An Initial Exploration of the Cultural Adaptation and Motivations of Immigrant Workers in Ireland

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ABSTRACT

Ireland has become a destination host country for a new wave of immigrants. This new multiculturalism creates challenges for human resource professionals. The present study was an initial exploration into the motivations and cultural adaptation of immigrants who have entered the Irish workplace. Data were collected from a sample of 74 immigrant workers, most of who were from Poland. Results found money and opportunity to be the primary motivators for coming to Ireland. After controlling for the large Polish population in the data, both age and English skills were found to be predictors of cultural adaptation. Results are discussed as they apply to the needs for human resource practices.

Key Words: Cultural adaptation; Immigrant workers; Motivation.

INTRODUCTION

Ireland has become a destination country for a new wave of immigrants. Officials report the influx of over 300,000 immigrants from

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Eastern Europe into Ireland since 2004, with 150,000 from Poland (Purvis, 2007; Ledbetter, 2006). Immigrants have primarily entered the Irish workforce through low wage jobs in the service, hospitality, construction and other labour industries (Ledbetter, 2006), as well as some in healthcare (Aiken et al., 2004; Buchan and Sochalski, 2004). While this wave of immigration is relatively recent with regard to Ireland, labour migration has altered manpower in developed and undeveloped countries for centuries.

At the organisational level, human resource (HR) managers are on the front lines of the immigration phenomenon. Their responsibilities for recruiting, training and orienting new employees, developing managers and designing effective performance appraisal processes become more complicated by this new multiculturalism in the Irish workplace. Although the HR field predicted immigration would increase in developed countries (see Burke and Ng, 2006), the scale at which it is occurring has created challenges for HR managers all over Ireland.

With immigrant workers, the most immediate concern is that of adaptation to the host culture. The challenges of cultural adaptation create considerable stress for immigrants (Bhagat and London, 1999; Brown and James, 2000; Hagey et al., 2001; Omeri and Atkins, 2002). Studies have also found significant health consequences of adaptation stress, including depression (Hener et al., 1997) and mental illness (Hafner et al., 1977). Adaptation is also related to the immigrants' perceived trustworthiness among the local population (Pornpitakpan, 2005). Since severe stress is negatively related to employee job satisfaction, commitment and performance (Cropanzano et al., 2003; Quick et al., 1986), and distrustful environments also reduce employee satisfaction and commitment to the organisation (Zhao et al., 2007), reducing the stress in immigrant workers is important. The effective integration of immigrants into the workplace should contribute to more positive work environments, and there is value in taking a humane and progressive approach to managing immigrant workers. Whether this means providing counseling, training or support for immigrant employees or additional training to native Irish employees and managers, HR could play an important role in the acculturation experience.

Cultural adaptation, however, begins with the immigrants them-selves. Their motivations for leaving their home country and their choice of a destination country are the starting points of their adap-tation process. Researchers have explored a number of factors that could influence the cultural adaptation of immigrants or expatriates (Haslberger, 2005b), including gender, age, work experience, lan-guage skills, motivation and personality. At present, researchers have just begun to examine the characteristics of immigrants into Ireland and their impact on the Irish workplace. In the broader man-agement literature, researchers have virtually ignored foreign-born workers, while the rates of global labour migration continue to increase (Lopes, 2006).

The purpose of the present study was to explore the cultural adap-tation and motivations of immigrants into the Irish work environment. Factors such as gender, age, education, motivations for emigrating from the home country and coming to Ireland, English proficiency and assistance provided from their workplace were examined as to their predictive ability of cultural adaptation among a sample of immigrant workers. The study also examined the job expectations of immigrants and the degree to which their expectations have been met. In order to develop effective policies and practices regarding the integration of immigrant workers into the workplace, HR professionals need to first understand the factors that influence immigrants' cultural adaptation and work motivation.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Cultural adaptation can be understood as a state or a process (Haslberger, 2005b). As a state, cultural adaptation is defined as the fit between an individual and his/her environment (Gudykunst and Hammer, 1988). As a process, cultural adaptation reflects the con-verging of individual behaviours, values, norms and other assumptions from the home country with those of the host environ-ment (Haslberger, 2005b; Schein, 1985). Much research suggests that adapting to a new culture is a stressful event (Bagley, 1968; Berry, 1988; Schmitz, 1992, 2001). The degree of stress experi-enced by the immigrant depends on such factors as the immigrant's personal characteristics, the choice of coping or adaptation strate-gies, and contextual aspects such as the degree of difference

between the home and host cultures (Schmitz, 2001), as well as random individual experiences with the culture (Haslberger, 2005b).

