all acted as barriers to employment for immigrants. Each of these variables will be addressed in the

following section. The job search of an immigrant is impacted by unique job search factors that can only be experienced by an individual who is not a native of the local culture, in addition to the prototypical factors of job search. The social support received by an immigrant is often more limited than a non-immigrant individual, since immigrants lose access to some of the advantages that might have been gained through their home country social network (Zikic, Bonache, and Cerdin, 2010). Those immigrants, who are able to maintain close network ties to people in their home country, do not experience the same level of support as individuals who have similar ties in the host country (Guerrero and Rothstein, 2012). Social networks have been shown to play a significant role in securing a job (van Hoyer, van Hooft, and Lievens, 2009). Zikic, et al. (2010) found that immigrants face a lack of knowledge about the job market of the host country; it is believed that this knowledge could be augmented with local network ties. Van Hoyer et al. (2009) found that job seekers with network ties to people who were considered to be of a higher status in terms of education and position were more likely to find employment, than individuals who were networked with people of similar, or lower, educational and occupational status. The effect of this limited knowledge of the local job market knowledge can be decreased if the job seeker increases his or her job search intensity (Schwab, Rynes, and Aldag, 1987). If an immigrant has limited network ties or a limited understanding of the host country, he or she would be less able to increase the intensity of the job search. The avenues available for the individual's job search would be more limited, since he or she would have fewer options of exploration (Schwab et al., 1987).

The construct of cultural knowledge of an immigrant looks past the stereotypes an individual might have had at time of his or her immigration and instead looks at the level of an immigrant's understanding of his or her host country (Guerrero and Rothstein, 2012). Formally

defined as the knowledge of cultural differences and knowledge of the processes through which culture influences behavior (Thomas, 2006), cultural knowledge is believed to play a role in an immigrant's cross-cultural behavior. Higher levels of cultural knowledge are likely to result in more effective cross-cultural behavior on the part of the individual (Thomas, Elron, Stahl, Ekelund, Ravlin, Cerdin, Poelmans, Brislin, Pekerti, Aycan, Maznevski, Au, and Lazarova, 2008). Cultural knowledge can be divided into two categories: explicit cultural knowledge and implicit cultural knowledge. Explicit cultural knowledge is something that can be taught to individuals through classwork or training opportunities. Some studies have shown that this training can be effective even when it is done by the individual (Black and Gregersen, 1991; Morris and Robie, 2001). Implicit cultural knowledge is acquired after many years of living in the host country (Guerrero and Rothstein, 2012). This is the more difficult of the types of cultural knowledge to obtain, since it is knowledge that can be expressed in written or verbal form, but has not yet been expressed.

A higher level of cultural knowledge has been positively related to individuals who have a better understanding of behavior (of themselves and others) (Thomas, et al., 2008). Job seekers who have higher levels of cultural knowledge report being more comfortable in social interactions, greater ease with cross-cultural behaviors, and experience greater accuracy in their attributions (Thomas et al., 2008).

The final aspect of job search, and the moderator of interest in this dissertation, is unique to the experiences of immigrants. Language fluency is defined as how well an immigrant understands the language of the host country (Guerrero and Rothstein, 2012) and has been related to the success had by the immigrant in his or her job search, though this is a relatively unexplored variable of job search research (Adamuti-Trache, 2013). The ability for an



immigrant to gain proficiency in the language of the host country is a key step in his or her successful integration into the new culture (Adamuti-Trache, 2013). This job search limitation is unique to immigrants, since even an individual who is a native speaker in the local language, but has a lower level of verbal ability is still capable of basic writing and verbal comprehension that is inherent in language fluency. Guerrero and Rothstein (2012) noted that the lack of academic consideration could be since language fluency is not something that could have an impact on the job search results of non-immigrants. Delander, Hammarstedt, Mansson, and Nyberg (2005) found that immigrants who were involved in language training programs reported fewer days of unemployment than their non-training group counterparts. The immigrants who were a part of specific demographic groups (i.e. women, older immigrants, and under educated immigrants) reported greater difficulty in finding access to these learning opportunities which resulted in their adaption of the host country's language proficiency was less than their counterparts (Adamuti-Trache, 2013). Where the immigrant lives in the host country can also play a role in how quickly he or she adapts the new language. Lindemann and Kogan (2013) found that the effects of ethnicity and language proficiency can depend on the region of the country where the immigrant settled. Russian speaking minorities in Estonia, a Russian-language environment had a decreasing effect on the individual's poor skills in the Estonia language. The understanding of the official Estonian language played an important role in finding a job in Estonia, this relationship increased when looking at positions of a higher-status. This same effect was not seen when looking at Russian individuals looking for high status positions in Ukraine where the official language is Ukrainian. An understanding of both languages held some value in finding a job in areas of higher concentrations of the Russian-speaking minorities, but there was no positive effect of bilingualism in Ukraine or in Estonia (Lindemann and Kogan, 2013).

