Neither Here Nor There:

Choice and Constraint in Migrant Worker Acculturation

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ABSTRACT

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The current wave of migration into the UK is not just the latest in a long line but, to many, appears different in character from those previously. Arguably, Central and Eastern European migration can be distinguished by its unprecedented overall scale, speed and sectoral coverage as much as by its temporal quality and the social diversity of those drawn to the UK (Pollard et al. 2008). Indeed, these traits confirm a certain freedom of movement and choice for CEE migrants that are denied to their non-CEE counterparts and predecessors. This phenomenon has led to unpredictable changes in UK migration patterns (Sumption and Somerville 2010) and has changed the current state of many British workplaces which have become increasingly diversified and competitive places. However, in the context of the workplace, much of the existing research has covered traditional concerns of employment such as work exploitation and discrimination, and has predominantly used survey techniques (e.g. Fitzgerald 2007; Sriskandarajah et al. 2007). This thesis complements extant work by offering a subjective account of migrants' work lives in a specific workplace. Its aim is to present the realities of daily life as experienced by migrants in the British workplace, particularly in relation to decisions over the level of integration with others of significance. The contribution of this research at a conceptual level lies in its use of an approach that goes beyond traditional models of migrant acculturation. By taking discourse as a medium of identity construction and expression (Bowskill et al. 2007), the research presents a more nuanced and dynamic account of migrant workers' "fitting in" and/or distancing strategies. Data for this study has been collected during a three month period of participant observation in a local food manufacturing plant, followed by a series of 20 interviews with Polish migrant workers. This combination enabled the generation of an insider's perspective and taps into migrants' stories about their workplace experiences. Drawing on this data the research illuminates touchstones by which migrants anchor their sense of being settled or rooted. It covers their relationship with their home country as

mediated by Polish migrant co-workers, sensitivity towards other national groups and economic well-being, tempered by a sense of organisational and interpersonal justice. As such the study illustrates that the dilemma over whether to settle down, put down roots and integrate into the workplace is no longer in the foreground when migrants think about their situation but has taken a back seat. Because migrants are no longer rooted in one place only, they are both *here* and *there* in terms of country allegiance and sense of identity but these positions are not seen as incompatible. Their choices are often deferred or rescheduled indefinitely during which experiences of the workplace infuse attitudes towards settlement and vice versa. In fact, there is a strong sense of postponing settlement decisions until they secure a better purchase in the job market, either here or back home, or their personal circumstances related to love, marriage or family change.

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1   THE NEW WAVE OF MIGRATION

1.1   Introduction – the phenomenon of migration

Due to the rapidly improving transport and communication technologies associated with globalisation, mobility has become a fact of modern life. It is now easier than ever to move to another city, country or even continent. Consequently, using the United Nations' definition of an immigrant as anyone who changes his or her country of usual residence for a period of more than 12 months, the number of immigrants has grown from 75 million in 1960 to an estimated 213 million in 2010 (United Nations 2008). This increase has made migration a global phenomenon. It touches every country in the world, including places that have had little previous history of migration, such as Iceland. Only 20 years ago Iceland was considered almost ethnically 'pure' but today 7% of its population is made up of foreigners (Veal 2006). Currently all 190 or so sovereign states of the world are now either points of origin, transit or destination for migrants, often being all three at once.

Consequently, international migration has become one of the most important and debatable issues of the twenty-first century. Within Europe, it is one of the highest issues on the political agendas of the British government, the European Union and most of its member states, especially in the light of recent and future EU enlargements. The EU expansion to the East in 2004-2007 set in motion a greater transnational mobility, which multiplied the economic and social interactions among people from different nationalities (Meardi 2007). On 1 May 2004 the fifth EU enlargement took place comprising the largest number of countries admitted at one time. Accession of ten new member states, a third of which lived under the Nazi regime and communism, provoked mixed reactions. While some citizens welcomed new members as a chance for Europe to become more solid, competitive and powerful to defend Europe's interests on the world stage, others have perceived the enlargement as a risk to their security, identity or welfare.

The pre-enlargement debates across Europe and increasing concerns in the EU15 member states about the implications of this particular enlargement led to 12 of these countries adopting restrictions of some kind as a precaution to protect their economies and labour markets against the uncontrolled influx of 'welfare tourists' and a cheap labour force. Only Ireland and the UK gave the accession countries unrestricted access to labour markets but for a limited time restricted access to social benefits, while Sweden decided that European Community rules would also apply fully to the new member states.

1.2   The novelty of the phenomenon

While it is difficult to conclusively assess whether the fears and adopted precautionary arrangements were justified, mainly due to lack of accurateness, comprehensiveness and comparability of data across countries and time, free movement of people within the EU has had implications in a number of areas. In the case of the UK, the last two EU enlargements have fundamentally changed migration patterns to the country. Since May 2004, an estimated 1.5 million workers have come to the UK from new EU member states and Central and Eastern Europeans (CEE) have constituted approximately 50% of the total labour migration inflow in recent years (Somerville and Sumption 2009). The current crop of migration is therefore not only the latest in a long line of migrations into the UK but also much larger in a shorter space of time than has previously been the case. The novelty of the phenomenon is therefore proven by the inaccuracy of the most authoritative forecast produced before 2004 EU enlargement. The 'optimistic' forecasts produced for instance for the European Commission (Boeri and Brucker 2001) not only anticipated an inflow many times smaller than the actual one (according to the WRS data 680,000 A8[1] migrants registered in the UK in the first three years instead of the expected 50,000), but they mistook the trend as well: the number of migrants did not decrease immediately after the first year but continued to grow between 2004 and 2006 and only started declining in the second quarter of 2007 (Home Office 2009b). But the 'pessimistic' forecasts, such as that by Sinn and Ochel (2003) that supported

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[1] The 'Accession Eight' (A8) – countries that joined the EU on 1st May 2004: Czech Republic, Estonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Slovakia and Slovenia.

the German decision to close the borders for the accession states, were equally erroneous because the vast majority of A8 migrants come to the UK to look for work and fears of 'social tourism' and 'social raids' turned out to be particularly exaggerated, even in Sweden where social benefits are available for newcomers. This is possibly due to a lack of research on the subjective side of migration as migrants' hopes and strategies may have nothing to do with 'social dumping'. Hence, the above forecasts that are based on individualistic economic models have largely failed to understand the cultural and social determinants of the new wave of migration and have shown how different it is from previous influxes (Meardi 2007).

However, CEE migration is not just distinguished by its unprecedented scale and speed; it also appears fundamentally distinctive in terms of its temporal qualities and the type of people drawn to the UK. The Institute for Public Policy Research report (Pollard et al. 2008, p.5) also suggests that post-enlargement migration was "very different" from previous migration to Britain in the sense that "in contrast to previous migrants, it is financially and logically possible for migrants from the new EU member states to come to the UK on a temporary or seasonal basis and to regularly visit home while living in Britain." The new European citizens do not face the same barriers to migration as non-EU nationals and their freedom of movement has a number of implications. First, since migration has become a relatively easy undertaking, different kinds of individuals have been able to migrate into the UK. Thus, the term 'Central and Eastern Europeans' refers to a heterogeneous group of migrants who come to the UK for contrasting motivations and for varying lengths of stay. Still, on average, they differ from the UK's other migrant groups in terms of being young (according to the Worker Registration Scheme data 81% of registered workers were aged 18-34) and working for low wages in low-skilled jobs, even if they are highly educated (Blanchflower and Lawton 2008).

Moreover, according to Pollard et al. (2008), Eastern European nationals have settled more widely throughout the UK than has happened during previous waves of migration, working across the country in diverse and dispersed locations, even in areas that had not traditionally attracted migrants, such as Scotland and south-west England. In fact, in 2007, even though most Polish National Insurance (NI) number recipients were clustered around London and other major cities, every local authority

in Britain had some registrants (Rabindrakumar 2008). This widely spread flow of recent migrant workers might suggest that A8 migrants are not only highly mobile but possibly also more flexible and adaptable to potentially more difficult conditions of non-migrant accustomed labour markets. In these new locations migrants do not have an opportunity to benefit from numerous institutions such as legal-aid bureaux, health clinics, social organisations and bilingual services necessary to accommodate the new migrant population and possibly to facilitate the feelings of almost immediate inclusion. Moreover, it could be expected that migrants' acculturation and experiences of intergroup relations in these new gateways may differ from the experiences of migrants in more established gateways such as London and other major cities. Unlike in places with long histories of migration, locations with no migratory experience might have less crystallised ideas about migrants' place in the host society; thus migrants may have more freedom to define their position in such places.

Hence an important characteristic of the recent migration stream is its great mobility. On the one hand, a new legal status and ability to claim EU citizenship rights might encourage more prolonged stays and greater permanence. However, mobility could also increase as borders are easier to cross, thus facilitating more back-and-forth movement. Data from the WRS indicates that as many as 62% of applicants only intend to stay in the UK for a few months while 22% of migrants have no particular intentions with regards to the length of their stay (Home Office 2009b). Indeed, migrant surveys demonstrate that recent CEE migrants are less certain about their settlement plans compared to other migrant groups (Blanchflower and Lawton 2008; Green et al. 2007). This seems to illustrate the changing nature of current migration processes particularly well. People choose to relocate to another country mainly for economic reasons and they have a number of choices available to them in terms of where, how or for how long to migrate. Unlike earlier waves of migration, little in the current flows of people seems to be final. The 'suspended' nature of this migration might be confirmed by the very frequent contacts with the home country through telecommunication (Meardi 2007). Thus, it appears that little seems to be permanent or ultimate due to the migrants' freedom of movement and availability of cheap transport and communication facilities that make this potentially serious undertaking a relatively straightforward and low-cost affair.

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The distinctive character of this recent migration stream leads to two main issues. Firstly, the dynamics of migration are likely to be considerably different to previous migratory inflows. Unlike other groups for which migration is traditionally an important, difficult life-choice, for Eastern Europeans the choice is relatively less difficult and more casual, given the ease of movement between Poland and the UK for instance. Their status is expected to be more fluid, unplanned and corresponding to the typology of 'transnational' migrants (Pries 2003) than other previous groups of migrants. Consequently, they might feel less committed or pressurised in terms of adapting to the receiving country or maintaining loyalty towards the homeland. This is because the situation might not require them to do either of these things due to their increased mobility, back and forth movements between countries, increased flexibility and independence in decision-making. This suggests distinctive relationships with people with whom they interact, including employers who need to manage an increasingly mobile labour force. However, migrants' high mobility might be of benefit to employers who are keen to employ people temporarily for low-skilled jobs to address current labour shortages or peak season needs. This leads to a second issue, namely employers using the opportunity to employ large numbers of migrants *en masse*. Given new migrants' strong work ethic, high levels of commitment and willingness to work hard for low wages, it comes as no surprise that they are very popular with employers. In fact, they have been successful at obtaining work as their participation in the labour force remains well above average when compared to natives: 95% for men (83% among natives) and 80% for women (75% among natives) (Dustmann et al. 2009). Moreover, according to Meardi (2007) there is a striking similarity between female and male migrants in this new wave of migration, where the choice of migrating takes the same form and women have become as proactive as men.

The above characteristics of the recent migration into the UK seem likely to have implications for the current state of many British workplaces. Firstly, following Spencer et al.'s (2007) findings about migrants' limited social contact with British people caused by the high proportion of migrant work colleagues, it could be assumed that British workplaces have become increasingly diversified and not necessarily native-dominant places. Thus, the reality for many migrants is now to

work in an increasingly multicultural workplace. Daily interactions with people of different nationalities or even the same nationality, but not necessarily with members of the host society, might be a norm in today's British workplace, with implications in terms of new migrants' level of familiarity and integration with the host society outside the workplace. Secondly, given female migrants' high participation in the labour market and migrants' readiness to cross gendered lines in the labour market, which they may not readily cross in home countries (e.g. men taking up cleaners' positions and women doing men's jobs in factories), it appears that this wave of migration puts a greater weight on the instrumental rather than symbolic value of work. This might also have implications in the way that these new migrants reflect on the issue of their integration into the host countries. The workplace environment might consequently be a place for earning money only, with little consideration given to developing interpersonal relations. Nevertheless, even if work is perceived only as an instrument to achieve better financial standing, it does not prevent interactions with other workers and managers, but due to their assumed lack of interest in establishing long-lasting relations, the dynamic of such interactions is likely to be different. It is therefore possible that the employment relations in a workplace dominated by migrant workers might differ from the traditional ones.

Ultimately, recognition that much sustained, regular, on-going relationships and interaction between migrants themselves as well as with indigenous people take place in a workplace leads to my focus on the workplace environment. However, it is not only due to possible differences in recent migrants' integration attitudes in the workplace that might make the work relations different in dynamism, but it is also the most likely site where migrants are faced with a variety of other migrant groups. As has already been noted, it is a place where large cohorts of contemporary migrants seem likely to interact with each other on a day-to-day basis. Consequently, intergroup tensions and conflicts can easily arise, leading in extreme cases to acts of discrimination, harassment or violence perpetrated not only *against* migrant labour but potentially *among* migrant workers. Unlike in the workplace, migrants of the same nationality might decide to create enclaves in their private lives and not interact with other migrants. In many workplaces this could mean that individuals are now placed in multicultural environments where contact with other nationalities might no longer be an option. In such contexts, and in contrast to non-work (social) settings,

the notion of integration seems to expand and develop into some kind of 'multi-integration' concept. New migrants' position and ability to fit into the British workplace appears to become potentially more complex and dynamic due to an even larger number of actors than is often supposed to be involved in that process. This potentially also poses some challenges for employers who have to manage such multicultural workplaces. Finally, contemporary discourses on migration issues and debates around migrants' impact on the economy and local labour markets build an ambiguous picture of recent migrant workers and appear to contribute to generating even greater dynamism in workplace interactions.

1.3   Ambiguity around migrant workers

In the context of unprecedented levels of inward migration to the UK over recent years, notably from CEE countries, the issue has become the focus of much attention from a number of quarters. However, perspectives on CEE migrants residing in the UK are ambiguous. They are portrayed in some quarters as 'good workers' who are praised for possessing a strong work ethic, positive attitudes to work, high levels of commitment and a willingness to work hard for low wages: factors that explain why they now constitute a significant proportion of labour throughout the UK (People Management 2006). Even the House of Lords' somewhat negative report on the economic impact of immigration (House of Lords 2008) acknowledged the diligence and motivation of most migrant workers. Likewise, when commenting upon the 2006 figures from the WRS, the Home Office Minister Tony McNulty (Press Office 2006) said that A8 migrants "are benefiting the UK, by filling skills and labour gaps that cannot be met from the UK-born population." Accordingly, many migrant workers have been, at least until relatively recently, officially perceived to be a valuable addition to the resolution of labour supply problems within sectors of the British economy.

However, the growth of migrant labour may not be viewed so positively by indigenous and other migrant workers for whom competition in local labour markets has become fiercer. Given the largely positive perceptions of CEE migrant workers, and employers' preference for employing them, hostility emerging from fears of

wage suppression and employer substitution by migrants might be expected. Partly due to negative media coverage, those reservations among the host society might prevail despite a general acceptance within evidence-informed debate that migrant workers do not disadvantage indigenous workers by displacing them or depressing wages (e.g. Blanchflower et al. 2007; Dustmann et al. 2008; Gilpin et al. 2006; Glover 2001; Gott and Johnson 2002; Lemos and Portes 2008). While there is no significant general impact, there may be some negative effects with regard to indigenous workers in some very specific locations and circumstances (Learning and Skills Council 2007). It is believed that recent migration inflows can cause pressures on the working conditions and job prospects of local people in situations when there is a high concentration of migrant workers in a given sector or geographical area, being exacerbated in areas where the labour market is rather rigid and mobility of local workers is very low. Moreover, if it is so easy to employ migrants with any of the required skills, one can imagine how significant the threat to the future of vocational training in the host country might be. In Britain, for instance, a report from a House of Lords Select Committee on economic affairs published in July 2007 says that it was already an enormous challenge to find employers who offered apprenticeships (Phillips 2007). In that light, migrant workers might also be perceived as a source of problems for people just entering the labour market.

Another argument posited against migration is that huge and uncontrolled inflows of foreigners can negatively impact a host country's physical infrastructure and public services, including transport systems, housing facilities, schools and medical services. In a country like the UK, where the welfare system is highly developed, the big concern is migrants' use of that system. There have been claims that migrants are a drain on the public purse, with the Daily Express claiming that they are "costing the taxpayer £77 million a year" (Whitehead 2007). However, while it can be recognised that some local authorities such as Peterborough and Slough may be struggling to deliver services to growing and changing populations, this does not mean that these pressures are widespread, outweigh the benefits of migration, or that they can be easily distinguished from other pressures at a time when many public services are already overstretched. Existing empirical studies also contradict the opinion that migrants are profiting from benefits. In the UK, Home Office studies reveal that migrants pay more in tax than they use in public services (Home Office

2007; Sriskandarajah et al. 2005). However, it is said that the critical issue in this matter will always be migrants' actual dependence on welfare systems and this in turn will to a large extent depend on their success in local labour markets. It is believed that if immigrants manage to integrate successfully into labour markets, their use of the host country's welfare system will be very limited as a consequence of rational choice. It seems unlikely that they would remain poor and dependent on public welfare if they were given access to training, economic opportunities and career advancement, which together would secure them a satisfactory level of income. Nevertheless, numbers count from the public policy perspective and if numbers of migrants living in a local area are underestimated, education, housing and other public service resource provision will be influenced negatively due to Government misallocation of funding.

For those reasons and under circumstances when the level of tolerance for migrants and among migrants can decrease leading to more tensions and even conflicts, issues around workplace integration have important social policy implications. For migrants attempting to settle, even if for a temporary period, the issue of how to manage relationships with those around them becomes an urgent and important one. When looking at the latest statistics on immigration, according to which work applications from the eight accession countries have fallen to their lowest level since they joined the EU in 2004 (Home Office 2009a), one can see the problem as becoming outdated. Nonetheless, I argue that in the light of the current economic recession, concern about migrant workers' integration into the workplace has become even more critical. That is because the economic downturn has tightened local job markets and made them more competitive and demanding; this has its implications for existing workplace relations within migrant groups and between themselves and indigenous job seekers.

1.4 Existing research and its limitations

In general, research has focused on four main migration issues: effects of immigrants on natives, the determinants of migration, migration policy and assimilation of migrants. This last area of interest, however, relates mainly to labour market

assimilation or integration into the host country, which is understood in terms of immigrants attaining the same wage and employment levels compared to native-born workers of the same or similar characteristics. Findings are usually limited to confirming that the average employment and wage prospects for immigrants are worse than those for the average worker. This is often attributed to language barriers, lack of qualification transferability and/or unfamiliarity with the host countries' job market institutions (e.g. Amuedo-Dorantes and Rica 2007; Bevelander 1999; Schmitt and Wadsworth 2007).

As a result of recent migrants' growing importance in local labour markets, a number of initiatives have been undertaken to gain better knowledge of that migration inflow. However, the research agenda to date has largely been dominated by exercises in 'mapping'. This growing body of research provides information that can be broadly categorised into two themes. Firstly, there is information provided on the origins of the migration through identifying migrants' reasons for emigration, their profile (country of origin, sex, age, education) and mechanisms for entering the UK, especially the role of agencies. Secondly, there is a body of research that maps the migration process in the country and shows employer use of A8 migrant workers. Most of this type of research aims to address the scale and impact of the phenomenon both nationally and regionally. It also analyses migrant workers' employment (by nationality, sector, and region), investigates terms and conditions of their employment, states reasons for which employers use migrant workers (but also reveals the (mis)match between migrant jobs and skills) and often recommends greater protection of A8 migrants due to issues of their exploitation and mistreatment (e.g. Anderson et al. 2006; Currie 2007; Drinkwater et al. 2006; Evans 2007; Fitzgerald 2006b, 2007; French and Mohrke 2006; Gaine 2006; Glossop and Shaheen 2009; LSC 2007; Pollard et al. 2008; Salt 2006; Spencer et al. 2007; Stenning and Dawley 2009; Sumption and Somerville 2010).

While a large amount of research has been undertaken on this topical issue, deeper debates on the novelty of this migration wave and its implications for migration and labour studies are only just beginning. On the one hand, migration studies have not developed an adequate schema for categorising this group of migrants and catching their specificity because, like today, most of them do not even qualify for the

demographic definition of migrants. The concept of "transnational" migrants (Cohen 2004), which has developed in the USA, grasps many aspects of the new wave phenomenon, but its application to the distinctiveness of EU citizenship and freedom of movement is still explorative (Pries 2003). On the other hand, the recent industrial relations studies on new intra-EU migration have focused on the same migration issues, such as effects of migration influx on the host economy and social services, or exploitation of migrant workers, largely ignoring the distinctive nature of this migration. Consequently, there is currently a knowledge gap regarding new wave migration, a phenomenon that cannot be easily understood on the grounds of models developed for other migration flows.

For instance, existing cross-cultural studies, which deal with migrants' adaptation issues, restrict their investigation into acculturation processes only within a host society and can be criticised on at least two accounts. First, the existing models of acculturation remain limited by their location in an overly cognitive framework and a positivist research paradigm. As argued by Sheller and Urry (2006), the world is currently on the move and it brings about change in terms of fluidity and uncertainty. However, while everything around us seems to be mobile, boundless and re-grounding, social science appears to ignore or trivialise the importance of mobility and new research methods that would reflect it (Sheller and Urry 2006). It can be argued that despite acculturation models' growing sophistication, they reproduce overly static and de-contextualised accounts of acculturation and fail to acknowledge the increasingly fluid nature of relationships that migrants develop through time. For example, participants are allocated to one of four mutually exclusive positions and are defined as either integrated or assimilated. In reality, however, they might identify themselves with both strategies depending on the situation they are in and be engaged in not one process but a series of separate, related processes that involve adaptation not only by migrants themselves but also by the institutions and public of the host society (Spencer et al. 2007).

Moreover, according to the traditional models, positions adopted by migrants are supposed to point towards the same underlying attitudes within and across particular studies despite their taking place in completely different socio-historical settings (Bowskill et al. 2007), particularly labour markets. It is assumed, for example, that

the meaning of integration is stable and does not change regardless of the cultures in question, the topic, or the intent. That argument has led to the second point of criticism according to which research sees migrants as one homogeneous group that only comes into first-hand contact with the indigenous people. Research to date seems to ignore the reality of contemporary processes of acculturation in which migrants not only have to accommodate themselves to the host society but to a possibly even greater extent to other migrant groups and fellow nationals. In fact, numerous definitions of acculturation refer to the process of culture change that occurs when different populations come into contact but they do not specify that one of them must be the culture of the host society. Nevertheless, conventional studies restrict themselves to situations where migrants are a minority and indigenous people a majority, not to one where migrants make up the dominant group within a cluster of people that is itself culturally heterogeneous.

Hence, this research aims to lead to knowledge not yet readily available, by moving beyond mapping and gaining a deeper insight into the work relations of A8 migrant workers. This is because few of the available sources of knowledge specify how the social and reciprocal exchange relations between different migrant groups, indigenous workers, employers and/or trade unions might be characterised at an individual company level, and how these might evolve over time and what might influence migrants' choice over their acculturation into the workforce. The dilemma of whether to 'rub along' or fully assimilate is managed every day, in particular in the work environment. This also applies in the light of the current economic recession when possible tensions between continually interacting sets of workers is potentially severe due to increasing diversity and competition among workers. Therefore, to address the missing element of knowledge about A8 migrant workers in a British workplace, the aim of this research is to investigate what shapes people's choices and how a particular group of migrant workers position themselves within the complex interplay of work environment enablers and constraints. These relate to issues such as the work environment or nature of work itself but also the presence of large numbers of migrants, level of cooperation and tolerance among them, competence of the management team and activity of trade unions. Such insights aim to complement existing literature by providing a richer understanding of the reality of migrants' work experiences and their everyday struggles.