Berry (1988, 1990) and Berry et al. (1977) presented a two-dimensional model of acculturation. The first dimension is the degree to which the immigrant seeks to maintain the home country culture, while the second dimension reflects the degree to which the immigrant seeks contact and interaction in the host country culture. From this model emerge four generic strategies of adaptation. The strategy of *integration* is where one seeks to maintain the home country culture and initiate high levels of contact with the new culture. The strategy of *assimilation* is portrayed as the abandonment of one's home culture while seeking high levels of contact and involvement with the new culture. Immigrants opting for the strategy of *separation* seek to maintain their home country culture and show no interest in contact or interaction with the host country culture. Finally, a strategy of *marginalisation* suggests one has no contact with the home country culture and no interest in interacting with the new culture. Research suggests that the strategies of integration and assimilation result in more positive levels of adaptation and are more effective in terms of the individual's health and well-being (Schmitz, 2001). Kosic (2002) studied a sample of Polish and Croatian immigrants to Italy and found that those who employed the strategies of integration and assimilation gained more positive adaptation levels, with less emotional disorder and psychosomatic problems, compared with those who employed strategies of separation or marginalisation.

Antecedents of Cultural Adaptation
Why are some immigrants better able to adapt than others? Some research suggests demographic factors are important. For example, researchers have found that females experience more adaptation stress and cultural conflicts than males (Berry et al., 1992; Moghaddam et al., 1990; Naidoo, 1992; Schmitz, 2001). The immigrant's age could also be important, as younger immigrants have been found to adapt more effectively than older immigrants (Ebrahim, 1992). In the expatriate literature, the interaction between the expatriate and spousal adaptation has been found to strongly affect adaptation outcomes (Black, 1988; Black and Gregerson, 1991). Other demographic

factors of potential importance to adaptation are education, socio-economic status and social support (Haslberger, 2005b). Schmitz (2001) noted that cultural distance will also impact on the immigrant's adaptation. As the degree of differences in values, language and belief systems between the home and host countries increases, acculturation should be more difficult.

Researchers have also examined individual characteristics in their search for predictors, including the expectations of the immigrants and the extent to which those expectations are met in the new country (e.g. Black and Mendenhall, 1990; Black et al., 1991). Factors that would influence expectations include migration motivation, pre-immigration contacts with the host country, and the knowledge of the host country language. Others suggest that acculturation is influenced by the interaction between immigrants' need for closure and their reference group in the host country (Kosic et al., 2004). If immigrants form close social relations with others from their own country, then those immigrants with a higher need for closure will be less likely to adapt to the new culture. If immigrants form closer social relations with members of the host country, then the higher need for closure will be associated with a stronger tendency to adapt to the new culture.

Haslberger (2005b) noted the inconsistencies associated with these antecedents of cultural adaptation and suggested that perhaps a linear framework for adaptation is an inaccurate model. Instead, he applied the concepts of chaos and complexity theory to explain cultural adaptation. In particular, he focused on the possibility of a small insignificant interaction that can have a very profound impact on an immigrant's adaptation. For example, a bad interaction with a store clerk early in one's residency in the host country might seem insignificant at first. In later interactions or discussions, the insignificant event grows in influence and is embellished to a degree as one thinks and discusses host country experiences with others. Eventually, one's motivation in and satisfaction with the host country culture are affected, with little evidence as to why. When researchers examine a broad set of predictors of adaptation, this insignificant event is likely to escape notice. This 'butterfly effect', where sensitivity to small variations creates more dynamic consequences later, suggests a great deal of 'noise' in the predictability of

cultural adaptation, potentially leading to inconsistent findings in research.