## **Theoretical Development**

This paper investigates the impact of an individual's context has on his or her ability to engage in a potential opportunity entrepreneurship. This study takes the first steps in the operationalization of the second proposition proposed by Dimov (2007), that an individual's desire to engage in entrepreneurship activity will be correlated to his or her situational context. In other words, whether an individual has experienced a destabilizing change in his or her life when the individual is confronted with an entrepreneurship idea could change the likelihood of moving forward on the idea. By looking at the type of employment of Mexican immigrants, this dissertation begins the process of shining a light into the black box of potential entrepreneurship opportunities.

The level of an individual's acculturation into the dominate culture seems to play a role in how an immigrant identifies a potential entrepreneurship engagement. Cultures, social norms, approach gambling, losing, bankruptcy, and failure in different ways (McGrath, 1999; Petzinger, 1997; Tezuka, 1997), which could have an effect on an immigrant entrepreneur's choice to take advantage of an entrepreneurship opportunity (Cangioni, 2010). McGrath (1999) noted that individuals in collectivistic cultures asses the downside loss associated with engaging in entrepreneur activity as far more impactful than for individuals in cultures where failure is easier to overcome. Individualistic cultures, such as the United States, failures are professionally forgiven, so the effect of the downside loss is lessened (Petzinger, 1997).

Entrepreneurship opportunity could be a reason for an immigrant's migration (Lin and Tao, 2012). The resulting entrepreneurship activity draws on the resources from the immigrant's country of origin and the immigrant's host county, becomes a driver towards some immigrant's transnational mode of economic adaption. As Dimov (2007) proposed, an entrepreneur's

perceptions of his or her surrounding environment may have an influence on the decision making and entrepreneurship process. This surrounding environment could easily be seen as the acculturation of the potential entrepreneur and may influence the entrepreneur and the choices made by the entrepreneur (Chrisman et al, 2002). Lin and Tao (2012) show the importance of context-specific determinants when looking at immigrant based entrepreneurship opportunity engagement. How much an individual identifies with the new culture could impact the person's desire to engage in the entrepreneurship activity.

The understanding of how an opportunity is identified would add to the deeper understanding of engaging in a potential entrepreneurship opportunity and to international entrepreneurship. This dissertation looks at how the level of acculturation impacts the individual's use of a potential entrepreneurship opportunity (see figure 3).

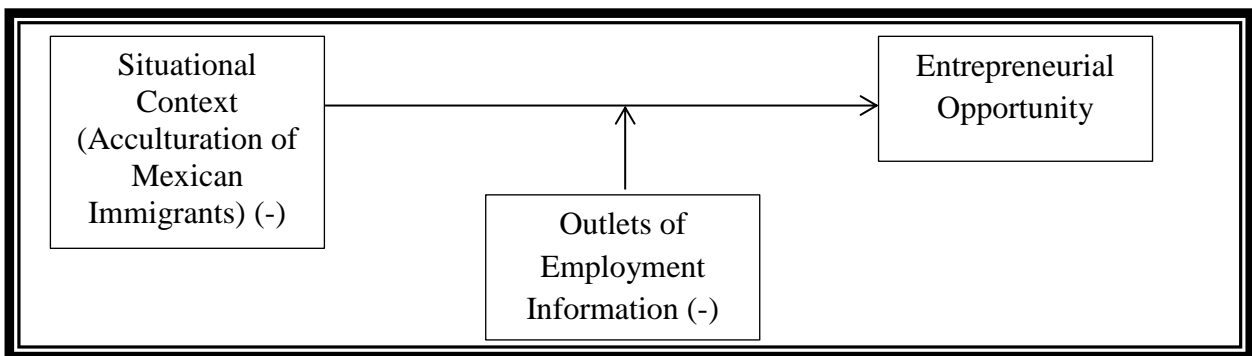


Figure 3.1: Conceptual Model.