1.5   **This research and its relevance**

Most of the studies completed before EU enlargement focused on large-scale demographic trends or their political framing (Favell and Hansen 2002; Wallace and Stola 2001). Consequently, it could be argued that significantly less has been done on the micro, ethnographic level: on the lives, experiences, networks and social forms that this new migration in Europe has taken. Hence Smith and Favell (2006) call for fresh research on the 'human face' of this migration.

Understanding the differences between earlier waves of migration and that of today reveals a need to rethink the theoretical and empirical assumptions used to study recent migrants. I have argued that the migrant experience has changed and for that reason my research objective is to discover and explore what the presumed certainties of past migration theories have closed off. The purpose of this study therefore is to gain a deeper insight into the complex phenomenon of recent Central and Eastern European (CEE) labour migration into the UK by building on the existing theoretical frameworks and applying methods that allow a better understanding of today's migrants' experience. Assuming that migrant workers are still likely to be an important part of the national economy for the foreseeable future, the research not only contributes to the existing body of knowledge on acculturation but also explores the ways recent migrants negotiate their 'fit' into the British work environment, and how their employment relations are shaped and managed over time.

Thus, this body of research pays close attention to the quotidian experiences of A8 migrants in workplaces and attempts to illuminate the reality of Polish migrants' work lives. It seeks to examine *why* and *how* migrant workers choose and apply their strategies in their British workplaces, whether to 'fit in' or distance themselves from work colleagues and employers, in particular how they negotiate the basis of these relationships and manage them over time. The core of this research, however, is not to identify the type of strategies that migrant workers prefer or apply but to find out *how* they arrive at decisions, what pushes them in one direction as opposed to

another and what issues they face in applying the chosen strategy and in managing their relationships with the main actors in the workplace. One of the issues here is also the consideration of the extent to which factors such as their intentionality towards permanent settlement, language skills, nature of work itself or contractual status influence migrants' strategic acculturation choices. Thus, to reflect the increasing dynamism of the migratory experience and in comparison with similar studies that have recently been undertaken in the social science field, the turn to biographical methods is also acknowledged and used in the study (Breckner 2002; Chamberlayne and Ruskin 1999).

Hence, with the use of biographical methods, the above issues are addressed by complementing traditional typologies of acculturation with an approach that pays close attention to the process itself. Due to the dynamic nature of migrant workers' everyday negotiation of their acculturative choices, existing models are seen as offering too static and de-contextualised accounts of acculturation. These conventional models attempt to label migrants' strategies or identities as they appear to be, neglecting the process of their development; in particular how individuals come to identify themselves and what factors shape their way towards or away from certain strategies. The process itself acquires particular significance once we assume that the positions adopted by migrants are not static but change according to the circumstances and situations they face. One way of looking at these problems is offered by Bowskill et al.'s (2007) discourse approach according to which studying the discourses cannot only reveal others' positions but also uncover ways in which they are mutually shaped. Thus, it is argued that investigating ways in which migrants come to choose their strategies will provide a better insight into their working lives than identifying the strategies alone.

The analysis offers the uncovering of variability and the ways in which positions are negotiated in everyday practice. In this sense, the research also contributes to Halfacree and Boyle's (1993) call for a focus on the situatedness of migration within everyday life. Henceforth, daily interplay becomes the point of departure for exploring the ways in which differing groups of workers enact and contest acculturative outcomes such as whether to 'rub along' together or to adopt more distancing tactics. Also, the importance of the research workplace context is

highlighted by recognising that much sustained, regular, ongoing relationship/interaction between different sets of migrants as well as indigenous people takes place in a workplace. That is the place where people bring in their perceptions, expectations and habits which can be reinforced, changed or mediated by others. In today's increasingly globalised society, it is common for individuals to live and work in culturally diverse environments and enter into contact with people from different cultures. However, while in their private lives migrants can choose the level of contact with other cultures, in the workplace environment they do not have that choice and have to take a stance and position themselves accordingly. This is because cultural diversity might represent major challenges for individuals and organisations who need to accomplish tasks in a multicultural context, often where huge individual and organisational interests are at stake. While issues of integration in general have attracted a lot of attention, it is claimed that situations in a workplace, in particular one with an increasingly heterogeneous workforce, have received very limited consideration so far. Thus, this study focuses on workplace experiences because they are often argued to be overlooked (Cook et al. 2010). In fact, the workplace is a space in which many new migrants spend much of their everyday lives and is considered important for integration because it is generative of multiple, varied and diverse types of encounters that emerge between new and established individuals. This in turn might have an impact on larger integrationist issues because the way that these workplace encounters manifest themselves and play out in people's lives can consequently influence and shape positive or negative social relations between new and established community members.

1.5.1 *Case study*

Given the nature of this study, it lends itself to qualitative approaches as it is concerned with exploring people's everyday behaviour, with special emphasis on feelings and perceptions as to what matters between migrants themselves, indigenous workers and their employers. In order to understand the relationships between culturally different groups within a British workplace context, the focus of this research is on interpretation and not quantification of the findings. Since the aim of the research agenda is to pay close attention to everyday encounters between actors

in the workplace, forms of ethnography are used. Hence, data has been collected over an extended period of participant observation, followed up by autobiographical narrative interviews with Polish migrant workers and other organisational actors in a local food processing plant. Such an approach has given not only an insight into migrants' acculturation practices but also illuminated the milieu in which daily encounters between workplace actors take place.

The research site, which is a food processing plant on the South coast of England, hereafter referenced as Food Co., has been identified as one of the biggest local employers with a high proportion of migrant workers, predominantly of CEE origin. In the contemporary discourse around 'new wave' migration, Polish workers are commonly identified as the largest and most visible element of that influx and, as such, can be regarded as a suitable proxy for the migrant work experience generally. To validate the changing nature of the migration processes in to the UK and consequently the character of many British workplaces, it is important to note that British workers form only a very small part of the shop floor workforce in Food Co. In addition to Poles there are large numbers of Romanians, who were the first CEE workers to be recruited, as well as small numbers of Portuguese, Indians and Iraqis, to name just a few of the twenty eight nationalities present in the factory.

1.6 The structure of the thesis

In this introductory chapter I have outlined the different nature of the new wave migration in terms of its unprecedented scale, speed, temporal qualities, type of people drawn to the UK and generally greater mobility and fluidity of migrants' positions. It is argued here that all of these seem to have implications for the current state of many British workplaces, which have become increasingly diversified and competitive places. This in turn might have its implications in terms of migrants' adaptation strategies, in particular why and how they decide whether to distance themselves or fit into the workplace milieu. In the next chapter I therefore review the existing research on A8 migrants that lacks this type of perspective and, pointing to the increased dynamism of new wave migration, I argue that the traditional models of acculturation are too static and de-contextualised to get an insight into this aspect.

Consequently, I also suggest focusing on the workplace environment as a place where migrants are faced with relatively different circumstances to their predecessors and where many sustained ongoing relationships between migrants themselves as well as indigenous people take place. This arrival of a new type of migrants is particularly interesting in the context of traditional employment relations that prevail in many British workplaces. Hence, I also characterise the ways in which workplaces have traditionally been understood through rehearsing the language of organisation studies/employment relations in order to set out the terms in which further analysis will be conducted. Important here are issues such as job control, resistance, power, identity, and so forth. Finally, I offer a proposed solution in the form of a discursive turn, which promises to deliver a better picture of new migrants coming into the traditional employment relations of a British workplace.

Chapter 3 starts by presenting background knowledge on the A8 nationals' presence in the local area to give the context in which the study was undertaken and justify my decision in selecting a local employer. Then it outlines the methods used in the study, also addressing the challenges of the tools used and the issue of ethics. I chose to work alongside migrant workers to experience myself the everyday struggle of being a young and educated migrant working in a harsh environment of food production and managing my relationships with a great variety of co-workers and superiors. In the factory I also recruited participants for my narrative interviews which provided an insight into migrants' individual perceptions and understandings of the situations in which they found themselves. Finally, the last issue discussed in this chapter is that of my ethical approach. Undoubtedly, the most challenging ethical aspect has been my very presence in the factory, which, apart from causing no harm or disruption to people's work, required me to stay neutral and dissociated from both 'them' and 'us'.

Chapter 4 provides an in-depth inside view of the research site. It starts with a brief description of some of the facts and a historical account of new wave migration in the plant. Then it gradually progresses towards more subjective accounts of the workplace that people may experience when coming to work at Food Co. This is done by presenting a selection of episodes experienced during the participant observation stage. These are proffered to provide a rich context as a backdrop to the

later analysis. Hence this chapter profiles the main organisational actors and introduces a number of themes that are further reflected on and developed by my interviewees.

The next chapter presents a selection of six narratives which reveal something of the complex nature of employment relations in Food Co. These are stories that provide an insight into individuals' world of work, their complex relationships with each other and other organisational actors; but also how their fitting in evolved over time and how it has affected their sense of national identity, settlement plans and other aspects of their future life.

Participant observation and conducted interviews revealed a number of themes that played a significant role in the process of shaping new migrants' acculturation and workplace relations. Chapter 6 therefore takes the form of discussions of empirical findings which present the preoccupations of Polish migrants that resonated throughout the research. They are presented as a result of interplay among four organisational actors: Poles themselves, Romanians, British managers and the absence of British work norms. All of them create a particular workplace situation whereby on a daily basis Polish migrant workers decide about their position in the workplace and larger society and/or are pushed in one direction as opposed to another.

The last chapter is structured around the contribution of this study to the existing body of knowledge on new migrant workers, in particular the outcome of their presence in a traditional British workplace. In this part of the thesis I argue that the research delivered a relatively insightful picture of migrants' every day work experiences. The narratives reveal a complex and contradictory set of discourses at work where common workplace strife is shot through with notions of identity, the assumed identity of others, and complex notions of normality and neutrality. And yet, there is still scope for further research in this vein.

2   NEW MIGRATION and OLD APPROACHES?

2.1   Some basic terms

One of the major obstacles to finding common ground when discussing the integration of migrants is to define fundamental terms. Neither "integration" nor "migration" nor even "migrants" are clear-cut terms. Although international migration could easily be defined as the medium to long-term movement of persons from one country to another involving a change of residence, it also encompasses a large variety of phenomena making typologies or classifications complex. Some of these categorisations refer to the migrants' reasons for leaving their home countries, such as economic or political, while others attempt to label migrating persons along the lines of voluntary versus forced, regular versus irregular, permanent versus short-term or circulatory. The term "migrant" is also a broad one and could refer to concepts as different as migrant workers, seasonal workers, cross-border commuters, asylum seekers, political and war refugees, irregular/illegal immigrants or international students, who all fall into the category of "international migrants".

Accordingly, each discourse on migrants' integration has to take this large spectrum into consideration. However, identifying target groups, in terms of whose integration will be examined, is only the first and possibly the easiest step. The next is to clarify what is meant by the term integration, because, depending on researchers' individual interests or national integration policies, the concept of integration might reflect different ideas and refer to different dimensions of the integration notion, whether economic, social or cultural. Both practical interpretation and social connotation may vary considerably, and if there is a problem of definition it also has a bearing on measurement and interpretation. There will be different perceptions of what "successful integration" means and this, in turn, has implications when it comes to comparing levels of integration among migrants across countries and/or over time (Werth et al. 1998).

The above issues have been recognised in the literature. The 'Integration: Mapping the Field' project (Castles et al. 2002) surveyed over 3,200 pieces of British research

on immigrants and refugees from 1996 to 2001, predominantly within academic and NGO sectors. The report, among other things, describes a general lack of understanding of the term "integration" and how it can be measured, as meanings vary from country to country, change over time, and depend on the interests, values and perspectives of the people concerned. Consequently, many researchers prefer to use alternative concepts such as assimilation, adaptation, incorporation, inclusion, insertion or settlement, to name just a few, but often they are just used as synonyms. Hence, the report concludes that there is no single, generally accepted definition, theory or model of migrant integration and the concept continues to be problematic, controversial and hotly debated.

For the purpose of this thesis and in the light of reviewed literature, I decided to use the term migrant with reference to CEE migrant workers who have come to the UK in search of work since the expansion of the EU in May 2004. The particular emphasis here is on choice of movement and the ability of an individual to freely decide to move from their home country to seek a wage. In other words, the research focuses on people who appear to have made a free and rational economic choice and therefore does not encompass asylum seekers or refugees, for whom the decision to migrate can be seen as a result of coercion. Work is key to defining the group of interest, as access to the UK labour market was a significant new right gained through A8 accession. Furthermore, the decision has been made to investigate the process by which migrant workers adjust to different cultures and the term "acculturation" has been chosen as the most dominant in the field (e.g. Berry 1980). Although researchers have focussed on different aspects of the acculturation process, my interest lies in migrants' sociocultural rather than psychological acculturation. While the first is situated within the behavioural domain and refers to the ability to 'fit in' or execute effective interactions in a new cultural milieu, the latter refers to feelings of well-being or satisfaction during cross-cultural transitions (Ward et al. 2001, p.42). Thus, while the concept of acculturation will be explained later in this chapter, it is worth clarifying now that terms used in this thesis such as integration, assimilation, exclusion and marginalisation are not treated as synonyms but refer to different concepts. Instead, expressions such as adaptation and adjustment are often used in exchange for the word acculturation. Before we progress to these issues,

however, other discussions are undertaken to provide a better understanding of the new migration phenomenon and current nature of the migration research agendas.

2.2   Scale of the migration phenomenon

Migration into the UK is nothing new in the history of the country. Since the formation of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland in 1922 there have been substantial arrivals of migrants from other parts of the world, in particular from Ireland and the former colonies of the British Empire - such as Pakistan, India, the Caribbean, Bangladesh, Africa, Hong Kong and Kenya. In fact, even migration from Poland to the UK is by no means a new phenomenon, starting on a small scale as early as the sixteenth century. Although the nature and size of the flows from Poland were different at particular points in the history of both countries, the first large-scale migration did not take place until the Second World War and its aftermath.

However, while Britain has always attracted immigrants from a range of countries (Winder 2004), the last decade has seen an increasing diversity among newcomers. In 2007, there were an estimated 35 country-of-origin groups that had more than 40,000 people living in the UK, five more than in 2002 and 12 more than in 1997. The 2004 EU enlargement, when the UK accepted immigrants from Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), has largely contributed to this picture. That decision has led to 'a new wave' of mass migration into the country, causing large increases among certain groups of nationals, most notably Poles. The latter went from being the 13th largest foreign-born group in early 2004, to the largest foreign-born group four years later (Pollard et al. 2008). Consequently, it is estimated that 2 million have been added to the foreign-born population in the UK over the last decade (Rutter et al. 2008), and around half of this number constitute people who have migrated to the UK from the CEE countries, primarily from Poland, since May 2004 (Pollard et al. 2008).

2.3 Existing research on migration

Due to the scope and size of the current wave of international migration it has become one of the most important and hotly debated issues of the twenty-first century. Within Europe, after recent EU enlargements, it is one of the highest issues on the political agendas of the British government, the European Union and most of its member states. Not surprisingly then it has also become an area of interest for many academic researchers who have looked into various aspects of new migration inflows.

Since this large scale entry of people from the A8 CEE countries started, a significant number of research projects have been undertaken. This growing body of research provides information that can be broadly categorised into two themes. Firstly, there is information provided on the origins of the migration through identifying migrants' reason for emigration, their profile (country of origin, sex, age, education) and mechanisms of getting into the UK, especially the role of agencies. Secondly, there is a body of research that maps the migration process in the country and shows employer utilisation of A8 migrant workers. Most of this type of research aims to address the scale and impact of the phenomenon both nationally and regionally. But there are also studies that analyse migrant workers' employment (by nationality, sector, and region), investigate terms and conditions of their employment, state reasons for which employers use migrant workers and reveal the (mis)match between migrant jobs and skills (such as poor English language skills or non-recognition of qualifications gained overseas). These studies often recommend greater protection of A8 migrants due to the claims of their exploitation and mistreatment (e.g. Anderson et al. 2006; Currie 2007; Drinkwater et al. 2006; Evans 2007; Fitzgerald 2006b, 2007; French and Mohrke 2006; Gaine 2006; Glossop and Shaheen 2009; LSC 2007; Pollard et al. 2008; Salt 2006; Spencer et al. 2007; Stenning and Dawley 2009; Sumption and Somerville 2010; Waddington 2007). Recently, due to increased public concern over a lack of control of migration inflows to the UK, much effort has been made on establishing migrants' actual contribution to the country's economy but also assessing costs in terms of housing, education, health or social care services that local communities allegedly incur to accommodate an increasing number of migrant families (Gaine 2006; Home Office 2007; Sriskandarajah et al. 2007).

Although such data could be argued to be valuable in many respects, there is scope for more research in terms of complementing the agenda by more micro matters and extending the statistical and economic analysis by incorporating the sociological and cultural realms. A number of researchers have already responded to this emerging research strand (e.g. Galasinska and Kozlowska 2009, Burrell 2010, White 2011). The aim of the following review is therefore to present key themes in current research on A8 migration and some of the major findings which have appeared to date.

2.3.1 *Motivations and strategies*

One of the most significant themes to emerge so far relates to the issue of why people have migrated and their possible strategies for returning home. Much research on this issue identifies the relative state of labour markets to be one of the strongest determinants of large-scale migration from CEE countries to the UK (e.g. Pollard et al. 2008). However, generic economic explanations for migration have also been underpinned by complementary research that identifies other (non-economic) drivers. For instance, young and highly-educated people who constitute a significant component of this new wave migration are found to be 'cosmopolitans' (Datta 2009) or 'searchers' (Eade et al. 2006) who want to experience new ways of living previously denied to them and their forebears. They wish to encounter new people outside of their own immediate experience and learn an international language such as English. However, as Galasinska and Kozlowska (2009) point out, this desire to find a 'western' meaning 'better' life is often a wish for 'normal' life. Thus, their strategies for uprooting themselves are not to be seen purely in economic terms but also by reference to the stock of social, cultural and human capital on which they hope to build. Their hope is that through migration, diverse skills are acquired that will prove to be decisive in later life, either back home or, if settled, in the UK.

While the reasons for migrating are relatively easy to identify, the longer-term intentions are less obvious. Fihel et al. (2006) for instance, argue that it is difficult to forecast how long new migrants might stay but Ruhs (2006) asserts that post-

accession inflows are not necessarily as short-term as had been expected. Eade et al. (2006) divided their Polish respondents into four categories: storks (circular migrants), hamsters (those who treat their move as a one-off act to get enough capital to invest in Poland), searchers (those who keep their options deliberately open) and stayers (those who intend to remain in the UK for good). More recently, a report published by IPPR (Pollard et al. 2008) stressed the fact that migration flows were slowing and there was evidence of return flows. Hence, while there is no conformity in terms of how temporary or not this new migration is, there seems agreement that A8 migrants are heterogeneous and not an entirely predictable population. Even though they operate within the same economic framework, they often have diverse strategies of migration and return (Burrell 2010). Perhaps the most convincing insight, however, comes from Spencer et al. (2007) who argue that migrants' intentions with regard to their length of stay will change over time. It could be argued that this to a large extent will depend not only on migrants' personal circumstances but also their experiences in the host country, whether at work or in a local community.

Research conducted by the Canadian statistics office (Schellenberg and Maheux 2008), for instance, shows some interesting findings in terms of how migrants' perspectives on Canada have changed over a four-year period since they arrived. Overall, most new immigrants have very positive views about the social and political environment in Canada. However, a lot of them have less favourable assessments of their experiences in the Canadian labour market, with difficulties finding suitable employment remaining the problem they most frequently encounter. They also face challenges in such domains as finding housing, getting language training or accessing health care but some of these are transitory in nature and are only experienced during the initial stages of settlement. Despite these challenges, about two-thirds of them feel that their expectations of life in Canada have been exceeded, met or improved upon. That being said, the outlook of new immigrants who have not made material gains while in Canada express less positive views. These individuals are more likely than others to feel their expectations about life in Canada have not been met and that going there was not the right decision.

2.3.2 *Life beyond work*

Whether about vulnerability or opportunity, most studies acknowledge work as central to new migrants' experience and this will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter. Many other researchers however recognise the fact that migrants are not only workers. In this respect, migrants' living standards and quality of life have been dominant in many reports. Spencer et al. (2007), for instance, looked at quality of housing available to new migrants and concluded that although housing conditions were still rather poor, they had improved since 2004 possibly due to better employment and earning options. Studies often focus on the continued difficulties faced by those who theoretically are entitled to better protection due to their membership in the EU. Ryan et al. (2009) give examples of risks and difficulties that many new migrants encountered when looking for a job or accommodation, arriving to the UK with few contacts, few English language skills and very limited knowledge of the British way of life. Osipovic (2008) also points to the legal position of A8 migrants who do not always realise what their rights are and possibly because of that do not enjoy equality alongside British citizens. This suggests migrants' vulnerability to acts of discrimination, which interestingly has received little attention. Moreover, studies such as that conducted by Fomina and Frelak (2008), who analysed British press releases on East European migrants, show that there is hostility towards new migrants and according to Burrell (2010) this is the area that needs much closer academic scrutiny.

Nevertheless, despite being vulnerable in many situations, there is also research illustrating that many new wave migrants enjoy their interactions with British citizens and their way of living the longer they stay in the country (Spencer et al. 2007). The importance of strong and weak social ties for providing practical and emotional support, in particular the role of churches in responding to migrants' needs, has been much discussed (e.g. Davis et al. 2007; Garapich 2008; Ryan et al. 2009; Ryan et al. 2008). Rodriguez (2010), White (2009) and Ryan et al. (2009) also highlight the importance of family for Eastern Europeans and how having young children helps migrant mothers in particular to integrate with local communities by interactions in schools and playgrounds. Interesting too is Siara's (2009) investigation of online discussion boards and her insight into the changing roles of

women in the UK, particularly around shifting relationship dynamics and mixed ethnicity partnerships. By considering these tensions, Siara also demonstrates how hostile the relationships among migrants themselves might be. In fact, much of the research on social interactions, in particular the Polish studies, illustrate a lack of harmony and unity among new migrants. Thus in general, what the research on social interactions demonstrates is how complex the relationships of Eastern Europeans in the UK are, irrespective of whether these are virtual or real contacts.

Another category of studies that looks at migrants' lives beyond work focus on fundamentally more qualitative aspects of their experiences, in particular the issue of belonging and 'feeling at home'. For example, Galasinska (2010) and Rabikowska (2010a) are two of the most recent studies looking at the issue of normality and how new migrants negotiate their sense of identity, simultaneously trying to satisfy the host culture and reinforce their own culture. Metykova (2007) shows how migrants handle new lives by deliberately trying to construct familiarity in their immediate environments. Finally, Rabikowska (2010b) discusses Polish migrants' negotiations of identity in relation to their food habits and how they recreate aspects of home in the UK through buying and cooking Polish food. All this research implicitly relates to issues of migrants' acculturation process, in particular their integration or not into the host society. One may anticipate that these issues play themselves out in the workplace setting. For migrants, their sense of integration or separation is confined neither to home life nor to work time, but embraces both. Work and non-work are intimately entwined in ways that deeply inform the whole migrant-worker experience. As will be seen, the factory worker narratives recounted in this study confirm this synthesis.

