

*A study exploring the role of the GAA  
and employment of expat's abroad*

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## **Abbreviations**

HRM	Human Resource Management
HR	Human Resource
SIE	Self Initiated Expat
OE	Organisational Expat
GAA	Gaelic Athletic Association
DFA	Department of Foreign Affairs

## **Abstract**

The aim of this thesis was to identify the role of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and the employment of expat's abroad. This was explored by examining the community base and cultural touchstone presented by the GAA thus investigating the impact on adjustment for the self initiated expat.

The method used by the researcher was the qualitative semi-structured interview, guided by previous literature. Data was collected from seven self initiated expat's and one GAA international representative.

The findings present the GAA in support of the Human Resource both for recruitment and retention by emphasising the importance of networking, support and integration for expat's. The research also highlighted areas for future consideration, such as the idea of nepotism as a result of the findings. This term carries many negative connotations, and it must be considered as to what inference it would hold for the HR function.

## **Introduction**

“Globalisation plays an increasingly important role for companies in today’s fast changing business environment” (Jack & Stage, 2005). This has given rise to the need for HR practitioners to manage an international workforce, which calls for a different set of skills along with a complex mindset. Having international staff is highly attractive and to implement an internationally focused HR strategy can enhance competitive advantage (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010)

The Irish Diaspora has made a home from home community on every continent. It has paved the way for today’s Irish emigrants to have a smooth transition when making the move abroad. With many of the current day technology like Skype it has made the world a smaller place for expatriates. However the real issue for any international organisation when recruiting is to ensure that their international employees adjust culturally to the given country. “International Human Resource practitioners play an important role in facilitating the success of an expatriate assignment by selecting and training expatriates that are able to adjust cross-culturally to the host country environment” (Gruszynski, 2007, p. 8). For any Human Resource professional it is essential to process integration, (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013) whether they are an organisational expat or a self initiated one. Integration for an expat is as much about their love of the community of the country there in and will have direct impact on their integration into the given company and hence their performance.

As a HR professional it is important to understand the motivations behind why people choose to work abroad. Irish people have been emigrating for decades however there have been many push and pull factors at play. To now understand the



current generation Y expat can give rich information on their expectations. They are not the first generation to take the plunge abroad but with the world a far smaller place, what is the motivation for particular destinations? With the Irish having such a presence as a community on a global scale, are there considerations there for international HR professionals? Core to this community is the dominant existence of the GAA on all five continents. (GAA, 2007)

The Gaelic Athletic Association was founded in 1884 in an attempt to promote Irish culture and pastimes. It is through this Organisation that it would establish a community for the Irish to develop a unique identify that would transcend any barriers. “The GAA is a community based volunteer organisation promoting Gaelic games, culture and lifelong participation” (GAA, 2008) . Though it is an Irish Organisation the GAA has become a phenomenon throughout the world and has become more about the community it has created than the sports it encompasses. In the current *GAA strategy Vision and Action Plan 2009-2015* “Our Vision is that everybody has the opportunity to be welcomed, to take part in our games and culture, to participate fully, to grow and develop and to be inspired to keep a lifelong engagement” (GAA, 2008)

The term ‘expat’ refers to anyone who lives and works in a country other than the one in which they were born, with the intention of returning home “Self-initiated expatriates initiate their expatriation and find a position in another country by themselves” (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). There has been many conclusions drawn for the explanation for expatriation over the years, and though through the years of economic decline for many countries it was at the top of the list of reasons to make the move internationally. However it has become more apparent that there is much more pull and push factors at play. Despite the fact that self-initiated expats (SIE)

make up the majority of the global labour market, research is minimal (Myers & Pringle, 2005). And it wasn't until 1997 that Inkson undertook the first study of SIE's with a group of New Zealanders with overseas experience (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013). According to the study undertaken by Inkson most of his participants sought the overseas experience, for just that, and also to seek out adventure. Globalisation has opened up the phenomenon for research as there is much to be considered as a HR practitioner when defining an 'expat'. The motivation of expats can have great implications as to their overall integration to the country and most of all to the job, and is very relevant to HR practices (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010).

The existing research in the area of expatriation focuses on defining the expat and understanding the motivations as why they go. This study wants to expand on that further with looking into the integration process itself and what aids it. More specifically how the presence of GAA clubs across continents has assisted the integration process. The study will be take lead with reviewing the literature to date, analysing the phenomenon of expatriation and the surrounding themes. Influenced by the current literature the research methodology will then be explained, giving detail of the design and approach taking in the exploratory study. Finally the results will be analysed in light of the research objectives in a critical and insightful manner.

# **Chapter 1**

## ***Literature Review***

## **1.0 Introduction**

The following chapter aims to give a theoretical overview of the literature to date to the best knowledge of the researcher. The literary review will focus on the areas that will compliment the study of the role of the GAA and the employment of expats abroad. Firstly by reflecting on the GAA itself, an understanding will form of their mission as an organisation. Following this it is important to comprehend the phenomenon of expatriation and its presence among the scholars. Subsequently this leads directly onto the branch of expatriation that this study will focus on, the self initiated expat and the importance of defining the group. An exploration of the motivations of expatriates will be analysed, which will then guide the discussion of cross cultural adjustment. The concluding areas will focus on the adaption process of expatriation and concluding with the implications for the human resource function.

### **1.1 History of the GAA**

“Ireland had been decimated socially, culturally and economically by the Great Famine of 1845-1851: amongst the major causalities of the Famine were the field games and other traditional pastimes of rural Ireland, which in many areas suffered an irreversible decline” (Mangan, 2002,p.59). During this time of devastation in Irish history, with loss of many of its patriots through death and emigration there was call for the revival of the Irish identity. Douglas Hyde and Michael Cusack established a base for the Gaelic revival through the Gaelic League and the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA), these organisations would act as a cultural touchstone for the Irish people (Keeler & Wright, 2013).

Hurling and Gaelic Football needed a governing body and more importantly it was necessary to regulate the rules, so with that the GAA was formed in Tipperary in 1884. For the Irish at home it was the opportunity to become immersed in one's native culture. As for the Irish Diaspora on the whole it would be their social outlet overseas that would provide them with potential entry points within their now host country communities. "The GAA is more than an athletic association; it is a declaration of national faith" (O'hEithir B, 2005). Prior to the establishment of the GAA there is anecdotal evidence of Gaelic games being played in America, Argentina and Australia. The first recorded game in 1886 was played in Boston which was later followed by the setting up of the GAA of America in 1890 (Boston College, 2012).

Unlike home soil teams which took place names, county etc, American teams sought Irish nationalist's leaders and influential patriots as team names e.g. Wolfe tone and Robert Emmett (Keeler & Wright, 2013). In the GAA's strategic review it highlights their aims and roles in Irish society and fully recognises the importance of the organisation to the Irish Diaspora

"the activities of the Association abroad, act as a major social and cultural focus, as well as furthering the promotion of Gaelic games.....is often their only opportunity to keep in touch with the broader elements of Irish identity and culture" (GAA, 2002).

Currently there is much collaboration between the GAA and the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, as the GAA is the foremost organisation today in terms of active engagement with the Irish abroad (Houses of the Oireachtas, 2015). There is a concentration of funding to support the GAA abroad, more for the social rapport it encompasses than the sports affiliation.

*Sub objective: As an expat what is your opinion on the expansion of the GAA worldwide?*

## **1.2 Expatriation**

Expatriation is by no means a new phenomenon; however its definition has transformed significantly over the years. Globalisation has changed the motivations for people deciding to work abroad. Inkson et al (1997) began distinguishing the overseas experience expat against the overseas assignee (Doherty, et al., 2013). The concept of overseas was later discussed as it didn't seem appropriate when considering the parameters of Europe. They were now seen as free travellers, who were not moving abroad to pre arranged employment but did engage in work while in a foreign country (Myers & Pringle, 2005) (Suutari & Brewster, 2001). This began to reevaluate the definition throughout the literature, Richardson and Mallon (2005) added further to the field, terminology of 'the self- directed expatriate' was coined (Doherty, et al., 2013). It applied to people working and living in countries other than their own home country and through their own inclination. For the purpose of this study we shall define the Self Initiated Expatriate (SIE) as such.