Motivation of Immigrant Workers

Labour migration studies suggest a number of motivations for one's choice of a destination country, including the economics of the country of origin or the destination country, and contextual effects such as the existence of a home country subculture, family relations or religious similarities (Van Tubergen et al., 2004). Thus, it is important to more closely examine the motivations of immigrants to Ireland. Motivation theories distinguish between extrinsic and intrinsic motivators (Pinder, 1984). Extrinsic motivators (e.g. pay or incentives) are viewed as satisfying such lower-order needs as status, security, safety or survival (Maslow, 1965). Higher-order needs would be satisfied through more intrinsic motivators, such as a sense of achievement or working to enhance learning. Given that immigrants seek immediate improvement in their lives, it is presumed that they would likely be initially focused on pay or other extrinsic motivators, with a later focus on intrinsic motivators.

The immigrants' motivation will also be a function of whether their specific job expectations have been met. New employees arrive in the work environment influenced by their 'psychological contract', or their perceived understanding of the job and the expected rewards and outcomes from the job (Rousseau, 1995). Perceived 'breach' of this psychological contract decreases job satisfaction and motivation to work, and increases intentions to leave the organisation (Zhao et al., 2007). Research has yet to examine whether immigrants will have a narrow set of expectations for their new jobs (i.e. expect more money) or broader expectations focusing on a range of work facets (i.e. good relationships with co-workers and supervisor, or good benefits), and the degree to which their expectations are met or breached. It is also unknown if immigrants' cultural adaptation is related to the degree to which their expectations are met.

In summary, immigrant workers must not only negotiate the process of adapting to the new culture, but also deal with their preconceived expectations concerning their new work environments. At present, little empirical evidence exists on the factors that influence

the cultural adaptation and job motivation of the immigrants into Ireland. Cross-cultural research has examined the antecedents of cultural adaptation, ranging from demographic factors to motivational and cognitive variables, to chaos and complexity theory explanations, but none of these have been studied in the Irish context. Even less is known about the motivation of immigrants in their new work environments. Given these gaps in research, the present study gathered data to explore the cultural adaptation and motivations of immigrant workers in Ireland. This study should provide needed information about the immigrants, which will assist HR managers as they facilitate the immigrants' integration into the Irish work culture.

METHODOLOGY

Survey Administration and Sample
A survey was developed and distributed by multiple methods to immigrants working in the Dublin area. First, through a contact the survey was administered to a number of employees with a Dublin transportation service. Most of the employees completed the survey on their break time and returned it to the contact immediately, while a few took the survey home and returned it the following day. Second, a 'snowball' method was followed to locate immigrants for the study. As contacts were made, subjects were asked if they knew of others who would be willing to participate. When potential subjects were identified, they were contacted and administered the survey while the author waited. Third, one of the authors administered the survey to immigrant airline passengers while on a trip to Poland. These participants completed the survey while waiting at the gate and returned it to the author immediately upon completion. This sampling process resulted in the participation of 74 working immigrants.

Survey
The survey included information on demographics (e.g. gender, age, marital status, education, home country and work experience), immigration information (e.g. when they immigrated to Ireland, how long they planned to stay, living arrangements with other

immigrants or Irish people, financial support received from their family), self-rated skills in the English language (speaking, reading, understanding and writing skills), current employment and pay in Ireland, information about the job search process, expectations about emigrating, expectations about jobs and employers in Ireland and the degree to which such expectations were met, a self-rated scale assessing adaptation to the Irish culture, and career plans.

There were two multi-item scales used in this study – the rating of English language skills and cultural adaptation. For the English language scale, Haslberger's (2005a) scale was used. For this scale, subjects were asked to rate their ability to speak, read, understand and write English according to a seven-point Likert format. The four individual ratings were then summed and divided by four to derive a total score for English language skills. Coefficient alpha for the English language skills scale was 0.94, showing strong reliability. For the cultural adaptation scale, we used Haslberger's (2005a) scale developed specifically to assess self-perceived cultural adaptation. Respondents rated their confidence (from 1 to 7) in 10 activities related to their associations with people from the Ireland, including establishing friends, getting to know neighbours, initiating social contact, dealing with problems and adjusting to political and religious values. Ratings for the 10 items were then summed and divided by 10 to determine the average item score. Coefficient alpha for the cultural adaptation scale was 0.89, demonstrating strong reliability in the scale.