2.3.3   *Local context*

For much of the above research the sense of place has been a significant matter. Without doubt, London has been dominant in many of the studies and different aspects of migrants' lives in the capital city have been looked at. The most prevailing theme however relates to the multinational character of London and the extent to which members of ethnically homogenous East European societies integrate into this

environment (e.g. Eade et al. 2006; Spencer et al. 2007). Siara's (2009) study also sheds light on the racial and national diversity of London and how migrants, who have not encountered multi-ethnicity previously, either embrace or shun it when having to live amidst such a diverse urban community. Svasek's (2009) research on Polish migrants in Northern Ireland is also informative in demonstrating how difficult it is for new migrants to understand prevailing religion and identity complexities in the region and how their Catholic religion positions them in local communities without them realising it. White (2011), in turn, explores the significance of moving from specific localities within Poland to those in the UK. The suggestion here is that there has been limited research to date that regards Poland and the UK to be two ends of the same migration arc. She emphasises the importance of locating the specific site of the research given the geographical diversity of migration patterns that have been uncovered in both the UK and Poland. It would appear that each combination of a sending and receiving locality is likely to produce a unique migration experience.

Interestingly, for Pollard et al. (2008), Eastern European nationals appear to have settled more widely throughout the UK than has happened during previous waves of migration. They work across the country in diverse and dispersed locations, even in areas not previously known for its migrant settlements, such as Scotland and south-west England. Accordingly, London is not the only locus for researching new migrant communities. While some studies cover larger regions such as the South West (Evans 2007) or West Midlands (Meardi 2007), others are focused on particular urban centres such as Leeds (Cook et al. 2010), Leicester (Roberts-Thomson 2007), Newcastle (Fitzgerald 2006b; Stenning and Dawley 2009), Poole (Borough of Poole 2008a, 2008b) and Chichester (Gaine 2006). In general, a range of issues have been covered in these studies ranging from the changing state of local labour markets through to difficulties faced by local authorities in trying to accommodate the needs of constantly growing migrant communities. This type of research often feeds into the wider policy concerns over community cohesion on which, for example, Markova and Black (2007) focus in their report.

In fact, integrating migrants into pluralistic yet cohesive communities is a policy issue of considerable concern to social scientists and the UK government alike

(Cantle 2001; Commission on Integration and Cohesion 2007), and one that also extends to broader policy debates on social inclusion (Kofman 2005; Yuval-Davis 2006). Thus, cohesion and citizenship policies are also meant to address people's sense of belonging and to promote 'good (community) relations' (Cook et al. 2010). However, this gives rise to a further question as to how capable A8 migrants are at developing good relations with others in their neighbourhood and workplace when perhaps struggling to establish cohesion within their own migrant communities.

2.3.4 *An alternative research focus?*

It is no mean feat to bring together a comprehensive overview of existing research on this new wave of migration. Its scale and variety are considerable with a wide range of academic disciplines being deployed across the humanities and social sciences and research ranging from small-scale micro-projects to large publicly-funded collaborative macro-studies. Nonetheless, a significant proportion of this research is variously orientated towards issues of migrants' acculturation, albeit some more explicitly than others. Indeed, investigating people's reasons for migrating, their settlement strategies (or otherwise) and interactions with others can serve as proxies for assessing their overall integration with host countries and thereby inform relevant policy-making. Looking at migrants' sense of identity and belonging along with their level of awareness of host country norms and language proficiency are useful ways to explore social cohesiveness within emerging migrant communities whilst remaining a rich source of interest for acculturation researchers. Similarly, research on integration of the rather ethnically homogenous societies of Eastern Europe into the ethnically diverse communities of London also reflects the importance of migrants' acculturation in today's research on new migration inflows. For these reasons my research has diverted towards the issue of acculturation, and in particular, the shortcomings of existing theories that categorise or label people in one way or another; seemingly ignoring the fluidity and dynamism of the processes through which new migrants get involved under contemporary conditions.

Although available research is valuable in many respects, there still remains scope for more research that complements studies that look to develop an adequate

understanding of the actions, perceptions, emotions and experiences of migrants. For this reason, paying close attention to the quotidian experiences of A8 migrants has become a major strand of research activity. In human geography, for instance, Ley (1977) suggests paying close attention to the ordinary, everyday and 'mundane experiences' of people's lives, and de Certeau (1984) has made significant contributions to this emerging field by showing how everyday social practices can prove critical in enhancing the ability of ordinary people to negotiate, and possibly resist, structural apparatuses of power. This said, few of the available sources of knowledge provide a particularly useful insight into key aspects of work relations as experienced firsthand by A8 workers located in older British work settings, as with this study. Of specific interest is the perspective on the locus of workplace power, the role of hierarchy, recourse to resistance and other related elements of the micro-reality that constitutes migrant work life. Indeed, how migrants actually conduct their working lives and the extent to which they 'fit' or not into novel work settings seems to be a relatively under-researched area. This, in turn, has certain ramifications for us when it comes to shaping broader policy discussion. As Cook et al. (2010) contend, there is a link between everyday mundane encounters and workplace relations that occur between migrants and members of established communities. Thus, migrant strategic choices in terms of acculturation into the host society might not only constitute expressions of their general attitudes and longer-term aspirations, which can reflect the changing nature of the migration processes, but also what shapes their decisions might be influenced by migrants' relations with each other, indigenous workers, managers and workplace representatives.

Despite there being a significant and extant body of research on the new wave of migration into the UK, there is also the view that certain aspects of this rather distinctive phenomenon remain under-researched. More specifically, there is a case for complementing existing research by looking at migrants' work experiences from a subjective rather than objective point of view, especially given the way that migrant labour has already featured prominently in most of the larger research reports on A8 migrants (to be discussed in more detail later). Once again, people's lives are not only a series of economic choices but they also comprise emotions and feelings that develop as a result of the experiences they face. This applies as much to the workplace as to the community in which migrants find themselves. Seemingly,

"people construct a personal, subjective meaning of their actions in a particular context which governs them through the socially constructed world" (Chirkov 2009a, p.96). Thus, researchers are also obliged to look at the way work itself is actually experienced and judged by individuals and groups, and not just by reference to substantive outcomes such as pay. For example, a sense of justice is claimed to play a significant role because people who feel unfairly treated by authorities are more likely to act aggressively or retaliate in the workplace (e.g. Miller 2001), more likely to steal or sabotage their workplace (e.g. Greenberg 1993) and more likely to be supportive of sit-ins and strikes (e.g. Leung et al. 1993). Thus, because subjectivity is important, there is a need to move beyond mapping exercises and focus on migrants' everyday experiences in order to gain a deeper insight into their work relations. This should reveal how they respond to novel circumstances in which they might find themselves and how they might strategically position themselves in this new milieu. Gaining this deeper insight is particularly relevant if we assume that in some way and to some extent the world of work experienced by these new migrants might have a direct bearing on their views regarding the settlement issue.

Investigating the processes by which people settle into a new country has become a well-established area of research and has frequently been linked to acculturation studies from earliest days. It follows that in modifying existing acculturation models and applying them to studies of new wave migration can hopefully add something substantial to our understanding of this recent phenomenon. Consequently, we need to turn our attention to the work setting itself being such an important locus of the acculturation process and given the economic character of new wave migration. Arguably, migrant work has now become a highly dynamic domain in terms of contesting and/or accepting people's circumstances, shaping their identities and acculturation choices. Primarily this is because first-hand, continuous and sustained contact with numbers of diverse migrant groups, compatriots and indigenous co-workers takes place within the competitive environment of a local labour market. Mindful of the unprecedented size and speed of recent migrant flows, their unrestricted mobility and other attributes attractive to British employers, a different workplace dynamic is to be expected to prevail than for previous migrant cohorts. Similarly, it could be said that established acculturation theories are less than

convincing in the case of these newer mobilities. The implications of this are explored more fully in the next section and those that follow.

2.4   **Issues of acculturation**

Due to the major migratory movements and increased possibilities of mobility in this century, the field of cross-cultural psychology is extending and growing in importance. This is because studying individuals living in cultures different from those in which they developed, investigating how they gain acceptance and recognition in new cultures and observing the reactions of receiving societies are seen to have important implications for understanding human behaviour and individual intercultural competencies. In cross-cultural psychology, acculturation constitutes one of the major areas of interest while contemporary theories of acculturation processes remain a major resource for understanding the issues of human experiences in the context of migration and mobility. The concept of acculturation itself has a long history ranging from 2370 B.C., when the Sumerian rulers of Mesopotamia established laws that were supposed to protect traditional cultural practices from acculturative change (Gadd 1971), to the present day. However, the first full psychological theory of acculturation was developed by two major researchers in the Chicago School, Thomas and Znaniecki (1918), and from that time a number of acculturation typologies have been proposed.

The Chicago School gave weight to the concept of assimilation as a way of gaining a scientific understanding of migration and has become a canonical account of a social process that occurs spontaneously and often unintentionally in the course of interaction between majority and minority groups. In general, the notion of assimilation was then understood as the final stage of a "race-relations cycle" of contact, competition, accommodation and eventual assimilation – a sequence that is viewed as "apparently progressive and irreversible" (Park 1950, p.281). This theory was then developed by Gordon who identified seven stages of assimilation but still argued that acculturation, the minority group's adoption of the "cultural patterns" of the host society, typically comes first and is inevitable (1964, p.79). It is the inevitability of this process that became the major point of criticism for many writers

(e.g. Lyman 1973; Stone 1985), but other issues were also identified. Doubts were raised about Gordon's view of acculturation as a largely one-way process and the ambiguity as to whether his hypothesis is meant to apply to individuals or groups. Moreover, early versions of the theory have been criticised as Anglo-conformist because migrant groups were portrayed as conforming to unchanging, middle-class, white Protestant values. The problem that Alba and Nee (1997) drew attention to is that the American society on which the research focused has become more heterogeneous, making the majority group relatively small compared to the increasing number of minority groups. Gordon's account does not appear to extend to situations that become increasingly common, that is, relationships between members of different minority groups. With regard to this point Alba and Nee (2003) not only argue that the incorporation of migrant groups also involves change and acceptance by the mainstream population but also acknowledge that assimilation takes place within racially and economically heterogeneous contexts. This, however, has led to criticism that, as the mainstream cannot be easily defined anymore, Alba and Nee are trying to define assimilation so broadly that the concept loses its meaning (Brown and Bean 2006).

A theory that remains popular among researchers is the foundational work of Berry (1980; 1984). In Chirkov's (2009a) analysis of the current research on acculturation, Berry's bi-dimensional model was the most widely applied theoretical model in reviewed articles; being used exclusively in 55% of the reviewed articles. Berry described what he saw as the fundamental issues facing immigrants in terms of maintaining their own culture, and/or embracing the culture of the host country, and the implications that flowed from the balance of these forces (Fig.1). His taxonomy in its present form of assimilation, separation, integration and marginalisation, has played a significant role in cross-cultural research.

	Is it considered to be of value to maintain cultural identity and characteristics?	
	Yes	No
Is it considered to be of value to maintain relationships with other groups? — Yes	**Integration**	**Assimilation**
No	**Separation**	**Marginalisation**

Fig.1 The Berry (1980; 1984) bi-dimensional model of immigrant acculturation orientations.

This work is important in positing the strategic choices available to migrants. The model however has been widely criticised for overly focusing on immigrants' acculturation orientations, implying in a way that acculturation is something that happens only to minority people, and neglecting the importance of dominant group attitudes (Rudmin 2003). The argument is that acculturation is a two-way process of cultural change that happens to all humans due to exposure to and interaction with other cultures. Thus, members of the dominant group are not different species of psychological being and therefore their culture can also be influenced by contact with the migrants' culture. Consequently, the model was developed by writers such as Bourhis et al. (1997) who assert the importance of acculturation choices being part of a negotiated order, in which immigrants and the host community are co-implicated in the choices and the constraints over forms of mutual adaptation. Their Interactive Acculturation Model (IAM) posits four positions that can be adopted by the host community, and which are corollaries of those identified by Berry: *integration,* which occurs when a dominant group finds it acceptable that migrants maintain their cultural identity but also adopt important features of the host community culture; *assimilation*, reflecting a host community's expectation that immigrants will fully adopt the dominant culture and relinquish their cultural identity; *segregation*, referring to situations when members of the host community distance themselves from immigrants by accepting their cultural maintenance but not wishing them to

adopt the host culture; and *exclusion*, which occurs when members of the dominant group not only deny immigrants freedom to maintain their culture but also refuse to allow them to adopt features of the host culture.

A further development of this approach lies in the identification of inter-group relationships that flow from the combinations of immigrant and host positions. Montreuil and Bourhis (2001) identify these as "consensual," "problematic" or "conflictual," and locate them in the context of the degree of concordance, or not, between the parties. The greater the difference between options chosen by the native society and those preferred by immigrants, the greater the risk of conflict and frustration in the relationship. It is expected that in situations when members of both groups share a preference for either integration or assimilation, a consensual relationship will occur and will be characterised by positive and effective communication and low inter-group tension. Problematic relationships may emerge when there is only partial agreement on the desirable acculturation orientation. For instance, migrant group members favour integration but majority group members prefer their assimilation. Conflictual relationships are most likely to emerge when either majority group members or migrants do not want any contact and there is no positive communication between the two groups, mainly because the groups tend to ignore each other (Bourhis et al. 1997).

Although this approach goes some way towards acknowledging the dynamic interplay between groups, Piontkowski et al. (2000) argue that the model does not differentiate between inconsistencies arising from differences in the attitudes of the minority and majority group over the issue of "cultural maintenance", and discordance between groups regarding "contact participation". Piontkowski et al. claim that in certain inter-group contexts it matters whether the difference between groups relates to their assessment of *cultural* values or their attitudes toward seeking and accepting *contact* between the groups. Thus in situations when there are significant cultural differences between groups, disagreement over the maintenance of their own culture heritage has a greater impact on the relationship than disagreement over the amount of desired contact, as maintenance of culture is strongly related to a sense of group identification (Florack and Piontkowski 2000). Therefore, if the dominant group does not accept the non-dominant group's

maintenance of culture, this could threaten the minority's identity but also threaten the dominant group if the non-dominant group insists on maintaining its own preferred cultural values, consequently exacerbating the potential for inter-group conflict.

Consequently, Piontkowski et al. (2002) developed The Concordance Model of Acculturation (Fig.2) which distinguishes four types of relationship between majority and minority groups and suggests a variety of outcomes.

Host Community Orientation	Migrant Community Orientation			
	Integration	Assimilation	Separation	Marginalisation
Integration	*Consensual*	*Culture Problematic*	*Contact Problematic*	*Conflictual*
Assimilation	*Culture Problematic*	*Consensual*	*Conflictual*	*Contact Problematic*
Segregation	*Contact Problematic*	*Conflictual*	*Consensual*	*Culture Problematic*
Exclusion	*Conflictual*	*Conflictual*	*Conflictual*	*Conflictual*

Fig.2: The Concordance Model of Acculturation (Piontkowski et al. 2002, p.224).

2.4.1 *Life domains*

The above models suggest a developing sophistication in understanding how inter-group relations arise and are maintained. Such understanding is particularly important in a workplace context, one with a very particular dynamic, where positions adopted by the parties are likely to be explicit, material, and have immediate consequences. This possibility is disclosed by the Relative Acculturation Extended Model (RAEM) (Navas et al. 2006; Navas et al. 2005; Navas et al. 2007) which makes a distinction between the acculturation strategies adopted (real

situation) and acculturation attitudes preferred (ideal situation). For Navas et al. acculturation strategies adopted by immigrants often do not correspond to their stated attitudes because there are certain constraints, such as poor language skills, that make it difficult or even impossible to adopt preferred strategies. Apart from affirming that the adaptation process is complex, the model also confirms the findings of earlier acculturation researchers (e.g. Eshel and Rosenthal-Sokolov 2000; Horenczyk 1996; Trimble 2002) that the process is relative, because the same options are not preferred, or the same strategies may not be adopted, in different areas of life. For example, some studies reported a variation in strategies across life domains, indicating that in private domains (e.g. family, religious beliefs) immigrants tend to prefer cultural maintenance more strongly than in public domains of life (e.g. work) (Phalet et al. 2000; Taylor and Lambert 1996; Vermeulen and Penninx 2000).

The RAEM considers seven domains in which acculturation takes place: political and government systems, labour or work, economic, family, social, ideological, religious beliefs and customs and ways of thinking, principles and values. The latter elements are seen to constitute the 'hard core' of one's culture which not only affect behaviour directly but are most difficult to change even after years in the new society. Conversely, elements from the material or instrumental areas of migrant life (for example, work) would be expected to be adopted more readily. Consequently, it can be expected that there will be greater resistance to overcoming the differences arising in the core domains, particularly the family, than in overcoming the differences in material domains, such as work. Thus immigrants are seen to be more likely to adopt stronger integration strategies in the more materialistic areas - most notably, that of the workplace (Navas et al. 2005).

2.4.2 *Dominant & non-dominant groups – inter-group theories*

According to Bourhis et al. (1997) as well as Piontkowski et al. (2002), if acculturation attitudes of both groups differ, there is potential for conflict. However, this assumption also needs to be considered with regard to some additional circumstances and reasons which shape both groups' attitudes and strategies, other than their cultural maintenance/contact participation preferences. When acculturation

is understood as a mutual process of influence between immigrants and natives it is necessary to consider the main differences between the dominant and non-dominant groups, and the obvious distinction between these two groups seems to be power resulting from the groups' majority-minority characteristics. As mentioned above, the dominant group is said to have more power and more possibilities to shape the way in which the non-dominant group should adapt (Piontkowski et al. 2000). However, if we consider workplaces being our research context, it is the employer, and trade unions, if present, that have a degree of power over both indigenous (dominant) and migrant (non-dominant) workers; employers through setting the terms and conditions of their employment and specifying rules of behaviour, and trade unions acting in ways that may ameliorate or exacerbate workplace tensions. Similarly, if we consider contemporary British workplaces which have been becoming increasingly diversified, migrant workers could actually be in the majority and the type of relationships among compatriots could constitute the core of the 'fitting-in' issue. The extent to which these happen is likely to determine which of the acculturation outcomes occur. In this way factors which affect the processes of mediating, and consequently strategic acculturation choices of individual group members, become central to the issue.

A further factor affecting the acculturation choices of both groups is the level of familiarity with the out-group. Lack of knowledge about the host society and its culture combined with the lack of contact with the reference group that formerly reinforced one's own identity, may cause feelings of insecurity and anxiety. Referring to the work context, this often translates into a migrant's novelty of work norms and rate-busting practices that are long-established and highly valued by host country workers (Beynon 1975; Brown 2002; Roy 1952). Individuals and groups may adopt different strategies to cope with these feelings: some may choose to assimilate into the host society while others may prefer to separate. For migrant workers entering the workplace, this often presents itself as a choice between seeking affiliation or non-affiliation with indigenous work colleagues and their teams. Similar dilemmas may face host country workers. Lack of knowledge about the immigrants' culture combined with an increased need for positive evaluation of one's own group may influence their acculturation attitudes (Piontkowski et al. 2000). Once again, there are choices for indigenous workers to make between shunning

migrants entering the workforce or socialising them into the employment relations environment of the workplace and so ensuring their insertion into prevalent work group cultures to avoid rate-busting, or other behaviours considered to be detrimental.

On the other hand, however, if we consider workplaces where migrant workers are in the majority compared to indigenous workers, a high level of familiarity with co-workers who are often compatriots might not necessarily result in positive workplace relationships. A study of recent Polish migrants undertaken by Ryan et al. (2008), for instance, revealed that there is a general sense of mistrust towards the wider Polish community. The idea of Poles not helping each other, competing and undermining each other emerged frequently in their study, illuminating Poles' hostility towards their compatriots. In common with the findings of Eade et al. (2006), they found that competition between Poles for employment was a common theme that often led to rivalry among them. Consequently, their study suggested that "the Poles who relied most on networks of co-ethnics were also the most critical of their fellow Poles" (Ryan et al. 2008, p.680). Thus, it could be expected that under such circumstances members of the in-group would seek more contact with other nationalities instead. Accordingly, it is possible that the low level of familiarity with the out-group actually has an opposite effect on the relationship between them as potentially the unknown group could constitute a better alternative than the well-known home option.

Accordingly, the relationship between minority and majority groups can be summarised as an "inter-group situation" that emerges from the groups' social identifications. In the context of immigrant–host relationships, nationality seems to be the key category. Taking into account the various motivations behind their emigration (e.g. political, economic) in the first place, migrants will exhibit differing degrees of identification with their nationality. As a result, their attitudes towards the host group as well as ideas as to how to live in the new country will vary. In the same way, attitudes of the host society members will differ depending on their level of identification with their own nationality. The more such groups identify with their nationality the more likely they are to assess their group as being more positive than the out-group and so are more likely to support discriminative attitudes towards the

other group. The discrimination however is likely to decrease in a situation when both groups feel that they can benefit from each other or if they perceive each other to be similar. In the work context for instance, the likelihood of this happening improves where there is a shared understanding of their relationship with the employer and, possibly, towards the union, and where common terms and conditions prevail. Sometimes social contact, such as that in workplaces, can also have a positive effect on attitudes towards each other (Piontkowski et al. 2000).

Although the acculturation attitudes of different groups seem to be difficult to predetermine, Piontkowski et al. (2000) argue that there are certain intergroup variables that can markedly affect the process of acculturation. Thus, they hold in-group bias, similarity, contact, self-efficacy, permeability, outcome and vitality to be important variables in influencing interactions between groups and consequently their acculturation options. For instance, similarity in background (ethnicity, race, age, and occupation), attitudes, values and personality traits are linked with positive evaluation and an increased liking (Byrne 1971). Concerning acculturation attitudes, it is to be expected that perceived similarities with the out-group will result in greater acceptance and integration or assimilation attitudes, while perceived dissimilarity will support attitudes of separation and marginalisation. However, we need to acknowledge from the outset that the type of migration involved will have a considerable bearing on the outcome. Migrant workers' preferences for their incorporation into the workplace will vary considerably depending upon their perception of themselves as "return," "circulatory" or "settled" migrants (Dustmann and Weiss 2007).

On the other hand, compared to other migrations to the UK, we might reasonably anticipate that A8 nationals' lower visibility would meet with greater acceptance than those of migrants from South Asia or Africa. This would fit with the concordance model of acculturation according to which the potential for problematic relationships is smaller when cultural differences between two groups are not so profound. According to Cook et al.'s (2010) research, for instance, positive workplace encounters of Polish migrants, compared to those of Roma workers, are probably the result of them being in a relatively advanced position vis-à-vis the darker skinned Roma who are positioned as a more 'visible minority'. On the other hand, large and

uncontrolled numbers of A8 migrants entering the country may cause British workers' hostility towards them due to perceived increased competition in the labour market or their negative impact on wage levels, in particular at the current time of economic crisis. The same would also apply to relationships among migrants themselves, who being in most cases economic migrants, compete with each other in local labour markets. This would confirm realistic group conflict theory, which states that inter-group resentment is a consequence of competition for scarce resources where members of both groups perceive themselves under threat from each other. In the case of migrant and home country workers, for instance, perhaps an employer's use of migrant agency labour best encapsulates the mutual antipathy that can arise between these two groups of workers. The former may begrudge the latter's superior terms and conditions whilst the latter may resent their perceived 'rate-busting' behaviour and its contribution to their growing sense of insecurity. Finally, it is expected that in a workplace context in which individuals' choices can be influenced by a number of external factors, such as presence of a large number of compatriots as well as employers' or trade unions' practices and policies, it seems to be particularly difficult to decide on how the workplace relationships are developed and what actually matters in shaping workers' choices, making the acculturation process even more complex and worthy of research.

2.4.3   *The context*

As previously claimed by Bourhis et al. (1997), the acculturation context affects the native society as much as the migrants but it can be argued that the pressures and demands are not equal. Therefore, attitudes preferred and strategies adopted vary in many respects. The more powerful the host society, the fewer compromises and changes its members are likely to make in their relationships with migrants. Conversely, the less powerful the immigrant group, the greater effort its members will have to make to adapt. The relations of power however might alter when the number of migrants starts to outnumber the indigenous people in places such as a workplace. Then, it could be the indigenous group that faces more changes and needs to compromise more in order to fit in. Either way both groups are affected by the acculturation *context* and both groups will have to modify their own systems to some

extent as a result of the interaction. Each person will have to make their own cultural synthesis, taking and/or rejecting some elements of both cultures, but this will take place in a certain context with all its corresponding ideologies, mainstream discourse, prejudice and relations of power.