## **1.3 The Self Initiated Expat**

In 2008 Doherty and Dickmann formulated the term "self initiated expatriates" in the literature, the SIE would now distinguish those that independently elect themselves to go abroad, from those who were sent by their employer. The fundamental concept that emerged was that the process must involve the relocation across a national border and also the term 'expat' would refer to temporary relocation (Doherty, et al., 2013). To talk on a more permanent relocation/situation would

brand them an emigrant. It should also be noted that throughout the literature it has concentrated mainly on professional groups, leaving a gap in the research for unskilled workers.

Defining the 'expat' in the literature provides much of the focus for research. Many comparative studies on the self initiated expatriate (SIE) and the organisational expatriate (OE), emphasises the complexity of the "type' of expat under exploration (Brewster, et al., 2014). According to Myers and Pringle (2005) though SIE's dominant the global labour market compared to OE's there is very little research undertaken on the group. In fact research has mainly focussed on employees sent on assignments by their company (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). In a study carried out in 1997 notable differences were realised between OE's and SIE's, which called for a deeper understanding of the different drivers of the two groups. (Inkson, et al., 1997). Within the study it established that the differences had a significant impact on the approach to the process, depending on the type of expat (Doherty, et al., 2011). For the purpose of this paper SIEs will be the main subject, as the initiative to work abroad comes from the individuals desire to do so. The interest to obtain international experience ranks higher with the SIE (Doherty, et al., 2011).

#### **1.4 Motivation**

To understand the influence of the GAA on relocation choices for expats it is important to look at the motivation to move. One's motivation to move has obvious implications for how well they will adapt to their new environment and also their willingness to do so. For the SIE's who undertakes the international career experience on their own initiative; motivation comes from the desire for adventure and exploration (Doherty, et al., 2011). The dominant literature in the area of

expatriation tackles the question of what drives the expat and what motivates them to make the move abroad? Doherty et al evaluated Inkson's et al study of 1997 that undertook a study of a group of New Zealanders overseas experience. The findings of the project identified the desire for adventure and exploration, for the self directed expatriate the cultural experience and the opportunity to grow in self confidence. Defined as a self directed experimentation process, Inkson identified the desire for the expat to gain flexibility and cross-industry skills. This desire for exploration sparks from reasons from their current way of life, and it acted as a means of escapism from job or relationships. (Doherty, et al., 2011)

Richardson and McKenna (2002) elaborate further with their study on British academics. They divided up the key motivators into four categories, motivation to explore, to escape, the desire for career capital and finally for financial gain. The desire for adventure shone through with their subjects and "social relationships and interactions were identified as central to the strength of the affiliation with the host country" (Doherty, et al., 2011,p.597). In Doherty et al study they found it very interesting to realise that those who were self initiated expats were statistically more likely to stay longer than organisational expats. It was also concluded that they "might perceive a higher need to integrate into the physical, institutional and cultural environment" (Doherty, et al., 2011,p.606). This provides significant evidence in regards to one's motivation, for example whether the expatriation was forced or not (SIE Vs OE). Such research emphasises the attractiveness of the host country and culture, and the apparent ability to adjust to the host location.

*Sub objective: Has it provided other networking opportunities for you within the country? E.g. social or employment related.*



Another apparent element driving expatriation is the idea of home-host relations. This factor applies to both types of expatriates, however for the SIE it can relate primarily to their allegiance with their now host environment. It refers to the bond that influences one's desire to stay in the host country against their desire to return home. The motivation for adventure, travel and foreign experience in general for the SIE can impede on their decision to stay, if they are becoming satisfied with their environment. However there is a need to "preserve other opportunities in the local business context if things do not work out as planned" (Doherty, et al., 2011,p.606). Within this it was identified that though there is a perceived element of choice for the SIE, there is also a higher dependency on their local contexts. For example the chosen city and how it is branded, in terms of the potential networking opportunities.

Using social cognitive theory a model was constructed by Tharenou which distinguished between personal agency and family barriers (Tharenou, 2008). However comparing this model with the socio-economic push/pull model, F.J. Froese found it incorporated the notion that there are individual and environmental issues at play, which he found more accurate (Froese, 2011,p.1096). Certain push factors may be recession or personal grievances and pull factors as a result of passion for international experience. Understanding one's motivation for undertaking expatriation can deliver valuable information about how they will experience the process of adjustment.

*Sub objective: Did the GAA have an influence on your relocation process?*

## 1.5 Cross Cultural adjustment

There is a wide range of research in relation to cross cultural adjustment in the expatriation process

“It refers to the degree to which expatriates are psychologically comfortable and familiar with different aspects of a foreign environment and can be understood as the degree of ease or difficulty expatriates have with various issues related to life and work abroad” (Peltokorpi & Froese, 2009,p.1097).

Searle and Ward 1990 identified three consistent features within the study of adjustment of living and working in a foreign country (Searle & Ward, 1990). This has since provided the foundation for expatriation studies, the area of psychological, work adjustment and socio-cultural were identified (Froese & Peltokorpi, 2013). Within this psychological adjustment refers to the comfort of the host environment taking in factors such as climate, food and housing. Work adjustment encompasses the expatriates comfort within their work environment regarding their performance. Finally the socio-cultural refers to the comfort with the host environment: the language and the interpersonal styles of the host culture. All three areas encompass both employment issues and non employment issues in the process of expatriation.

For the purpose of the thesis these factors are relevant in establishing the features that influences adjustment. For example throughout the literature it is evident that OE’s have support from their company with crucial adjustment issues like housing, family support (education for kids) and in some cases healthcare (Doherty, et al., 2011). The SIE however must become accustomed to all three areas of adjustment themselves.

*Research question: Do you feel that the GAA has helped you integrate into your host society?*

## **1.6 Adaption process**

In a recent study in 2014 on the adaption of Chinese expatriates in an international business context the study recognises the process as changing ones perspective. It was realised within the study that it was more about factors of: sensitivity, understanding, reaction and anticipation to the host environment (Shi & Wang, 2014,p.24). The study breaks the process into four streams, the U-curve theory, Classic arithmetical learning curve, and ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism and finally the homeostatic mechanism model. All four deal with how an expatriate processes the experience. The U- curve theory, aptly named illustrates adjustment into four stages, whereby the expat starts off on a high (honeymoon stage). This is then followed by descending into the culture shock stage however gradually ascending to the mastery stage of effectively functioning into the new culture. In direct opposition to this is the arithmetical learning curve which envisions the adaption as an initial ignorance of cultural norms which will require participation and learning of new culture. The third approach from ethnocentrism to ethno-relativism illustrates a journey from the fringe of a culture to the centre “from a state of ignorance and resentment to a position of understanding and empathy” (Shi & Wang, 2014,p.24). The final approach also known as a dynamic and cyclical process of tension reduction is one’s ability to adapt for survival. Ultimately the study demonstrates that it depends on expats perspective on situations and their own individual approach will affect the adaption process.

*Research Question: Does your involvement with the GAA affect your integration with your host country?*

## **1.7 Employment and HR Implications**

“Competition for talent is not just competing locally but competing globally....it can be highly attractive to have international staff” (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010,p.260). As the literature has mainly observed the highly educated and skilled professionals, it can then be assumed that they possess career capital (Al Ariss & Crowley-Henry, 2013). The pursuit of personal and professional development is highlighted throughout the literature, regardless of the mastery motivation. If we consider the expectations of today’s expats in terms of their generational status, can this lend a hand to understanding what is truly important to them? Luscombe, Lewis and Biggs (2013) identified Generation Y (the millennial generation-ranging from 1980’s- 2000’s) as possessing very different characteristics to their predecessors regarding their relationship with work (Luscombe, et al., 2013). These characters are ambitious and highly value relationships, in and outside of the office. Considering this the expectations and goals of the current generation and therefore the current generation of expats influences how we study them. Generation Y values relationships and being valued within their jobs over any financial incentives and are supposedly ‘uninterested’ in the job for life (Lindquist, 2008).