Established methods of determining acculturation use fluency of the dominate language in the host country and connections to people in the community (Wenzel, 2006). Also using the difference between types of social capital by Putnam (2000), who found that an increase in familial ties suggests that the immigrant has a higher level of bonding social capital (ties with family or close friends with similar social characteristics), which could limit an immigrant's

acculturation. This dissertation will use these measures to determine the respondent's level of acculturation by using data from the Pew Research Center (<http://pewresearch.org/topics/immigration/>) and the survey questions which were used to assess the level of acculturation and entrepreneur status of the Mexican immigrant (*"How much English do you speak?" "How many family members live in the same city as you (in the US)?" and "Are you an owner or proprietor of a business?"*).

Whether or not the immigrant engages in an entrepreneurship opportunity could depend on his or her level of acculturation. Limited language capabilities and higher numbers of relatives in the community are expected to have a positive correlation with entrepreneurship activity, since an immigrant with those characteristics would exhibit lower levels of acculturation he or she would have a decreased understanding and comfort level with the host country culture. This decrease in acculturation would be correlated with the individual being more likely to identify and engage in entrepreneurship opportunities, since lack of identification can negatively impact an individual's ability to obtain and maintain employment in an organization.

H1: A lower level of an immigrant's acculturation will be positively and significantly correlated with his or her engagement in a potential entrepreneurship opportunity.

The second relationship of interest in this dissertation is whether the variety in access that an immigrant has to information about potential employment opportunities changes the relationship between an immigrant's level of acculturation and engagement in a potential entrepreneurship opportunity. By looking at the knowledge an immigrant has about the job and

job market, researchers can further understand how job search behavior impacts an immigrant's ability to identify a potential entrepreneurship opportunity.

Immigrants face multiple challenges when relocating from their home country to their host country. The success of the immigrant's job search can be influenced by a few basic factors of acculturation. Bourdieu (1986) held that accumulation and conversion of various forms of capital is only possible when the individual is in a social field. In other words, language acquisition happens when the individual is actively participating in the culture of the host country. This language fluency is one of the factors which can impact the effectiveness of an immigrant's job search (Guerrero and Rothstein, 2012). The expectation is that when an immigrant has a language understanding of both the home and host countries he or she will have greater access to information about potential formal job opportunities. In other words, if an immigrant is fluent and literate in the language of both the home and host country, he or she will be aware of more employment opportunities than if he or she was only fluent and literate in the language of the home country.

Immigrants who are more fluent in the culture of their host country (as seen through the immigrant's understanding of the local language and number of network ties) would be able to find more information about employment opportunities. The more fluent immigrant would be able to look for employment opportunities in forums in their native language (newspapers from their home country, network connections in their home country, and media outlets out of their home country) and also through forums in the language of their host country. Using data from the Pew Research Center (<http://pewresearch.org/topics/immigration/>), this dissertation applied survey questions about the types of access the respondent had for information about potential

employment opportunities (*“What are the two most important ways you get employment information here in the U.S.?”*).

This dissertation holds that when an immigrant has access to employment information through multiple languages, he or she will be to explore entrepreneurship opportunities. This ultimately will have a negative effect on the primary relationship of interest in this dissertation.

H2: The variety of languages an immigrant has to obtain employment information moderates the positive relationship between the immigrant’s level of acculturation (situational context) and his or her desire to engage in a potential entrepreneurship opportunity, in such a way that the relationship is weaker when the number of ways of information is high than when it is low.

## Methods

### 1.1 Procedure

The Pew Research Center (<http://pewresearch.org/topics/immigration/>) has a long history of collecting primary data which focuses around various experiences of Latinos in the United States. Its mission is to improve the public's understanding of the U.S. Mexican population. It is a nonpartisan group operating out of Washington D.C. The primary funding for the research comes from The Pew Charitable Trusts, a public charity out of Philadelphia. The data utilized for this study was taken from one of their 2005 surveys, Mexican Migrant Worker Survey. The data was collected from seven different cities in six different states, over a period of six months. Each data collection was conducted at the corresponding city's Mexican consulate, with applicants seeking a *matrícula consular* (an identification card issued by the Government of Mexico). The respondents were not asked for any identifying information and they were fully informed of the anonymity and confidentiality of their responses. Each respondent was asked to complete the survey while waiting at the consulate office and if the survey was completed would receive a phone card which could be used to telephone Mexico. Due to a higher rate of potential illiteracy, each participant was given the option to complete the survey independently or to have the survey read out loud and the responses recorded by an interviewer. It was made clear, that being able to read or write was not a prerequisite for survey participation.