RESULTS

Of the 74 participants, most were from Poland ($N = 56$), with the remainder from Botswana, China, Germany, Lebanon, Nigeria, Portugal, Romania, Scotland, South Africa, Spain, Turkey, the USA and Zimbabwe. Employment of the immigrants included such jobs as engineer, waitress, bus driver, physical therapist, chef, personal assistant, builder and care assistant. Table 1 shows the demographic characteristics of the sample. The sample was 60.8 per cent male, with an average age of 29 years, with 25.7 per cent holding a college degree and another 20.3 per cent with a masters level degree. Approximately 56 per cent were single, with 39 per cent married and 5 per cent divorced. 36 per cent of the immigrants have been in Ireland for less

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Sample

Characteristic	Total sample ($N = 74$)	Polish sample ($N = 56$)	Non-Polish sample ($N = 18$)	Difference between Polish and non-Polish (F or Chi-square)
Gender (% male)	60.8	50.0	93.9	$CS = 11.29$***
Age (years) (mean)	29.54	26.7	36.2	$F = 37.08$***
Marital status (% single)	55.6	70.4	16.7	$CS = 15.89$***
Education level attained				$CS = 8.53$ *ns*
% Primary	1.4	1.8	0.0	
% Secondary	32.9	36.4	22.2	
% Some college	19.2	14.5	33.3	
% College degree	26.0	20.0	38.9	
% Masters degree	20.5	27.3	5.6	
Time in Ireland (years) (mean)	3.16	1.34	9.39	$F = 69.59$***

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$
*** $p < 0.001$
Note: F = F-Statistic; *CS* = Chi-Square; *ns* = not significant.

than one year, and another 27 per cent have been in the country between one and two years. Approximately 5 per cent of the respondents have been in Ireland longer than 10 years. Just over half of the respondents (53 per cent) had secured jobs prior to arriving in Ireland.

Given the high representation of Polish immigrants in the sample, the demographics of Polish and non-Polish subsamples were examined using the Chi-square statistic or ANOVA to determine if significant differences existed that might affect the overall analysis. As shown in Table 1, this analysis revealed significant differences on a number of demographic characteristics. The Polish immigrants were significantly younger, more likely to be single, more evenly split between males and females, and have fewer years of experience in Ireland compared to the non-Polish sample. The samples did not differ on education level. These differences suggest the need to control for the impact of the Polish population on the analysis.

Regarding living arrangements, 62 per cent of the respondents live with at least one person from their home country (83 per cent of the Polish live with at least one other Polish person). Only 8 of the 74 respondents reported that they live alone (four were Polish and four non-Polish). 38 per cent indicated their living conditions in Ireland to be about the same as in their home country, and another 38 per cent indicated their living conditions to be worse. Thus, 26 per cent said their living conditions were better in Ireland than in their home country. While the distributions across perceived living conditions varied somewhat between the Polish and non-Polish samples, the differences were not significant.

Next, immigrant motivations were examined (see Table 2). There were four categories of responses concerning immigrants' motives for leaving their home country: 40 per cent indicated money to be the motive; nearly 25 per cent emigrated to seek a new job or to secure employment in a better economy; 12 per cent indicated that they left to follow a family, spouse or significant other; and the remaining 23 per cent responded with other reasons (e.g. bored, traveling or to learn English). As shown in Table 2, there were significant differences between Polish and non-Polish samples on motives. Among the Polish sample, nearly 52 per cent left to make more money, 24.1 per cent left for more opportunity, 3.7 per cent were following

Table 2: Motivations and Expectations of Immigrants

Characteristic	Total sample (N = 74)	Polish sample (N = 56)	Non-Polish sample (N = 18)	Difference between Polish and non-Polish (F or Chi-square)
Job in Ireland prior to arrival (% yes)	53.1	63.8	22.2	CS = 9.03**
Reasons for leaving home country				CS = 19.17***
% Money	40.6	51.9	0.0	
% Opportunity or job	24.6	24.1	33.3	
% Family, spouse, significant other	11.6	3.7	33.3	
% Other reasons	23.2	20.4	33.3	

Table 2: (*Continued*)