Expatriates personal networks are disbanded when they leave their home base therefore they are different to domestic employees, in that they face challenges socially in their start up (Shen & Kram, 2011). Very few studies have looked at the benefit of social networking for expats; network diversity can aid the expats adjustment and in turn their performance. Shen and Kram’s (2011) study showed the merit of ‘extra-organisational developers’, this referred to outside resources

that enhances expatriates career and personal growth. Primarily in regards to social systems which facilitate networking. The GAA can act as an example for these non work related developers that can have a positive influence on the SIE.

There are positive implications for HR in networking outside of business hours especially for the case of the SIE's, who unlike the private expat may have less practical issues to worry about. There is much debate throughout the literature as to why it may be the responsibility of Human Resource management (HRM) to have initiatives towards SIE's when they were necessarily not 'invited' into the organisation. This argument lies with the premise that the individual decided to expatriate, so therefore adjustment is their own responsibility (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). However there have been significant studies to show "that social capital and networks affect their adjustment, performance and retention" (Shen & Kram, 2011,p.529). From this we can establish that the Organisation can gain advantage in having a HR strategy that is focussed towards international employees which is tailored despite expat motives.

Expanding on the notion of 'Generation Y' and how they differ from their predecessor's: baby boomers and Generation X. "That careers in the twenty- first century are driven by the person, not the organisation, and [careers] will be reinvented by the person from time to time, as the person and environment change" (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010,p.263). In the case of not just the Generation Y employee, who have certain expectations, but to then realise the motivations of the SIE can dictate how the company handle their support of expatriation. Companies cannot help the expatriate prior to their emigration, HRM focus is on the adjustment after expatriation (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010).

*Sub objective: Establishing whether the GAA/ social system supports adjustment process*

## **1.8 Conclusion**

This chapter attempted to explore the current literature surrounding the concept of expatriation. The GAA and its role with expats abroad are under discovery in this thesis and have presently had little focus academically to the researcher's knowledge. Offered in this chapter were the related topics in assessing the expatriate experience. From this a contribution to the literature can be made towards this gap. In fact there has been little evidence of any studies which present the merits of social systems outside the business context that can aid companies in supporting the expatriate process. The literature review has supplied the definition of expatriation and the motives for the said trend. This field of work will attempt to enhance the literature further and will gain validity by the use of both primary and secondary resources. The next chapter will outline the research methodology which was implemented in accomplishing the objectives of this thesis.

# **Chapter 2**

## *Methodology*

## **Methodology**

### **2.0 Introduction**

Methodology is defined as “the philosophical framework or orientation within which your research is based....it provides the rationale for your particular method or methods of data gathering” (Anderson, 2013,p.173)

This chapter demonstrates the process undertaken by the researcher to investigate the research questions and objectives. By firstly identifying the objective the procedure then begins. The research philosophy follows, which in turn outlines how the research will develop. The approach adapted in relation to this thesis is discussed. Method and strategy are then accredited. An analysis of the sample is given, outlining the selection and the research instrument. Finally limitations and ethical considerations that were examined will be put forward.

### **2.1 Research Objective**

This dissertation with the following research framework aims to understand the phenomena of the role of the GAA and the employment of expats abroad. Therefore the following research questions have been formulated in response to this objective;

- Identify the role of the GAA for the SIE in the recruitment process.
- To examine the community base and cultural touchstone presented by the GAA community.
- Investigate the influence of the GAA on relocation choices for expats.



## **2.2 Research Philosophy**

Philosophy is defined as “the use of reason and argument in seeking truth and knowledge, especially of ultimate reality or general causes and principles” (Collis & Hussey, 2009,p.55). In Saunders et al ‘the research onion’ it illustrates the ‘layers’ to the process of research. The research philosophy adopted by any researcher can be assumed to underline their view on the world.

“Your assumptions about human knowledge and about the nature of the realities you encounter in your research inevitably shape how you understand your research questions,the methods you use and how you interpret your findings” (Saunders, et al., 2012,p.128-cited by Crotty)

Saunders et al explains it as follows “research philosophy is an overarching term that relates to the development of knowledge and the nature of that knowledge” (Saunders, et al., 2012,p.127). Within which a paradigm exists, whereby a framework can be designed to conduct the study (see Appendix 1). It must first be considered from which branch of philosophy should the paradigm stem, both ontological and epistemological were considered. However for the purpose of this dissertation epistemology was chosen due to its notion of knowledge being created. It is more concerned with “what constitutes acceptable knowledge” (Saunders, et al., 2012). The three branches of epistemology are Interpretivism, Realism and Postivism. The researcher considered the Interpretivism and Postivism approach in depth.

### **2.2.1 Postivism**

This approach is favoured by those who would rather work with facts than the opinions of the individual. In fact it can be seen as more creditable as it is “not influenced by the unpredictable behaviour of human beings” (Biggam,

2008,p.93). For the positivist the world is seen objectively, theories appear from the natural sciences. The researcher identifies the need to adhere to the rules of the universe and in turn the universal truths (Horn, 2009,p.108). In the case of this project the positivist approach will not be suitable due to the subjective nature of the research objective.

### **2.2.2 Interpretivism**

Inside the stems of a social science project the researcher's views on the world will impact their research design. In this particular study it is imperative that it is recognised that an understanding of the role of the GAA and employment of expats abroad is sought. The area is by definition, subjective; therefore an interpretive research approach will be applied. This leads the research to take an explanatory nature allowing the experiences of the people within the phenomena to form the results. The interpreter believes that understanding can be fully gained through social interaction and being completely objective in doing so (Biggam, 2008,p.222). Saunders et al recognises this as the main challenge for the researcher, the ability to enter the subjects world from their perspective (p.137).

Unlike the positivist, data cannot be gained through questionnaires or surveys, the interpretivist needs an indepth analysis of the social phenomenon. Therefore the qualitative interview is suited to this approach as it will allow the researcher an opportunity to delve into the phenomenon under question.

### **2.3 Research Approach**

In analysing evidence gathered there are two directions the researcher can take, through the means of deduction or induction. Deduction moves from the theory to the data, "in a

deductive inference, when the premises are true, the conclusion must also be true” (Saunders, et al., 2012,p.144),this is a more appropriate approach when undertaking a quantitative method. Saunders et al explains within this thesis the research objective aims “to explore a phenomenon, identify themes and patterns and create a conceptual framework” (2012, p.144). In using a smaller sample the interview can provide a platform for an in depth exploration, which can occasionally lack in quantitative methods. The inductive approach towards this project through the method of interviewing facilitates the development of themes inside the context of expatriation and the role of the GAA within that. The questionnaire was considered as they feature as a dominant method in the research of expatriation.However as a research instrument they, like surveys can prove a difficult venture when relying on participants to respond. Throughout the literature questionnaires/surveys were effective when a targeted sample was used e.g. in an organisational context or a select population. Shi and Wang (2013) used an on-line questionnaire in analysing Chinese expatriates in an international business context. This was suitable for that particular study as it was conducted over a longer period of time. The interview can provide richer insights into behaviours, thus into the effect of the GAA on a personal level to expats abroad. Dickmann et al (2008) used the semi structured interview in assessing the motivations of expatriation and it proved extremely beneficial by giving an in depth knowledge of the context.

## **2.4 Research Strategy**

Robert Yin describes the Case Study approach as follows “investigates a phenomenon in context and in depth, and is particularly useful when the distinction between the phenomenon and its context are unclear or disputed” (cited in Anderson, 2013, p.62 ). The specific area of the GAA and their

involvement with expats abroad has received little attention on an academic scale to the knowledge of the researcher. However there has been related research into secondary areas within expatriation that together with the appropriate method and research instrument can formulate a solid research objective. The use of the case study format in comparison to an experimental approach, allows for a more natural flow to the design. Information can be understood rather than explained through human experience. The case study and its exploratory fashion focuses on contemporary events. The exploratory researcher is inclined to adopt qualitative methods as an understanding is sought, not necessarily verification. They seek to devise appropriate questions that can be addressed in future research when investigating a new area (Neuman, 2007, p.366). All data was gathered by the researcher through secondary and primary sources, academic literature and websites as the secondary and the interviews for the primary. The idea of a focus group was seriously considered by the researcher, however due to the geographical nature of the study, subjects were not easily accessible. The option of a qualitative approach presented as the most attractive given that it is more concerned with studying the participant's personal experience. The interview allows great flexibility and though they are time consuming, they prove very affective in understanding behavioural studies. Providing the most appropriate and effective means to understand the phenomena.