Moreover, migrants do not acculturate into a society that is fixed and given, but rather one that is fluid and subject to changes brought about by the presence of migrant groups. In the context of recent migration into the UK, the changes seem to be even greater due to the unprecedented scale and speed of the migration flow. This suggests that the process of acculturation responds to a context that is subject to constant dynamism and change. Consequently, migrants and indigenous members' original attitudes and strategies may change in different directions over time as they gain more experience of each other and acquire more knowledge, depending on the positive or negative evaluation of these new circumstances (Navas et al. 2005). Moreover, the unstable economic situation and different ruling political parties in the country could be expected to alter people's attitudes with particular ease. These attitudes are possibly driven by the growing perceptions of uncontrolled migration inflows that are seen as disadvantageous by indigenous people. Consequently, it seems to be reasonable to suggest that the lack of consideration for this growing dynamism of the acculturation process may constitute one of the limitations of the existing body of knowledge.

2.5   Perceived limitations of the available models

The above models reveal important aspects of the divisions between public and private domains, real and ideal situations, and the ways that these can change over time. However, they remain limited by their location in an overly cognitive framework and a positivist research paradigm. It can be argued that despite their sophistication, extant models reproduce overly static and de-contextualised accounts of acculturation. For instance, participants are methodologically fixed into a restricted number of mutually exclusive positions (e.g. they can either integrate or assimilate). That is because they typically answer Likert-scale questions about their cultural attitudes, practices, or identities, as well as questions about distress, life

satisfaction and other measures of adaptation. This method of using response-restricted questions enables a researcher to categorise individuals into one of four available options (assimilated, integrated, separated or marginalised). However, in reality people may find themselves in a number of different positions at the same time since their attitudes, perceptions and behaviours are not static but depend on circumstances and their situation. Moreover, these positions are supposed to point towards the same underlying attitudes within and across particular studies despite their taking place in completely different socio-historical settings (Bowskill et al. 2007), most particularly labour markets. It is assumed, for example, that the meaning of integration is stable and therefore it does not change regardless of the cultures in question, the topic, or the intent.

Furthermore, such models are seen to assert the individualistic nature of the processes involved, glossing over the socio-political construction of the meaning and value of acculturation. Assumptions that people of certain characteristics are likely to adopt certain options (e.g. perceived similarity between two groups increases the possibility of integration or assimilation strategies) ignores the potential influence of other factors, the context in which acculturation takes place and the dynamic nature of interpersonal relations. For instance, locating the desire for, or opposition to, integration in the minds of individuals risks reifying the construct and shutting down the ways in which social practices serve to privilege or denigrate particular strategies, as well as placing the burden of adjustment on those least able to bear it. To illustrate this point, Bhatia and Ram (2009) present stories of Indian migrants whose success and upward mobility allowed them to feel assimilated into American society. However, the 9/11 events made them more visible as non-white and foreign people and exposed them to acts of racism, alienation and fear. Their movement towards being integrated and welcomed was interrupted and they were forced to reanalyse their identities as assimilated citizens of America. This case seems to demonstrate that it is simplistic to assume that the burden of acculturation lies primarily with the individual.

Moreover, despite the welcome incorporation of context in Navas et al.'s (2005) model, the suggestion that different strategies might be adopted in a limited range of life domains (e.g. family, work, social relations) leaves the conception of context

somewhat static. It leaves largely unconsidered the idea that many aspects of human life are often inextricably intertwined making it difficult to separate one from another. Even addressing the importance of inter-group relations draws attention to comparisons between the classifications assumed to be held by majority and minority groups. In this way differences and distinctions are reified and the negotiation and contestation over acculturation remains unseen. Consequently, what becomes important is what strategies different groups adopt, thereby neglecting the significance of the process itself, in particular how individuals come to identify themselves and what factors shape their way towards or away from certain strategies on a day-to-day basis. This seems to be particularly important under the new migration circumstances where nothing appears to be fixed or final, mainly due to migrants' greater than ever mobility and freedom of choice in terms of where to go and for how long.

Finally, regardless of the context in which acculturation takes place, it is always assumed that the majority constitutes people of the host country making them the point of reference to migrants' adoption or rejection of the new culture. While this is probably the case in most situations that migrants face, there might be locations where migrants do not necessarily form the minority. In the literature on international migration the phenomenon of migrant-dominated environments where groups of migrants seclude themselves from indigenous societies and create their own communities and enclaves is well-known (e.g. Johnston et al. 2002; Logan et al. 2002). Also in the context of the new wave of migration into the UK, it is expected that in certain environments interactions with local people might be limited. It is due to the distinctive nature of migration that recent migrants often find themselves in places where they mostly deal with either compatriots or other migrant groups, unintentionally ending up with limited interactions with British people (Spencer et al. 2007). For instance, workplaces could be such environments where, due to perceived migrants' strong work ethic, high level of commitment and willingness to work hard for relatively lower wages, they are popular among British employers who employ them en masse, especially in sectors less popular among indigenous people, such as agriculture and manufacturing.

To summarise to this point, there seem to be certain aspects of the acculturation process that have received little attention so far. It could be argued that some of them, such as migrants' relatively unrestricted mobility, which has resulted in increased dynamism of the migration process, have only become relevant under the new situation of EU enlargement. Thus, since the problem of acculturation models that are too static has only just become more visible, the new conditions seem to have identified the need to revisit the existing frameworks. For me, the significant issue is therefore *how* migrants arrive at and live with their acculturation choices and constraints. In fact, this is a concern increasingly shared by others. Valery Chirkov (2009c), for instance, provides a summary of the critical points regarding modern acculturation models addressed by the authors of the special edition of the International Journal of Intercultural Relations (2009). Among other points of criticism, he lists problems with understanding the nature of the acculturation process and methodological problems of the acculturation studies, mainly pointing at the acculturation process being "unrealistically understood as individuals' rational choice among four fixed acculturation strategies" and researched as if it was happening in a contextual vacuum (Chirkov 2009c, p.178). One of the solutions offered by Chirkov was a return to more traditional methods, such as ethnography, which are more sensitive to important contextual and cultural variables.

2.6   **Ethnography in acculturation research**

All the contributors to a special edition of the International Journal of Intercultural Relations (2009), in various ways, point towards forms of thinking and researching that attempt to transcend the perceived limitations of concepts of acculturation offered by traditional models. To illustrate this point Chirkov (2009a, 2009b, 2009c) commends a return to the methods and conceptual frames of Thomas and Znaniecki (1918). Through such work Chirkov argues for studies that identify and illuminate the experiences and meanings of acculturative activity, in particular in interactions between migrants and "representatives of the host society" (2009a, p.102). This is because cross-cultural researchers overwhelmingly utilise standardised scales and questionnaires that are used on relatively large samples of immigrants to research a phenomenon that by its nature requires a different paradigm. To interpret and

understand the process of migrants' acculturation, contributors argue that researchers should be using a variety of qualitative methods such as forms of ethnography, participant observations (Bhatia and Ram 2009; Chirkov 2009a), language and linguistic analyses (Cresswell 2009), and narrative analysis which could all be prospective ways to study the dynamic of migrants' lives (Tardif-Williams and Fisher 2009). Thus they recognise the importance of language and its role "as an active, constructive, and meaning-producing means of organising people's lives and experiences" (Chirkov 2009c, p.178). A contemporary approach in this vein is offered by Bowskill et al.'s (2007) analytical discourse approach.

2.7   A discursive turn

Many claim that contemporary societies are mediated through discourse that is circulated around every society in a more intense manner than it was historically. That is because the changing nature of social life and recent transitions in the flows of information across societies has made it impossible to live life beyond discourse (Wetherell et al. 2001). The chosen discourse delivers the vocabulary, expressions and style needed to communicate and is seen to affect people's views on all things. This is because language, whether written or spoken, affects people's everyday lives as every day involves face-to-face communication with another human being, talks mediated by technology such as the telephone, fax machine or the internet, writing letters, reading newspapers, listening to the radio and so forth. Moreover, critical awareness of language, or so called self-consciousness about language, seems to be well-recognised in contemporary society. People are often disapproving of racist and sexist ways of using language, or the language used in advertising. Various anti-racist or feminist organisations' objectives are to critique and change language. This increasing critical awareness reflects the important changes that have been happening in the function of language in social life and illuminates the increasing importance of language in modern societies (Fairclough 2001).

According to Fairclough's (1992) approach, language is not a neutral phenomenon but it shapes and is shaped by society, thus neither language nor language use exist in a vacuum. This is viewed as a two-way relationship, that is, language changes

according to the context and situations are altered according to the language used. Underlying this approach is the view that discourse plays a role in the social construction of reality (Condor and Antaki 1997). Discourse does not merely describe things, it *does* things (Grant et al. 1998; Potter and Wetherell 1987). It is both socially constituted and socially constitutive as discourse produces objects of knowledge, social identities and relationships between people (Fairclough and Wodak 1997). Studying discourse is, then, a powerful way to reveal people's attitudes and perceptions but also to examine how their positions are shaped through language use in a particular context. Studies of discourse reveal how people engage in discursive activity to pursue their plans and projects and produce outcomes that are beneficial to them (Hardy et al. 1998). However, we cannot assume that such an agency is without limit because individuals produce and disseminate various forms of texts within a larger discursive context (Hardy and Phillips 1999). The discourses that include this context derive from struggles between different actors and the accumulation of the activities of many individuals (Phillips and Hardy 1997). Thus, workplace contexts consist of multiple and often fragmented discourses of migrants, indigenous workers, managers and trade union representatives. These contexts provide actors with choices and outcomes which might be beyond the control of single individuals, concerning the discourses on which they draw. Studying the discourses can not only reveal each others' position but also how they are mutually shaped.

Having said this, for Bowskill et al. the shortcomings of extant models are best overcome through a focus on discourse. They offer a perspective that shifts to:

> …examining the global patterns of acculturation discourses as they are *rhetorically* configured to accomplish a variety of action-orientated, micro-level social actions. The focus is on the ways that particular accounts of acculturation are constructed to achieve particular argumentative effects (2007, p.796).

By this means the action-oriented negotiation and deployment of acculturation discourses is revealed. Furthermore, Bowskill et al. supplement the micro-level construction of these interpretive resources with a concern for a macro-level analysis, which draws attention to power relations:

…attention to local level discursive practices occurs in tandem with concerns over the pervasiveness of particular repertoires and what might be gleaned from this regarding existing power structures and the 'taken for granted' (2007, p.796).

This approach presents a distinct challenge to the traditional typological approach outlined earlier. Through a focus on ordinary language and its effects it promises to deliver a fluid rather than a static conception of acculturation, allowing a close examination of the ways in which particular positions are accepted or contested. In this way positions are revealed as negotiated and reproduced rather than simply treated as preordained.

The power of Bowskill et al.'s approach is well illustrated through their study of the British print media's debate surrounding the issue of faith schooling in the UK. Their own analysis of press commentary illustrates the ways in which the banality of language serves to privilege integration as *the* optimal response to diversity, while simultaneously denigrating other positions. Indeed, the purpose of much research is to find evidence that integration is the most preferred and most adaptive option such that it can be recommended (e.g. Berry et al. 1977; Montreuil and Bourhis 2001; Williams and Berry 1998). This paradigm is typically followed with this kind of evidence:

> Acculturation strategies have been shown to have substantial relationships with positive adaptation: integration is usually the most successful; marginalization is the least; and assimilation and separation strategies are intermediate. This pattern has been found in virtually every study, and is present for all types of acculturating groups. Why this should be so, however, is not clear (Berry 1997: 24).

Moreover, many authors have speculated or provided evidence that some forms of acculturation are socially or psychologically positive, while others are problematic or even pathological (Rudmin 2003). According to Bowskill et al. (2007) the traditional models have a judgemental character pointing at integration as the right thing to do and portraying other positions as undesirable. However, they also illustrate how integration rhetoric often hides the reproduction of a more implicit assimilation.

Integration was often used synonymously with assimilative outcomes while assimilation itself was never directly alluded to. In Bowskill et al.'s example, Muslims who were expected to integrate were positioned as current 'outsiders' to the assumed 'in-group'. The 'expectation' however, served implicitly to position Muslims as subjects of simultaneously privileged mainstream requirements. In this fashion Muslims were pressured, insidiously, to conform to the 'moral good' of assimilation.

Drawing on the above, it might be assumed that migrant workers similarly find themselves being positioned as 'outsiders' and therefore pushed by broader forces within the workplace in one direction, presumably towards integration, as opposed to another, for example separation, because forms of integration may be positioned as 'the moral good'. What remains to be explored is how this process takes place but also whether these influences are in fact integrationist in nature or whether the dominant discourse actually endorses less problematic positions such as assimilation, as it was illustrated in Bowskill et al.'s example.

Apart from methodological implications, Bowskill et al.'s work offers a fluid perspective of acculturation and the ways in which individuals' positions are contested and/or accepted. It could be argued that the process has become even more fluid now because in a period of increasing globalisation, massive flows of transmigration and border crossings, acculturation becomes increasingly complex. For this reason, Hermans and Kempen (1998) claim that because migrants no longer move in a linear trajectory from culture A to culture B, we should think of acculturation and identity issues more as contested, mixing and moving. Moreover, it is believed that identity should not be defined as a fixed and absolute essence but as a creation of history, discourse and power. For these reasons, researchers such as Bhatia and Ram (2009) and Weinreich (2009) argue that the dynamics of various identities of acculturating individuals should be at the core of understanding the acculturation process. This however takes place in a certain context – in this case a British workplace, but also in a broader perspective of increased mobility among today's migrants.

In fact, the context itself presents contemporary migrants with new options available to them. Unlike previous generations, today's migrants are relatively unrestricted in their decisions in terms of where, how and for how long to emigrate. The EU enlargement gave contemporary CEE migration a characteristic distinguishing it from the previous waves – it has been denationalised of its political and legal frameworks. Consequently, an internally borderless Europe has emerged, characterised by increasingly mobile citizens, and as Favell (2003, p.411) argues: "what is appealing about the EU as a context, is the fact that it offers a set of rights and entitlements to European citizens that enable individuals themselves – not corporations – to make the choices about moving." Such a situation places a burden of responsibility on an individual person one more time and somehow ignores the fact that labour migration is at the same time determined by the receiving nation states' and employers' needs and interests. To understand the complexities of the new context and recognise the fluidity and dynamism of the emerging new migratory situations, the sections that follow offer some conceptual resources - concepts of transnationalism and new mobilities.

2.8 Transnationalism and new mobilities

Following the argument of acculturation theories being overly static, King (2002) points at often meaningless attempts of 'modelling' or 'explaining' migrant behaviour by reference to economic or psychological variables which seem to have scant linkage with the reality of the migrant experience in the specific context in which they are being studied. For instance, assumptions that all migrants are poor, uneducated, uprooted, marginal and desperate, when applied to European (and other) migrations today, do not correspond to reality. These assumptions are rooted in established forms of international migration which have historically been very important (refugee migrations post-World Wars, post-war guest-worker migration from the Mediterranean to northwest Europe, nineteenth-century settler migrations from Europe to the Americas) and have for too long shaped researchers' thinking about how migration is conceptualised and theorised (King 2002). In an attempt to move beyond the paucity of these assumptions an increasing number of researchers

have drawn upon the concepts of transnationalism and new mobilities, and the central ideas of these are discussed below.

2.8.1 *Transnationalism*

Today humans are said to continually create and recreate boundaries, moving, trading and communicating across them, thus making fluidity and change a part of all human social formations and processes. Additionally, the intensification of international labour and economic markets, the globalisation of the media and economies (Harvey 1990) resulting from the transportation and communication advancement, have made transnational back-and-forth travel and communication even quicker, easier and more readily available (Foner 2000; Vertovec 2004). The impact of new systems of transport and communications as experienced by the individual has made the pace of life faster.

Hence, as argued by Schiller et al. (1992), earlier conceptions of migration no longer suffice. In the face of recent and observable European-scale migrant behaviours, an older paradigm of migration and integration has become somewhat inadequate for explaining the process. It seems that new times and new socio-economic circumstances require a new theoretical paradigm. For that reason, during the last decade, the notion of "transnationalism" has entered migration researchers' lexicon to describe "the process by which immigrants build social fields that link together their country of origin and their country of settlement" (Basch et al. 1994, p.27). Since its 'launch' in the 1990s (Glick Schiller et al. 1992) the term 'transnationalism' has been extensively employed in migration scholarship and has acquired numerous meanings and generated considerable debate (e.g. Kivisto 2001; Portes 2003; Vertovec 2001). In general, however, it describes a condition in which, despite great distances and notwithstanding the presence of international borders, laws and regulations, certain kinds of relationships have been globally intensified. Transnationalism is therefore an aspect of globalisation and as such many scholars of this concept have been particularly interested in the impact of transnational ties on state borders, citizenship and migrant integration. However, it is only recent transnational literature that claims to see trans-border ties which were invisible to the

assimilationist researchers of earlier generations (Glick Schiller 2003; Portes 2003; Smith 2005). Current interest in transnationalism often focuses on national and ethnic identities where special emphasis is placed on the role of ethnicity and national belonging in the lives of migrants.

Dual or multiple identifications, for instance, are said to result in increasing transnational ties whereby individuals remain 'home away from home', 'both here and there' or perhaps even, 'British and something else'. For Schiller et al. (1992, p.11) "while some migrants identify more with one society than the other, the majority seem to maintain several identities that link them simultaneously to more than one nation." This is supposedly explained by people's awareness of multi-locality which stimulates the desire to connect oneself with others, both 'here' and 'there' who share the same 'routes' and 'roots' (e.g. Gilroy 1993). Indeed, this phenomenon is increasingly reflected in migrants' being able to maintain or gain access to health and welfare benefits, property rights, voting rights, or citizenship in more than one country (around half the world's countries recognise dual citizenship or dual nationality). For that reason, Vertovec (1999) argues that 'transnationalism' provides an umbrella concept for some of the most globally transformative processes, developments and activities of our time.

Implicitly, introducing this new concept suggests an existing theoretical framework that is insufficient for describing these new types of migratory experience. Many argue however that transnational migration is not a new phenomenon and point for instance at the cross-border engagements of "old" immigrants coming to the United States in the Industrial and Progressive eras (Chan 2006; Foner 2000; Morawska 2004). It has been recognised that many predecessors of contemporary migrants maintained a variety of ties to their home countries while they became incorporated into the countries where they settled. Indeed, many past migrants perceived their sojourns as temporary and stayed tightly connected to their home countries by sending money and goods to friends and relatives in the homeland, being a source of information and support for those contemplating migration and wishing to come back after obtaining enough capital to make the return economically successful (Deconde 1992; Lyman 1974). Thus, neither return nor circulatory or seasonal migration is a new phenomenon (Daniels 1990). Consequently, rather than claim that earlier waves

of migrants lacked a desire to be involved in homeland issues, Portes et al.'s argument is that what makes current migrants' situation different is the improved communication channels and transportation systems that make it possible to act more readily, quickly and decisively on that desire:

> While back and forth movements by immigrants have always existed, they have not acquired until recently the critical mass and complexity necessary to speak of an emergent social field. This field is composed of a growing number of persons who live dual lives: speaking two languages, having homes in two countries, and making a living through continuous regular contacts across national borders (Portes et al. 1999, p.217).

To illustrate the point in relation to Poles' migration to the UK, the number of flight links between these two countries could be used. In the days of visas and limited air routes, the journey from Poland to the UK required a Polish passport, a UK visa, and usually also travel between Warsaw and London, the capital cities and symbols of a nation-state. Today, it is simply necessary to take one's identity card and drive from Katowice to Bournemouth, or fly from Wroclaw to Birmingham. In 2003 for instance, only three UK airports served Poland: Gatwick, Heathrow and Manchester, and passengers could only fly to and from Krakow and Warsaw. However in 2008, 22 UK airports were already linked to 10 airports in Poland. Many of the flights are with low-cost airlines, meaning that Polish migrants can travel to and from the UK with relative ease. Consequently, some 10 million people flew between the UK and the A8 and A2 countries in 2007, which was a three-fold increase in traffic since pre-enlargement (Pollard et al. 2008). This is on top of the growth in alternative forms of cross-border travel within an enlarged EU such as rail, ferry and car. According to the IPPR researchers this reflects an increase in migration, tourism and trade in both directions. Since travel is easy within the European Union and it consists of a single labour market for all its citizens (except from those subject to transitional arrangements), it makes sense to understand migration within the EU as internal rather than international.

According to Portes (1998, p.14) transnational activities are cumulative in character and 'while the original wave of these activities may be economic and their initiators

can be properly labelled transnational entrepreneurs, subsequent activities encompass political, social, and cultural pursuits as well'. Accordingly, migrants simply focus on sending remittances back to their families, but, in time, become involved in other non-economic activities, such as voting in presidential elections that still connects them to the home country. In fact, politics is a good example of transnational activity because the relations between migrants, home country politics and politicians have always been dynamic. A considerable amount of political activity is now undertaken transnationally where politicians look for support in their political campaigns abroad. This is something observed among Polish migrants who become involved in the politics of homeland by actively participating in elections. In the run up to recent elections, Polish politicians have travelled to the UK to campaign for migrants' votes because, thanks to the massive inflow of Polish migrants, Great Britain has been identified as a crucial Polish 'constituency'. This is because, unlike past migrations, recent Polish migrants who live and work in the UK are perceived by the Polish government as nationals with an ability to affect the political situation in their homeland, whether directly or by influencing friends and relatives who have remained in the country. Thus, today's migrants are seen as being useful politically, economically and sometimes even culturally and rather than condemn their decision to exit, politicians instead work to create relationships with migrants that are beneficial to the homeland. . The fact that Polish politicians do not launch campaigns in the USA for instance, where there are also some large and long-established Polish communities, might suggest that in the case of previous generations of migrants, there is no such continuity of social relationships across national borders. Indeed, during the last presidential elections in Poland, Polish migrants often made it explicit that despite living in the UK they still felt connected and responsible for the future of their home country and this is why they made an effort to vote. When asked about reasons for their active participation in the selection of the new president, the following responses were amongst the most common:

"This is my obligation and I hope that I will make the right choice."

"I want to have some influence on what's going to happen in the future." (Mojawyspa.co.uk 2010).

According to the Polish portal, 46,000 Polish citizens living in the UK registered to vote and the voter turnout was between 85% and 86% (Onet.eu 2010). Whilst this shows Poles' high sense of patriotism and belonging it could equally signal their interest in the future of the country and an intention to resettle eventually. If nothing else this example simply confirms the prevalence of this more dynamic new mobility enjoyed by EU citizens contemplating cross-border migration.

Another example of transnational activity in the context of Polish migration into the UK relates to trade unions' actions. Apart from special Polish-language union sections (the first established in Southampton) that have been developing as a result of this migration, the level of cross-border linkages and cooperation between the Trade Union Congress and Polish Trade Unions such as Solidarnosc is unprecedented, compared to other migratory inflows. Finally, when it comes to more everyday practices, Poles in the UK engage in a range of transnational activities that keep them close to home while physically being away from it; these include frequent communication with family and friends in Poland, speaking Polish at home, attending Polish mass, watching Polish television and eating Polish food (White 2011).

