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How is immigrant entrepreneurial opportunity formation influenced by interactions between home and host countries?

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Abstract: This study examined how the entrepreneurial opportunity formation process among different ethnic groups was influenced by their origins and the cultural values accustomed to them. Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data was collected from 20 participants (five each from four different ethnic groups) using an in-depth interview technique. The study found that the interactions between an immigrant's home and host environments can take different forms (i.e., enablers and threats) which will influence their career choices in diverse ways. The study model framework showed that participants are influenced distinctly subject to their ethnic backgrounds and the nature of their interactions with the families.

Keywords: immigrant entrepreneurship; entrepreneurial opportunity formation; visual mixed embeddedness framework; cultural assimilation.

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Biographical notes: Kingsley C. Njoku travelled to the UK in 2005 where he studied at Henley College after his secondary school in Nigeria. Thereafter, he received his first degree in Law from the University of Kent in 2009. After obtaining another degree from Maastricht University, he went to Ukraine where he studied the Russian language in 2013. His thirst for knowledge inspired his publications (academic and non-academic), including a children's story-book titled *We Love Billy the Puppy*. After his Master's at the American College Dublin, he was awarded a scholarship by Technological University (TU), Dublin to undertake a programme in entrepreneurship. He defended his PhD thesis on 2 July 2020. He currently partners with entrepreneurs in Dublin in teaching people how to set-up their own online businesses. More details can be found at <https://bit.ly/3fIUyJ3>.

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Governments, the European Commission, OECD, the European Training Foundation and other international organisations. He has published widely on the topic of entrepreneurship and full details of his career can be found at <http://www.thomascooney.com>

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1 Introduction

In recent years, the value of immigrant entrepreneurship has been progressively recognised by policymakers and has become the focus of increased academic research. However, one area lacking insight is an understanding of how entrepreneurship opportunity formation (EOF) process by immigrants is influenced by the interactions between their home and host countries. As such, research on how immigrant entrepreneurs view entrepreneurial opportunity formation remains underdeveloped (Njoku and Cooney, 2018). Hence, the concept of visual mixed embeddedness framework (VMEF) has been introduced to demystify the variable factors regarding why immigrants often resort to entrepreneurial opportunity formation as their last option (*ibid*). The primary objective of this paper is to advance this discussion by exploring how nascent entrepreneurial activity by immigrants is influenced by their interactions between their home and host countries, focusing on their interpretations of their experiences. It will employ the VMEF logic to explain how entrepreneurial opportunities are formed from an immigrant entrepreneur's perspective through their interactions with both their home and host countries. The ambition of this paper is to explore how these influences alter the entrepreneurial opportunity formation of an immigrant entrepreneur and offer explanations regarding how it differs to the entrepreneurial opportunity formation of non-immigrant entrepreneurs. The conclusion will show how immigrants' entrepreneurial idiosyncrasies are influenced by mixed relationships during their journeys through entrepreneurial opportunity formation.

A recent study shows that the high growth rate of 'immigrant businesses' has been influenced by a restructuring phase within western economies (Njoku and Cooney, 2018). In agreement with Hagen (1962), issues such as joblessness, low paid employment and discrimination have forced immigrants to embrace alternative means of survival in foreign lands where they have difficulty securing employment. While Light and Bhachu (2008) reported cases showing the possible ethnic impact regarding how immigrants form, create, access and exploit entrepreneurial opportunities, their work also highlighted the need to create an empirical framework that demonstrates how immigrant entrepreneurial opportunity formation activities can be understood from an interactive-base perspective. Thus, 'interaction' as used in this paper suggests relationships between immigrants and their families in the forms of networking and other forms of contact. Also, it entails their cultural perceptions of self-employment and opportunity creations based on inherent genetic qualities, materials and components that influence behaviours (Kennedy, 2018). Hence, cross-cultural psychology suggests that

cultural factors will influence the development and display of individual human behaviour (Berry, 1997).

2 Immigrant entrepreneurship and opportunity formation

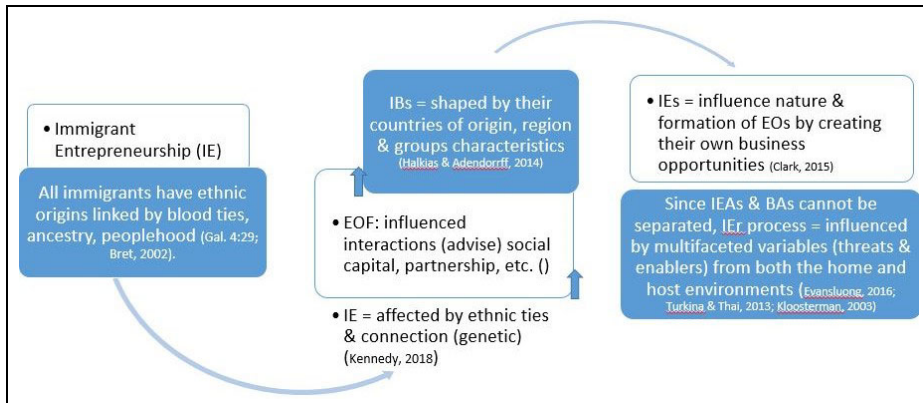
The literature shows that self-employment amongst immigrants in the host country is subject to different explanatory variable factors. While some scholars believe that self-employment can be described as a desperate move amongst immigrants to sustain members of an ethnic minority group within a larger society (Hagen, 1962), others argue that it is embedded in the culture of some ethnic minority group and thus explains why immigrants often identify themselves with self-employment (Weber, 1905). However, others might argue that business opportunity or identification with regards to self-employment is culture oriented (Dana, 1996). Based on the notion that entrepreneurship creates wealth and reduces unemployment (Dana, 2001), immigrants who engage in entrepreneurial activities meet the criteria for describing them as entrepreneurs because their actions create new jobs and contribute to the development of their host economies. As Dana (2010, p.ix) affirmed: “the role of entrepreneurship in economic development involves more than just increasing the per capita output and income, it involves initiating and constituting change in the structure of business and society, thus allowing for more wealth to be divided by the participants in the economic unit”.

Although, migration has remained one of the subjects heavily studied in modern social and behavioural sciences (Kourtit and Nijkamp, 2012), there is still a lack of unified definition of who an ‘immigrant’ is (OECD/ILO, 2018). However, the selected definition for this paper defines it as “any person who changes his/her country of usual residence, in which an individual normally spends his daily period of rest” [UN, (1980), rev. 1]. This implies that an individual is considered an immigrant in the host country after he/she has legally lived for more than three months in the receiving state (OECD/ILO, 2018). Najib (1999) and Nutek (2001) concluded in their observations that someone is considered an immigrant entrepreneur in their host country once he/she establishes a business. Thus, the act of leaving one’s native home for a foreign country for the purpose of starting a new life has something inherently entrepreneurial associated with it. Such behaviour justifies the disproportionately higher rate at which immigrants show strong intentions (Parastuty and Bögenhold, 2019) to start businesses in their host countries above native-born people (Stangler and Wiens, 2015). Indeed, some scholars have highlighted that an immigrant’s cultural ties and identity will define their views on business conduct and strategies, and therefore their countries of origin will influence the way they operate and run a business in their host countries (Rath and Kloosterman, 2000).