## **2.5 Research Choice**

As previously discussed quantitative research concerns itself primarily with statistics and adheres to empirical principles of validity and reliability (Saunders, et al., 2012). The quantitative questionnaire was considered for this thesis however due to time constraints and also the interpretive nature of the subject it was not suitable. Neuman (2007) identifies the qualitative

researcher as borrowing their subject's opinions and experiences and placing them within the framework of the given theory (p.372). The research objectives of this thesis rely on how the participants experience the phenomena of expatriation and within that, the role of the GAA. The research instrument of a semi- structured interview was tailored to assist the research objectives and aims. This instrument was chosen as the most efficient method considering the nature of the topic.

## **2.6 Semi Structured Interview**

The researcher carried out semi structured interviews, this format allowed deviation by the use of open ended questioning, although giving specific direction. The researcher had themes and key points for reference depending on the course the interview took (Saunders, et al., 2012,p.374). Many new themes and areas mentioned by the interviewee could be explored further during the process. Each interview provided new insights for the next and though many of the same questions were asked, each interview gave weight to the subsequent one. This meant that no one interview was the same, permitting rich data to accumulate. Three of the interviews were face to face which made probing much easier, whereas the remaining four took place over the phone or on Skype. It became apparent throughout the literature that the interview was the most affluent method of data collection for this particular topic.

## **2.7 Sample**

The interviewee's were selected by using the technique of snowball sampling whereby "making initial contact with cases in the population, these cases identify further members of the population, who then identify further members, and so the sample snowballs" (Saunders, et al., 2012,p.289). The GAA community was easily accessible using this technique, as the

researcher had close contact with the forums abroad and it really did take a snowballing effect. It was important for the researcher to maintain a diverse representation of expatriation in a variety of countries, and where possible different continents. Obviously there were certain criteria for taking part in the research; participants must be both an expat and a GAA member abroad.

## **2.8 Data Collection and Analysis**

As explained previously the instrument of semi structured interview was chosen, consisting of eight participants. The first interview took place in Croke Park, the GAA headquarters in Dublin, with the International GAA officer. The interview took place in a conference room and the contributor had no problem being recorded, which was done so by the researcher's mobile phone device. The two subsequent face to face interviews took place in a conference room in a local centre in Co. Cavan reserved by the researcher in advance, while both participants were home on holidays. The venue and time were made for the convenience of the participants. The same room was used for the remaining five interviews as it provided a confidential and quiet space for Skype and the telephone interview. All interviews were recorded using the same mobile phone device; a transcription of one of the face to face interviews is included with this thesis (see Appendix 4). All interviews varied in length ranging from 15 minutes to 50 minutes, the face to face interviews all reached the 35 or more minute mark. Before each interview started the researcher briefly recapped on the letter previously emailed to each participant and also permission was requested to record the interview, which no participant had any issues with. All interviews transcripts can be made available upon request for examination.

## **2.9 Ethical Considerations**

Research ethics is extremely important while undertaking any project which involves human participation and “is about adherence to a code of behaviour in relation to the rights of those who become the subject of your work or are affected by it” (Anderson, 2013,p.128,cited by Wells 1994). All participants were contacted and recruited voluntarily, once agreeably the researcher provided a letter of explanation for the context of the study (see appendix 2). The letter stated the purpose of the study and explained that all participants would be anonymous within the project and complete confidentiality was assured. This was reiterated before every interview began. The researcher also asked permission before each interview, would the use of a recording device be acceptable,this was also stated in the letter.

## **2.10 Limitations**

The researcher was fully aware of certain limitations due to the nature of the subject as many of the potential participants would be abroad. Therefore there were issues of access and time constraints to work with; seven of the eight interviewees were living outside Ireland. However during the summer months two of them returned home on holiday so the interview was scheduled at their convenience. The remaining five interviews were conducted through Skype or on the phone, which in itself had technical limitations. The researcher was conscious before interviews took place that the information could be interrupted due to technical issues, so extra time was allocated to accommodate this. There was also a pilot conversation over Skype to see how it would work with two of the participants before interviews commenced. The use of a small sample is also a limitation, however the researcher, were

possible, choose from a variety of countries to obtain diverse knowledge of the subject matter.

### **2.11 Concluding Remarks**

This chapter has outlined the process endorsed in obtaining the primary data for this research. The subsequent chapter will now put forward the results and findings in favour of the research objectives of this thesis.



# **Chapter 3**

## ***Findings and Discussion***

### **3.0 Introduction**

The following chapter will illustrate the primary data gathered through the semi structured interviews. Seven of the interviewees are highly educated professionals based in seven different countries and three different continents, which brings a range of experience to the study. Two of the participants are situated in the Middle East (Qatar and Saudi Arabia) the remainder located in Canada, Australia, Switzerland, England and Belgium. All seven are self initiated expats working in areas of Finance, Business Administration, Teaching, Engineering, Human Resources and Law. Interviewee 2 and 3 both actually were founders of their GAA club abroad and both have an official role on their club committee and the European GAA Board .The seventh interviewee (interviewee 1) works for the GAA alongside the Department of Foreign Affairs in supporting expats abroad. The researcher found that many similar themes arose throughout the interviews with the expats. However the presence of the GAA network and the ‘community’ element of it play a much more vital role in particular to the Middle Eastern participants.

The themes that developed were investigated under the following research objectives:

1. To identify the role of the GAA for the SIE in the recruitment process.
2. Examine the community base and cultural touchstone presented by the GAA community.
3. Investigate the influence of the GAA on relocation choices for expats.

The questions that the researcher posed are enclosed in Appendix 3, and for the purpose of complete anonymity the

interviewee's will be referred to as Interviewee/participant 1, 2, 3 etc.

### **3.1 Research Objective 1: Identify the role of the GAA for the self initiated expat in the recruitment process.**

This research objective was explored with the participants by discussing if their involvement in their club helped them when seeking employment or accommodation/initial start ups. Also as an expat what was their opinion on the expansion of the GAA worldwide. The interviews further explored the possible networking opportunities provided by the GAA abroad. On analysis the following themes emerged: networking, support and nepotism.

- **Networking**

The topic of networking was a very dominant theme throughout all the interviews. Though interviewee 1 was not an expat, their role within the GAA required them to directly deal with expats abroad and setting them up in clubs. They explained that prior to expats leaving Ireland they would often contact Croke Park seeking contacts for the nearest GAA club in their host country. Interviewee 2 and 3 hold official roles within their clubs abroad. They recognised that though their involvement with the GAA did not help them with employment specifically, however it provided the platform for them to provide such help.

Interviewee 2 stated that there are companies in Riyadh (Saudi Arabia) were "*the presence of a GAA club has contributed to their ability to recruit young professional Engineers, Surveyors and project managers to the Kingdom*". Interviewee 3 and interviewee 6 recalled several cases whereby people had lost accommodation or employment and would use the GAA network to find a new job or apartment. Interviewee 6 (involved with both Gaelic Football and Camoige) in fact stated that "*I'm looking for a new job and as I told my teams, people*

were asking for my CV to hand into their offices and putting in good words”. Interviewee 7 also felt that *“if I was laid off from my current employment, I would have lots of contacts within the club and feel that I would not be unemployed for long”*.