Transnational migrants are therefore those who are engaged in activities designed to define and improve their position in the host country, while simultaneously seeking to remain embedded in a participatory way in the everyday affairs of the home country (Kivisto 2001). Thus, because of the complexity and dynamism of everyday experiences that are designed to both maintain the home links and develop new ones with the host country, transnationalism seems to offer a refusal of fixity as it is often associated with fluidity of constructed styles, social institutions and everyday practices (Vertovec 1999). In this context Urry (2000) perceives these migrants as being among many "fluids" including information and goods that demonstrate "no clear point of departure or arrival, just de-territorialized movement or mobility" (p.194).

This raises a crucial issue for us. Is it now the case that modern economic migration creates a different mind-set for those moving from one part of Europe to another? In short, if the decision to migrate is no longer as final and irreversible as has

traditionally proved to be the case, then with what impact does this conceptual change from 'migration' to 'mobility' have on settlement, as opposed to return or resettlement decisions? The implications emanating from new wave migration studies now become highly significant for us. In shifting the analytical perspective away from traditional 'migrant' behaviours towards these newer 'mobility' ones requires us to change the way we debate both current and future integration and assimilation of A8 migrants. Feasibly, making sense of findings from my own study obliges us to bring these powerful debates to centre stage so as to more accurately identify the true nature of modern economic migration and the distinctive challenges and dilemmas compared to the past. For this to happen, we first need to explore a little more fully what is meant by 'mobility' in contrast to 'migration'. This we now do.

2.8.2 *New mobilities*

The above example of the increasing number of flight links between Poland and the UK also supports the idea of changing mobility patterns, in particular in Europe. Sheller and Urry (2006) introduce the idea of a 'new mobilities paradigm' by starting with the point that the whole world is currently on the move. They enumerate "asylum seekers, international students, terrorists, members of diasporas, holidaymakers, business people, sports stars, refugees, backpackers, commuters, the early-retired, young mobile professionals, prostitutes, armed forces" and many others who fill the world's airports, trains, buses and ships. The scale of this travelling is enormous if we just look at the number of world-wide air passengers which have reached four million each day. There are new places and technologies that enhance the mobility of some people and heighten the immobility of others, especially as they cross the borders in this re-dividing world. In Europe, for instance, borders are coming down, and a new East-West migration system is being established on the continent. Moreover, because of EU enlargement, European migration is probably the most dramatically evolving and changing context of migration in the developed world. In fact, it is argued that East European migrants are not immigrants anymore but regional 'free movers' who are more likely to engage in temporary circular and transnational mobility rather than long-term permanent immigration.

Although this 'new mobilities' paradigm is more than just novelty, we should also note from the outset that the speed and intensity of current migrant flows are often greater than those previously observed (Sheller and Urry 2006). For instance, Cook et al. (2010) argue that considerable numbers of new migrants exhibit different mobility characteristics to the significant past waves of migrants. According to Favell (2007), new mobilities are distinctly characteristic of new migrants such as Poles and other members of transnational communities who are not required to produce visa or passport documentation prior in order to travel within the European Union. This also means that there is little pressure on them to commit to changing their identity through becoming citizens of the receiving country. Nor do they necessarily define themselves as being of migrant status, particularly when they do not even show up as official residents in the countries to which they move. Indeed, official detailed records of their entry, exit and distribution may be found wanting, depending on the member state. In short, they enjoy lives that are functionally organised across a complicated European space that corresponds to no clear-cut national or cultural demarcation. Thus, new ways of interacting and communicating between 'home and abroad' enable them to maintain a simultaneous presence in both country of origin and country of choice.

With everything being on the move, however, it is not to claim that some single system of mobile power has replaced nation-state sovereignty. It would be too simplistic to declare that there is now some kind of 'smooth world' which is deterritorialised and borderless, with no centre of power or fixed barriers and boundaries (Hardt and Negri 2000, p.136). What the new mobilities paradigm does is to go beyond the existing 'a-mobile' science and challenge sedentarist theories present in many studies in geography, sociology and anthropology (Sheller and Urry 2006). The concept of new mobilities moves away from sedentary assumptions and believes in treating stability, meaning and place as normal, for example that citizens will have fixed dwellings, addresses and nationalities (Cresswell and Hoskins 2006). In a sense this is nothing new in the studies of migration, diasporas, and transnational citizenship which also offer critiques of the bounded and static categories of nation, ethnicity, community, place and state (e.g. Basch et al. 1994; Ong 1999; Van Der Veer 1995). These works highlight disjunction, dislocation and displacement as

widespread conditions of migrant subjectivity in today's world. At the same time, they also draw attention to acts of 'homing' (Fortier 2000) and 'regrounding'(Ahmed et al. 2003) which indicate the complex interrelation between travel and dwelling, home and not-home. It will be interesting to see whether the narrative discourse emanating out of my own ethnographic study confirms this lack of fixity and stability in contemporary migrants' experiences and whether this continues to be a direct by-product of newer mobilities prevailing over traditional forms of migration.

Having signposted the emergence of a novel type of migratory experience pertaining to Europe, this research is now in line with Portes et al.'s (1999) point that received versions of acculturation theory need revisiting so that newer ways of adapting to receiving countries can be explained. This is because thinking through what a contemporary 'migration experience' has come to mean requires us to draw on theories of 'liquid modernity' (Bauman 2000). This means that research is now to be redirected away from static structures of the modern world and static categories of nation, ethnicity and community. Henceforth, notions of identity and home are no longer fixed and given that notions of 'integration' or 'assimilation' are no longer to be regarded in such black or white terms, they are subject to constant challenge, review and refinement.

To achieve the above, I wish to suggest an alternative to existing models of the acculturation process which entails moving away from acculturation outcomes and towards examining the very process itself. By this means, I mean to shed some light on the way that complex decisions over settlement-versus-return are taken against a backdrop of contemporary mobility that only adds to the indeterminacy of the outcome. Rather than simply rejecting preceding theories of migrants' adaptation, I wish to build on them while offering both needed correctives and expansions. This is also in response to Favell's (2007) call to think outside of the box in our attempts to renew the conceptual tools with which we think of and recognise migration. Looking at the process of fitting in and the dynamism of everyday employment relations is a commitment to contemporary 'science' that no longer sees anything "as static, fixed and given" (Rifkin 2000, p.192). Thus, the questions that social science should also be asking do not only relate to issues of globalisation and a weakening of ties

between culture and place but equally to what else needs to be addressed as part and parcel of any research agenda into the 'new migrant' experience.

2.8.3 *The workplace*

Due to the economic nature of new-wave migration considerable attention also needs to be given to the field of employment relations. A key dynamic behind much migration lies in the desire to actively participate in the economy of the receiving country. For most, this results in their entry into the world of job markets and paid employment of the receiving economy and exit from that of their home country. Thus, the work, its organisation and reward become central to migrant workers' interests and remains at the forefront of their thinking when it comes to interpreting their daily experience of new migration or geographical mobility. What they experience in the workplace becomes crucial in determining the degree of integration and assimilation that subsequently occurs. The two are inexorably entwined with each other, the more so when a serious driver behind much mobility remains the economic motives for choosing to leave one's country of origin in the first place. However, the central locus of this economic activity is the workplace and both the economic and social relationships that go hand in hand. Crucially, these relationships may be judged either 'good' or 'bad' from a migrant worker perspective such that they begin to colour an individual's evaluation of the whole 'migrant experience'. How fairly or otherwise migrant workers perceive themselves to be treated in the workplace can be just as significant for them, if not more so, as the remittances sent home or the career opportunities made available to them in the receiving country's labour markets. In summary, relationships between migrant workers, their managers and other co-workers become an important component of this process of deciding whether to settle down in the receiving country, move on to another country or resettle back home.

Moreover, the transformation of production processes as well as the labour market have been instrumental in changing perceptions of labour's role in the workplace (Fogarty and Brooks 1986, Lovering 1990), with the growth of part-time, temporary and other 'non-standard' forms of employment being particularly associated with this

change. Hence, co-worker relations are increasingly important in the contemporary world of work because of the movement towards flexible production and the increasing diversification of the labour force. Understanding changing co-worker relations in the workplace, where indigenous workers are not necessarily the majority, gives impetus to projects that reanalyse workplaces and employment relations. From this viewpoint, conceptual and measurement models need to be updated and expanded to meet these demands and to adequately understand the changes that are occurring in the contemporary workplace. Models and methods are needed that are capable of understanding the components, causes and consequences of co-worker relations in the workplace of the new millennium (Hodson 2008). Having said that, however, one could argue that not everything is progressing rapidly and there are certain elements that remain constant or at least present some sort of continuation of the past. In the manufacturing environment Fordist modes of production or forms of workplace resistance could play such a role. It becomes even more pertinent given that the site of this research (a food processing plant) can be characterised as one that conforms to an older type of factory – one founded on the routinisation of work as typically depicted from the past. Some argue (e.g. Thompson and Ackroyd 1995) that forms of resistance, misbehaviour, and dissent continue to be of relevance and have not gone away with the decline of trade unions, organised industrial actions or the introduction of new technologies and new working practices. The second part of this chapter therefore starts with a revision of the existing research on new migrants' employment and is followed by a discussion of some of the traditional and well-known aspects of the employment relations that seem to resist the new times and continue shaping workers' experiences. The question worth asking is whether the contemporary British workplace is going be a significantly different place under the new mobilities paradigm. As Bolton and Houlihan (2009) argue, while the distribution, technologies and locations of work may be changing, the nature of work that is to be done in our world remains largely unchanged. An argument could therefore be offered that despite changing structures of the workforce and workplaces, certain processes will remain unaffected.

Two such examples come to mind that have recently been highlighted as being highly relevant when it comes to employers introducing significant numbers of migrant workers to work sites. First is the presumption that tensions and conflicts

arise between migrant and home co-workers over such flash points as job and grade allocations, overtime working, rate-busting, pay discrepancies, training and promotion. This begs the question as to whether such tensions play their part in defining the employment relationship at the site of my own study. Second, an equally commonplace observation is the growing use of agency-working in factory and manufacturing settings and the tensions that arise within a workforce on dual terms and conditions of employment. Resentments are presumed to emerge between those agency workers on less secure terms who feel mistreated relative to those in more secure employment, especially if the agency workers are also migrant workers. Again, to what extent is it the case in my own work? If nothing else, such issues justify the case for homing in on the working lives led by such migrant workers, the relationships they experience and on the sites where they are forged. To do this requires an overview of what recent research has uncovered.

2.9   A8 migrants' working life

Due to the economic nature of this migration, work has been dominant in most of the larger research reports on A8 migrants who have been defined principally as workers. They have moved to the UK to find work and as such, work is presented as central to their new lives. With employment statistics probably being the most accessible source of information on recent migrants, most of this type of research aims to analyse their employment by nationality, sector and region. New migrants' working experiences are studied by looking at the terms and conditions of their employment, in particular wage levels, investigating reasons for which employers use migrant workers and revealing the (mis)match between migrant jobs and skills (such as poor English language skills or non-recognition of qualifications gained overseas). These studies often recommend greater protection of A8 migrants due to the issues of their exploitation and mistreatment (e.g. Currie 2007; Drinkwater et al. 2006; Evans 2007; Fitzgerald 2006b, 2007; Gaine 2006; Pollard et al. 2008; Salt 2006; Sumption and Somerville 2010).

Hence, despite some strong evidence that A8 migrants generally see more improvement in working conditions and over time many of them manage to 'trade up' in their jobs finding better paid work, some studies report that compared to UK

citizens new migrants continue to face variable conditions, are more likely to be in temporary jobs, and are less protected with regard to working rights (Anderson et al. 2006). Several researchers have developed these findings by looking closely at different working experiences among migrants. Janta (2009), for instance, gives an insight into the exploitation faced by Polish migrants working in the hospitality sector and illustrates how online information fora are used by migrants to cope with emotional difficulties in their jobs and positions. Datta's (2009) work is slightly different and is focused on construction industry workers who face various negotiations of masculinity and ethnicity in their London workplaces. Another study with a gendered approach was carried out by Coyle (2007) on the status of Polish women in employment. Finally, research undertaken by Waite et al. (2008) complements studies that stress the importance of work to migrants' new lives by looking at their everyday experiences of work and how it connects them to local environments.

Recently, it has become evident that some researchers' interest is moving away from so called 'mapping' exercises towards more exploratory studies that aim to understand the dynamic processes within the UK labour market and promote cohesion through better employment relations. McKay's (2009) study of employers' use of migrant labour for instance, investigates the procedural and employment relations challenges surrounding the employment of migrant labour, with a particular focus on their impact on HR arrangements. The research highlights two opposing models of employment. On the one hand it shows that while formal policies may not have changed, there is evidence of changes in practice - with employers having adapted practices (relating to, for example, communications) and providing support outside the workplace. On the other hand, the 'distancing' of the employment relationship - in particular the growth of agency and sub-contracted work - allows for a greater use of flexible and short-term labour, with associated reduced job security and variable terms and conditions.

A study conducted by Tuckman and Harris (2009) complements the above report by considering the impact that employment of migrant workers has on HR and employer practices. In the three organisations studied, employers were found to have adopted

an inclusive approach to integrating migrant workers into their established workforces. Employers had come to reconsider their HR duties beyond the workplace - manifesting itself in a move towards a wide range of informal welfare support mechanisms.

At this point it could possibly be concluded that employment of migrant workers has presented new circumstances for the field of employment relations. This has added to the already changing environment in which employee-employer relations prevail and are shaped. Economic pressures from global competition, combined with pressures for companies to implement industrial benchmarking and work standards has also led to a historical shift in the ongoing struggle for shop-floor control of production workers in manufacturing. This, in turn, has led me to rehearse the debates between those who believe that workplaces have actually transformed into more advanced and employee-friendly environments and those who claim that workplaces are just as they always were - exploitative and nasty, particularly at the low-skill end of the spectrum where we anticipate a majority of new migrants would figure. Hence, by looking at some of the essential arguments around Labour Process Theory, as well as shop-floor control, resistance, power and hierarchies, the following section will try to examine how relevant the traditional concepts of employment relations are in today's world of work. The purpose of the following part of the study is to determine whether there is a fit or a clash between 'new migration' and 'contemporary organisations' and if so, to explore the potential outcomes of such a situation.

2.10 **The contemporary 'new - old' employment relationship**

It is claimed that work is both a social and economic reality. Quality of work and workplaces has implications for itself, for those who perform the work and for society as a whole because at the same time it defines the quality of manufactured goods and provided services; it marks the quality of our care and our livelihoods (Bolton and Houlihan 2009). Due to both material and subjective dimensions rooted in work, one could argue that studying work issues matters considerably to human lives. That is because in a market-based economy people need to sell their capacity to labour as a means to survival but it is also because work embraces the whole range of

people's other concerns such as esteem and disrespect, subordination and status, opportunity and cost, commitment and alienation. Indeed, Sayer (2005, p.41) calls work and workplaces 'fields of struggle where interests can both coincide and clash, and personhood is both attacked and maintained'. Work is so important because it is a fundamental requirement of humanity yet essentially it relies on factors that are external to the individual such as pay, security of employment and equality of opportunity.

With the introduction of new types of creative, technological and knowledge-led work there is a general understanding of a radical break from the past. However, while higher-skilled work is increasing in advanced economies (Ghose et al. 2008), Bolton and Houlihan (2009) argue that there is little recognition of the fact that while certain jobs, especially in manufacturing and information-processing, have moved from advanced to developing economies, a significant majority of 'routine' jobs remain. In fact, a significant proportion of empirical studies tell us that the anticipated radical change from old to new, from control to liberated and from structured to flexible has failed to materialise. Organisations are still demanding and bound by rules, often relying on a fundamental division of labour and rewards. Forms of control might be less perceptible, bound up in psychological contracts, but they are control nonetheless. Hence, it is argued in some quarters that despite some changes, there is limited evidence to support the idea of prevailing 'new' workplaces, with all their benefits of ongoing learning and development, successful teams, empowered employees, coaching managers and work-life balance. In reality, very little has changed as work is not reorganised and jobs are not redesigned. Talks about flexibility, instead of being a personal benefit or opportunity, serve employers as their freedom to hire and fire workers and employ them on a variety of contractual terms and conditions (Bolton and Houlihan 2009). Instead, there is rather strong evidence that too many businesses today are competing on the basis of low pay and low skills yet a continual drive for greater productivity and flexibility, which in effect places the burden on employees.

The above gently introduces the ongoing 'no change – all change' debate in industrial relations, which was ruptured by the publication of the 1990 Workplace Industrial Relations Survey (WIRS) (Millward et al. 1992). Substantial decline in

national, multi-employer bargaining, union recognition, membership density and industrial action combined with a rise in individual contracts and performance-related pay policies, were understood as the end of institutional industrial relations (Purcell 1993) and the beginning of Human Resource Management (Tuckman 1994). According to Dunn (1990) there is a trend towards a change in the 'root metaphor' deployed by HR managers' language away from 'trench war' (that is 'them and us') to something less conflictual. The decline of trade unions for instance, is synonymous with the disappearance of workplace recalcitrance and resistance. Nevertheless, it could be argued that while the metaphor is constantly evolving, it reflects managers' emotional investment in the HR ideal rather than what might actually be occurring in the workplace, especially the traditional ones (e.g. Mailly et al. 1989). And yet, it is believed that with the use of appropriate strategies and social and technological devices the employment relationship has been significantly transformed over the last ten years. Found mainly in managerialist writings, today's interpretations of the employee-employer relationship are rarely characterised by acts of misbehaviour of any kind. The disappearance of Taylorist and Fordist forms of direct control and direction and the consequentlial forms of overt conflict, is now understood in terms of the disappearance of confrontational politics in the workplace (Thompson and Ackroyd 1995). Consequently, some make a strong claim that resistance has been eradicated by the success of new management practices (Delbridge et al. 1992, Barker 1993). On the other hand however, it might be the case that the control techniques have become so subtle that employee ignorance or lack of understanding is counterpoised to "the increasing knowledge-ability of organisations" (Dandeker 1990, p.197). It has been pointed out that companies shape and monitor their employees' behaviour through combinations of empowerment, workforce engagement and dependence (Grugulis et al. 2000, Smith and Tabak 2009). Or, in many cases, surveillance simply displaces control which would only suggest that little has changed in the workplace except the new language that describes the old realities.

Ironically, despite the technological developments and increasing recognition of good human resource management practices, today's workplaces do not necessarily provide 'decent work'. In increasingly aggressive economies companies struggle to harness and direct their efforts to compete and face a few real choices. This is a

recipe for increasingly desperate measures of control rather than empowerment. As a result workplaces are experiencing a decline in trade union influence and voice mechanisms, coupled with pay inequalities, work insecurity and intensity (Kelly 2005). Indeed, the absence of strong employee-side control mechanisms leaves workers increasingly vulnerable to work intensification and flexibilisation, and the tariffs they pay to support the new economy (Bolton and Houlihan 2009). Consequently, in the contemporary world of work certain common themes have started to emerge in both advanced and developing economies as people are increasingly feeling under pressure, more stressed, working more intensively and 'clocking in' for more hours than in the recent past (e.g. Coats 2007; Green 2006).

This is the reality captured by surveys on the experiences of those in formal employment. Very often however, experiences of those who are trapped in the informal economy, who are paid less than the minimum wage and are deprived of employment rights, are difficult to access due to the invisibility of these workers. Due to new political arrangements and rising new mobility patterns, experiences of many European migrants are far removed from those faced by, for example, the UK's Morecambe Bay Cockle Pickers. Despite the fact that they are no longer an invisible group of workers and their massive presence in British workplaces is significant, relatively little is known about the realities of the increasingly multicultural workplaces that emerge these days. We need to hear from new migrants speaking about their experiences, hopes and intentions and from workplaces defined by their multiculturalism. How they struggle to claim some form of control over the increasingly tight spaces they occupy is an area of this study's interest. Meanwhile, however, it is worth looking at some key issues from a traditional industrial relations perspective to provide grounds for further analysis of new migrants' employment relations. To evaluate the extent to which new migrants' working lives are the same and/or distinctive from those experienced by their predecessors, there is a need to review some long-established employment relations research as a guide and point of reference. This is because questions that arise in this study might challenge what the conventional literature suggests happens in many factories. Do these same notions of conflict, resistance, control and power in traditional factory environments still apply to this research site with a significantly different type of workforce composition that is young, educated, mobile and migrant?

2.10.1 *Conflict and consent, power and control*

It is believed that production is not merely seen as a technical transformation of inputs into outputs but it is also a social activity in which employers attempt to impose obligations on workers to ensure that they carry out their duties, while workers behave opportunistically, that is they try to avoid these obligations when they can (Edwards 1990). Still, an importance needs to be given to the fact that management-worker exchanges are complex and the worker-manager transaction is not to be understood in purely economic terms.

The labour contract and consequently labour relations, involve the creation of co-operation and conflict. That is because both managers and workers engage in a set of social relations, each aiming to secure many various ends. For that reason it is argued that conflict is endemic in organisations. Those who have been concerned with efficiency and productivity, for instance, have frequently located the source of conflict in workers' adherence to a "lower social code" and their failure to comprehend the "economic logic" of management (Mayo 1933, p.116). Others have suggested that conflict stems from the lack of integration of worker and organisation (e.g. Argyris 1964). Some claim that conflict is not inherent or inevitable but reflects some irrationality – human, technical, or environmental – that is not a necessary feature of capitalism (e.g. Crozier 1964). Contrary to this, Bowles (1985) argues that conflict is unavoidable but it arises not because workers are opportunists but because capitalists exploit them.

Labour Process Theory
According to the Labour Process theorists (e.g. Braverman 1974; Burawoy 1979) in a capitalist system it is necessary for companies to continually find ways to maximise profits. This forces companies to increase productivity by developing methods that capture their workers' 'extra effort'. In such a system, the main role of a supervisor is to get as much work out of each individual as possible whereas subordinates seek to exercise some autonomy and control over their work. As this struggle ensues between management and labour, one can see the conflict that emerges on the shop

floor between profit maximisation and workers' desire to control how their time is spent. Nevertheless, while a company's goal is to increase the pace and productivity of each worker, it is argued that employers can secure effort from workers but doing so is costly. Sanctions are needed to ensure that work is performed, two key ones being the threat of job loss and direct supervision.

On the other hand, however, the employment relationship is not just about getting work out of unwilling workers. As Burawoy (1979) argues, workers often work eagerly and the question that should be asked here is why they work as hard as they do when overt means of extracting effort are absent. An answer is provided by Cressey and MacInnes (1980) who believe that there is a double balance of conflict and co-operation: employers have to control workers while also releasing their creativity; and workers have interests in resisting their own subordination although also needing to co-operate with employers because they rely on them for their livelihoods. Fantasia (1988), for instance, addressed the issue of solidarity in workplace struggles, arguing not that workers had a true consciousness but that the ways in which people behave can be explained in terms of their material conditions and the ways in which they give meaning to these conditions.

Similarly, labour process theorists talk about the existence of incipient, structured antagonism between management and labour within capitalist organisations (Burawoy 1979, Edwards 1986). Because of the competitive pressures that require capital to continually transform the conditions of work and because of the control imperative established by the agency relationship of managers to employers, superiors find it difficult to perform their obligations towards subordinates well enough. Hence, it is argued that there is a contradictory nature of capitalist employment relations in that they are built upon both conflicting interests and interdependence between labour and management (Cressey and MacInnes 1980). In view of that, labour process writers explain how managerial control is naturally at odds in its attempts to treat employees as both disposable and dependable labour (Hyman 1987). Normally, managers seek to utilise employee creativity and commitment while limiting this very same worker's discretion because it might be applied in ways considered unacceptable. These conflicting managerial practices aim to create consent while also exercising coercion (Burawoy 1979).