Figure 1 captures the interconnectedness and relationships between immigrant entrepreneurs and their environments, showing how their opportunity formation approach differs subject to interactions with their home country (e.g., families, peers), including interactions with resources and opportunity structure present in the host environment. Based on the figure, such interactional relationships influence an immigrant’s idiosyncrasies regarding entrepreneurial opportunity formation in their host country. This constitutes a difference between an immigrant’s entrepreneurial approach and the strategies used by the mainstream population. Figure 1 also indicates that an immigrant’s

ethnic origins and social capital constitute a connection (meso-level) that facilitates cross-group interactions between members (Pécoud, 2010). Thus, immigrant entrepreneurs possess inherent strengths (e.g., intrinsic capabilities-risk propensity, predisposing factors) that increase their likelihood to venture into self-employment more than their host country counterparts (Kerr, 2017). Overall, while all immigrants have ethnic origins connected by either blood-ties, ancestry or peoplehood (Brett, 2002), their opportunity creation process is influenced by factors from their mixed environments (Evansluong, 2016).

Figure 1 Relational theory for immigrant entrepreneurship and opportunity formation (see online version for colours)



Source: Authors

Drucker (1985) argued that entrepreneurial opportunities originated from seven sources of change – unexpected occurrences, incongruities, process needs, changes in industry structures or markets, demographic changes, changes in perception and new knowledge. Agreeing with Drucker's taxonomy, it is arguable that these sources of change can appear either as enablers or threats, as they motivate immigrant entrepreneurs in different ways during their pursuit of entrepreneurial opportunities. Similarly, a recent study conducted on immigrant opportunity formation found that these changes have different levels of influence (Njoku and Cooney, 2018). They can come either as positive influences (e.g., the pursuit of career choice) fulfilling a personal passion or negative influences (e.g., discrimination in the host country) and therefore they are capable of forcing an immigrant to create his/her own business to serve as job security in the host environment. Scholars agree that the entrepreneurial opportunity formation process amongst immigrants involves a certain kind of relationship which has been observed in their communication patterns, networking strategies and the merging of different elements (Rath and Kloosterman, 2000; Shane, 2003; Carpenter and Dunung, 2011). Therefore, entrepreneurial opportunity occurs because entrepreneurs react to events or situations based on their perceived real nature. Consequently, it is arguable that the processes involved in forming entrepreneurial opportunities captures the happening of two elements (i.e. environmental resources and individual beliefs), hence a recombination of these can lead to new business formation (Shane and Venkataraman, 2000). However, immigrant entrepreneurial activities to form new business opportunities are influenced by variable factors (Light and Isralowitz, 2019) which often appear in the form of enablers and

threats from both countries. The paper argues that these factors have multifaceted forms subject to their latent roles with direct effects in the entrepreneurial activities of immigrants.

In following the VMEF logic, the key constructs regarding how variable factors and the institutional contexts interact during immigrant entrepreneurial activities will be explained in light of participants' cultural differences (Njoku and Cooney, 2018). The VMEF model agrees that some immigrant ethnic groups are pulled to entrepreneurial activities in the host countries because it is compatible with the cultural values to which they were previously conditioned, hence they are neither attracted because of the risks involved nor because they had better options at the time (Dana, 1995). Therefore, the interactions that exist between these countries take different shapes and so create a unique type of relationship, connecting both participants and their environments through networking, entrepreneurial conditions, advice, etc. A relationship describing such embeddedness with social networking activities is described as 'integration' into new cultures (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001).

3 Interactions between home and host countries

A review of the literature affirms that the reasons behind migration are multifaceted (e.g., war, unemployment, the chance of a better life, family reunification and the opportunity to pursue entrepreneurial opportunities) (Hammar et al., 1997; Kingma, 2007; Portes and Fernández-Kelly, 2015). A review will also highlight that entrepreneurs and their environments are in constant interaction during entrepreneurial activities (Kirzner, 1999, 2009). Consequently, an immigrant's national identity and their cultural heritage will facilitate the creation of an immigrant business in the host country through interactions with the host environmental variables (institutional regulations, environmental resources, etc). Therefore, "the need to associate with one's ancestral home, as well as to be involved in entrepreneurial activity in the host country, drew diasporas to their home countries in the same way that culture and national identity creates immigrant entrepreneurial activity in the host country" (Masurel et al., 2002). Furthermore, the literature shows that the process of entrepreneurial activity between immigrants in the host country is influenced by factors from both the home and host country (Light and Isralowitz, 2019). A logical conclusion suggests that a relationship exists between the home and the host country in the form of interrelationship stemming from an entrepreneur's contact with the home country, the host environment and the resources within, which facilitate the creation of entrepreneurial opportunities. As a consequence, immigrant entrepreneurial activities are influenced by this interconnected relationship (Ximenes and Sato, 2016) based on the remote roles played by the ideas from family members, peers, project capital, networking, etc. It suffices to state that immigrants' entrepreneurial actions in the host country are itself an interactive phenomenon, since the process entails relating with both their home and host countries simultaneously.

The actions of immigrants in the host environment are influenced by cultural heritages which are subjected to the host environmental rules and regulations. The question to ask is: "what happens to an individual entrepreneur's neuro-receptor when he/she leaves the home country as an adult to live and establish themselves in a new environment with different cultural perceptions about life?". Berry's (1997) study

highlighted two major activities that many immigrants wish to enjoy in their daily encounters:

- a Cultural maintenance – to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important, and their maintenance attempted?
- b Contact and participation – to what extent should they become involved in other cultural groups or remain primarily among themselves?

Since the current study is aimed at showing how immigrant entrepreneurial opportunity formation is influenced by interactions between the home and host country, the need to understand the roles played by embedded immigrant cultural features during their entrepreneurial activities becomes important. In modern plural societies, it is evident that cultural differences are tolerated so long as they do not infringe on the rights of others (natives). For instance, immigrants are allowed to set up their own businesses, replicate their family-line of business and import exotic food items and goods for both commercial reasons and for personal usage. Immigrants are also allowed to mingle with natives and participate in social events. Such degrees of communication, interaction, networking and tolerance are important since they form the basis that nurtures inter-ethnic relationships between two countries. Thus, alliances are formed and relationships built between the countries through exchange and trade, which is clearly an interaction of a kind.