Interviewee 8 contacted their local club in Belgium on arrival regarding accommodation *“I started training and one of the members offered me a place for a few days while I searched, I think that’s a major factor in why Irish people who move abroad seek a GAA team from the offset, to network for jobs and accommodation”* they also stated that *“I have been able to make and receive introductions to people that have helped my professional career in law”*. Interviewee 5 was the only one who got direct employment as a result of playing GAA; in fact they left Ireland on the promise of a job and accommodation in London. They explained that they had seen an advertisement online recruiting players to come over to play and work *“and the rest they say is history, I’ve been here ever since”*.

- **Support**

Interviewee 1 was able to explain steps taken by the GAA and the Department of Foreign Affairs (DFA) in helping support the Irish Diaspora through their involvement with clubs abroad. They identified several schemes abroad that were being funded by the DFA to support expats, one such case in Australia whereby the Australasia board created a welcome pack for expats *“Given out to members containing important information about their new area, social outlets and contacts for accommodation and general services in the area”*. In support of this, interviewee 3 mentioned their clubs heavy involvement with helping members out *“with visas and other forms in different languages, advice on living there, as well as other valuable information on cultural traditions or the actual lay of the land in this new place”*. The same club also benefited from the departments funding through the GAA.

- **Nepotism**

This was a very interesting theme that arose with no negative intention, but rather by accident. The idea of nepotism within the GAA abroad was not considered by the researcher.

Interviewee 5 discussed how they had been recruited to an administration job through their connection with the football club. Interviewee 6 and 7 both commented on how being part of a GAA club has got them into direct employment in the past. Interviewee 4 recalled several incidents whereby fellow teammates had received employment with no prior experience to their respective jobs.

### **3.2 Research Objective 2: Examine the community base and cultural touchstone presented by the GAA abroad.**

This area with the interviewee's appeared the most prevalent whereby all the participants had a very clear definition for its purpose it had to them as expats. The discussion emerged by examining their opinion on why people who move abroad find the GAA and if they felt it provides a strong cultural identity while abroad. There was also the opportunity to assess whether they felt that this method of connection inhibits Irish emigrants from interacting with their host society. Identifying whether they partake in any other social clubs Irish or non Irish. This section of the interview highlighted consistent themes of isolation, home from home and integration.

- **Isolation**

All six interviews could resonate with the feeling of loneliness that comes with emigration. Though all interviewees had highly positive experiences of the expatriation venture, they all recalled times of isolation. Interviewee 3 recognises "*the GAA abroad is a great platform for social interaction, mental and physical wellbeing as well as life improvement*" and "*it was a*

*great coping mechanism during the tough times of loneliness, isolation and homesickness*". Interviewee 4 also felt that *"in places like the Middle East you can become quite socially isolated if you do not try to get out"*. Both participants (2 and 4) based in the Middle East commented on the presence of the GAA club within such a restricted culture and how they would have nothing else socially. Interviewee 2 listed their limitations *"no bars, cinemas, entertainment clubs, mixed restaurants, places of worship are all prohibited"*. The researcher found that the two Middle East expats defined the GAA community slightly different to that of the more western expats. Especially for interviewee 2 whom was confined to their compound within Saudi Arabia, their life there was in isolation by nature.

- **Home from Home**

Throughout all seven interviews the term 'home from home' was used without fail and though the motivations for all six expats varied, a method of connection to home was important. Both interviewee's 2 and 3 actually set up their respective clubs abroad that are now in existence. Interviewee 2 proclaiming *"there is no doubt in my mind that we become more fervent Irish men and women and more culturally aware when we are overseas"*. Participant 6 admitted never *"bothering to play back home, but I felt being away it would give me a little piece of home here in Canada"*. Interviewee 1 discussed the expansion of the GAA abroad *"the fact that the international GAA representation is now over 20% of the GAA overall speaks for itself"* and which interviewee 3 referred to strongly as *"the GAA is ingrained in Irish DNA, we bring it with us wherever we go"*. Interview 5 and 7 both referred to this home from home feeling *"as a sense of security while starting in an unknown environment, especially when you are adapting to a new job as well as a new country"*. Interviewee 8 felt by being

part of the GAA is *“a way of feeling connected to Ireland and to experience the country through the Irish”*.

- **Integration to host society**

Integration within this research question highlighted the influence of their involvement with GAA on their ability to integrate with their host society. The opinions on this were very much split down the middle. Interviewee 2, 3, 8 and 5 believed that it did not have an impact on their interaction with their host country; in fact both 2 and 3 were involved with non Irish and other Irish clubs. Whereas participants 4, 7 and 6 believed that it did hinder them slightly as interviewee 7 states *“I think it is great and it gives people great opportunities, but the only down side of it I see is that the majority of the Irish in the club here would only socialise with other Irish people”*. It should also be noted here that interviewees 4, 7 and 6 were not involved with any other club outside the GAA. However for Interviewee 4 (the Qatari expat) though they agreed that it did interfere somewhat, they did not see it as intentionally a *“cultural snub”* but rather an *“accidental happening”*: due to the licensing of alcohol being allowed to the sports club, therefore the only social hub they had. For Interviewee 2, 3 and 5 it was a repetitive no when considering its impact on their interaction, 3 declaring *“completely the opposite in fact it embeds the Irish people into their host society and if done properly helps to interact much better with the host society”*. Interviewee 2 having very much the same vision, while acknowledging the stigma of the Irish and the risk of developing an enclave or siege mentality of doing exclusively ‘Irish things’ they spoke with passion *“the relative merits and positives arising from physical sports, programmed routine and an opportunity to meet with like minded people, far outweigh the risks of developing a negative nuclear regime”*. Interviewee 8 acknowledged that there were many non Irish members in their

club “*we are very lucky to have Australian, English, American and New Zealand girls on the team so we enjoy mixing and mingling with people from all over the world*”.

### **3.3 Research Question 3: Investigate the influence of the GAA on relocation choices for expats.**

This question proved very interesting to the researcher as it probed questions to emerge and after analysing the data it has led to progression for future research. Determining whether the presence of a GAA club in their current location have an influence on their decision to relocate there and also in general did they feel that it helped their overall integration to the country. Two issues which became transparent through the interview process, where the participants intention to stay and their overall integration to their host country. Interviewee 5 was the only participant who moved to London as a direct result of a job offer through the GAA and also mentioned that a similar situation was arising with an American club.

- **Intention to stay**

The consideration of the GAA as an influence on relocation choices for expats proved invalid to all six participants. However the researcher identified that their involvement had a solemn impact on their intention to stay, which now acts as a sub objective. Interviewee 2 mentioned that Middle Eastern construction companies had stated that their ability to recruit young professionals was as direct result of the presence of the GAA club also noted that “*it significantly enhanced them to retain them beyond their initial contract phase*”. Both interviewee 2 and 3, while probed by the researcher on why they felt the need to set up a club in their areas, commented that they couldn’t imagine enduring very long without playing Gaelic football. Interviewee 3 declared that “*it did not have a direct influence on my decision to move to Belgium. My*



*decision was motivated by my professional and personal life. The fact that there was a GAA club, however, did help me integrate and meet new people, who ultimately improved my life in Brussels*". On discussing the area interviewee 6 remarked that *"it may not have relocated me to Toronto, but it definitely helped me stay"* and finally interviewee 4 stated that *"Yes 100%, I would probably have gone home years ago only for it"*.

- **Integration**

The participants (excluding 5) claimed that the GAA had no impact on their relocation choice however three of them admitted searching online for the nearest GAA club before departing Ireland. Interviewee 4 admits that *"without the GAA club in Qatar my experience would have been massively different"* in fact both the Middle Eastern participants were passionate about the GAA in its contribution in helping integration. As interviewee 2 quotes *"the GAA overseas certainly does help Irish expats to integrate, particularly plays a significant role for women locating in Saudi Arabia, as Nurses and Teachers, as women have very limited opportunities in the strictly Muslim state"*. Interviewee 3 boasts of its role of supporting the integration process *"it stands as a beacon of confidence for people; it became a great forum for sharing and information gathering for a new person in a new place"*. Both interviewees 6 and 7 recognised it acts as an integration tool to their host society, 6 describing it as *"their family abroad"* and 7 *"although we train all the time, we also go out together or go to concerts, everyone is really inclusive, it makes the experience of expatriation what it is"*.