Incomplete surveys were returned to the respondent and the interviewer requested that the remaining questions be completed. If the respondent did not want to self-administer the rest of the survey, the interviewer offered to conduct the last questions in order to complete the survey. If the respondent still refused to finish the survey, the survey was marked incomplete and was not included in the final data set. Due to the bilingual nature of many of the respondents, the

questions were asked in both English and Spanish. The responses to open ended questions were all translated in English. The translations were completed and then verified by the original respondent.

The original survey from the Pew Research Center included data on a variety of topics such as demographic data, personal experiences in the U.S. and Mexico, employment and finances, medical care and social services, and communication tendencies. Not all of the questions asked were necessary for model represented in this paper. Not all of the variables collected in the original survey were used in this study, since many of the survey questions were focused around topics that are outside of the scope of this paper. Survey questions that were not pertinent to the hypothesized relationships in this paper were removed prior to processing the data.

The Pew Research Center followed the widely accepted methodology for estimating the size and characteristics of the population surveyed, based on census and survey data (Passel, Capps, and Fix, 2004; Lowell and Suro, 2002; Bean, 2001). This methodology was used by the Pew Research Center to develop estimates based on a 2003 survey by the U.S. Census Bureau which measures the foreign-born population and gives detailed information on the population characteristics. The characteristics of the population sample in the 2005 survey referenced in this paper were compared to the U.S. Census 2003 survey and there significant similarities between the characteristics of the two populations.

## **1.2 Measures**

Three sets of questions will be of primary interest to this dissertation and comprise the data to be used in this dissertation. First, in order to establish if the individual was an entrepreneur, the questions concerning the type of work the respondent is engaged in are used.



An example of these questions is, “*Are you an owner or proprietor of a business (in the US)?*”

This question reflects the business ownership of the respondent. Respondents were able to select from the following answer choices: *Yes (1)*, *No (0)*, *Don’t Know (98)*, *Refused (99)*, and *No Answer (00)*. Answer choices other than ‘Yes’ or ‘No’ were removed from the data set.

The second set of questions used for this dissertation focus on identifying measures of an individual’s acculturation. Wenzel (2006) used questions concerning dominate language usage and number of connections to people as a measure of an immigrant’s acculturation to a new country. Following that lead, this dissertation used the survey question focused around language fluency, “*How much English do you speak?*” The respondents were able to select from the following answer choices: *A lot (1)*, *Some (2)*, *A little (3)*, *None (4)*, *Don’t Know (8)*, *Refused (9)*, and *No Answer (0)*. Answer choices that did not address the level of the immigrant’s fluency were removed from the data set. The other question used to determine the immigrant’s level of acculturation looked at the number of connections of people within the same city. As Putnam (2000) found, an increase in familial ties suggests that the immigrant has a higher level of bonding social capital (ties with family or close friends with similar social characteristics), which is positively related to immigrants to develop exclusive relationships with people of the same community, preventing the immigrants from acculturating to the wider host culture (Portes, 1998). Respondents were asked “*How many relatives do you have who live in the same town or city as you (in the U.S.)?*” and were able to give any number between 0 and 96 as an answer choice. The respondents were also given the option of selecting *Don’t Know (98)*, *Refused (99)*, and *No Answer (97)*, these responses were removed from the data set used for this study.

The final question used in this dissertation focuses on how the respondent received information about employment opportunities in the United States. The respondents were asked

“What are the two most important ways you get employment information here in the U.S.?” This question was used to represent the range of avenues the respondent had for information about employment opportunities. Responses available included verbal communication in English, Spanish, written communication methods in English, Spanish, and media outlets. Specifically, the immigrants could choose from: *Talking with friends in Mexico (1)*, *Talking with friends in the US (2)*, *Mexican Newspapers (3)*, *US Newspapers (4)*, *Church/Temple (5)*, *Radio/TV News (6)*, *Community organizations (7)*, *Job sites (8)*, *Internet (9)*, *Other (10)*, *Don’t know (98)*, *Refused (99)*, and *No Answer (00)*. The answer choices used in this study included *Talking with friends in Mexico (1)*, *Talking with friends in the US (2)*, *Mexican Newspapers (3)*, and *US Newspapers (4)*. Answer choices that did not reflect a language preference were removed from the data set. Since the respondents were asked to select their two most important ways of getting employment information, it was important to treat sole language responses separate from a mixed language response. Respondents who chose the two Spanish language options (*Talking with friends in Mexico (1)* and *Mexican Newspapers (3)*) were treated as the Spanish moderating variable. Respondents who chose the two English language options (*Talking with friends in the US (2)* and *US Newspapers (4)*) were treated as the English moderating variable. Then respondents who chose a mixture of the two languages (*Talking with friends in Mexico (1)* and *Talking with friends in the US (2)*, *Talking with friends in Mexico (1)* and *US Newspapers (4)*, *Talking with friends in the US (2)* and *Mexican Newspapers (3)*, and *Mexican Newspapers (3)* and *US Newspapers (4)*) were treated as a Language Mix variable.