Characteristic	Total sample (*N* = 74)	Polish sample (*N* = 56)	Non-Polish sample (*N* = 18)	Difference between Polish and non-Polish (*F* or Chi-square)
Plans to stay in Ireland				$CS = 11.53*$
% 1–2 years	8.2	10.9	0.0	
% 2–3 years	13.7	18.2	0.0	
% 3–5 years	12.3	14.5	5.6	
% > 5 years	26.0	18.2	50.0	
% Not sure	39.7	38.2	44.4	
Weekly pay (mean)	€478	€422	€684	$F = 25.21***$
Met expectations (% met)	71.1	67.6	81.8	$CS = 0.822\ ns$

* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$
*** $p < 0.001$
Note: F = F-Statistic; CS = Chi-Square; *ns* = not significant.

spouses and the remaining 20.4 per cent left for other reasons. With the non-Polish sample, none left their home country to make more money. The sample showed equal distribution across the remaining three reasons. The motive of money was clearly more important to the Polish sample compared to the non-Polish sample.

The reported reasons for choosing Ireland as a destination reflected a variety of motives, and some respondents listed multiple reasons. Most respondents (36.2 per cent) chose Ireland because of family or friends. 13 per cent indicated money as their reason for choosing Ireland, while nearly 6 per cent indicated the broader notion of 'economic reasons' for coming. 6 per cent indicated cultural reasons for coming, and another 6 per cent said the choice was not planned. The remainder of the sample (33.3 per cent) listed a variety of reasons, including the proximity of Ireland to their home country, a chance to explore, low crime rate, horses and the colour green. Given the wide variety of responses to this question and the multiple responses given by some participants, statistical analysis was not performed on the differences between Polish and non-Polish samples. However, differences were evident as all who chose Ireland for money or economic reasons were from Poland. It should be noted that many Polish also indicated family or friends as a reason why they chose Ireland.

Regarding their future plans for staying in Ireland, 38 per cent responded that they were either unsure as to their plan or that their plan would depend on how things work out in Ireland. Another 26 per cent indicated that they planned to stay for a long time (i.e. five or more years). 15 per cent said they planned to stay for two to three years, while another 12 per cent planned to stay for three to five years. The two sub-samples differed significantly on this item. Given their longer tenure in Ireland, the non-Polish group reported either being unsure about their plans (44.4 per cent) or that they would be staying longer than five years (50 per cent). For the Polish sample, 10.9 per cent indicated a plan for less than two years, 18.2 per cent for two to three years, 14.5 per cent for three to five years, and another 18.2 per cent for more than five years.

The immigrants reported an average pay of €478 per week. The Polish group (mean pay = €422) reported significantly lower weekly pay than the non-Polish (mean pay = €684). This difference, however,

could be attributed to the significant difference in the time spent in Ireland by the two populations. Seven of the respondents (all Polish) indicated that they received money from family back home. On the other hand, 42 per cent of the respondents were sending a percentage of their paychecks to family in their home country, with equal proportions of both populations represented.

Regarding their job search methods, subjects' most frequent responses indicated family and friends, newspapers or advertisements, and the Internet. Only six (all Polish) of the 74 indicated that they used an employment agency.

Seven respondents indicated that they received some assistance from their hiring companies, with all seven being in the Polish sample. Assistance provided by hiring companies included helping the immigrant to locate a flat, providing living accommodations for two weeks, providing job training, receiving a bonus or lending money to the worker.

Regarding job expectations, a wide range of factors were listed. Most often mentioned was the expectation for 'more money' or 'better money', cited by eighteen of the respondents. Eight indicated that they had no expectations, four simply expected to be 'happy', and four others expected to improve their English skills. Aside from those four factors, no other expectations were cited more than twice. Work facets listed included positive expectations such as promotions, nice atmosphere, uncomplicated work, secure job, work experience, more benefits, learning new skills, less stress, good hours and the chance start a career, as well as negative expectations of hard work and long hours. Of the eighteen respondents who mentioned 'more money' as an expectation, fifteen were from Poland.