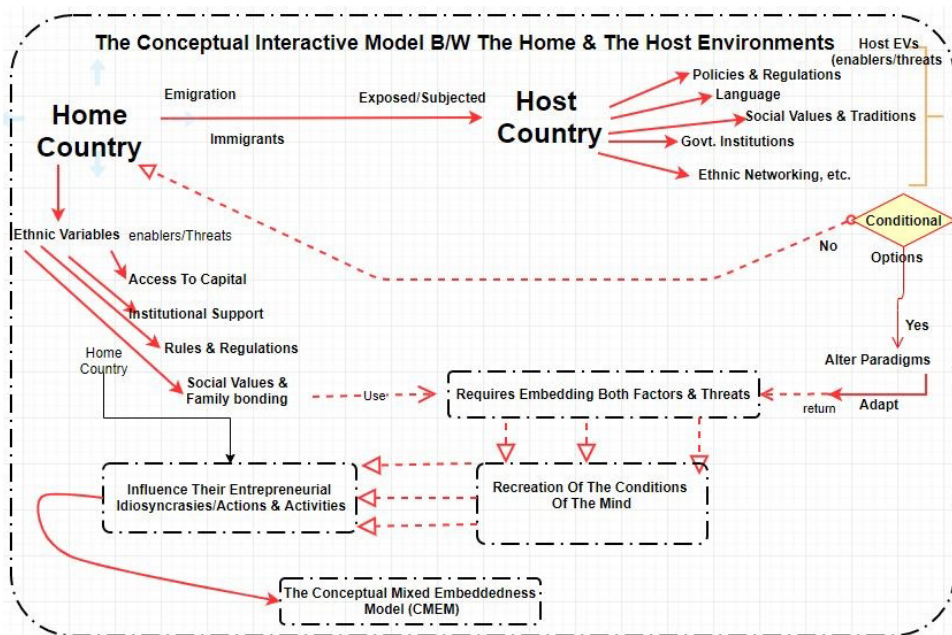
4 Immigrants and their notion of opportunity formation

The review of the literature shows that immigrant entrepreneurship has been incorporated into academic research since the 1970s, following greater recognition of the economic and growth impact resulting from their entrepreneurship activities (OECD/ILO, 2018). Using the relationship between supply and demand as basis, immigrant entrepreneurship was explained as what immigrants could provide subject to the demands from customers (ibid). Shane and Venkataraman (2000) argued that the definition of entrepreneurial opportunities should capture two things: first, it must show that something is happening in the environment (resources); and second, that such phenomenon must involve an individual who believes that the recombination of resources leads to the creation of opportunities. Therefore, an interactive relationship between immigrant entrepreneurs and their environments (home and host) can facilitate the formation of new opportunities. In the Schumpeterian perspective, the constant change in consumer behaviour affects 'entrepreneurial opportunity existence' (Schumpeter, 1934). Schumpeter argued that through new combinations, new means of production can be created. Therefore, the critical pathway to the creation and development of sustainable business models is through entrepreneurial actions (Brett, 2002). As Carter and Jones-Evans (2012) revealed, the creation of immigrant businesses adopts an interactive model and consequently, the concept of mixed embeddedness theory is a more realistic way to approach structure versus culture within an immigrant's business formation process.

With earning more money to support themselves and cater for their family needs being some of the primary common objectives, immigrants frequently venture into business after every effort to find a conventional job in their host country has failed. Thus, immigrants resort to self-employment because it is compatible with the cultural values to which they were previously conditioned (Weber, 1905). Hence, an immigrant's

source of support and sustainability can come primarily from their home country during the early stages of their business formation process in the host country, so they view business opportunity formation differently in comparison to native entrepreneurs (Halkias and Adendorff, 2016). In agreement with previous studies, findings in the same study further confirmed that immigrant businesses are run and managed differently subject to opportunity structure of the community, region and the country in which the immigrant is residing, since interacting with variable factors present in both the home and host environments shape their characteristics and success (ibid). These factors were referred to as ‘embedding process’ by Evansluong (2016) because immigrant entrepreneur models integrate factors in the form of ‘enablers’ and ‘threats’ from the home and the host country during opportunity formation process. Based on the literature, a ‘productive conceptual model’ takes relevant ideas from outside the study parameters and defines them to suit the areas of the study under investigation (Locke and Baum, 2007; Shane et al., 2003). It was on these principles that the development of the interactive model below was based.

Figure 2 Conceptual model of immigrant entrepreneurship opportunity formation (see online version for colours)



Source: Authors

The model simply shows that all immigrants have ethnic origins with existing cultures, traditions and institutions, with rules and regulations embedded in their systems, which have become part of an immigrant’s existence and way of life. The decision to start a new business in the host country becomes optional upon an immigrant’s arrival in a new country, subject to the host country’s rules and regulations. Indirectly, the decision to stay and run one’s own business using the host country as the base implies that immigrants are willing to adapt and observe the set embedded host regulations governing the way of life,

including how to establish a business. Subsequently, their actions, perceptions and approaches to life in the host environment are altered to conform with the requirements set by the system. In practice, the process of reconditioning the mind affects their perceptions and actions. This is revealed in their choices of entrepreneurial activities, which often possess ethnic characteristics and business operational features that can be traced back to their original roots. This reasoning agrees with Dana's (1995) ethnographic study, which argued that entrepreneurship should not be viewed as a function of opportunity, but rather a function of cultural perceptions of opportunity because native and non-native respondents relate to the concept of opportunity differently.

5 Research methodological approach

Given the orientation of the study topic, the paper adopted a phenomenological qualitative research methodology to examine values and population principles in conjunction with analysing societal determinants that occurred. Scholars agree that every research question influences the adopted methodology to limit bias, so the current research is no exception to such a 'rule of thumb'. Arguably, one of the limitations of the adopted methodology is that the results may be influenced by personal opinion. However, the authors ensured validity of findings through constant re-evaluation of results to make sure that participants' responses were accurately represented. Thus, the *epoche* principle by Moustakas (1994) was considered throughout the analytical phases of the study. Hence, the authors kept in abeyance personal views to focus on participants' interpretations of their experiences. In using equal sample sizes and parallel questions, data was collected from 20 immigrant entrepreneurs using in-depth interviews, with five participants each from Brazil, Nigeria, Poland and Pakistan. The participants' demographic profiles are provided in Table 1.