Respondents were asked to respond to questions on gender, age, education level, marital status, and whether they owned a business in Mexico. Business ownership was part of the

questions about the immigrants' life experiences in Mexico. The remaining items were presented at the beginning of the survey.

## **Results**

In this section, the results from the hypothesized relationships will be reviewed. This section begins with the demographic data from the sample population, including age, gender, level of education, and family status (see Table 4). Means, standard deviations, and correlations are examined next (Table 5). Hypotheses 1 and 2 are tested and analyzed next (Table 6 and Table 7). Finally, possible data concerns are addressed at the end of this section (Table 8 and Table 9). Correlations among demographic data, predictors, and outcome measures were examined, after which a linear regression analysis was performed. Evans and Lepore's (1997) guidelines for verifying a moderation effect were applied. First, the predictor (acculturation) and the moderator (variety of languages of employment information) should be slightly associated or not associated at all. Second, using a multiple regression technique, the interactive term is examined after controlling for the main effect (independent variable) and the moderator terms.

### **1.1 Demographic Data**

Researchers from the Pew Research Center found that the demographics from the sample population reflected much of the same demographic data from a 2003 US Census Current Population Survey, which were done in an attempt to measure the foreign born population and gather information on the population's characteristics (Passel and Suro, 2005). There was a slightly larger majority of males (58%) to females (41%) in the surveyed population. A large majority of the population is under the age of 40 (79.6%) and very few of the respondents were over the age of 65 (.4%). Over 30% of the respondents reported not having completed high school and almost 30% reported having graduated from high school or college. Few of the respondents reported being divorced (1%) or living in a common law marriage (.8%) and the most frequent response of marital status was married (46.2%). Most of the respondents reported

having children (87.6%), with the majority having between 1-3 children (56.8%). Very few respondents reported have no children (8.4%).

Table 4.1: Respondents' Demographic Data.

Variable	Percentage (%)	Variable	Percentage (%)
<b>Age</b>		<b>Marital Status</b>	
0-18	7.6%	No Answer	14%
18-29	41.9%	Single	37.1%
30-39	30.1%	Married	46.2%
40-49	12.8%	Divorced	1%
50-54	2.3%	Widowed	.9%
55-64	2.9%	Common Law Marriage	.8%
65+	.4%		
<b>Gender</b>		<b>Educational Level</b>	
Male	59%	Did not attend school	4.4%
Female	41%	Did not graduate high school	31%
		High school graduate	20.7%
<b>Number of Children</b>		Tech school	35.7%
No Answer	4%	College	8.2%
0	8.4%		
1-3	56.8%		
4-6	30.8%		
		N=4836	

## 1.2 Data Analysis

In order to assess the acculturation two questions were used from the Pew Research Center study. The first of which focused on the respondents' language fluency, which was scored on a 1-4 scale indicating the level of English fluency the immigrant held (*A lot (1), Some (2), A little (3), None (4)*). Higher levels of acculturation would be represented through responses of higher fluency (Adamuti-Trache, 2013). The second question asked the respondents to note how many family contacts in the same US city as the immigrant. This question could be answered with a number from 0 to 96. Following Putnam's (2000) lead, family member contacts were representative of the number of bonding social ties the immigrant

held. In other words, lower numbers of family members in the same city would be indicative of lessened bonding ties and increased acculturation (Putnam, 2000).

The moderating effect of access to information about employment opportunities was determined by the responses to the question of “*What are the two most important ways you get employment information here in the U.S.?*” Response choices included: *Talking with friends in Mexico (1), Talking with friends in the US (2), Mexican Newspapers (3), US Newspapers (4), Church/Temple (5), Radio/TV News (6), Community organizations (7), job sites (8), internet (9), other (10), Don’t know (98), Refused (99), and No Answer (00)*. Since the focus of the moderation effect is on whether access to employment information in a variety in languages will negatively moderate the relationship between an immigrant’s level of acculturation and the engagement in an entrepreneurship opportunity, answer choices that did not reflect a language preference were removed from the data set. The answer choices used in this study included: *Talking with friends in Mexico (1), Talking with friends in the US (2), Mexican Newspapers (3), and US Newspapers (4)*. The answers were transformed into new variables (*Spanish, English, and Language Mix*), which were each tested as a moderator for the main relationship of interest. By using each of the new language variables as moderators, this study can not only confirm whether information available through a mix of languages moderates the relationship between acculturation and business ownership, but that result can also be compared to the effects of immigrants who found employment information in just one language. The effects of one language has also been divided, so that differences between the moderating effects of information in only English and only in Spanish can be seen. A number of demographic variables were controlled for in this study, including the respondent’s gender, age, and education level.