Respondents were also asked whether their job expectations had been met and 45 responded to the question. Of that group, 71.1 per cent indicated that their expectations had been met, and another 13.3 per cent indicated that they had been partially met. There were no significant differences found between the Polish and non-Polish samples regarding their met expectations. Of the seven respondents who indicated that their expectations had not yet been met, four had listed 'more money' as their expectation, and three of those four were Polish.

Respondents rated their own English language skills at a mean of 4.63 (on a seven-point scale), which indicated a slightly above average rating. There was a significant difference between the Polish (mean = 4.08) and non-Polish (mean = 6.38) ratings of English skills ($F = 39.70$, $p < 0.001$). For both groups combined, the highest rating across the skills was for understanding English (mean = 5.19) while the lowest rating was for writing English (mean = 4.12). Similar patterns of skill strengths and weaknesses held for each group separately. Not surprisingly, females (mean = 5.19) reported significantly stronger English skills than males (mean = 4.16) resulting in an $F = 5.5$ ($p < 0.05$). Interestingly, those who secured a job before arriving in Ireland (mean = 4.09) reported significantly weaker English skills than those who had not secured any employment prior to arrival (mean = 5.63) for an $F = 13.1$ ($p < 0.001$). This suggests that those with stronger English skills were more comfortable coming to Ireland without a job, feeling confident that they could find employment after arrival.

The self-assessment of cultural adaptation resulted in a mean score of 4.99 (on a seven-point scale), suggesting an above average overall rating. While the adaptation scores for the non-Polish group (mean = 5.32) were slightly higher than the scores for the Polish group (mean = 4.87), the difference was not significant. It appears that immigrants felt fairly confident about initiating interaction with the Irish culture. Table 3 shows the correlations among inter-val variables. This analysis showed that cultural adaptation was significantly correlated with weekly pay ($r = 0.34$, $p < 0.05$), English skills ($r = 0.35$, $p < 0.01$) and time spent in Ireland ($r = 0.27$, $p < 0.05$).

Given the correlations among these variables, regression analysis was used to test for independent predictors of cultural adaptation. A dummy variable was created in order to control for the impact of the Polish population. Adaptation was first regressed on the dummy variable. In the second step, variables from the demographics, moti-vational variables and English skills were added stepwise into the equation if significant. As shown in Table 4, the dummy variable controlling for the influence of the Polish population was not significant, but both age ($\beta = 0.642$, $p < 0.001$) and English skills

Table 3: Correlations among Measured Variables

	Mean	s.d.	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
(1) Age	29.01	7.03	–	0.61**	0.69**	0.30*	0.37*
(2) Time in Ireland	3.30	4.96		–	0.60**	0.50**	0.27*
(3) Weeks pay	486.48	208.29			–	0.61**	0.34*
(4) English skills	4.64	1.66				(0.94)	0.35*
(5) Adaptation	4.99	1.33					(0.89)

$N = 74$

Numbers on the diagonal reflect calculation of coefficient alpha for reliability of the scale

* $p < 0.05$

** $p < 0.01$

*** $p < 0.001$

($\beta = 0.480$, $p < 0.05$) added significantly to the variance explained. For age, older immigrants reported higher levels of adaptation than younger immigrants.

DISCUSSION

As immigrants continue to join the Irish workforce, it is important that the HR field understands their motivations and the factors that affect their adaptation to the Irish culture. There have been few, if any, academic studies published on the characteristics of immigrants into Ireland, thus the present study provides an initial picture of this segment of the Irish workforce. Knowledge of the immigrants' characteristics and motivations reflect a starting point for designing selection systems, as well as orientation and training programmes.

This study found the immigrants to be generally well educated, with 46 per cent holding a college degree or higher. About half of the respondents arrived in Ireland with jobs already secured. The immigrants were primarily employed in the hospitality, service and construction industries, with some in professional positions. A majority of immigrants left their home country to make more money or to seek a new opportunity or job. Over

Table 4: Regression Analyses for Cultural Adaptation

Independent variables		β	R^2 (ΔR^2)	F change
Step 1			0.005	0.17
Polish vs. Non-Polish		0.072		
Step 2				
Age		0.642***	0.277	12.36***
Gender		−0.128		
Marital status		−0.219		
Education		0.050		
Time in Ireland		−0.227		
Plan to stay in Ireland		−0.115		
Reasons for leaving home		−0.031		
Secured job before arrival		0.080		
Met expectations		−0.072		
Weeks pay		−0.027		
English skills		0.480*	0.129	6.79*

Note: In Step 2, Age was entered into the equation first followed by English skills, based on their independent relationships with cultural adaptation. The ΔR^2 reflects the entry of each variable separately.
* $p < 0.05$
** $p < 0.01$
*** $p < 0.001$

one-third chose Ireland based on recommendations of family or friends.