The selection of these four countries was based on the 2016 Central Statistics Office report (CSO), which showed that these four countries provided the largest numbers of immigrant entrepreneurs in Ireland from four continents. Interviews were conducted over three months (starting mid-August to early December 2018) at nineteen different sites (e.g., at participants' workplaces, at their residence and at the Higher Educational Institution where the research was based) using the approach of Marshall and Rossman (2016). Given that a qualitative study gives room for alteration, reconsideration and possible modification of any design component during the study to accommodate new developments (Dana and Wright, 2009), such flexibility allows for in-depth interactions of data, thus rising above qualitative research limitations since it provides strong reasoning for using a phenomenological approach. The use of a phenomenological qualitative approach aided a clearer understanding of the study problem through in-depth inquiry and offers suggestions regarding how to resolve them. The methodological choice is summarised in Table 2. Furthermore, the table entails justifications for each of the methodological choices made and their underpinning authorities in qualitative phenomenological research. In addition, the table contains the rationale supporting each of the choices and the order for which they were employed. By ensuring clear transparency in the study's research methodological approach, the table demonstrates research rigor and validity of the findings.

Table 1 Participants' demographic profile

<i>Participants ID</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Marital-status</i>	<i>Type of business</i>	<i>Year started</i>	<i>Generation</i>	<i>Location</i>
Chinaedu	M	40–50	NG	Married	Publishing	2000	1st generation	Dublin 1
Cynthia	F	30–40	NG	Married	Restaurant	2010		
Mathew	M	30–40	NG	Separated	Saloon	2013		
Mushood	M	30–40	NG	Married	MoneyTransfer	2018		
Victor	M	40–50	NG	Married	Garage	2001		
Anella	F	30–40	PL	Married	Tanning	2007	1st generation	Dublin 1
Kaplan	M	40–50	PL	Married	Acct. Office	2009		
Marcin	M	20–30	PL	Married	Tee-Business	2006		
Mateusz	M	30–40	PL	Single	Dance Company	2015		
Miemez	M	20–30	PL	Married	Healthy Food	2016		
Daniel	M	30–40	BR	Married	Supermarket	2018	1st generation	Dublin 1
Leonardo	M	30–40	BR	Married	Restaurant	2018		
Marco_Cesar	M	30–40	BR	Stable R	Laptop Lab	2017		
Sandra	F	40–50	BR	Single	Food Business	2015		
Thiaz	F	30–40	BR	Married	Head-Rap	2014		
Faiz	M	40–50	PA	Married	Barbing-Shop	2018	1st generation	Dublin 1
Muhammed	M	30–40	PA	Married	Phone Shop	2000		
Qamarali	M	30–40	PA	Single	Phone/Accessories	2017		
Shabbiz	M	40–50	PA	Single	Mobile Phones	2018		
Shaoib	M	30–40	PA	Married	Phone/Accessories	2018		

Source: Authors

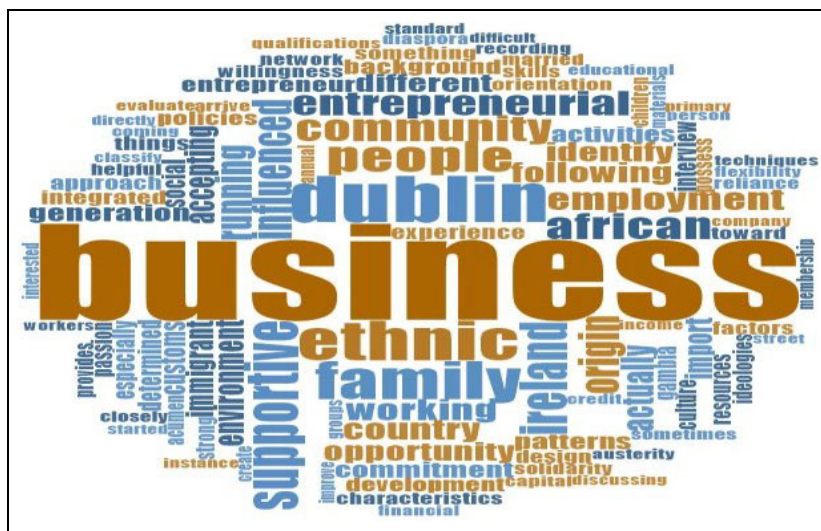
Table 2 Overview of research methodological choices and justifications

<i>Method</i>	<i>Qualitative Method (Creswell and Poth, 2018)</i>	<i>Explores (lived experience) (Abebrese, 2013)</i>
Approach to theory development	Abductive (Saunders et al., 2016)	Makes up for the limitations of inductive and deductive approaches
Research design	Phenomenology (Husserl, 1927)	Inherently qualitative (Cope, 2005).
Type(s)	Hermeneutics (Heidegger, 1962) and Transcendental (Moustakas, 1994)	Philosophy of presuppositionless (Husserl, 1959)
Interview structure	In-depth (open-ended questionnaires) (Hennink et al., 2010)	Allows an informal conversation b/w the researcher and the participants
Data collection	Semi-structured	Allows prompts and probes to be used
Mode	Face-to-face	Helps manage sensitive information by reading body language (Creswell and Poth, 2017)
Sampling	Purposive	Allows the selection of qualified participants
Data sample size	20 (5 participants from each of the groups (Brazil, Nigeria, Poland and Pakistan (CSO, 2016)	To test d/f perspectives for a better qualitative result (Saunders et al., 2016).
Form of analysis	IPA (Husserl, 1970)	Reflects on participant's 'lived experiences' about the phenomenon (Collins and Stephens, 2010).
Approach	Interpretivism (Abell and Myers, 2008; Dudovskiy, 2017)	Because phenomenology is both interpretive and descriptive
Perspective	Subjective (Dudovskiy, 2017)	Phenomenology rejects the objectivist view about reality
Time Horizon	Cross Sectional	The interview process lasted between 2–3 months.
Perspective	Micro level (20 interviews)	Allows a small theoretical contribution to be made