### 1.3 Tests of Hypotheses

Table 5 shows the means, standard deviations, and correlations for all of the study variables. Strength and statistical significance of the correlations among variables provide tentative evidence for the main relationship. Limited fluency in English and higher numbers of contacts were significantly correlated in the hypothesized directions to business ownership in the United States.

Table 5.1: Means, Standard Deviations, and Correlations.

Variable	Mean	sd	1	2	3	4	5
US Business Ownership	.04	.202	0				
English Fluency	2.55	.952	-.037**	0			
Relatives in the same city	9.43	10.598	.032*	-.108**	0		
Language variety in employment information (Spanish)	.19	.389	-.003	.099	-.011	0	
Language variety in employment information (English)	.62	.485	-.012	.025	-.037	-.331**	0
Language variety in employment information (Language Mix)	.75	.430	-.012	.105	.050	.273**	.731**
<i>n</i> =4836 for all variables			** $p \leq .01$ (2-tailed)		* $p \leq .05$ (2-tailed)		

For a more detailed look at the correlation between acculturation and business ownership in the United States a linear regression was run on the main relationship using SPSS (Table 6). Beginning with English Fluency, there was a negative and significant relationship between fluency and US Business Ownership the  $p \leq .01$  level. Meaning that as the level of fluency reported decreases, the likelihood of the business ownership increases. The second factor of acculturation investigated was the number of family contacts in the same city as the immigrant. This variable showed a positive and moderate relationship to US business ownership at the  $p \leq .15$  level. Meaning that the more family contacts a respondent had in the same city, the more likely he or she was to own a business. Those two factors are the determination for level of acculturation, thus hypothesis 1 was confirmed.

Table 6.1: Effects on US Business Ownership

Predictors	Dependent Variables	
	English Fluency	Relatives in same city
US Business Ownership	-.48**	.029*
* $p \leq .15$ Two-tailed tests ** $p \leq .01$ Two-tailed tests $n=4836$		

Hypothesis 2 tested whether access to employment information in a variety of languages would negatively moderate the association between acculturation and US business ownership. Following Evans and Lepore's (1997) criterion, it was determined that acculturation and US business ownership were not correlated, this lack of a relationship allows for the application of language variety in employment information as a moderator for the model. The addition of the interaction was tested after all other variables were included (see Table 7). In the first step control variables were entered. The predictor variables were entered in step two, followed by the moderator terms in step three. The final step included the interaction terms (the product of the moderator and the predictor) were included. Table 2 shows that language variety in employment information moderates the relationship between acculturation and US business ownership. A clear ordinal interaction is apparent, in support of hypothesis 2. Respondents who received information about potential employment opportunities in both languages were significantly and negatively related to the ownership of a business in the United States.



Table 7.1: Moderating Effects of Languages on Job Search Information on US Business Ownership.

Variable	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Gender	.018	.001	.001	.001
Age	.001***	.001***	.001***	.001***
Education Level	.001	-.003***	-.003	-.003
English Fluency		-.009	-.005***	-.046***
Relatives in same city		.000	.001	.030*
Language variety in employment information (Spanish)		-.004	.011	-.005
Language variety in employment information (English)		-.006	.012	-.008
Language variety in employment information (Language Mix)		.003	-.003	-.010
Acculturation x Language variety in employment information (Spanish)			-.001	-.020
Acculturation x Language variety in employment information (English)			-.001	-.051**
Acculturation x Language variety in employment information (Language Mix)				-.066***
$R^2$	.002*	.005	.005**	.006*
$\Delta R^2$		.003	.000	.001*
$n=4836$ . Values are standardized beta coefficients. *** $p < .05$ . ** $p < .10$ . * $p < .015$ .				

Due to the nature of the variables in languages, job search, and acculturation, the potential of multicollinearity was a concern. In order to alleviate the concern of predictor variables in the model being correlated, thereby providing redundant information about the outcome, collinearity diagnostic statistics were run (see table 8). Each of the variables resulted in a tolerance above .800 and VIF close to the lower boundary of 1.