In terms of motivations, immigrants reported an average pay rate of €478 per week. Anecdotal evidence from some immigrants indicated that this level of weekly pay exceeds the monthly pay in their home country. Very few received any financial support from family in their home countries, so most are dependent on their own funds. While respondents had a variety of job expectations when they arrived, over two-thirds reported that their expectations

had been met or partially met. The job expectation most often mentioned was money, but met expectations also included aspects of the work environment (e.g. hours, atmosphere, stress, job security, benefits and task difficulty), self-improvement (e.g. work experience, skill building, career focus and promotion) and life skills (e.g. meeting people, improving English and being happy). With the high proportion of met expectations, one can infer that many immigrants are likely to be satisfied with their work environments in Ireland. It is the case, however, that such job attitudes were not part of this study, and that this is just an inference from the data.

It is clear from the data that extrinsic motivators were mentioned more often than intrinsic factors. Given that the general education level of most immigrants is high – at least a college degree – many appeared to be overqualified or underemployed based on the jobs obtained. For those who were initially motivated by extrinsic factors, and who had reported their job expectations to have been met, theory would suggest their motivation should move toward intrinsic factors (Maslow, 1965; Pinder, 1984). In essence, pay will continue to attract new immigrants, but as they remain and adapt to the culture, higher-order needs may bring a desire for more job enrichment or management opportunities. For HR managers, such employees might desire additional training and promotion opportunities or they could leave to find other ways to satisfy higher-order needs. A positive perspective here is the economic gain for Ireland from an upwardly mobile immigrant work force rather than one that offers limited skills to the economy.

The large proportion of Polish workers in the sample provided a chance to understand this particular group of immigrants, which is relevant since Poles represent the largest segment of the recent wave of immigrants into Ireland. The Polish sample was generally young, single, educated and more assertive in terms of job search, as over 60 per cent had jobs prior to arrival. They predominantly came to Ireland for the money or a job opportunity, and making money was an important job expectation for them. Most indicated that their job expectations had been met. Of the few immigrants who indicated that their expectations had not yet been met, most

were Polish and their concerns were with money. The motivations of the Polish immigrants seem more extrinsic; however, their education levels did not differ from the other immigrant populations. The Polish sample did rate themselves lower on English skills. Research has demonstrated that opportunities for workers and trustworthiness increase as they learn the native language (Cessaris, 1986; Quinn and Patrick, 1993; Pornpitakpan, 2005), thus the lower level of English skills of the Polish immigrants could influence their progression toward promotions or other higher level job opportunities.

Cultural adaptation was the focus of the analysis, since it relates to perceived stress in and trustworthiness of immigrants (Pornpitakpan, 2005). Adaptation was positively correlated with immigrant age, English skills, weekly pay and tenure in Ireland. Immigrant age was perhaps the most surprising since prior research has suggested a negative relationship between age and adaptation. This finding was reinforced in the regression analyses. In the regression analysis, age was shown to be the strongest predictor of adaptation. English skills emerged as the only other significant predictor of adaptation. Regarding the relationship with immigrant age, prior research suggests adaptation to be easier for younger immigrants than for older ones. Data from prior research focused primarily on recent immigrants and their adaptation, whereas participants in the present study included recent immigrants as well as some who had longer tenures in Ireland. Since the present study found age to be significantly related to tenure in Ireland, and longer tenure immigrants reported stronger English skills, it is not surprising that the older immigrants also reported higher adaptation scores. Further research is necessary to fully understand this issue.