### **3.4 Discussion**

This section will discuss the analysis of the findings in relation to the Literature review in Chapter 1. The analysis will unfold under the headings of the research objectives which develop through the themes.

### **3.5 Research Objective 1: Identify the role of the GAA for the self initiated expat in the recruitment process.**

- **Networking**

The GAA as a networking function to the expat proved extremely influential to their experience abroad. Whether it was intentional or not to the participants, they had, or could at least name incidents where it aided in employment or social networks. Doherty et al (2011) identified the need for the SIE, more so than the OE, to establish other opportunities outside the business context in cases where things did not work out. This is extremely evident in the findings. Shen and Kram (2011) acknowledged that HR must recognise that there are differences between the expat and the domestic employee. They highlighted the advantages of ‘extra organisational developers’, this referring to outside stimuli that affect employee behaviour. The findings in this area can attribute to both Doherty et al study and Shen and Kram’s discussion, as they both felt that lack of social capital and networks would influence adjustment, and therefore affect performance and retention. It can now be clearly seen that the GAA acts as a facilitator for such networking.

- **Support**

It was confirmed in two of the interviews that there is financial support for the GAA abroad in conjunction with the Department of Foreign Affairs. Previously discussed was the recognition by the Houses of Oireachtas for the GAA's active work with the Irish Diaspora. As was mentioned in the literary review, there is much debate among Human Resource professionals as to whether or not SIE support initiatives should be the responsibility of the host country company (Howe-Walsh & Schyns, 2010). The debate along with the characteristics of the Generation Y self initiated expat gave little consideration to the notion that these are already socially adventurous (Inkson, et al., 1997). The findings maintain that these individuals appreciate support in which they gain themselves, by actively seeking out social outlets, like the GAA. In defining the expat, the literature focused very much on distinguishing the self initiated expat from the company backed expat. Analysing the data from the semi structured interviews can provide very good reason in doing so. This further highlighted that SIE participants all embraced the role of the GAA as a support tool for their new venture. Doherty et al (2011) recognised that the OE receives fixed support in crucial areas like "housing, family support, healthcare etc". The findings show that support with visas, accommodation language barrier support and other integration issues have been supplied by the GAA abroad.

- **Nepotism**

Nepotism was one theme that came to light through the interviews; the researcher had never considered this as an area of research. The nature of the role of the GAA as a networking function was only considered in a positive light. However on further analysis after reflecting on results the researcher found

that this is a very valid issue. There is a gap in the literature especially in regards the negative impact this may have on HR strategies in regards to recruitment, particularly in a fair manner. Though it is defined as “the employment of relatives in the same organisation or the use of family influence to employ them in other organisations” it can have relevance for “any individual receiving positions because of their relationship rather than their merit” (Adballa, et al., 1998,p.555). The word itself carries negative connotations for obvious reasons, and may be something for HR professionals to consider.

### **3.6 Research Objective 2: Examine the community base and cultural touchstone presented by the GAA abroad.**

- **Isolation**

This theme is firmly positioned in the literature as a challenge to overcome in expatriation, the findings support this. Froese and Peltokorpi (2013) recognised psychological adjustment as a factor within expatriation process. This adjustment for the SIE, in alliance with the study, can be a consistent battle for an expat. The findings proved that there are times of loneliness for the interviewees and that the presence of the GAA has helped them overcome it. What was particularly interesting within the answers was how isolation was defined differently for the Middle Eastern expats. Isolation for the western participants was merely loneliness from family and friends, however for the Middle Eastern participants it meant isolation within their now host country. Under the same study Froese and Peltokorpi considered socio-cultural and work adjustment as other factors which was more apparent to the Middle Eastern subjects. The very issue of cross cultural adjustment for these individuals was far more relevant to their situation.

- **Home from Home**

Upon analysis of this theme it became extremely obvious that it linked directly with the core of the GAA and what it stands for as an organisation. The activities “acts as a major social and cultural focus....and is an opportunity to keep in touch with the broader elements of Irish identity and culture” (GAA, 2002) all participants could correspond with this. Keeler and Wright (2013) saw the organisation as a cultural touchstone for Irish people wherever they were, the results support this. For interviewee 6 who did not play prior to leaving Ireland vouched for this “declaration of national faith” (O’heithir B, 2005) as for them it was a way of bringing a “*piece of home with them*”.

- **Integration**

The study of Shi and Wang (2014) presented the adaption process into four streams that were discussed in Chapter 1. This study focussed on how the expatriate approached the process which in turn would determine the outcome of the adjustment. Adapting to one’s host environment would depend on their willingness to change one’s perspective. Shi and Wang observed that success of the process of adaption would be demonstrated through expats sensitivities and their reactions to such. The findings verified this, as two out of the three participants who believed that the GAA had no impact on their ability to integrate with their host society where the only two of the six, who were involved with other non Irish clubs. While examining these results it can be concluded that it is the participant’s willingness to get actively involved in their host community that aids adjustment.

### **3.7 Research Question 3: Investigate the influence of the GAA on relocation choices for expats.**

- **Intention to Stay**

This theme became a sub objective within the question of relocation choices. In the literature review Doherty et al (2011) observed that the SIE were statistically more likely to stay longer than the OE, therefore their integration into their environment was of higher importance. This further supported the notion of the findings in comparison to the Generation Y expat, as according to Lindquist (2008) the focus is no longer on “job for life” but rather value the relationships. This is very evident with all six expats, the presence of the social outlet, that is the GAA gives them the incentive to stay. Doherty et al recognised this bond that influences one to stay, against their desire to return home.

- **Integration to the host society**

Integration was seen throughout the literature review and also within the findings as a dominant theme. Doherty et al (2011) and Luscombe et al (2013) studies illustrated that social relationships and interactions were key to expats affiliation to their host country. The seven interviews, six of which were expats, confirmed the role of the GAA abroad for their integration away from home. In the case of the Middle Eastern participants it may not have integrated them into the strict Muslim society, but it acts as a way of life in very complex culture. Shi and Wang (2014) and their four streams of adjustment exemplify the process, however regardless of one’s level of adjustment it must now be acknowledged that there can be support systems in place. The results show evenly that the GAA does not inhibit the interaction with the host society; rather people do this, in their willingness to engage.

## **Chapter 4**

### ***Conclusion and Recommendations***

## 4.0 Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to evaluate the role of the GAA for expat's abroad under the following research objectives:

- Identify the role of the GAA for the self initiated expat in the recruitment process.
- Examine the community base and cultural touchstone presented by the GAA abroad.
- Investigate the influence of the GAA on relocation choices for expats.

This chapter will present the overall conclusion to the findings in light of these research objectives. The limitations that became apparent to the researcher throughout the project will also be critically evaluated. Finally recommendations will be put forward by the researcher for future research.

Identifying the role of the GAA in the recruitment process for the SIE has proved very insightful. Building upon past study this research has demonstrated that it acts as a facilitator for networking, which as Doherty et al (2011) would indicate as important for the SIE. Within the study, the GAA is a proven support system for SIE's, which is similar to what OE's would experience. This would further stir a debate as to how aware are companies of the potential benefits this support could provide? A much unexpected find within the study, was the issue of nepotism, which could have certain negative implications for Human Resource professionals. This will be further discussed in the recommendations.

Considering the findings of the community base and cultural touchstone presented by the GAA, it illustrated evidence of a very crucial position put forward by the GAA. The expat experiences periods of loneliness and isolation, this effectively dictates the success of the adjustment process. The most empowering result of this thesis is the beneficial position the GAA pose to the Middle Eastern expats. It not only acts as a 'piece of home' but rather acts as an integration tool within the confinements of a somewhat restrictive society.



The GAA as a relocation factor for expats established no concrete evidence among the participants; however it became obvious that it cemented their reasons for staying. This discovery alone contributes to the HR function immensely, the use of this knowledge acts as a resource in recruitment and retention. The recognition that the self initiated expat's of today value relationships and experiences far more than financial incentives (Lindquist, 2008). This research has created a new avenue, as the GAA specifically has received little attention in this domain.