Agency

However, an explanation can also be given using ideas of structure and agency which form an enduring core debate in sociology but also play an important role in the field of industrial relations. The extent to which workplace actors are free and independent to act and make strategic choices, or constrained by factors such as class, culture or ethnicity, might serve as justification for certain behaviours, including lack of opportunism. For instance, Edwards (1989) criticises some radical models' assumptions that workers' consent is generated within the labour contract and the worker comes to work innocent of prior habits. They treat the labour contract in a cultural vacuum and direct attention away from the real-world in which consent to authority is generated and reproduced in society at large. Hence, various aspects of work behaviour might reflect norms learned outside the workplace. These include for instance, a powerful ideology that one's pay is private; a belief in hard work, reflecting pride in one's work as a service to the customer; and an acceptance of authority figures as natural in work relations. An explanation of the limited extent of opportunism among workers would have to relate to their beliefs before entering the workplace. The labour contract is embedded in a larger social world and assumptions within that world constrain the freedom with which workers engage in opportunism (Edwards 1990).

Management behaviour

Moreover, employees' outcomes are often regarded as individual characteristics leading to higher performance (e.g. Mathieu and Zajac 1990; Williams and Anderson 1990). This approach also ignores the fact that behaviour is embedded in a context and is often based on interaction, that is, behaviour is not independent of to whom it is directed and how that target person (or persons) reacts. Studying employees' outcomes thus makes it necessary to examine the context of the respective behaviour as well as the target persons and their reaction. Employees' outcomes are in fact results of the relationships employees have with other people inside and outside the organisation. Hence, employees are cooperative (or not) not in general but to an individual entity, for instance the supervisor, the organisation or their co-workers (Sanders and Schyns 2006). Hence, it could be argued by some that resistance is not so much intrinsic to capitalist employment relations as reactive to particular

management behaviour and therefore the role of management competencies is so significant.

The first normative obligation of management is to maintain an effective and coherent organisation of production, including co-ordination of productive activities, maintenance of the facilities and technology, communication and leadership. A coherent workplace is essential for the maintenance of management legitimacy and a 'mandate to manage' (Elger and Smith 1998). Also, employees experience a greater sense of predictability and security in an environment that is stable, reliable and lacking in chronic uncertainty and confusion (Hodson 2008). Maintaining the foundations of a productive workplace is vital because it creates an area of shared interests between management and employees (Beynon et al. 2002; Edwards et al. 1998). Thus, management competence is essential for creating a shared work identity as part of a collective assignment involving common goals, values, rules and meanings (Barnard 1950).

A second normative obligation of the management is to respect workers' interests and rights which includes the provision of stable and secure employment (Edwards et al. 1998), adequate pay and benefits (Fernie and Metcalf 1995) and opportunities for training and development (Elger and Smith 1998). Supportive human relations practices have been found to be important factors in organisational success, improved workplace climates and reduced staff turnover (Bartel and Saavedra 2000). Unfortunately, highly destructive supervisory abuse is widespread in workplaces and often involves treating workers in a less than respectful manner (Mouly and Sankaran 1997). This superior-subordinate conflict is fairly common in contemporary workplaces because of management's struggle to fulfil the above normative obligations. And because meaningful work is seen as critical for dignity and fulfilment, to achieve it a key worker interest is power: the ability to both control the physical and social environment but also influence the decisions which are and are not taken by others (Hyman 1975).

Frontier of control
As each party seeks to exert their influence over the formal and informal aspects of the employment relationship, the outcome is a constantly changing 'frontier of

control' (Goodrich 1920, 1975). Goodrich's classic study of workshop politics showed how workers countered managerial power by extending their own 'frontiers of control' with respect to organisation of work, changes in technology, and methods of payment. Demands for workers' control were an extension of the degree of job control already exercised. These days it is claimed that today's employers have pushed the 'frontier of control' back in terms of reducing workers' control and increasing their own control of the organisation of work and employment (e.g. Gall 2008). Technology, availability of alternative sources for supply of goods and services, relatively higher levels of unemployment, and the weak position of trade unions all seem to hinder workers' ability to influence their employment relations. On the other hand however, in a workplace like this research site, which is a plant that is highly labour-intensive, operating at high pace 24/7 due to the nature of manufactured goods, has strong competition in the market and high demands on the buyers' side, workers should theoretically be capable of pushing the 'frontier of control' back. This is because workers' power is derived mainly from their ability to disrupt the production, distribution and exchange of goods and services (Batstone 1988) and doing so in the researched plant would significantly weaken the employer's position in the market. Nevertheless, the starting point is always an acknowledgement that workers must be dissatisfied with conditions of work, that is, have grievances which they wish to have resolved. Lack of such grievances or the presence of a large number of migrant workers in the local market, combined with a weak sense of solidarity among diversified groups of workers, could however potentially hinder the disruptive capacity of contemporary migrant workers.

Resistance

Labour Process supporters argue that no matter how asymmetrical power relations are, managerial control is never complete and employees always find ways to resist (Beynon 1975). In fact diverse managerial control systems provide openings for different types of workers' resistance and people become resourceful and creative in developing strategies that allow them some sort of control and in constructing meaning for the activities that management direct them to undertake. Where the direct control of supervisors is abusive, workers may resist by releasing their frustration through sabotage, theft or pilferage and through extensive collective support and solidarity, often with a leadership from trade unions.

Indeed, much of the research on worker insurgency has been union-centred, with the assumption that the resources, leadership, and influence that unions bring will boost workers' power and capacity to demand change through formal and informal collective channels (e.g. Ashenfelter and Johnson 1969; Edwards 1996; Rubin 1986). Empirical evidence suggests that unions have a positive and significant influence on worker mobilisation. Due to the organisational capacity of unions and the resources they provide (McCammon 1990, 1994), workers in highly organised industries are more likely to engage in militant action (Cornfield 1985, 1991). Rubin et al.'s (1983) study is notable in its attempt to understand the complex relationships between formal organisation and labour militancy. They concluded that labour organisation fostered worker insurgency during certain eras but also widespread strike activity increased labour organisation. Strikes were thus "both the causes and effects of mobilised resources" (Rubin et al. 1983, p.341).

Forms of individual resistance however are common on a more day-to-day basis. Where technical control prevails, resistance is likely to concentrate more on the duration of work and its intensity, for instance playing dumb, tardiness or absenteeism (Collinson and Ackroyd 2005). Traditionally, there are also many survival and coping strategies such as clowning (Ackroyd and Thompson 1999), cynicism over management (Taylor and Bain 2003), distancing (Collinson 1994), and gossiping (Noon and Delbridge 1993) that according to Noon and Blyton (2007) serve workers to get through the working day and survive the boredom, tedium, monotony, drudgery and powerlessness that characterises many jobs. Even today:

> With more extensive forms of technological and behavioural monitoring within organisations, employees may well need to find new coping strategies and new ways of 'misbehaving' and resisting these disciplinary regimes (Collinson and Ackroyd 2005, p.322).

For that reason it is often concluded that even though the labour process has changed and continues to change throughout industrialisation, misbehaviour is a lasting feature of organisations. Moreover, misbehaviour continues to develop according to the nature of modern organisations, the people who work within them and to an

extent reflects broader social, political and technological trends (Richards 2008). For instance, it could be argued that under the new circumstances of recent waves of migration to the UK, a range of cultural misbehaviour in the workplace could be expected. This is because the number of actors in a workplace has significantly increased through different types of migrant groups and inter-group relations. In addition, management of such diversity is potentially more complex and challenging than in a workplace consisting of indigenous workers only.

Identity

Identity is seen as a site of resistance and an important factor in shaping resistance. For instance, Oberschall (1973, 1993) noted that in order to mobilise on a large scale, social movement organisations and trade unions must tap into pre-existing networks of individuals who share common life experiences and social identities. What is more, goal-directed decision-making and rational calculations among individuals about whether to participate are filtered through, if not fundamentally weighted by friendship networks, group affiliations, and prior experiences (Dixon and Roscigno 2003; Oberschall 1994; Blau 1964; Huber 1997). Consequently, it could be argued that frameworks introduced by trade unions must resonate with the lived grievances and the already established identities of prospective participants. This could be particularly difficult in workplaces characterised by multiple identities of large cohorts of multinational migrants.

That unions are necessary for work-based collective action is either implicitly or explicitly noted in much of the labour research. However, there is also a small body of work denoting the importance of solidarity processes among workers, which in turn are emergent in the workplace itself and shaped by lived experiences. For Fantasia (1988) for instance, worker solidarity and insurgency are unlikely to be driven by unions, but rather will emerge out of conflict in the workplace, more indigenous worker strategies and practices, and "active work-group social relationships" (p.108). Such relations could range from ordinary cooperative strategies to bitter confrontations with supervisors, all of which may serve to create a "collective identity separate from management" and prepare the foundation for collective action (Hodson et al. 1993, p.399; Vallas 2003). Similarly, Roscigno and Danaher's (2001) analysis of southern textile strikes during the 1930s also shows

how considerable mobilisation occurred with little or, at best, limited union organisation. Rather, worker solidarity and ultimately mobilisation were boosted largely by indigenous strategies and cultural practices that marked common constraints and grievances. Once again, however, in a workplace that is now dominated by migrant rather than indigenous workers, it is possible that forms of resistance do not emerge because there is no point of reference and no one that would act as a seed and then disseminate action across the workforce. Such a workforce structure might seriously challenge workers' ability to reach for local practices and strategies. It could be that a multiethnic workforce means a lack of common understanding of industrial misbehaviour or simply a lack of confidence among migrants to repeatedly break rules and actively re-negotiate them in favour of workers.

Summary

Much has to be considered when analysing employment relations and it is not a matter for this thesis to summarise this enormous field of research. However, within the scope of this study I want to evaluate to what extent the traditional 'truth' about British employment relations is still valid under the paradigm of new mobilities and recent migrations to the UK. As Kondo (1990) (1990) argues for instance, employees often 'consent, cope, and resist at different levels of consciousness at a single point in time' (p.224). Individuals position themselves in relation to their community, work environment, and prevailing power relations. In what appear to be increasingly disciplinary, insecure and highly stressful workplace conditions, the increasing dynamism of employment relations is likely to impact on workers' resistance and management techniques of behavioural control. For that reason, scholars of work and organisation will continue to examine co-worker relations, misbehaviour and coping strategies. The changing structure of the labour force caused by inflows of a large number of migrant workers is certainly one of the factors that keeps employment relations academics intrigued. Sectors like manufacturing are of particular importance here, given the nature of this research site and the large concentration of new-wave migrants in low-skill low-pay manufacturing jobs.

2.10.2 *Manufacturing in the UK*

In 1979, out of a total workforce of 24.7 million people, as many as 6.9 million worked in manufacturing. Eighteen years later the workforce remained relatively static at 24.5 million but the number of people employed in manufacturing had fallen to 4.2 million. In 2007 the total workforce grew to 27.1 million but the number of those employed in manufacturing had dropped even further to 2.9 million (Office for National Statistics 2011).

With a declining number of people employed in this sector, contemporary studies of these workplaces are unsurprisingly rare, with jobs at the bottom end of the labour market being particularly neglected recently (Bach 2005). However, despite fewer people working in manufacturing, the composition of the workforce in this sector has changed notably. Since 2004 EU enlargement a significant number of A8 and A2 migrants have entered the labour market, alongside some successful asylum seekers from countries such as Iraq and Afghanistan (Holgate 2005). At the same time UK workers have experienced a significant reduction in security with temporary work increasingly becoming the prevailing trend. This situation has changed the perception of a low-skilled manufacturing job from what it used to represent in the past, namely a comfortable option for a working-class worker, being safe, permanent, with a guaranteed income and a stepping stone into higher skill roles or management.

An element that could serve in favour of undertaking such a job today is an argument that contemporary manufacturing plants are not like those of the past. Modernised and with higher levels of health and safety, workplaces are no longer the hard, unforgiving shop floor environments of the past.

> Few people now toil under arduous or hazardous conditions. Most people work in safe, clean environments. Modern workplaces are a long way from the dark satanic mills of industrializing Britain. Increasingly, work environments look, feel, sound and even smell great (Reeves 2001, p.70).

However, Newsome et al. (2009) argue that much low-end factory work remains hidden and often neglected. While diminishing in scale and scope, factory work

remains heterogeneous. Their research on 'forgotten factories' suggests that the above quote is not necessarily the case. There are still places with high levels of work intensity, filtered through assembly lines subject to unilateral controls. Ezzamel et al.'s (2001) work also contributes to the belief that the 'factory of the future' with self-subordination through 'new-wave management' is not necessarily a feature of the modern world of work. Their study of the "factory that time forgot" illustrates the importance of workers' identification with practices from the past and how difficult it is to re-engineer working practices, mainly at the point of production.

Though assembly work is rarely pleasant, the nature of the manufactured product in many instances adds a further dimension of hazardous work environments through extremes of temperature, smells and noise levels. It could be argued that these conditions have a long-standing history in the food-processing sector and my fieldwork revealed a similar picture. Following the tradition of workplace ethnography, when the tool has been utilised to investigate not only labour process but also subjectivity of experiences, I gained an in-depth insight into a contemporary food manufacturing plant. It suggests that Reeves' sanguine statement does not necessarily apply to all British workplaces and factories 'that time forgot' are not uncommon phenomena in today's modernised world. My work also acknowledges the value of ethnographic research by grounding myself and my reader with a sense of the reality of the workplace, instead of treating workers as abstract entities.

2.11 The tradition of workplace ethnography

The field of social science in organisations was shaped in the first part of the 20th century when mass industrialisation resulted in substantial social changes, both promising and troubling. To understand the changing work conditions that accompanied the transition to an industrial society and learn about people they wished to help, many social reformists entered the workplace incognito. The backgrounds and motivations of the early ethnographers varied widely. Whether to better understand the hard realities of the workplace or the plight of working women, researchers were mostly interested in economic and moral issues related to improving working conditions and only a few focused more on the psychology of the

people they were studying (e.g. Parker 1920). One of the first and most influential ethnographers, Williams (1920), entered the workplace because he realised that it was impossible to effectively manage his employees without understanding their daily concerns and issues. His main conclusions were that many causes of poor morale in the workplace were due to poor, harsh, and indifferent management. Moreover, Williams' work was instrumental in the foundation of what would later be the human relations movement according to which treating workers in the right way benefited both company and individual (Zickar and Carter 2010).

A pioneering ethnographic study of the world of work in a British motor components factory was initiated by Cavendish (1982). This research of the industrial working life of female manufacturing employees became a classic study which addressed a number of enduring issues of ethnicity, gender and class in global manufacturing. The work covered nine months of 1977-78 and was based on participant observation of migrant and minority ethnic women working on an assembly line. By working alongside migrant women from Ireland, the Caribbean, and the Indian subcontinent, Cavendish managed to provide a detailed account of their daily experiences, routines of repetitive work, the temporalities of work, home, children and leisure. She explained how the shape of the women's family lives outside the factory were a product of the material relations within it: the low wages, long hours and the need to earn money set very definite limits on the type of relationships that the women could experience. Another important point of reference for discussion and debate were the differences of race and nationality. For instance, Grace, a West Indian worker, felt that the Tories wanted to deport black people back to the Caribbean and said "you English want to send us all home". However, Cavendish explained that national and racial groups were not the basis for friendship groups. A source of great tension was also the sexual division of labour in the factory. The men were not "a homogenous group" but "from where we were on the line, anyone with skill or training was a man, anyone in authority was a man and any man had authority." She asserted that the reality of unequal pay, patriarchal relations inside the workplace and the tyranny of the production line were an integral part of capitalist exploitation.

Beynon's (1975) research methods mixed straightforward sociological techniques with a participant observation approach more akin to ethnography. Beynon spent

much of 1967 in Ford's Halewood plant on Merseyside talking to workers, union officials and management. The main achievement of this study was the immediacy and vividness of Beynon's portrayal of life on the shop floor. It provided valuable insight into the operation of trade unions at plant level in Britain and shed light on the complex relationships which existed between trade unions, shop stewards and ordinary members. By simply illustrating what it was like to work in a car plant, the study highlighted some important issues in labour relations for the 1970s; it revealed the processes by which conflict was coped with in larger organisations, and how shop-floor workers and their shop stewards expressed their political and economic aspirations through the union. This valuable contribution to our understanding of work would not have been possible however if not for Beynon's ability to get inside the skin of the shop-floor workers and the stewards. In a way his work also shows the importance of language in exploring people's positions. As such, ethnographers place a high value on treating situated language use as a topic of inquiry in the settings they study. Ethnographic studies, by their nature, are more likely to be sensitive to important contextual and cultural variables and by the attention paid to language. An insider's knowledge, first-hand reactions and most importantly, accounts of the subjective phenomena of beliefs, attitudes and past experiences are the outcomes of ethnographic investigation.

The above review was not meant to be comprehensive but illustrative of ways in which workplace ethnography has become an important and viable methodological tool for studying the workplace. With the use of in-depth descriptions of workers and their behaviours in a workplace conducted by ethnographers, researchers can enrich their own quantitative studies and provide insights that lead to new hypotheses or revisions of existing theories. Zickar and Carter (2010) argue that further and deeper consideration of the spirit of workplace ethnography will result in organisational research that has a deeper understanding of the worldviews participants bring to our research studies as well as better recognition of our own personal assumptions that limit our research (Zickar and Carter 2010). In a similar vein this study uses ethnography as a means to gain understanding of the perspectives and values of the people being studied and the attitudes and perspectives that are taken to govern their behaviour. This is how and why ethnography has traditionally been used to study workplaces - what is happening inside and how people experience it - which in turn

has its implications for how these workplaces and people are eventually managed. At this point I now turn to concluding the main aim and objectives of this research.

2.12 A way forward

In line with what has been suggested so far, a migrant's identity can be understood as an ongoing process of construction and reconstruction, a category of everyday experience used by individuals to make sense of themselves in a particular situation and in relation to particular people, who might be defined as 'similar' or 'different', 'us' or 'them'. Since identity is regarded as a *process* rather than an end product, the key question is not what it is but how it has been formed, retained and changed over time in the course of various experiences and the factors that are crucial for its shaping. In the context of the workplace this leads to a focus on significant actors and the dynamic nature of employment relations within the workplace.

Analogically, one way of addressing the issue of static and de-contextualised acculturation analysis is to replace the traditional typologies with approaches that pay closer attention to the process itself. Instead of looking at the final identity or strategy as it is, the research needs to investigate the process of becoming or developing a strategy. Analysis seeks to offer the uncovering of variability and the ways in which positions are negotiated in everyday practice. Therefore, daily interplay at work becomes the point of departure for exploring the ways in which differing groups of workers enact and contest acculturative outcomes such as whether to 'rub along' together or to adopt more distancing tactics. Such an approach offers opportunities for recognising the ways in which dominant and 'transgressive' positions are mediated and reproduced rather than being seen as givens to be 'read off' from actors. Also, the importance of the research context needs to be highlighted by recognising that much sustained, regular, on-going relationship/interaction between migrants themselves as well as with indigenous people takes place in a workplace. That is the place where people bring their perceptions, expectations and habits that can be reinforced, changed or mediated by others. In this way the research complements previous work by looking at those aspects of recent migrants'

experiences that have so far received little attention from both migration and cross-cultural researchers.

2.13 **Research aim and objectives**

The aim of this thesis is to gain a deeper insight into the complex phenomenon of recent Central and Eastern European labour migration into the UK, in particular the intersection of new migrants and their work. The research seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge by studying 'new' migrant workers' acculturation choices and constraints within the 'old' workplace. This aim will be attained by examining the ways in which Polish workers accept or contest the everyday process of 'fitting in' with work colleagues in the local labour market. In particular, factors that shape the process of adaptation to the workplace, including the role of other migrant workers, especially large numbers of compatriots, are the main focus of this research. Also, the influence of employers' and trade unions' policies and practices on the existing work relations between the main organisational actors are to be explored. This is because employers' strategies and trade unions' interventions are likely to have some impact on the process of exchange not only between them and migrant labour but also between migrant and indigenous workers. All these will constitute important elements of migrant workers' adaptation to the workplace. In this way, the research will also examine the ways in which forms of integration may be positioned as moral 'goods' and become a source of valuable knowledge about the reality of migrants' workplace experiences. The potential value of such knowledge is that it might suggest possible social policy solutions so that better adaptation of migrants is secured in terms of ameliorating the increasing problems for migrant communities in a workplace, as well as for the host society.

Following the approach outlined above, the research agenda will pay close attention to the everyday accounts proffered by actors and explore their reaction to broader forces within the workplace. This will be done by seeking answers to three research questions. Firstly, as has been argued in this and previous chapters, new-wave migration is fundamentally distinctive in terms of its temporal qualities and higher than ever flexibility and mobility. Using Papestergiadis' and McHugh's words,

contemporary migration "is an ongoing process and needs to be seen as an open voyage' (Papestergiadis 2000, p.4) and it "is about people dislodged from place, people in motion, people with attachments and connections in multiple places, people living in the moment while looking backward from where they came and forward to an uncertain future" (McHugh 2000, p.83). It therefore appears that little seems to be permanent or ultimate for the new migrants and therefore it becomes very difficult to categorise them as assimilated or integrated into the host society. The traditional view of the acculturation process, in which individuals' strategies are static and often preordained, seems to become too simplistic and hardly applicable. The process of 'fitting in' seems to have little in common with a static procedure; instead it could be perceived as an ongoing experience of contesting and negotiating a migrant's position both outside and inside their workplace. For this reason I aim to complement the existing research and examine how migrant workers negotiate and contest their acculturation strategies in every day interactional workplace settings.

Secondly, Coleman discusses at length the importance of trust in social relationships, arguing that "a group whose members manifest trustworthiness…will be able to accomplish much more than a comparable group lacking that trust" (1990, p.304). Having lived in the UK for six years I have experienced how complex migrants' relationships with the wider migrant community can be. Despite the high levels of practical and emotional support migrants receive from their Polish friends and relatives, the discourse of 'Poles don't help each other' seems to be the dominant one among Poles themselves. As Eade et al. (2006) have also noticed in their study, Poles tend to perceive their compatriots with suspicion and wariness. The reason behind this might lie in their perceiving each other as a source of competition. As such the role of indigenous people, who blame migrant workers for wage suppression and taking away their jobs, might also play a role in mediating Poles' relationships with each other. Going back to the ambiguous picture of recent migrants, who are also perceived among employers as hard-working and committed to their jobs, and trade unions that have to position themselves among dissatisfied indigenous workers and pleased managers, my second research question seems to be of particular relevance. Namely, I want to investigate the roles that compatriots, other migrant groups, indigenous co-workers, managers and trade unions play in mediating the experiences of migrant workers.

Thirdly, apart from the human aspect of migrants' new life there might also be other factors that influence their process of adaptation (or not) to a new milieu. Language, for instance, is said to be one of such factors (Waddington 2007). But there might also be some work-related elements such as the organisation of their work, physical conditions or pay that facilitate or hinder this process. This is especially true for relatively young and more educated migrants who have little or no experience of working in a factory environment but arrive from a country that has little to offer them in terms of employment or a decent standard of life. In terms of money, for example, the Polish minimum wage per month is the equivalent of one week's wage in a British factory. Since this might be a reason that pushes new migrants to endure more and contest less than they normally would in their home country, I found it important to examine the role of other factors that might affect migrants' everyday acceptance/contestation of positions.

To summarise, this body of research attempts to illuminate the reality of migrants' work lives. It seeks to examine *how* migrant workers choose and apply their strategies in their British workplaces, whether to "fit in" or distance themselves from work colleagues and employers, in particular how they negotiate the basis of these relationships and manage them over time. In other words, the core of this research is not to identify the type of strategies that migrant workers prefer or apply but to find out *how* they arrive at that decision, what pushes them in one direction as opposed to another and what issues they face in applying the chosen strategy and in managing their relationships with the main actors in the workplace. The rationale for doing this is that the new wave of migration is a qualitatively different phenomenon from previous migrations, especially in terms of its speed, scale and relatively unrestricted mobility. All this resulted in a multiethnic and highly flexible cohort of migrants who enter local labour markets en masse possibly triggering a new dynamism in workplace relationships. It is of particular interest to investigate the intersection of new migrant workers and old workplaces which are characterised by traditional means of work organisation and management. By exploring the case of Food Co., this thesis takes a detailed look at the lived experience of contemporary factory work and the lives of migrant workers who perform in this new/old context on a daily basis. It also investigates how migrants perceive each other, how fragmentation of

the workforce causes tensions between different groups and to what extent these experiences are different from those encountered by migrants from the past.