As noted, English skills were also found to be a significant predictor of cultural adaptation. Prior research found language skills important for immigrant adaptation and the present study supported that finding. The data also suggested that those immigrants who arrived in Ireland without jobs were more likely to have better English skills than those with employment secured prior to arrival. This suggests that those more skilled in English were comfortable conducting a job search in the English-speaking environment

outside their home country. Also, those immigrants who listed 'money' as their reason for leaving home rated themselves lower in English skills than those stating other reasons. This may be an arte-fact of the data, as the Polish group was more likely to list money as their reason for leaving and were also more likely to rate their English skills lower.

Aside from age and English skills, no other demographic or moti-vational characteristic was found to predict cultural adaptation. As Haslberger (2005b) suggested, it is possible that the prediction of cultural adaptation is not a linear function, but instead a more com-plex or chaotic function. Perhaps a more ethnographic approach to cultural adaptation research is needed, where immigrants are inter-viewed in detail and their life events are followed more closely. It is likely that, to some extent, cultural adaptation is a very differ-ent personal experience for each immigrant. Prior research has shown that even those in the same family do not experience it the same way.

With regard to future research, it is necessary to expand the scope of the present study to include a more stratified sample. Other than Poland, no other country represented had more than four participants; therefore we could not conduct any culture comparisons or cultural analyses beyond the comparison of Polish versus non-Polish. It would have been a more systematic approach to sample groups of people from certain cultures, ensur-ing each culture was represented by a large enough group for making valid comparisons. It would also be advantageous to compare immigrant groups to groups of Irish workers. Such methodology would allow one to more validly assess the 'cultural distance' each immigrant had to 'travel' in their adaptation jour-ney. This would also allow the researchers to compare the Irish culture to the immigrants' home cultures using frameworks such as Hofstede (1980) in order to determine which immigrants had to adapt the most. Another avenue for future research would be to study the expectations of emigrants in transit to Ireland, to gain their true expectations at the time of their entry. These expectations could then be more validly compared to the realities faced after the passage of time (e.g. one month, two months or six months). Finally, more descriptive analyses of the precise experiences of

the immigrants would help researchers establish the types of events that explain differences in the adaptation process or the motivation to adapt.

An additional avenue for study in this area is the impact of immigration and immigrants on the native Irish workers. As Ireland shifts toward a more multicultural workplace, the challenges of diversity management become more prominent. The effective management of the expectations and reactions of native Irish workers to their immigrant co-workers will be an area needing attention in the future. There is a growing literature in the US regarding diversity management. Although the historical origins of the need for such diversity management in the USA differ from Ireland's current multicultural situation, many of the outcomes and practices might be similar. It would be productive to attend to that literature for more information.

The ultimate goal of this research programme is to assist in the development of HR policies or practices that facilitate the cultural adaptation of immigrants so they can effectively contribute to Irish work settings. If predictors of cultural adaptation can be identified, HR professionals would be in a better position to develop the programmes for assistance with and facilitation of adaptation. One practice that emerges from the present study is possibly the development of English language training for immigrant workers. It is unknown at this point how many Irish firms offer such training for their immigrant workers. Since many Irish firms are already hiring and managing immigrants, there might be other practices in place that efficiently facilitate acculturation. A future study should survey Irish HR professionals to gain a snapshot of those practices surrounding the hiring, training and management of immigrants. The best practices across firms could then be shared by all.

Limitations of the Study
As stated earlier, increasing the sample size and recruiting more participants from a broader range of countries would contribute to the study of immigrants. The present study could not draw any inferences on the amount of cultural change through which each immigrant worker has traversed. The validity of such an analysis

would be enhanced with more immigrants from each different country. In addition, the present data were collected at one point in time, with all the immigrants having work experience in the Irish culture. Perhaps a more effective method would be to identify immigrants as early as possible after their arrival to make more valid comparisons of their initial expectations compared to the 'reality' they experience later. As presently gathered, data were all recalled, some from a few years prior.

CONCLUSIONS

As immigration continues, humane and progressive management practices would call for HR professionals to help facilitate immigrants' adaptation to the host culture so as to reduce potential stress and accompanying health and attitudinal problems. It is believed that such development begins with a clear understanding of the motivations and expectations of the immigrant populations. The present study was only an initial exploration into understanding the characteristics and motives of these immigrants into Ireland. It is hoped that future research can more clearly identify best practices for assisting adaptation and enhance organisational effectiveness for both workers and managers.

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