From the lack of literature in this particular field this thesis has opened up the gap for questioning. The objective was to explore the role of the GAA and the employment of expats abroad, it is apparent that they do indeed have a niche. Though this research has focused on self initiated expats, the results have relevance for all types of expatriates. There are also beneficial findings for the Gaelic Athletic Association itself. Their footprint around the world is no longer just the growth of a sporting organisation, but rather the growth of a cultural phenomenon.

#### **4.1 Limitations of the research**

In light of the interpretation of the findings the researcher established certain limitations to the research. Firstly, a comparative study encompassing expatriates who were not involved with the GAA or indeed with other social systems i.e. expat blogs etc could have a more rich validity to the study. Although the researcher was very cautious about maintaining an unbiased perspective, by using a comparative study this could have eliminated any unconscious desire to do so. Doherty et al (2011) in their study of exploring company backed and self initiated expats they used the comparative element to give the study legitimacy. Comparing the 'GAA self initiated expat' against a non member SIE would give greater scope to the 'integration' factor and provide new insights into cross cultural adjustment.

Secondly, the semi structured interview could have been assisted by a pilot study for gaining themes for the interview stage. This would have allowed critical reflection on the findings and hence improve the structure and focus of

the interviews, enhancing the reliability of the research design. This could have ultimately led to the use of more open-ended questioning.

Finally the very nature of the topic had time constraints from the offset. As participants locations varied, as did time zones. All interviews took place over a period of two weeks, which didn't allow much time for preparation between each interview. Time to analyse interview results could have informed each interview for more effective results i.e. to replace verbose questions.

#### **4.2 Recommendations and future research**

As outlined in the conclusion the results of this thesis has implications for many groups, the GAA itself, all types of expat's and of course International Human Resource professionals. The GAA expansion across the world has a clear role to play in assisting not only the Irish Diaspora, but it is rather opening its doors as an inclusive system for all. Its functioning as a networking and support system has many has positive implications for the future of Human Resources. As was noticeable in the results, the presence of the GAA was a major factor on expats intention to stay. Reflecting on this with F.J. Froese's observation of the socio- economic push/pull factor, the GAA can be defined as a pull for expats to stay. Acknowledging the role of the 'social system' put forward by the GAA can only act to serve the HR function in the following ways:

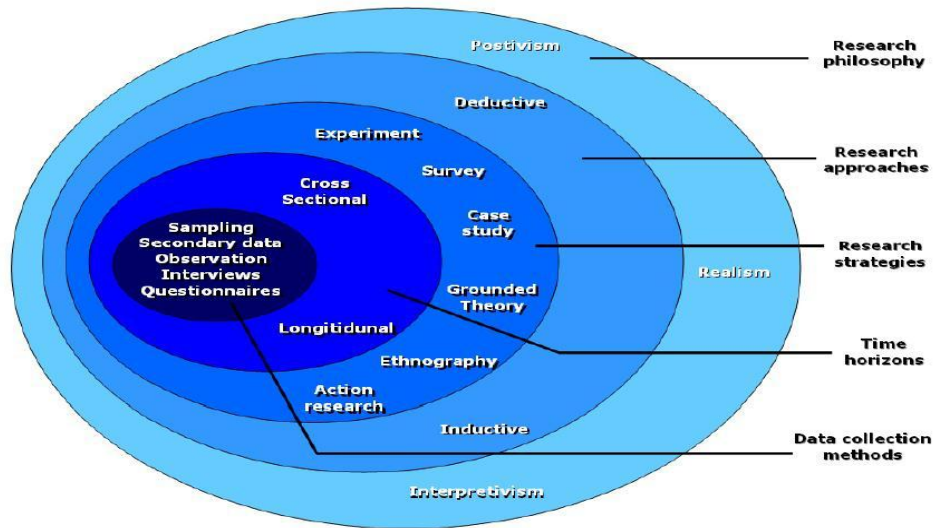
- Adopt it as a unique selling point
- Collaborate with the local GAA clubs in recruiting
- Recognising it as a strong 'extra organisational developer' and implementing it with the adjustment process.
- Establishing other networking opportunities that may be available in the locality i.e. social clubs, blogs.

The theme of nepotism came to light in the course of the interviews. Having not been considered by the researcher it is now apparent that there is room for investigation. The possible affect of this in regards to the potentially negative

role of the GAA, leaving the question open as to the implications for the future of Human Resource practices towards recruitment at home and abroad.

# *Appendices*

## Appendix 1: The Research Onion



Saunders et al (2012, p.126)

## **Appendix 2: Letter of explanation**

Dear Participant

I am a Masters student in the National College of Ireland and am currently undertaking the thesis stage of the degree. My topic focuses on the role of the GAA and the employment of expats abroad. I have chosen the semi structured interview as my research instrument as I feel it can elicit the most effective results due to the purely subjective nature of the topic.

I am requesting your participation as your experience as an expat and as a GAA member can assist the research significantly. The data collected will be for the sole purpose of the thesis and complete anonymity can be guaranteed. It is preferable to record interviews, however by no means a must, depending on your permission.

I look forward to hearing from you at your earliest convenience

Kind Regards

Carmel McBride

### **Appendix 3: Interview Questions**

1. Please state your name, email address, Club, Country and Gender.
2. Please state the location of GAA club: (e.g. London, New York)
3. What is your present occupation:
4. What is your highest qualification? (Leaving Cert, degree, Qualified Tradesperson):
5. Are you, Irish born, second or generational Irish or Non Irish?
6. If non Irish please state Nationality:
7. If Irish born did you play GAA before you joined club abroad?
8. Did the presence of a GAA club in your current location have an influence on your decision to relocate there? And if not did it influence your decision to stay?
9. How long have you been living abroad?
10. How long do you intend to live outside of Ireland for?
11. Are you involved in any other non Irish clubs abroad? If so please state.
12. Do you take part in any other Irish cultural activities outside of Ireland? E.g. Irish dance, language etc
13. How did you hear about this GAA club?
14. Did your involvement in this club help you when seeking employment or accommodation? (if so please elaborate):
15. As an Expat what is your opinion on the expansion of the GAA worldwide?
16. Why do you believe that people who move abroad find a new team and continue to play GAA?
17. Do you feel the GAA provides a strong cultural identity to people's national heritage?
18. In general do you feel that your involvement in the GAA abroad has helped your overall integration to the country?

19. Has it provided other networking opportunities for you within the country? e.g. social or employment related
20. Do you feel it inhibits Irish emigrants from interacting with their host society?



## **Appendix 4: Transcription of Interview No.2**

Please note that researcher and interviewee 2 were replaced for the individual's names.

**Researcher:** The area of study focuses on the role of the GAA and the employment of ex pats abroad. Firstly I would just like to thank you for taking the time out of your schedule to do this interview. Interviewee 2 is it ok with you to record this conversation here today?

**Interviewee 2:** Of course, work away!

**Researcher:** That's great thanks, I should also reiterate the point that I stated in the letter, that there is complete confidentiality with the information here today and if at any point you would like to stop the interview please don't hesitate.

**Interviewee 2:** No Problem

**Researcher:** Ok so first, could you please state your Club and Country.

**Interviewee 2:** I am located in Saudi Arabia and my is Club Naomh Alee GAA Club, Riyadh City, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

**Researcher:** Ok and what is your present occupation in Saudi Arabia

**Interviewee 2:** Senior Economic Adviser to the Saudi Arabian Central Bank

**Researcher:** Are you, Irish born, second or generational Irish or Non Irish?

**Interviewee 2:** Full Irish man!

**Researcher:** Ha-ha..... Did you play GAA before you joined the club abroad?

**Interviewee 2:** Yes. Drumgoon Eire Og GAA Club and Cavan

**Researcher:** And did the presence of a GAA club in Saudi Arabia have an influence on your decision to relocate there?

**Interviewee 2:** No. Actually the GAA Club was dormant when I arrived in 2010. Club was established and affiliated with the Croke Park in 1994, and the first, longest established GAA Club in the Middle East. However, following the targeted bombing of expatriate hotels and resorts in Riyadh in 2003 which resulted in the exit of many non-nationals from Saudi Arabia, the club became dormant.