3   NEW MIGRANTS: NEW METHODS

3.1   Introduction

Given the exploratory nature of this study and its interest in illuminating the factors and struggles underpinning the daily negotiations of encounters between migrants and other organisational actors, the research lends itself to qualitative approaches. In order to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by recent migrant workers and their work relationships with culturally different groups in a British workplace context, the focus of this research is primarily on the interpretation of findings, in an attempt to uncover the subjects' point of view. Given this commitment to understanding migrant workers' interaction in a workplace from the individuals' perspectives, an interpretive methodology was deemed the most appropriate approach as it promised the apprehension of recent migrants' worlds through their subjective experiences. According to Erickson (1986), the emphasis of interpretive research is not to study the "traits" of the actors or the environment, but to examine the process that takes place and the meanings of the actions of those involved.

This chapter outlines the approach and methods that were used to provide an insight into the dynamic nature of migrants' lives in the workplace. Unlike the majority of previous research on A8 migration and their employment relations in the UK, this study does not attempt to map recent migration or present general patterns of migrants' attitudes towards the host society. Thus, data has been generated by an extended period of participant observation and followed up by narrative interviews with migrant workers and other organisational actors in a local food processing plant. Before turning to a detailed discussion of the methods used to conduct this research, I shall briefly discuss my choice of methodology.

Previous research on acculturation has largely been undertaken using statistical materials such as census records (Bevelander 1999, p.72) or questionnaires (e.g. Liu 2007) and relevant methods of analysis (e.g. simple logistic regression). These techniques have generally been employed in an attempt to categorise migrants in

terms of pre-determined categories. By contrast this thesis takes a discursive turn as suggested by Bowskill et al. (2007) in seeing individuals' experiences as paramount. By this means it aims to go beyond existing research and gain a richer picture of migrants' everyday experiences while efforts are directed at illuminating the process rather than the variables of migrants' experiences. Narratives are seen to reflect the subject's point of view (e.g. Hermanns 1991, Mitchell and Egudo 2003). In addition, participant observation promises a better understanding of the context in which highly mobile migrants operate on a daily basis and negotiate their lives in the workplace (e.g. Fitzgerald 2006a, Finlayson 2004).

In a nutshell, this research took the form of an exploratory approach given that the subjective experiences of migrants could vary widely. This method was useful in determining the best research design, data collection method and selection of subjects, given my limited knowledge at the time, of how migrant workers' employment relations are shaped. Given the context of the research, it was decided to approach the data exploration in two stages. Firstly; the approach was through the use of a participant observation method. This method enabled personal involvement, thus overcoming the restrictions of alternative methods which may otherwise have been liable to overlook important questions due to a lack of first-hand involvement. Participant observation therefore provided an investigation platform for discovering issues important on the shop floor but possibly invisible to 'outsiders'. The second stage then took the shape of narrative interviews to restrict bias on my part due to a wholly subjective interpretation of the workplace dynamics. These were conducted on the back of a first-hand understanding of the shop floor experience with the subjects. Because of the way these two tools complement each other, they have produced a valuable insight into the studied aspect of recent migration.

This chapter begins by presenting background information on the A8 nationals' presence in the local area to give the context in which the study was undertaken and justify my decision to select a local employer. Then, the rationale for using an ethnographic approach is outlined and I detail the methods employed. I also discuss my approach to data analysis, which enables me to present a rich picture of what matters in shaping migrants' workplace relationships, identity and positioning. I then discuss the challenges of the research tools used and consider the issues of ethics,

which revolved around the concepts of informed consent and providing an open account of the research process, as well as issues of my own identity, being a young Polish migrant myself.

3.2   A8 nationals in the local area

In terms of the South West region, the distribution of non-UK nationals, despite being uneven, remains noteworthy. Although the region has one of the lowest numbers of non-UK nationals within the working age population, urban centres such as Bournemouth, Plymouth, Bristol and Gloucestershire have seen increases since 2004. As data from the Annual Population Survey shows, 10 per cent of the working age population in Bournemouth constitute non-UK nationals. This is an increase of nearly 70 per cent over the two-year period between 2004 and 2006 and it gives Bournemouth the highest proportion of non-UK nationals in the region (Evans 2007). National Insurance Number (NINo) registrations also indicate an increase of non-UK nationals working in the region. Since 2004 Bournemouth and Poole have experienced, respectively, a 124 per cent and 120 per cent change in the number of new registrations, which is well above the average for Great Britain (62 per cent) and the South West (85 per cent).[2] The same source of data indicates a clear concentration of migrant workers in urban areas, with Bournemouth being second, just after Bristol, on the list of most popular locations for NINo registrations in the region (Evans 2007).

It is believed that such a rapid and large increase of the foreign-born population in many areas might affect both migrant and indigenous communities alike. According to a House of Commons report on community cohesion and migration, "areas with limited experience of diversity and change may have had limited arrangements for providing migrants with support both in the short term and in the longer term to help them fully integrate into communities" (2008, p.81). Moreover, it is expected that local people in areas with migration experience who have faced unexpectedly fast

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[2] Since 2004, Bournemouth experienced an increase in the number of registrations for national insurance numbers from 1,840 to 4,120. At the same time, Poole experienced an increase of 510 to 1,120 (Evans 2007)

change and new issues may be more conscious of, and concerned about, the new situation (Audit Commission 2007).

The Borough of Poole, where I conducted my research, is said to be one of many such areas. At the time of its last Census in 2001, this was a small unitary authority with a population of around 137,000 and a non-UK born population measured at 4.5 per cent, of which only 78 people were born in Poland (Borough of Poole 2008b). While in 2003 there were no NINo allocations to Poles, from May 2004 to mid 2011 there were 1730 allocations, with a peak in 2007 when out of 1400 new allocations in the Borough of Poole 600 were made to Polish nationals (Department for Work and Pensions 2011). This represents a significant diversification of the local population, but it is not only the scale of the migration that matters, its rapid growth is also important. Previous migrants from Portugal, Pakistan and Bangladesh have settled and integrated into Poole over past decades but they have done so much more gradually and over a much longer time frame (Borough of Poole 2008b). What could therefore be expected as a result of these changes is a different dynamic in the relationships between local people and new incoming migrants, and possibly among migrants themselves. Apart from increasing concerns in terms of greater demand for housing, healthcare or school services, there is also increased competition in the local labour market, which is of particular interest bearing in mind the largely economic nature of this migration.

It is said that with the constant influx of new actors comes a new set of social interactions and negotiations between people in their daily lives that is embedded within a broader socio-economic framework. According to Olzak (1993), for instance, an immediate sociological concern raised by the growing heterogeneity of urban areas is whether members of different groups view one another as direct competitors for scarce economic, political and social resources. Accordingly, research undertaken by the Borough of Poole was motivated by the historical evidence that "a large sudden influx of 'foreigners,' particularly during a time of economic uncertainty, can result in increased tensions within the destination community – that can easily be exacerbated by a lack of cultural understanding, a language barrier, and an acceptance of self-perpetuating myths" (2008a, p.2). For this reason the Borough of Poole sought to develop knowledge of the experiences of

Polish migrant workers in order to advance local understanding and to facilitate their transition into the community. Among other things, the report provides an overview of recent migrants' reasons for coming to the South West region:

> People come to the UK for employment, but if you live in a really nice place that's why you stay. If you work hard, but can spend your spare time enjoying the area, or walk to work along the coast, that's what makes it seem worthwhile (Borough of Poole 2008a, p.11).

> (…) more people will come here as it is such a nice area. People who are currently in the big cities but want lifestyle jobs will come to Poole and Bournemouth (Borough of Poole 2008a, p.11).

The report also provides an insight into how migrants are perceived by local employers:

> They come to the UK to work, so they want to work and so do their best so that they can secure their job. They don't know the system well enough to play it. They don't have families with them so will work longer hours. They need to both send money home and afford to live here. So, they have more incentive and goals to achieve. If you visit their home countries you will find workers who don't have the same ethic, because the incentives are less (Borough of Poole 2008a, p.9).

> We [as a company] have a worker of the month scheme. Of the top ten workers five or six would be Polish. They work hard, are diligent, empathetic, they inspire clients and they ask for more work (Borough of Poole 2008a, p.9).

The above quotes illustrate the nature of the research undertaken by the Borough of Poole, which claims to fill the gap in the existing research on A8 workers: "although much work has been undertaken into the numbers of Polish people coming to England during this period, there remains a lack of empirically grounded studies on the more human aspects of A8 migration, such as the social impact on, and implications for, both the migrants and the destination community" (Borough of Poole 2008b, p.2). In this research an attempt was made to examine whether some forms of motivation, adaptation and settlement pursued by economic migrants in the past, are still relevant to A8 migrants, considering their freedom of movement across

EU countries. Consequently, on the basis of 15 in-depth interviews with Polish migrant workers who live and work within the borough, they gathered personal accounts of the choices these migrants have made and the barriers they have faced in order to "fit in" to the new and unfamiliar milieu. What they found is that the new migration wave is different from previous ones in terms of being very flexible and distinguished only by personal motivation. New migrants are focused on maximising their opportunities to improve their quality of life and therefore they move to new locations and jobs with ease when such opportunities arise. This is something they owe to EU expansion as a result of which new migrants are free both to look for employment and return home, making their choices less restricted than those of previous migrants.

In this way the research is apparently one of very few studies that develop knowledge of the experiences of Polish migrant workers but in a narrative way and from the adaptation/settlement point of view. My research is similar in nature to the study by the Borough of Poole and supplements many research initiatives undertaken to date that have mainly focused on "mapping" the new wave of migration. As discussed in the previous chapter, in many cases these research initiatives did not seek to gain a deeper insight into workers' everyday experiences and explore the distinctive nature of new wave migration, which has implications in terms of these migrants' "fitting in" to a British workplace. To complement the existing studies and gain a better understanding of recent migration to the UK, I spent some time working alongside different groups of migrants and their indigenous colleagues, sharing their experiences and seeking to shed light on their perceptions of work-life situations in which they find themselves.

3.3   **Participant observation**

A focus on everyday encounters between actors in the workplace suggested forms of ethnography as a proper candidate for the research approach. As a researcher I needed a tool that would give me an insight into migrants' everyday struggles and I believed that through participating in their daily work, watching what happens, and listening to what is said, I would be able to identify issues that matter in developing,

managing and shaping their employment relationships. I judged that attempting to become one of them was the best way to understand what they were going through, and to some extent I already was one of them. After all, as a Polish student I also came to the UK in the aftermath of the 2004 EU enlargement. Even though my motives for coming here were probably different from the majority of my compatriots, as my aim was to continue university education, I still hoped for a better life in the country "of milk and honey." Since I came to the UK I have also come through the experiences of working in many unfamiliar and undesirable jobs in hotel kitchens, restaurants and shops where I mostly interacted with my compatriots and other migrant workers. I have had mostly Polish friends, lived in the most Polish part of the town, bought products in Polish shops and attended Polish mass every Sunday. Thus, on many occasions I could easily classify myself as one of them, the Polish migrants, but what I needed was the richness of subjective experiences of new wave migrants within the work context in order to better illustrate the distinctive character of the A8 migration as applied to mostly young Polish migrant workers.

As such, participant observation is what seemed to fit best since my aim was to understand the knowledge and practices that recent migrants share and use to interpret their experiences in a particular British workplace. According to Agar (1996, p. 8), the ethnographic product is knowledge that the researcher has learned and that helps them understand the world within which those "others" live. Moreover, ethnographic research is said to produce situational, rather than universal, knowledge and captures the detail of social life (Taylor 2002). It is therefore believed that this type of knowledge may not only facilitate analysis by providing rich contextual data but also gives the data collected a greater sense of reliability through providing a consistent, accurate and explicit account of what has been experienced, thus enabling the researcher to draw legitimate conclusions so that the veracity of the findings may be confirmed by other researchers.

Ethnography also has the capacity to illuminate processes in "fine-grained detail and to open black boxes to show mechanisms causally linking independent and dependent variables" (Fitzgerald 2006a, p.12). While some argue that the same strength inherently leads to limitations in terms of being able to study a wide range of cases intensively and allowing for empirical generalisation, this is of less importance

in this study. My interest is of a qualitative nature as I am looking into the process of how migrants negotiate their positions in a British work environment and insights from an individual rather than a collective perspective.

Moreover, Fitzgerald compared good ethnography to a camera zoom lens that "can both capture the wide context of structure and narrowly focus on agents in a way that shows their interactions with that structure" (2006a, p.9). As such he believes that following migrants is a productive way to understand their individual experiences but in a wider context. Though ethnography can be criticised for being limited only to a case study and findings produced by participant observation in one setting may not be true for other settings of "the same type," it is still believed that ethnography is a way to make claims of "societal significance" rather than "statistical significance" and leads to the development of ideas of theoretical and practical importance (Burawoy 1991, p.281).

Considering the interest of this study in the way recent migrant workers behave, find themselves and interact with others in a British workplace, participant observation has an advantage over the other available tools in its potential to produce authentic, naturalistic data. Participant observers study people in their natural environment, gaining a depth of insight into behaviour that comes not simply from close, detailed, observation but also from the researcher's own experiences within the group being studied - a technique that provides first-hand insights into why people behave as they do. In addition, participant observation does not prejudge issues and events (in the way a questionnaire may, for example) and for these reasons it is possible to argue that in a study like mine, such a method provides data that has a high level of validity. Having limited knowledge of the way employment relations and acculturation are shaped among migrant workers in a British workplace, this method was chosen to give me a grounded picture of the situation.

The advantages and importance of ethnography have occasionally been acknowledged in acculturation research. Ethnographers are said to have pushed the assimilation programme forward by demonstrating that the different domains of assimilation (e.g. economic, family and cultural) are not always mutually reinforcing but can also be at odds with each other. For instance, economic assimilation can be

increased through ethnic retention when it comes to migrants' upward mobility (see Gibson (1988); Zhou and Bankston (1998); Waters (1999). In the light of this finding and the potential that ethnographic tools represent, I seek to push the research agenda further by illuminating the nature of the processes that migrants experience in a workplace. However, before doing so, I will describe the setting and design of the field study in order to validate presented later data but also to facilitate in-depth understanding of the context in which the research was undertaken.

3.3.1 *Participant observation in the plant*

The research site was identified as one of the largest local employers with a high proportion of migrant workers. Access was gained primarily by personal contact with the HR manager of the factory who had graduated from the local university and knew me from previous research activities. An early meeting was followed up with an official letter sent to the factory's management explaining the nature and purpose of the research. As a result of this negotiation, a relatively unrestricted right of entry to the factory was granted in exchange for sight of future observational findings. Meanwhile, on a few occasions during my visits to the factory I was introduced to a training officer who since then has become my first point of contact and source of information in the plant. At this stage I would like to emphasise her role in the research process. Agnieszka, the only Polish employee in the offices upstairs, met me on a daily basis and was not only a source of information, she also helped me to understand and clarify many aspects of these migrant workers' experiences. During our frequent discussions she always offered new insights and provided support, especially in the first days of my presence in the factory when my experiences of working on the shop floor turned out to be unexpectedly hard.

In the next stage, I discussed potential ethical issues associated with the method, such as the extent to which my presence in the factory would be overt with my supervisors and, having explored all concerns, began the fieldwork. The first stage of data collection commenced on the factory shop floor where I undertook compulsory training and familiarised myself with the production process and basics of food hygiene requirements. Observations took place across a number of departments

throughout the shop floor and with different shift teams. It was meant to maximise my exposure to working alongside people of different nationalities as well as indigenous workers and managers and to meet the aim of learning as much about the migrants' world of work as possible.

Almost 1,000 people work on three shifts in a system called 'six on, three off' to ensure the factory operates for 24 hours a day, seven days a week. The shop floor is divided into a number of departments that produce, pack and despatch the final products. All areas of the plant operate with comparatively old-fashioned labour-intensive methods of production and it seems likely that the availability of cheap labour following the inflow of workers into the country since 2004, has lessened the incentive for the company to modernise its production methods. Hence, the physical organisation of work tends to conform to classical accounts of Fordist work regimes. As a result, most jobs on the shop floor are physically demanding and require a high level of fitness. Jobs I could either observe or perform myself included standing on a line and packing pies into plastic boxes at relatively high speed and for eight hours per day, manually delivering trays of pies to lines, pushing or pulling two metre high iron racks carrying pies into bakery and/or fridge areas with high and low temperatures respectively, mixing ingredients for the products, and many other activities.

Over a continuous period of 12 weeks I actively participated in food production and packing at Food Co. Although departmental managers always gave me an option to just hang around and observe, it was my deliberate strategy not to do so. The main reason for this was that I wanted to go through the same experiences that "an average" migrant worker does because I knew that it was the best way to understand what it means to be a migrant worker here and working alongside others was an inevitable element of "becoming" one of them. However, I also knew that by just watching people work I would never have got close to them. Instead of building a relationship of trust with my research participants, a vital part of the process, I would have probably caused unnecessary distance and caused suspicion that I belonged to "the other side" – managers from upstairs. But my decision to join other workers also had some less positive aspects. First of all, regardless of my initial intention to follow Spradley's (1980, p. 78) advice on making field notes (space, actor, activity, object,

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act, event, time, goal, feeling) to capture all aspects of the context and be open to incidents and issues that might not have seemed relevant initially, I found it challenging to make any type of field notes. First of all, for safety and food hygiene reasons it was forbidden to take any items down to the shop floor, including jewellery, mobile phones or even chewing gum. Thus, having a pen and a notepad with me was out of the question. However, taking notes on the shop floor would have also been impossible from a practical point of view. Due to my lack of experience, gender and temporary presence in the factory, my role mainly entailed standing on a line and packing. In this role there would have been no time or place to take notes so I knew I had to try to memorise as much as possible and record it before my memory started to play tricks on me. Moreover, the nature of the work significantly decreased my mobility during the day and restricted my observations to one line at a time. In addition, I felt that the pace of work combined with the physical attributes of the research setting (the noise of the working machines) not only reduced my chances of talking and interacting with people but also influenced my concentration span which made me less perceptive than I would normally expect to be. Working on the line for eight hours a day was a physically demanding activity and making field notes after such a day was even harder. What seemed to work for me though was to record everything on a tape recorder on my way back from the factory, finish at home and transcribe it after the observations.

The participant observation stage was completed after almost three months spent on site. I decided to withdraw from the fieldwork when I started feeling that observations no longer served to enrich my insight into the workplace and I achieved saturation of information. In the next stage I wrote a brief report to the HR manager on my main observational findings, as previously agreed, and started transcribing the field recordings. A total of almost eight hours of recordings were translated and transcribed.

3.3.2 *The role of the Polish researcher*

Following prevailing critiques of using covert research (e.g. Beauchamp et al. 1982, Bulmer 1982, Herrera 1999, Warwick 1982) I decided to apply methods that have

been recognised as more ethically and professionally sound. With an awareness that full disclosure of my role in the plant might limit access to some information, I did not plan to pretend being a 'normal' agency worker. Such a decision, however, involved the risk of not being accepted on the shop floor as one of "them" – a migrant shop worker. Fortunately, the possibility of being rejected was minimised by Agnieszka, a well-known and trusted HR officer, who acted as my sponsor and introduced me to many people on the shop floor. This is because, as the only Polish-speaking person upstairs and previously a recruitment officer in the on-site agency, she remained the main point of contact for most Polish workers, in particular for those who did not speak English. In fact, all migrant workers displayed an openness and enthusiasm for working and talking to me because I was perceived not only as "fresh blood" but also as a potential link between them and "the managers upstairs," and this is something that put me in an uncomfortable position on several occasions. Many people I worked with hoped I would be a person who would finally listen to them and intervene with the managers on issues of importance concerning their work, such as unfair allocation of overtime hours or competitive speeding up of the lines. They saw me talking to the managers and believed that in these instances I had the authority to say what was right and what was wrong. Despite my explanation about the nature of my role in the factory I think that it was not until the first two weeks had passed that they realised that nothing was going to change in their situation. Still, I believe that it did not negatively impact on our relationship because throughout my presence in the factory I could feel that people who worked with me felt safer than usual, mainly because of the perception that I was there to observe and therefore managers would not do anything that would put them in a bad light. Nevertheless, I managed to gain their trust by assuring them of my loyalty and sharing the same experiences. I socialised with some of the people I met there and made a few friendships that have lasted during the period of the work.

Nevertheless, I was aware of the fact that my overt presence on the shop floor could have inevitably led to distorting certain arguments or situations. Indeed, the effect of researchers and the procedures they use on the responses of the people they studied has been subjected to considerable investigation (Orne 1962, Rosenthal 1966, Sudman 1974, Schuman 1982) and owing to the influence that the participant observer may have on the setting studied, the conclusions he or she draws from the

data are by no means necessarily valid for that setting at other times (Ball 1983). Hence, the question that I kept asking myself when working on the shop floor was to what extent people who know they are being studied change the way they 'normally' behave. The conclusion I reached suggested that their behaviour appeared not to have changed as a result of my presence in the group but because of my actions as part of the group and this is illustrated in some of the episodes presented in the following chapter. Consequently, as a way of overcoming bias in my research I tried to stay away from conflictual situations and not draw other people's attention to minimise the effect of my presence in the group but also to avoid my potential affiliation with one group or the other. Also, on many occasions the large density of people in a department combined with a rotation of agency workers led to my limited visibility on the shop floor and workers' little interest in someone doing a piece of research. This led me to feel that my participant observation was not only of little harm to people I worked with but also to natural behaviour and consequently my observation findings.

However, it must be recognised here that to some extent my presence on the shop floor remained covert. According to Lugosi (2006) it is a mistake to assume that ethnographic fieldwork can ever be fully open and overt, with all the relevant participants giving their continued support based on a consistent understanding of the research. Most practised ethnographers agree that fieldwork relationships inevitably involve some covertness (e.g. Grills 1998; Shaffir and Stebbins 1991; Smith and Kornblum 1996): it was also the case in my research. Even though all of the managers and supervisors had been briefed on my presence in the factory, not many fully understood the purpose of my role. Moreover, many of the people I saw and heard did not formally consent to share their experiences. Due to the large number of workers present on the shop floor and the working environment, on many occasions my interactions with them did not allow introductions or explanations of the purpose of my research. A lot of passing comments or publicly broadcast declarations that I heard from people working next to me, complaining about hard work or an unfair Romanian supervisor, did not necessarily warrant detailed explanation of my reception or potential interpretation. At times, stopping a person to explain who I was, what I planned to do, and then asking them to repeat their opinion was certainly impractical. On the other hand, however, a lot of people seemed uninterested in my

research having had more important things to do or talk about. In some instances I was just introduced to other people by my colleagues as someone who works with them and does research about the factory, yet I was presented as 'cool' and trustworthy, hence no other questions followed. For this reason the research never became completely overt with some of the people being unaware of the study and some having only a partial understanding of it.

Despite taking appropriate measures to make the research ethically sound, valid and unbiased I know that as a participant observer I do not aim for objectivity but a subjectivity that must be disciplined. Consequently, to avoid making spurious conclusions based on a single piece of evidence I attempted balance through collecting another set of data, namely interviews, to support and/or challenge my observations. And yet, being Polish just like most of the people I observed and interviewed could also be an important factor in me being prejudiced. Hence, by making my record of events as accurate as possible and regularly reporting on my decision-making process to my supervisors I avoided being too judgemental or too sympathetic towards certain groups of people. Seeking feedback from professional colleagues helped to overcome bias, however complete elimination of my beliefs and assumptions was impossible. As a participant observer I inevitably brought into the analysis my own feelings but they were always revealed and reflected upon. By being reflexive and providing details of my own background, experiences and attitudes for the reader, I believe I began the process of overcoming bias.