Source: Authors

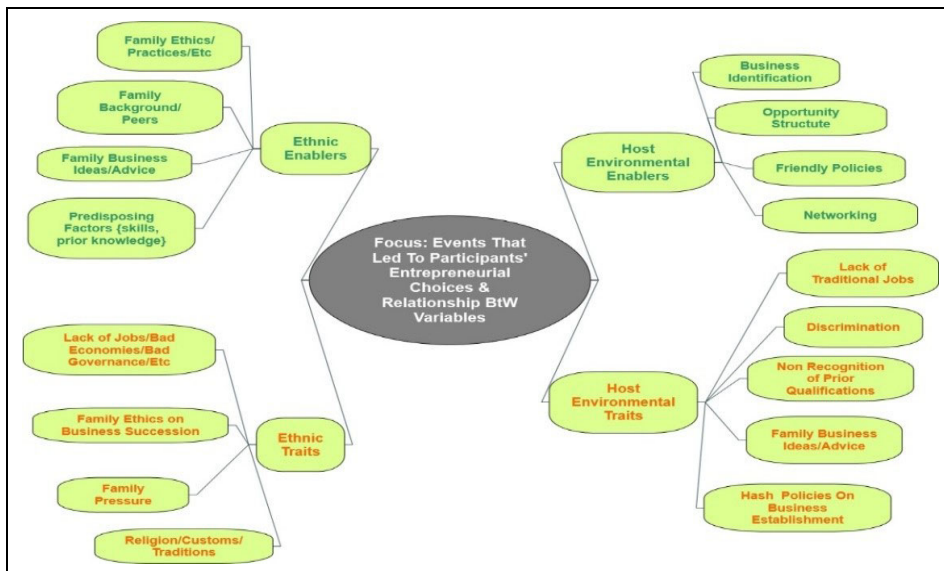
Employing interpretative phenomenological analysis (IPA), it is important to note that the phases in qualitative research attempt to resolve questions accompanying each phase. The answers to the questions asked were influenced by the current research stances such as approach to reality, perceptions of reality, the value-stance and the procedures used in the study (Creswell and Poth, 2017). Consequently, the application of transcendental phenomenological approach (TPA) is considered best practice since it suppresses personal views and perspectives to ensure focus on participants' lived experiences. The first phase involved reading, cleaning, reorganising and arranging the transcripts in preparation for analysis after data collection was complete. This technique helped with data exploration and facilitated a deeper understanding of the language and terms used mostly by participants, focusing on their meanings. This allowed the data to be cleaned before it was uploaded onto NVivo software in preparation for manual analysis. Figure 3 shows the frequently used words by participants to the study during thematic analysis. The bigger the font, the more it was mentioned by participants.

Figure 3 Participants' frequently used words (see online version for colours)



Source: Authors

The approach also enhanced data validity by ensuring that the findings accurately reflect the original data by correctly representing participants' responses. In the second phase, after reading and cleaning the data, the transcripts were summarised. Focusing on the main questions raised by participants, the authors avoided getting lost in a welter of details and eliminated unnecessary features associated with repetition (Flick, 2018). The process helped to identify commonality, differences and examine relationships between the patterns. Using the 'anchor coding' technique (Adu, 2016), the authors summarised participants' responses, selected important statements and adopted the interpretation technique (Harding, 2018). The third phase allowed the data to be constantly compared. Through this, insights were generated by identifying patterns of similarity or difference within the data set (Barbour, 2013) and thus, helped to establish relationships. In the fourth phase, the authors identified categories using their best judgements. This was achieved by reading the transcripts to identify broad subject areas under which data could be grouped. According to Moustakas (1994), this step is known as 'horizontalisation'. The fifth phase entailed the coding of the transcripts by selecting, separating and sorting the data (Charmaz, 2007). As one of the tasking phases of the thematic analytical process, it involved iteration and paying attention to participants' responses. Rigor and validity were ensured through a clear representation of findings by accurately representing participants' positions. Similarly, the approach reflects the double hermeneutics concept in IPA because it is concerned with participants' lived experiences and the meanings they make out of them, thus focusing on how the authors think participants are thinking based on their accounts. Finally, the sixth phase allowed the authors to generate themes based on the contents in the data transcripts as Figure 4 represents.

Figure 4 Relationship between coded themes (see online version for colours)

Source: Authors

Figure 4 simply shows the relationship between the themes that emerged during the thematic analysis of the data. With focus on the interactive nature of the two countries as participants demonstrated through networking, constant communication with their family members, importation of exotic goods, etc., themes were identified using anchor coding technique (Adu, 2016). Thus, through the exploration of family business opportunity formation relationship to religion and culture, the pattern of the relationship between themes was established. Based on the reviewed literature, conceptual themes are likely to have five characteristics that emerge from different sections of the transcripts, they use codes from the analysis to illustrate different issues, they are not always referred to directly, they cannot be spotted easily, they achieve the most difficult aim of the analysis (Gibson and Brown, 2009) and they enable theory building. Using both summary and constant comparative approaches (Harding, 2018), the identified themes were generated by examining interview questions and by comparing with the answers in the transcripts.

6 The analytical outcome

The results obtained from the analysis conducted across four immigrant ethnic groups (Brazil, Nigeria, Poland and Pakistan) have interesting correlations with Berry's (1997) framework model. Although, Berry responded to acculturation issues using the technique of attitudinal dimensions, his perceptions are reflected in the current study given that 'attitudes' can be hard to measure, especially across culture. However, the idea for presenting the results in the context of Berry's acculturation concept is to show that integration into new culture can take different forms. Thus, participants to the study were first encultured before they were able to set up their own businesses. Therefore, in discussing the first issue on 'cultural maintenance, Berry (1997) shows that it is a

common problem that presumes there is an answer to the question: to what extent are cultural identity and characteristics considered to be important? In practice, immigrants in the current study engaged in different businesses of their choices and took part in ethnic social events. The data collected suggests that there is no straight answer to Berry's question. However, since immigrants are allowed to practice their cultures freely and engage in business activities under their ethnic traditions, it can be argued that their entrepreneurial behaviours are indirectly subjected to the host institutional regulations since they are practiced in an environment outside of their ethnic jurisdictions. Hence, it can be established that the answer to Berry's question is subject to the extent allowed by the host regulations. Under the second issue on 'contact' and 'participation', Berry's study highlighted that immigrants exercise their choices freely. This agrees with the current study since participants in the study never raised any objection to this claim. Their responses showed that they maintain regular contacts with their families and discuss entrepreneurial activities. They attend meetings of the cultural group and also, belong to any association of their choices. In congruence with Berry (1997), the two issues intersect to define acculturation strategies from a cultural integrative point of view.

Based on the established grounds, the analysis of the data agrees with Berry's work on acculturation strategy given that in relation to entrepreneurial attitudes, cultural perceptions varied across the tested groups. For instance, the results obtained found that while it can be conclusively held that participants were encultured to some degree, the acculturation phenomenon did not override their inherent cultural qualities. This further agrees with the Weberian perspective as cited in Dana (1995, p.62) that "the Weberian entrepreneur is not attracted to entrepreneurship because of its risk; instead, such a person is pulled to entrepreneurial activity because it is compatible with the cultural values to which the individual was previously conditioned". Similarly, Fuchs (2009, .346) found that "the relationship between structure and culture is called net-dom". Given that it correlates with network interlock, a suitable labelling is net-dom. While 'net' refers to a pattern of ties, 'dom' for domain comprises stories, symbols and expectations, and together they co-constitute a 'net-dom'. In light of Fuchs' analogy, the interaction between the home and host countries in the form of communication through immigrant entrepreneurial transnational activities can be described in Fuch's context following the immigrants' relationships with their home countries. Analysing culture from a network point of view shows two strands: while the first ignores culture, the second (a phenomenological network approach) describes culture as interwoven and entangled with social relations structure (Fuchs, 2009). This is important because it affirms that inherent embedded genetic qualities cannot be altered simply by the change of environments as the tested groups showed.