In 2010, together with two Cork men, original club founder, Charles Sullivan and former Irish and Grand National Jockey, Sean O Donovan, we re-commissioned the club, developing men's and women's playing squads and engaging in the Middle East League and Championships. In 2012, Riyadh won the Intermediate Men's Championship and Gulf Games titles.

**Researcher:** Oh fair play to ye getting it back up and going, so you have been there 5 yrs then?

**Interviewee 2:** Yeap, but it really doesn't feel like that

**Researcher:** And how long do you think you'll live abroad?

**Interviewee 2:** Golden question!..... My engagement is a professional commitment, so hard to define in time terms, but probably another 3 years.

**Researcher:** Are you involved in any other non Irish/Irish clubs abroad?

**Interviewee 2:** No other formal sports or cultural clubs, associations. But I am an honorary member of the Riyadh Irish Society in Saudi Arabia. I am also involved with the Irish Ambassador in Saudi Arabia, Bahrain and Iraq in developing the Irish Business Network of Saudi Arabia, which supports Irish Business and Irish affiliated business in establishing links with the Middle East.

**Researcher:** Oh that's sounds interesting

**Interviewee 2:** It Is. I don't think people in Ireland realise the extent of the business connections between Ireland and the Middle East. It's quite astonishing the work that's been done there.

*Pause for water*

**Interviewee 2:** I should also mention that I am the Cathaoirleach of Naomh Alee GAA Club in Riyadh, and the Leas Cathaoir; each of the Middle East GAA County Board.

**Researcher:** Yes I heard recently that the Middle East now have a county board that must be difficult arranging meetings?

**Interviewee 2:** HAHA you would think so, but it is a much more smooth process than at home, people make it work, conference calls, Skype and Emails make it all very doable.

**Researcher:** HA yes we fairly make a big deal to travel a half an hour once a month to the county board meetings, maybe we could get Skype going.

**Interviewee 2:** You should definitely pitch that and see the response you'll get ha-ha

**Researcher:** Ha-ha I'll keep you updated

**Interviewee 2:** ha-ha

**Researcher:** Interviewee 2 do you feel that your involvement has helped you when seeking employment or accommodation?

**Interviewee 2:** In my case, no, as I said the club was dormant at that time. However, the presence of the club has been instrumental for some of our current members in the decision to move to the region and to Riyadh.

*Paused for water*

But two major employers in the Middle East are Jones Engineering Group and Bruce Shaw Group, both of whom are engaged in the construction professions. These companies, both now shirt sponsors for Naomh Alee, have stated that the presence of a GAA Club has contributed to their ability to recruit young professional Engineers, Surveyors and Project Managers to the Kingdom, and equally significant in retaining them beyond their initial contract phase.

**Researcher:** So a huge retention factor for Middle Eastern companies then and obviously acts as a networking tool also?

**Interviewee 2:** Oh without a doubt it does

**Researcher:** As an Expat Interviewee 2 what is your opinion on the expansion of the GAA worldwide?

**Interviewee 2:** I believe this to be a key and critical factor in the ongoing and future development of the GAA. It is of course, a two way street. A. the GAA provides a means of sporting and cultural

expression for the Irish when abroad and B, Irish expats provide the perfect resource for the GAA to extend its reach and impact.

**Researcher:** Yes and the overseas wing has become an integral part of how the world views it as a sport.

**Interviewee 2:** Ah of course, the overseas wing of the GAA is now the fastest expanding part of the GAA, with clubs emerging in virtually every corner of the globe. The current Uachtaran, Cumann Luthcleas Gael, Aogan O Fearghail as you know is a keen advocate and supporter of the GAA overseas, and in 2015 attended both the inaugural GAA World Games in Abu Dhabi and the 21<sup>st</sup> Birthday celebrations of Naomh Alee GAA Club in Riyadh.

The GAA World Games were designed, developed, hosted and run by the Middle East GAA County Board, in March 2015 in Abu Dhabi. Over the previous 18 months, we developed the concept, secured sponsorship, Etihad being the lead sponsors and secured Croke Park endorsement for the concept and execution of the three day event-(including an Irish enterprise focused GAA World Games Business Forum.

The event proved hugely successful and popular, with teams from US, NY, Canada, Argentina, Europe, Asia, Australia/NZ, Africa and the Middle East competing for honours. Major GAA Celebrities, including Marty Morrissey, Pat Spillane, Valerie Mulcahy, Pat McEnaney and Michael O Muirheartaigh all attended and were key contributors to the event.

The inclusion of the very successful World Business Forum illustrated clearly that the role of the GAA is ambassadorial as well as cultural, in that it provides a conduit for Irish Business (including senior executives from Dubai Duty Free, JP Morgan Chase and Intel) to make the case for Irish Business on a world stage.

The patron of the GAA World Games Business Forum was the No. 2 in line to the throne in Abu Dhabi, Sheikh Nayhan, who addressed the forum, marking the GAA as a key international entity across the region

**Researcher:** Wow, there's a lot going on!

**Interviewee 2:** There sure is, and it's really only the beginning.

**Researcher:** Why do you believe that people who move abroad find a new team and continue to play GAA?

The GAA overseas provides a sense of belonging, affiliation and affinity. Playing our national games, and viewing our championships live through the increasingly popular streaming services like GAA Go, provides a platform for engagement, and a means of remaining connected to the 'themes of home'.

For younger (mid 20's) participants, the overseas teams provide a means of remaining ready to re-join clubs when they return home. For others, and older members, it's a means of extending their playing career at (in some cases) a less intense level.

We notice that for Irish parents overseas, the existence of our Juvenile sector and Cul Camps is a very important feature. For some, it's an opportunity to show their children what they played as kids, for others, it's an opportunity to have their children exposed to football, hurling, Camogie, to prepare them for returning to Ireland later on.

**Researcher:** Yes, particularly now when many expats are becoming permanent overseas. Do you feel the GAA provides a strong cultural identity to people's national heritage?

**Interviewee 2:** Without question it does. There is no doubt in my mind that we become more fervent Irish men and women...and more culturally aware, when we move overseas.

**Researcher:** In general do you feel that your involvement in the GAA abroad has helped your overall integration to the country?

**Interviewee 2:** Not sure on this....However, the GAA overseas certainly does help Irish expats to integrate with their Irish community abroad and across borders overseas. This is particularly significant for girls and women locating in Saudi Arabia (as Nurses and Teachers). Women especially have very limited opportunities to socially engage in the strictly orthodox Muslim state of Saudi Arabia. No bars, cinemas, entertainment clubs, mixed restaurants, places of worship etc. All of these are prohibited. However, the GAA in Riyadh arranges for secure training sessions, on secure campus's which allows men and women to mix, train at the same facility, and hosts social events and

functions. In my 5 years with the club, we have had two weddings, 5 engagements and 2 children among players from Ireland, UK, Australia and New Zealand, who met and developed relationships through the club.

**Researcher:** Do you feel it inhibits Irish emigrants from interacting with their host society?

**Interviewee 2:** On balance, no. Obviously there is a risk of developing an 'enclave' or 'siege' mentality, by going overseas and doing exclusively 'Irish' things, but the relative merits and 'positives' arising from physical sports, a programmed routine (Sunday and Wednesday training) and an opportunity to meet with like-minded people, far outweigh the risks of developing a 'negative nuclear' regime.

**Researcher:** Yes, the Irish can't help finding their own!! Home from home is certainly a fitting tribute. Well that's great (name) thanks a million for your time today; I won't keep you any longer as you head back tomorrow is it?

**Interviewee 2:** Yes tomorrow afternoon after the girls game.

**Researcher:** I really do appreciate you spending what is, precious time at home in doing this.

**Interviewee 2:** Not at all, anything GAA grabs my attention.

**Interview closes**

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