Table 8.1: Collinearity Statistics.

Variable	Tolerance	VIF	Minimum Tolerance
Language Fluency	.852	1.174	.835
Number of contacts	.993	1.007	.970
Spanish	.989	1.011	.966
English	.984	1.016	.964
Language Mix	.970	1.031	.960
Acculturation x Language variety in employment information (Spanish)	.989	1.011	.965
Acculturation x Language variety in employment information (English)	.988	1.012	.960
Acculturation x Language variety in employment information (Language Mix)	.981	1.020	.954
<i>n</i> =4836.			

The other statistic that gave partial pause to the significance of the model was the small  $R^2$  of .006 for the final model (see Table 7).  $R^2$  is used to determine the fit of the data into the model, in other words how well the results can assist in prediction of the dependent variable based on the independent variables. While a smaller  $R^2$  can be a reason for concern over the usefulness of the model, it does not necessarily mean the model is without merit. The purpose of this study is to explain how acculturation predicts entrepreneurship and the expectation is that there are many things that would contribute to the ownership of a business and immigrant acculturation levels is just one of those many things. The model in this study does show a reliable, though small, relationship and with a sample size of close to 5000, so a small effect size is less of a concern. With each development in the models the  $R^2$  also increases, showing that

with each step of modeling more information is explained by the model, increasing the predictive ability of the model.

## Conclusions

The results from this study make for an interesting discussion. From the beginning, the purpose of this dissertation was to test a previously unexplored variable in predicting business ownership in the United States. Dimov's (2007) second proposition holds that an individual's immediate context affects how he or she interprets possible opportunities of entrepreneurship, by shaping the individual's thinking and engagement. Through the application of the second proposition to the environmental context experienced by recent immigrants to the United States, this dissertation is able to look at how differing levels of fluency and cultural understanding influence an individual's ability to engage an entrepreneurship opportunity.

The results suggest that immigrants who have lower levels of acculturation are more likely to engage in entrepreneurship opportunities. This primary finding supports Dimov's (2007) second proposition of his extension of creative entrepreneurship. Even more so, this primary finding gives support to the impact that a potential entrepreneur's situational context plays in his or her ability to identify an opportunity. The primary finding from this study extends entrepreneurship theory by confirming previously unexplored aspects of the individual, beyond the superficial understanding of how people form ideas of entrepreneurship (Dimov, 2007).

The direct acculturation-entrepreneurship relationship findings are noteworthy and should receive further research beyond this study to clarify. There could be other unexplained variables that might directly impact entrepreneurship opportunity engagement, including variables about immigrant friendship networks or access to available funds. This study did not measure variables to detect the entire entrepreneurship process, so there is no clear distinguishing indicator between the entrepreneurship opportunity and the actual business ownership, which

could result in a different relationship. Given the difficulty in collecting data from recent immigrants, the possible difference in correlation between entrepreneurship opportunity and actuality will be harder to determine, since it would require a longitudinal based study to look at the lifespan of an entrepreneur's idea.

The significant and positive relationship between low acculturation and entrepreneurship is supported by previous research in acculturation, since when compared to native born counterparts, immigrants are more likely to become entrepreneurs. This is believed to happen due to exclusion from mainstream labor markets, work restrictions, preventative laws, and individual company hiring practices (Bogan and Darity, 2008; Minniti and Nardone, 2006). Opportunities of entrepreneurship have also been identified as a possible reason for an immigrant's migration (Lin and Tao, 2012). In the case of this study, as the fluency of the immigrant increases the correlation to business ownership in the United States decreases. The same consistency did not hold true for bonding social capital, as seen through higher numbers of family contacts. The correlation between the number of contacts and business ownership was strongest when the responder had 51-75 family members who were living in the same area. The relationship between 76-100 contacts was also significant and positive, but it was not at an increasing strength.

This study also extends the immigrant job search literature. By conceptualizing access to the variety of employment information as a moderator in a model of entrepreneurship helps to illustrate a reason that might affect an immigrant's engagement in an entrepreneurship opportunity. Consistent with immigrant job search literature, that found that language fluency is one of the factors which can positively impact the effectiveness of an immigrant's job search (Guerrero and Rothstein, 2012), the greater the access to job search information will give the

immigrant more opportunities to find potential employment. Specifically, this study found support for the second hypothesis, that when an immigrant has access to a wider variety of ways of obtaining information about potential employment opportunities, there will be a negative effect on the immigrant's likelihood of engaging in an entrepreneurship opportunity.