Examining Berry's work in light of the current study shows that there are four types of acculturation strategies (integration, assimilation, separation/segregation and marginalisation) (Berry, 1997). Integration is simply an acculturation strategy realised through mingling. An immigrant's ability to integrate is subject to their ability to adjust their neuromodulators in a different environment. In practice, participants' cognitive abilities to make attitudinal changes are important and enhance their acculturation process. As participants from Nigeria showed, their acculturation process was realised through integration. Based on findings, they demonstrated that they are more flexible comparable to the Pakistanis and are more willing to mingle with the Irish society in order to pursue their entrepreneurial dreams. While this may not be a case for 'willingness to integrate' per definition, it is worth mentioning that participants'

attitudinal dimensions are subject to more than personal experiences, which can be used to measure the state of their interactions with their home countries. When one of the Nigerian participants was asked: 'is the intention to run your own business one of your primary reasons for choosing Ireland'? His response was: "No...actually, I was here to join my family who already live in Dublin. I was on a paid job when I first arrived, but something happened and I was without a job. That was when I started thinking on what to do to earn a living by starting my own business" (Mushood_NG, 2018). When further questioned to identify the form of interaction that exists between Nigeria and Ireland and how that affected his business approach, he stated: "We run a money Ria Transfer business. This offers Nigerians the opportunity to remit money to their families back in Nigeria. We are also planning to grow this business into the Western Union and MoneyGram businesses" (ibid). This shows that the nature of interaction between immigrants with their home and host environments can influence their next entrepreneurial line of action.

In the case of the Brazilian participants, their first-hand impression 'attitude-wise' was that they left Brazil for Ireland because they were subjected to marginalisation. The feelings of being marginalised in their own homeland through the actions of politicians triggered the movement to Ireland and the acculturation process that occurred. By searching for security and a better life elsewhere, their entrepreneurial activities in Ireland became one of the outcomes. Arguably, the process of cultural integration can be triggered subject to the workings of political factors, environmental instability, etc. In the study context, this form of integration is triggered by different variables with indirect effects, thus the roles played by the enabling factors were too remote to recognise. Consequently, the Brazilian participants showed its impact by leaving in search of a safer environment. As one of the participants' stated: "I came to Ireland because Brazil as we speak is very difficult. The politicians steal money meant for the public and people are very poor. As a result, they have no spending power. I had to look for a better life for my wife and kids" (Daniel_BR, 2018).

The willingness to understand all the information and ideas governing business establishment in a host country is arguably an integration strategy through acceptance and recognition, thus proving that interaction between the home and the host country can take place in different ways. For instance, when another participant from Brazil was asked whether he imports materials from Brazil for his entrepreneurial activities in Dublin, his response was: "That depends... although there are many Brazilians here, as well as Brazilian electronic brands, I only order products from Brazil when I come across such Brazilian products. Usually, I buy materials and products from Europe, China and the US..." (Marco_Cesar_BR, 2018). As an interactive process through trade and importation between Brazil and Ireland, such endeavours have both direct and indirect impacts on immigrant entrepreneurial strategies. Hence Marco Cesar's interest can change subject to demands over a particular product by the Brazilians in Dublin. This can influence both the target market and the nature of interaction between the two countries.

Given the meaning of 'separation/segregation' as Berry (1997) described it, the Pakistani participants fit this integration strategy better than the other groups based on their responses. As previously acknowledged, participants' attitudinal dimensions in the context of Berry's framework show that their experiences are mostly defined under the first issue. However, Berry's description of acculturation through separation can be achieved through either a positive or negative response based on the nature of experience. This further agrees with the current research findings that variable factors affecting

immigrant entrepreneurial activities can influence the interactions between the home and host countries. As multifaceted variables, their influence can either come in the form of ‘enablers’ or ‘threats’ from either of the countries. Depending on the manner in which a particular individual is influenced, true results are obtained based on participants’ account of the phenomenon. Faiz from Pakistan stated that: “Honestly, there are lots of redlines for immigrants. For instance, when I was studying at Dublin Institute of Technology, now Technological University Dublin, there were lots of redlines for immigrants. The white-collar jobs were not available for immigrants. Some of my course mates then, who were less talented than myself, were working in different companies because they were Irish, while I could not even get a job. They were given chances while the three of us in the same class who were from different ethnic backgrounds were having interview and work placement problems. Due to these red lines, despite the opportunities resulting from the booming Irish economy, I was out of the job market for 5 years. I thought of the need to be self-sufficient as I was back home in Pakistan. I had to do it myself since no one was giving me a chance” (Faiz_PA, 2018). Based on Faiz’s experiences and the tone of his voice and gesture, the conclusion drawn can be described as ‘feelings of disappointment’ and ‘discrimination’.

From the analysis, it could be established that Faiz would have preferred a traditional job, had he gotten that opportunity. In agreement, Singh and Gibbs (2013, p.1) found that: “the entrepreneurs in our study, all of whom had achieved moderate success, were much more likely to have pursued internally stimulated opportunities than externally stimulated opportunities”. Clearly, this reflects Faiz’s tone and responses following his description of the experiences that compelled him to start his own business. Also, it reflects the discrimination suffered by the Chinese and Black immigrants that Ong (1981) and Lieberman (1980) identified in their studies. However, when further questioned concerning his relationship with Pakistan, he stated: “What I do is influenced by culture. I belong to a community where we take responsibility ourselves. For our survival, we have to be extra active and it is in our background. We basically have to be entrepreneurs” (Faiz_PA_2018). Interaction-wise, Faiz’s reference to his parents and culture suggests that he is connected with his home country. Although the nature of his communication was described as ‘remote’, it had an impact on his pursuit for self-employment. The feeling of ‘not been given a chance’ put him under pressure, thus triggering the need for interaction with his family. Subsequently, he rediscovered that he possesses predisposing skill(s) and abilities; together they drove him to his next cause of action(s). In summary, although Faiz’s experience was negative based on his account, it enabled the epiphany of latent predisposing skill(s), which helped him to create business opportunities in Dublin. The realisation of the effects of segregation facilitated the pursuit of an entrepreneurial activity, which brought him closer to the Pakistani community in Dublin.

Comparable to other ethnicities, the Polish participants mostly came to Ireland for a change of environment. For instance, their presence in Ireland was subject to reasons such as adventure, visiting friends, trying something new, etc. Their attitudinal dimensions and behaviours based on their responses showed that they are willing to learn more about the Irish cultures. This can be seen in Anella’s response, which seems to have compared the Polish and Irish cultures. When she was asked to describe her experience since she began running her own business, she stated: “While it can be said that people like what they do back in Poland, running a business is different in Ireland. In Poland, the Polish people are scared to open businesses due to many restrictions from the government. Whereas here in Dublin, people are free to open any business of their choice

without government restrictions. The approach here is more relaxed and open compared to Poland” (Anella_PL, 2018). Like others, the Polish participants were motivated by mixed variables (enablers and threats) originating from their backgrounds. Based on the analysis of data, their entrepreneurial activities in Dublin can be described under Berry’s assimilation acculturation principles. For instance, Anella further added in response to why she left Poland for Ireland that: “I left Poland because Ireland is more open, and I thought it wise for my children to come here and study English. As I said earlier, Poland is very close-minded to some of these things. I wanted my children to get a better education and this is very important to me and that was one of the reasons I left Poland for Ireland” (Anella_PL, 2018).

It can be argued that the concept of assimilation from an acculturation perspective can be induced by unfavourable conditions in one’s home country or subject to an individual’s definition of ‘reality’. Thus, what constituted participants’ ‘reality’ in both environments varied since it is determined by their personal experiences and descriptions of them (Alvarez et al., 2010). Through participants’ descriptions of their lived experiences, the meanings they gave to their ‘realities’ became clearer. Hence, their actions are the results of their true meanings and thus an interaction embedded with energy and resources from both environments.

7 Discussing empirical findings

The study explored entrepreneurial practices amongst the four target immigrant groups in Ireland to establish how the interactions between the home and the host countries influenced their opportunity formation activities. Based on the analytical results, the study identified mixed variable factors emerging within immigrants’ ethnic origins and cultural characteristics embedded in their daily actions and activities. These have been established to have direct, indirect and remote influences on first generation immigrant entrepreneurial motivations and decisions to be self-employed in foreign countries. The analysis further confirmed that variable factors (as enablers) can equally appear as threats. In the following section, the study will attempt to synthesise the empirical findings from the analysis conducted to address the topic in discussion, focusing on the study objectives.

An immigrant’s family background can have both direct and indirect influence on their career decision-making powers based on transferable genetic components (Kennedy, 2018). It can be argued that cases where children grew up idealising the careers of their parents simply suggest that the chances of following in the footsteps of their parents are high. Therefore, it is not unusual for immigrants to exhibit traits of career cloning in the host environment, since their family backgrounds influences their career choices genetically. As inherent qualities, they are passed from one generation to another (ibid). Thus, supports the Weberian notion that some ethnic groups resort to self-employment because it reflects the culture to which they have been conditioned and not due to the risks involved. Participants are therefore linked with family members by blood ties as the Nigerian group showed in their career preferences. Immigrants are most likely to take on self-employment in the host country based on ethnic family demands and the dictates of their parents. Similarly, family career cloning can be induced based

on religious grounds and practices common in a particular environment. Such influence is mostly anchored on family responsibilities, in which case an individual is

bound by custom and tradition to succeed in the family business regardless of the environment. This is clear evidence of some ethnic groups with strong perceptions on family business succession traditions. Based on this, cultural perceptions are described as subjective due to the presence of mixed explanatory variable factors. In another example, the Pakistani participants in the study showed strong connections with this claim. In some extreme cases, it is a non-optional situation for a member of the family to succeed their parents in a particular line of trade. In addition, the Pakistani participants agreed mostly with Singaravelu et al., (2005) who found that factors which influenced many Pakistanis career choices are family, religion and traditions.

In agreement with Berry (1997), acculturation presents challenges that must be carefully addressed collectively in all plural societies. Similarly, the demographic and social nature of an individual has been identified as personal characteristics that facilitate the integration process (ibid). The argument that 'age' determines the integration process is a valid hypothesis. Beiser et al. (1988) found that the process of integration is smooth when it starts before an individual enters primary school. In light of the study, the demographic information of participants supports this claim and arguably, that is why they maintained strong affinity with their home countries through communication, importation of exotic goods, etc. In some cases, older youths found assimilation into new culture a challenge because of embedded qualities formed from childhood. Thus, assimilation for them into their host culture becomes a slower process.

Although, the VMEF construct sought to visually demonstrate how mixed explanatory variable factors from the home and host countries interact to influence immigrant entrepreneurial activities, it also helped to expound latent cultural qualities present in the entrepreneurial activities of immigrants. The question that was asked in Berry's study was: If culture is such a powerful shaper of behaviour, do individuals continue to act in the new setting as they did in the previous one, do they change their behavioural repertoire to be more appropriate in the new setting or is there some complex pattern of continuity and change in how people go about their lives in the new society"? Employing the logic of mixed embeddedness theory (Kloosterman and Rath, 2001) and the VMEF ideological construct (Njoku and Cooney, 2018), the authors argue that the answer to Berry's question lies with how much the host institutional regulations can tolerate. As the VMEF construct explains, immigrants by default are required to adjust their cognitive abilities to conform with the local norms. This can be achieved through a remote mental interaction with both cultures regarding how to strike the required balance through appropriate behaviour in their new setting. Since the management of immigrant businesses in the host country is influence by mixed relationships (Evansluong, 2016), understanding to what degree an immigrant is influenced by either the home or the host country is important because it will help reduce the challenges that immigrants face in terms of cultural assimilation. Also, it will clarify the difficulties associated with understanding how assimilation into new culture due to a change of environment will affect their entrepreneurial activities in practice. Table 3 captures some of the significant statements and their formulated meanings as extracted from participants during thematic analysis. Paraphrasing the content into shorter forms helped to eliminate unnecessary repetition. In light of the current study, this process facilitated the identification of commonality, differences and the examination of relationships between the patterns that were identified. Using the 'anchor coding' technique (Adu, 2016), it became simpler to

summarise participants' responses and select important statements and interpretations that best suit the study (Harding, 2018). These statements are significant because they encapsulated various reasons triggering important decisions that led to participants coming to Ireland, thus underpinning their reasons for interacting with the home and the host environments.

Table 3 Selecting significant statements from participants

<i>Significant statements</i>	<i>Formulated meanings</i>
I left Poland because Ireland is more open and I thought it wise for my children to come here and study English. As I said earlier, Poland is very close-minded to some of these things. I wanted my children to get a better education, this is very important to me and that was one of the reasons I left Poland for Ireland.	Poland is too closed-minded for the kind of future I wanted for my children.
I came to Ireland because Brazil as we speak is very difficult. The politicians steal money meant for the public and people are very poor. As a result, they have no spending power. I had to look for a better life for my wife and kids.	The Brazilian corrupt leaders have made the environment unsafe for poor people to earn a living and raise children.
I left Nigeria because as at the time I was there, the problem of economic instability was a huge problem for youths like myself. Because of this, the Nigerian youths like myself were unable to see hope in their future. In addition, I left because I wanted to upgrade myself since there was no hope of that happening in Nigeria.	Due to economic problems, the Nigerian youths are searching for a better future elsewhere.
I came to Ireland to study initially. When I got my Irish Passport, I started my business but I am planning to go back to Pakistan to open a business there in the future.	To obtain quality education and improve English language skills.