### **1.1 Practical Implications**

The results of this study not only contribute to theory, but also have practical implications for managers and society. The biggest of these relates to the main relationship that shows how an entrepreneur's context can impact his or her ability to identify an entrepreneurship opportunity. As community can benefit from an increase in entrepreneurship engagement, since it increases the local economy while decreasing unemployment experienced in the region. With the greater understanding of a relationship correlated with entrepreneurship engagement, communities can develop local laws and regulations to encourage entrepreneurship while decreasing the difficulties sometimes found with small business ownership.

Managerial practices can benefit from the use of the moderator effect in this study. Knowing that when there is an increase in the number of ways and languages an immigrant decreases his or her likelihood of engaging in an entrepreneurship opportunity, a hiring manager can use this information and increase the avenues that information about employment opportunities are distributed. In order to reach the most possible employees, posting information in multiple languages and in a variety of methods could increase the number of candidates who apply.

## **Limitations and Future Research**

### **1.1 Limitations**

There are a number of limitations within this study, which revolve around the data sample. Remedies for many of these limitations will be discussed in the future research section. Immigrants are an understudied population, partly due to the difficulty experienced when trying to persuade an immigrant to complete a survey (Tourangeau, Edwards, Johnson, Wolter, & Bates, 2014). In order to take advantage of the work done by the Pew Research Center, variables were fit into the questions asked by the survey. Moreover, some of the questions asked by the Pew Research Center could have been considered unclear by the respondent-*How many relatives do you have who live in the same town or city as you (in the U.S.)?* This question could confuse respondents with how distant of relatives to count or if close friends are referred to as family members.

Finally, because the paper is based on secondary data, a true measure of cultural assimilation could not be used. Questions were found within the original survey which aligned with the standard measures used for assimilation, but this does not mean that different results could have been found with the usage of primary data.

### **1.2 Future Research**

The direct acculturation-entrepreneurship relationship findings are noteworthy and should receive further research beyond this study to clarify. There could be other unexplained variables that might directly impact entrepreneurship opportunity engagement, including variables about immigrant friendship networks or access to available funds. This study did not measure variables to detect the entire entrepreneurship process, so there is no clear distinguishing indicator between the entrepreneurship opportunity and the actual business ownership, which

could result in a different relationship. Given the difficulty in collecting data from recent immigrants, the possible difference in correlation between entrepreneurship opportunity and actuality will be harder to determine, since it would require a longitudinal based study to look at the lifespan of an entrepreneur's idea.

In addition to these new paths, corrections for this study's limitations could also be made in future research. Using primary data would resolve two of the three previously mentioned limitations. Also considering a field based experiment or a longitudinal study would add an additional layer of understanding to entrepreneurship research. Exploring the effect of bridging social capital on an immigrant's ability to take an entrepreneurship opportunity would look at the other side of the social capital equation suggested by Putnam (2000). Studies could also look at the effects of different types of media (internet, radio, and television) on an immigrant's access to information about employment opportunities.

In closing, the results suggest that studying the situational context of a person may deepen knowledge of entrepreneurship activity engagement. This new perspective suggests fruitful pathways for new research and an interesting direction for entrepreneurship.



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## **Vita**

Michelle Ruiz earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Philosophy and Women's Studies from Southern Methodist University in 2006. In 2008, she received her Master of Business Administration degree and a graduate certificate Health Organization Management from Texas Tech University. In 2010m she joined the doctoral program in International Business at The University of Texas at El Paso.

Dr. Ruiz has spent her time as a doctoral student researching the application of organizational behavior theories to a health care setting. She has also had the opportunity to become an adjunct faculty member with the University of Massachusetts Lowell.

While pursuing her degree, Dr. Ruiz worked as a Supply Chain Analyst for the surgical department of Berkshire Health Systems, in Pittsfield, Massachusetts. She began with BHS in 2013 and is currently a member of the management staff.

Dr. Ruiz has presented her research at conference meetings and workshops including the 2012 Southern Management Association and was published in the meetings proceedings. She was also a guest speaker at the annual Berkshire Nursing Association meeting.

Dr. Ruiz's dissertation entitled, "Creative Based Entrepreneurship: The impact of acculturation on opportunity engagement," was supervised by Dr. Santiago Ibarreche. Dr. Ruiz has accepted a tenure track Healthcare Management faculty position with the University of Houston Victoria.

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