Source: Authors

Given the results obtained, the nature of the interactions between participants and their home countries varied. The findings highlighted that the nature of influence stemming from ethnic affinities had two forms (positive and negative). However, the conclusion drawn argues that while the nature of influence is mixed, it also varies across the participant groups based on their ethnic origins. Therefore, their interactions with their countries of origin were also affected based on their backgrounds and cultural differences. Thus, the impact in all the groups have different connotations but with similar results. Likewise, participants' experiences differed, but their outcomes resulted in the creation of their own businesses. It suffices to state that regardless of the differences in their experiences, the results led to similar achievements. For instance, the nature of the rapport between the Nigerian participants and their families led to the conclusion that the Nigerian participants inherited positive attitudes toward entrepreneurship from their families, whose success as established entrepreneurs back in Nigeria motivated their actions. Table 4 presents background findings regarding how the Nigerian participants interacted with their families prior to establishing their own businesses.

Table 4 A test for background interaction influence

<i>Matrix coding query-results</i>			
	<i>A: Mixed</i>	<i>B: Negative</i>	<i>C: Positive</i>
1 Chinaedu_NG_4	0	1	1
2: Cynthia_NG_1	0	1	0
3 Mathew_NG_5	0	0	1
4 Mushood_NG_2	0	0	1
5 Victor_NG_3	0	0	1

While one of the participants had a negative influence, Chinaedu had a mixed interactive influence. Although his mother managed her own business in Nigeria, Chinaedu believed that besides observing her, his interactions with her helped him become clearer with his career choices. In comparison, while the Polish immigrant entrepreneurs made strong references to their educational system as having a significant impact on their entrepreneurial life journeys, one of the participants affirmed, “directly or indirectly, what we do has elements of our identities” (Anella_PL, 2018). The reference to ‘identity’ suggests that immigrants constantly remind themselves of their origins and thus can be described as a form of interaction that subjects their behaviours to checks, since it has a direct effect on their actions. From an entrepreneurial point of view, immigrants’ actions are controlled by the host environmental forces and thus their identities are defined by how they interact with both environments.

The Pakistani participants presented an interesting case scenario as strong advocates of family-business succession tradition. As first generation immigrants, their interactions with their backgrounds took the traditional perspective since it stems from their culture and was embedded with religious beliefs. As adults, their enculturation into their parents’ culture is so advanced that the host culture could have little or no effect on their entrepreneurial choices. This group mostly replicated their family line of businesses in Dublin. During an interview with one of the Pakistani participants, to identify how his relationship with his family affected his entrepreneurial behaviours in Dublin, he asserted: “Well, I was in college when my father back in Pakistan was running his business, but I was not interested in what he was doing. But as you can see, I ended up doing what he was doing and it is working well so far” (Qaramali, 2018; participants). These examples show the different ways that participants interacted with their countries of origin prior to setting up businesses in Dublin and how that influenced their entrepreneurial opportunity formation.

8 Conclusions

The authors have endeavoured to synthesise current research findings in the context of prior related studies to show that, although, immigrant entrepreneurship is fast gaining recognition in the academic literature, the phenomenon is still emerging with novel ideas. The reviewed literature demonstrated that cultural values conduct critical influences in every plural society, thus highlighting the different ways that embedded cultural identities impact entrepreneurial behaviours in the context of immigrant entrepreneurs. In an attempt to demonstrate how the immigrant entrepreneurial opportunity formation process

is influenced by the interactions between the home and the host country, the authors identified culture as having the prevalent impact on participants. This was achieved by showing the presence of mixed influence subject to different explanatory variable factors in the form of enablers and threats. Supported by participants' explanations of their experiences, the study established that each ethnic group was influenced differently based on their origins and the cultural values accustomed to them. Based on participants' explanations of their experiences, it is conclusive that the results obtained agree that participants' perceptions of opportunity formation were influenced differently.

Using a qualitative phenomenological approach, data was collected from 20 participants using in-depth interview technique. The goal was to identify the nature of relationship each of the groups had with their ethnic origins during the formation of their businesses in Dublin by allowing them to tell their stories. Participants were selected from Brazil, Nigeria, Poland and Pakistan. The rationale for their selection was underpinned by the 2016 Central Statistics Report, confirming that these ethnic groups were immigrant entrepreneurial communities in Dublin. From the sample size, it is clear that the study is not oriented to become a generalisable result because the numbers involved are relatively small. Also, it is worth mentioning that the study was originally intended to collect data from both first and second generation immigrant entrepreneurs. Because the first generation immigrants made themselves available for interviews but the second generation were unavailable, the authors believe that this is a limitation given that information from the second generation might have provided different results which might have enhanced the quality of data. The study advances the current understanding of entrepreneurial opportunity formation amongst immigrants in several ways. Using the VMEF framework, it offers novel insights to show how the interactions between immigrants' home and host environments take different forms (i.e., enablers and threats) which influence their career choices. Also, by creating a model framework, the study demonstrates how entrepreneurial opportunity formation amongst immigrants is influenced by mixed relations. The study adds to existing knowledge by showing how the combination of mixed explanatory variable factors from both countries affected participants' entrepreneurial behaviours as enablers and threats. Furthermore, it highlights the different perceptions regarding what constitutes opportunity to each of the groups. The model framework thus showed that participants are influenced differently subject to their ethnic backgrounds and the nature of their interactions with the families.

Finally, entrepreneurial opportunity formation amongst the tested groups was influenced by interactions between the two countries on different levels. For example, some participants maintained strong ethnic affinities with the home countries through communications, networking, etc. This helped them solicit for ideas and obtained help on how to move forward in a foreign country where the chances of getting traditional jobs were minimal. On another level, participants interacted with their home countries through importation of exotic goods as informed by local demands. Although, the question of 'how' remains the point of focus, reference to Berry's (1997) acculturation typology is important because insights from his work facilitated in addressing the current research issue. Therefore, the current study agrees with the reviewed literature and shows that entrepreneurial opportunity formation amongst immigrants in the host country is interactive because it facilitates the strong bond between the home and the host countries based on immigrant entrepreneurial activities. Thus, immigrant entrepreneurial actions are influenced by these interactions that exist in the form of relationship.

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