Nevertheless, there is one more risk associated with researching Polish migrants by a Polish migrant. Because of my background and experiences I could have become completely blinded in my observations because as Hammersley and Atkinson (1993) pointed out, there is always a danger of identifying with subjects' perspectives and hence failing to treat these as problematic. Moreover, what they call "going native" is not only a matter of missing out on an important aspect of the setting; it may well lead to a serious misunderstanding of the observed behaviour (Hammersley and Atkinson 1993, p.100). For this reason, even though I believe that I have managed to gain a unique insight into employment relationships at Food Co. I am also aware of the fact that I might know very little of the actual situation. The reader is therefore

alerted to possible conflicts or shortcomings in my own understanding of the experiences encountered in the factory and narrated in the interviews.

3.3.3 *The importance of participant observation*

Despite the hard work and a few truly difficult months when I wanted to give up on at least several occasions, I found the experience of working in the factory an invaluable part of my research process. At this stage, it is acknowledged that the importance of the participant observation is threefold. Firstly, it has provided access to a friendly research site by facilitating the selection, contact and establishment of a solid and trustworthy relationship with migrant workers, which I believe would never have been achieved without my active presence in the plant. Just as importantly, the workplace experience has served as a way of introducing me to the reality of migrants' working life and provided a greater understanding of the research context. I have learnt what it is like to work in the plant, a taster of which will be presented in the following chapter, and this significantly facilitated analysis of the collected interview data. Thus, interpretation of interviewees' words was easier and possibly more reliable because I had been there, I had seen it, I had done it, and I had met them. I believe that no other approach would have let me get so close to the researched phenomena.

The participant observation stage was invaluable in delivering rich and insightful information that I would probably not have encountered if I had chosen a different research tool. Issues such as the presumed 'neutrality' of British managers, inter-ethnic tensions, and the nature of everyday gripes on the shop floor came sharply into focus. However, in order to explore whether my experienced reality was shared by others in the factory, and also to follow up and explore some of the revealed issues, it was decided that interviews would also be undertaken.

Despite being a significant source of information on the factory setting, rules of behaviour and types of relationships people have with each other, the nature of factory work precluded the collection of detailed and individual accounts of migrants' understandings of their experiences. I had a rich source for contextualising

people's experiences but did not have their personal stories, feelings, perceptions and explanations of how they struggle and manage their everyday workplace relations. In this instance, I agree with Fetterman's claim that although participant observation is "crucial to effective fieldwork…the interview is the ethnographer's most important data-gathering technique" (1998, p.37).

Moreover, I realised that due to the richness of migrants' experiences there was a risk that a "traditional" interview would miss out on certain issues. Things that I had experienced might not necessarily be shared by others, as the common sense fact that everybody is different would suggest. Thus, I decided not to impose my personal picture of factory life on others and gather migrants' stories by applying an unstructured in-depth interview method. Finally, following Bowskill et al.'s (2007) approach, I have recognised the importance of language and its role in representing and shaping people's positions, and decided to apply narrative interviewing to gain a deeper understanding of migrants' reflections on settlement (or not) and how the nature of the work itself and associated work relations with co-workers facilitated or constrained their level of fit into a new milieu.

3.4   Narrative interviews

Narrative is one of four rhetorical modes of discourse. People both live and tell stories about their lives: stories that are ways in which human beings create meaning in their lives. Thus, narrative enquiry is an established practice in social research where the narratives of individuals have been used extensively in biographical research to analyse social processes. This is because it is believed that the production of a narrative is a fundamentally "social" process as it calls for the reproduction and transformation of a person in relation to society (Fischer-Rosenthal 2000). It has been noticed that the use of individual narratives makes it possible to relate personal experiences and broader patterns of institutional change:

> The stories people tell, from such a perspective, are not isolated, individual affairs but reflect and constitute the dialectics of power relations and competing truths within the wider society (Bron and West 2000, p. 159).

As such, people's individual experiences are shaped by the larger social, cultural and institutional narratives within which they live and have lived. As Clandinin and Connelly explain, "people are individuals and need to be understood as such, but they cannot be understood only as individuals. They are always in relation, always in a social context" (2000, p.2).

Furthermore, despite disciplinary differences in the use of life story methods, there have been some shared assumptions about using narratives in research such as authenticity and giving a voice to marginalised views and voices. Life story methods elicit not only what happened, but also how people experience events and how they make sense of them. Thus, life stories are an important vantage point for exploring the links between subjectivity and social structures. As such, readings of migrants' stories have proved to be useful, for instance in revealing the effects of immigration legislation on personal lives (which one cannot simply read off from the legal or policy texts) or revealing structures of exclusion and resistance that quantitative or larger- scale studies make invisible (Erel 2007). In my study, for instance, many interviewees told a story of Romanian co-workers for whom special arrangements were made so that they could finish work earlier and celebrate their Easter. Even though in normal circumstances there would have been nothing special about this story as the same was done every year for all workers at Christmas, in the context of Roman Catholics' Easter, which was a week earlier, it made a big difference. Thus, the accounts of my Polish interviewees were marked by bitterness and a sense of injustice because they were not given the same treatment from the management. They accused Romanian supervisors of favouritism and the incident became a highly prominent example of inequality and unfairness in the factory. Polish workers' recollections of this incident made it clear how much the Polish-Romanian conflict influences their everyday working life. My participant observation alone, even if combined with a structured type of an interview, would have possibly run the risk of not revealing how significant the role of other nationalities, and in particular the nationality of immediate superiors, might be in shaping other workers' positions.

A further reason to employ narrative interviewing is the fact that this method does not allow the interviewer to impose structures by selecting the theme and topics,

ordering the questions, or by wording the questions in his or her language. Hence, it is postulated that the perspective of the interviewee is best revealed in stories where the informant is using his or her own spontaneous language in the narration of events. As Holstein and Gubrium (1997) argue, where an interviewee is conceived as active, their decision on what to say and what to withhold during the interview can be understood as an active construction or presentation of self. Hence, such an interview is not only a way of obtaining information but it is also a case of social interaction and presentation of self. Narratives can be seen as crucial to the construction of selves – both of the telling participant and the others they refer to because, as Ellis and Bochner (2000) argue, narratives are a bridge from the past to the present because they involve the telling and understanding of past events in the present.

Finally, mirroring Bowskill et al. (2007), the discursive approach takes language seriously and acknowledges it as a medium of exchange, a medium that is not neutral but constitutes a particular "world view." Language is perceived as a window into the mind and experience and the site of identity construction. Moreover, I consider stories to be reflective of general assumptions within the culture or environment being studied because they are framed by the discourses and norms that structure society as a whole. By analysing the language of the interviewee it is possible to reveal knowledge that might not be accessible to the interviewee at the time of the interview, including the influence of other parties in the process of his or her positioning. In this way the dynamics of migrant workers and their acculturative choices are likely to be better revealed than when using traditional interviewing methods[3]. In this research, for example, I found it striking that many people I worked with on a line or spoke to during interviews had a perception of English managers as "neutral." Often, having no experience of working with English superiors whatsoever, there was a general view among Poles that they are 'objective' and 'just'. Such an opinion was shared even by those who recollected some negative incidents with British managers, partly because they were a better alternative to their Romanian counterparts but to a certain extent also because of the prevailing

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[3] Use of language is also linked to perceived cultural stereotypes, e.g. in this study contemptuous tone used by those who spoke about Romanians signaled prevailing stereotypes of dirty and poor migrants from Romania.

perception about the English as always being polite, tactful and well mannered, and therefore possibly incapable of any discriminatory or unfair actions. Such a view is in sharp contrast to many traditional employment relations studies (e.g. Beynon 1975, Ezzamel et al. 2001), in which antipathy to managers is routinely revealed.

3.4.1 *Biographic-Narrative-Interpretive Method*

The tool that enabled me to do all of the above and make the most of the data I had collected in the factory was the biographic narrative interview (Wengraf 1998). It is constructed around empowering an interviewee to provide an uninterrupted story of their own life. By telling the story in their own way, beginning whenever they like and talking for as long as they like, interviewees identify issues and experiences that are important to them and define the reality in which they find themselves. The process of interviewing is structured around three stages. The first begins with a single eliciting question that is designed to encourage the interviewee to tell the story of their life or a specific aspect of this life, for instance migration to another country. During this phase, the researcher does not intervene, but only provides non-committal, mostly non-verbal, responses. Depending on an interviewee's ability to provide narration on their own, this part can last from a few minutes to an hour. During this time the interviewer takes notes of the most crucial and potentially important situations but using the interviewee's exact words. As the interview moves to a second stage, some additional questions concerning the subject's story are asked, but only in relation to topics already introduced by the respondent and using their wording in order to avoid the interviewer's influence. By quoting the interviewee's words the researcher asks them to give more details or explain how they felt in that particular situation. In this way the interviewer obtains more insight into issues that are of interest in the study. However, if certain points or themes that are important for the researcher have not been mentioned, there is an optional stage three during which the researcher explicitly asks questions on issues which have not yet been raised by the interviewee.

As the interest in this research lies in the experiences and employment relations of Polish migrant workers and the social setting in which they take place, narrative

interviews were expected to help to achieve the aim of trying to understand the process of workplace acculturation and discover the mechanisms crucial to developing particular strategies. Since the process of acculturation had previously been identified in terms of migrants' constant process of becoming, biographical narrative interviews seemed to provide an ideal means of gaining insight into the development of migrant workers' identity and illuminating factors that actively shape the process.

Support for the choice of a biographical approach to migration-orientated research can also be found in the literature. For example, Hoerder (2001) argues for a life course approach in this type of research to present a "bottom-up" rather than a "top-down" view of migration and insists on developing sophisticated and nuanced (rather than linear) models in order to account for the complexity of lived experience. Hoerder (2001) uses hundreds of migrants' life writings, such as letters, diaries and travel journals, to describe how they adapted to and shaped Canadian society. His approach seems highly successful in producing a personalised exposé of migrants' first encounters with Canada and their understanding of an emerging national consciousness.

Rosenthal (1997) also recognises the complexity of life and assumes that there is a lifelong process of construction and redefinition of ethnic belonging as individuals interact with constantly changing social circumstances. Thus she prefers the idea of biography and consequently promotes biographical approaches to research, more specifically the Biographic-Narrative-Interpretive Method (BNIM), to illustrate the process of identity (re)construction. In her studies she argues that it is of fundamental importance to empirically show in detail how the interaction between self-attribution and attribution by others functions because constructions of belonging are not arbitrary choices made by the individual.

Additional examples of applying BNIM in migration research can be found in the work of Breckner (2002) and in the SOSTRIS (Social Strategies in Risk Society) project (Chamberlayne and Rustin 1999). Breckner argues, "that it is mainly the biographical context in which the dynamics of the migratory experience develops" (2002, p. 214). While the SOSTRIS team found that:

> …the most important findings of the socio-biographic phase of the project were obtained from detailed analysis of particular life-histories, not from aggregating or averaging the findings from each of them. Thus, the findings of the project "insist on 'complexity' and on 'individuality' more than they establish standard patterns". (Chamberlayne and Rustin 1999, p.10).

Within the context of the SOSTRIS project Breckner concludes that, despite the similarities in terms of social positions and biographical challenges, within the migration process each is experienced and responded to differently (2002, p. 225). The same might be said to apply to the world of employment and the work 'journey' that migrants take. This is the main reason I decided to focus on a small sample of cases and analyse them in great detail one by one rather than in a cross-sectional manner, as detailed later in this chapter.

3.4.2 *Narrative interviews in use*

The main data upon which the research is based come from biographical narrative interviews with Polish migrants working in a local food processing plant. All the interviewees were selected on the basis of previous contact established during the period of joint work in the factory. I believe that the shared experience of working in the factory has created a different kind of relationship between me and the interviewees as they were not put in a formal interview situation in which an interlocutor has to present an official version of reality; it was tantamount to an everyday conversation in which they could draw on their everyday work experience, introducing everyday concerns. Moreover, because of the cultural background that I shared with my interviewees I think it was, relatively speaking, easier for me to establish a relationship of trust. On many occasions I felt that I was not only "an average" co-worker for them but also a confidante, even a friend, as my field notes reveal:

> When I went for a break I met some people from the HPP (Hot Pie Pack) rotating shift; I think it's been my favourite so far. They were very happy to see me and it made me feel good because I also liked

them a lot. I am glad that they perceive me so positively and treat me as a friend. And I think they trust me a lot because the moment they saw me in the canteen they started saying how much they missed me and that there were bad things happening in HPP recently so it's a shame I wasn't there to see it. The atmosphere was very bad in there but I was happy to hear that they wanted to share these experiences with me. Some of them even suggested opening an office on the site where they would come to cry on my shoulder. We were laughing about it because they said they would have had a nice sofa in there, on which they would have lain down and told me everything that bothers them about this place (field notes, 24.09.2008).

It was interesting for me to discover how quickly I seemed to gain their trust and confidence in my role in the factory and reassure them that I was not there to spy or cause problems. Living in a Polish community abroad and therefore knowing a lot about Polish migrants' negative attitude towards their compatriots abroad, I expected a lot more resistance and reservation. Nevertheless, possibly due to my student status and being perceived as a person who can speak English and therefore possessing better opportunities in the UK than them, I was not identified as a competitor or a threat to their position. I believe that this is what helped me to reduce the distance between us and facilitated the informal and open manner in which the interviews were conducted.

I found using narrative interviews particularly helpful in enabling me to minimise the effect of my possible intervention and influence not only as a researcher but also as a migrant worker. There was a worry that my interference could influence interviewees' choices of how and what to tell me about their experiences. As a migrant who also experienced working life in the UK, including in the food processing plant, at times it might have been hard for me to hear tales of work experience and not to challenge opinions that differ from mine. Thus, because there was a risk of guiding the interviews, the use of non-interference rules prescribed in BNIM type interviews emerged as a good solution. This way the interviewees were free to construct their narrative identities within the given context, relying on their experiences viewed from the present perspective.

Initially a pilot interview was conducted for the first trial run of data collection, which ran smoothly and delivered plenty of information. Moreover, as the interviewee felt comfortable with the question, there was no need for it to be refined and it remained in the following form for the rest of the interviewing process:

> As you know, I'm researching the experiences of migrant workers who came to the UK after 2004. So can you please tell me your story of coming to Britain and working here?...All those events and experiences that were important for you, personally. How it all happened, up to now. I'll listen, I won't interrupt. I'll just take some notes in case I have any questions for after you've finished. Please take your time…Please begin wherever you like…[translated from Polish]

The interviews were conducted between March and September 2009. They were all tape recorded and a consent form together with some brief information on the nature of this study was provided in advance of each interview. The interviews took place at a time and place convenient to the participant, usually on their day off, in a café, their flat and in two cases in a room booked on the university campus. I interviewed the HR manager at their place of work as this was most convenient for them. Ideally the interviews were limited to a maximum of 1.5 hours; however this was highly dependent on an individual's willingness to talk. On five occasions I felt it was necessary to carry out stage three of the interview and in these instances we either continued the interview on the same day or scheduled another meeting. All data has been made anonymous and all confidences respected. For this reason all interviewees' names used in the study were changed to protect their identities. Interviews were audio-recorded and fully transcribed for later analysis. Verbatim transcripts were translated.

3.5 Sampling

Since the study's aim is to explore experiences that shape acculturative strategies of a range of recent migrants in the workplace, I included in my sample a representative group of workers whose profile reflects the general composition of the Polish workforce in Food Co. but at the same time does not diverge from data presented by the Home Office (2009b) on the profile of those registered under WRS. Hence the

sample consists of an equal number of males and females but with a significant majority of respondents aged below 34. The majority of respondents are well-educated individuals with little previous work experience. Nevertheless, in the study I also present stories of people with experience of both work and migration. Consequently, there is a mix of backgrounds, family and work circumstances to better serve the overarching objective of exploring the richness and complexity of migrant workers' experiences. I also used purposive sampling to make sure that participants were all part of the new wave migration, that is, they had arrived in Britain within the previous five years since EU accession.

In terms of the sample size, 20 interviews were undertaken in total but detailed analysis of only six is presented in this thesis. This is believed to be a realistic sample considering the richness of data collected in a single interview. I believe that the six cases presented illustrate the widest spectrum of experiences among the interviewed migrants. Moreover, in order to emphasise the complexity and richness of recent migrants' experiences, it was necessary to present individual stories in detail. Thus, I chose to portray a smaller number of migrants' accounts in great depth rather than adopting a superficial approach which would have enabled me to touch on all 20 cases but without an equivalent pay-off in terms of analytical depth.

I find myself tending to agree with Wengraf's argument that the quantity of qualitative cases is largely irrelevant:

> …because of the (necessarily low) numbers of cases that can be researched, because of the lack of a 'known population,' because of the lack of true carefully randomised selection from that known population, it is safe to say that *in any qualitative research of any sort no qualitative study has ever or can ever achieve statistical significance"* (2001, p. 95-104; 2009, p. 391).

Thus, since statistical significance appears to be impossible, the justification for researching "biographical cases" has to be different. Consequently, conceptual and theoretical significance is the goal. To achieve this, I aimed for "theoretical saturation" where the last new cases added nothing much of value to my understanding of the phenomenon (Glaser and Strauss 1967). Nevertheless, despite

the fact that I found some common patterns among interviewees' narratives and certain statements seemed to be repeated in almost every interview (such as looking for "normality" in their new life abroad), every narrative was different and presented a different story. Consequently, looking at it from a theoretical point of view, the complexity and richness of my participants' experiences would never have let me ignore any of the interviews, but I had to follow a more practical route and limit myself to only a few cases to be able to present them comprehensively to the reader.

Moreover, there is always a spectrum of "analytic depth," and therefore I found myself deciding which cases to choose, to what depth to take all or some of them and which cases to hardly analyse at all. As a reference point I used other PhD theses that used BNIM as a tool and the number of cases presented in theses varied from one case (Snelling 2003), three cases (Ackermann 2002; Meares 2007; Volante 2005; Worthington 2006), six cases (Aydin 2006; Campbell-Breen 2004) and seven cases (Jones 2001)**,** up to a maximum of thirteen cases (Mcnulty 2008). Given this range, confining my in-depth analysis to six cases appears not to make my work a distinctive outlier in this case.

3.6   **Analysis**

Due to my interest in individual accounts of migrants' work experiences, I perceived the "bottom-up" approach to this study to be crucial. Thus, I entered the research site and approached all interviewees with an open mind, letting them talk about whatever they found relevant or interesting to tell me. As such, I did not have any predetermined themes or codes with which to start my analysis. Consequently, I immersed myself in the interview texts acknowledging the fact that every narrative could be different from the rest. Nevertheless, although each interview was treated as an exclusive case, I noted any stark (dis)similarities between the current and prior interview outcomes and made reference to each one when needed.

Moreover, as Jovchelovitch and Bauer (2000. p.72) argue, a narrative is not a copy of the world but a representation or interpretation of the world and it articulates the truth of a particular point of view that is located in a particular time and space and

included in a larger context. Thus, it represents the experience of an individual narrator: "the reality of a narrative refers to what is real to the story-teller" (Jovchelovitch and Bauer 2000, p.72) and it should be treated accordingly. Such a view should not be taken to imply a simple acceptance of the narrative. In view of that, my engagement with the narratives was undertaken in a manner that was open and informed, facilitated by the HR manager's understanding of the migrants' situation and my own experiences of the factory, but also those of my friends, colleagues and the wider community in which I am embedded. In fact, I let myself include my own insights about Polish migrants in the UK, based on the fact that to a large extent I am one of them; born and brought up in Poland and currently residing in the UK.

Starting from the beginning, however, the route for selecting cases for in-depth analysis was a gradual process. Initially, I listened to all the recordings again and made a shortlist of three interviews which seemed to be the richest in their potential for answering the research questions around 'fitting in' to the British workplace. I chose narratives that I felt were most open and comprehensive in explaining how the workplace situations were experienced and dealt with. I started transcribing them thoughtfully, treating the process of transcription as an occasion for theorising and thinking, not just as a technical exercise (Wengraf 2001). Only after doing a full interpretation of the first case was I thinking about and reviewing another. Trying to maintain the possibly wide diversity of my sample group, I selected interviews that appeared to be in contrast or most dissimilar to the previous one, to make sure that the final presentation of cases illuminated the richness of migrants' experiences in, potentially, the most complete way. Gradually, as I was doing it, I found myself spending less and less time on successive cases because I was approaching the point where each new case added little to my interpretive understanding of the topic, which suggested that I was reaching the saturation point. In the end, due to the length and depth of the narrations, I decided to present the six stories which were the most thorough illustrations of migrants' workplace experiences; their attempts and struggles in trying to fit into the new environment and negotiate their position there.

It is said that qualitative analysis focuses on identifying various perspectives of a number of people or groups, documenting the challenges they face, and describing

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the strategies they use to deal with those challenges (Open University 1993). In the analytical approach I adopted, I tried to carry out a systematic analysis of what each respondent said, but at the same time, I also aimed to gain insight into the meanings they ascribed to concepts they used. Thus, after transcribing the data I worked intensively with the text, annotating it closely for insights into participants' experiences and perspectives on their position in the factory. I did this by first carefully selecting the most insightful extracts from a given interview transcript and grouping those that touched on the same topic. Thus, extracts of the narrative were never understood in isolation from the rest but interlinked with each other and embedded in a given setting of only one person's circumstances, a feature that could have been lost if cross-sectional analysis had been used. That way I managed to capture a more insightful picture of migrants' complex experiences, often by showing their contradictory understanding of the same situations but from a different perspective. Nevertheless, as the analysis developed, I subsequently started to identify themes that were recurring throughout the texts. In the end this process resulted in developing overarching themes, analysis of which is presented in the following chapters.

The insightful analysis of the interviews, however, would not be possible without close examination of the narrative language, which provided access to subjective experiences. As suggested by Bowskill et al. (2007), by taking a discursive turn it was possible to go beyond the existing research and gain a richer picture of migrants' every-day experiences. This is because language converts "thoughts, feelings and sensory experiences into a shared symbolic form" and in that way it becomes the medium through which meaning and socially constructed reality can best be studied (Smith 2000. p.328). Accordingly, adopting such an approach enabled me to illuminate the process rather than just the variables of migrants' acculturation.

3.7 Presentation of data

In presenting fragments of my field notes from the participant observation stage, a vignette technique was deemed appropriate to explore migrants' perceptions, beliefs and meanings about specific situations in the workplace. The main reason for using

vignettes in this study was to allow actions to be explored in context but of particular importance was also the fact that I aimed to provide a less judgemental and therefore less threatening way of exploring important issues from the shop floor. Vignettes enable participants to define the situations in their own terms and even though the presented episodes are my recollection of the encountered situations, they illustrate the way people interact with each other and the dynamism of their relations. It was particularly important for me to acknowledge the fact that through the long-term engagement with individuals from my study and ongoing reciprocal exchanges, I not only gained an emic perspective of the situations but also built relationships. Having struggled with my own subjectivity, vignettes also enabled me to present my role in shop floor relations hence leaving a space for the reader to judge my potential colouring of how I handled the data I gathered. Being aware of the subjectivity, the narratives were written in the first person, not only in narrating specific events in which I was personally involved, but also to a varying degree in my analysis and conclusions. Nevertheless, I believe that such a presentation of the field notes enabled me to overcome the difficulty of introducing implicit knowledge of the company's culture and its workers' interactions. These beliefs and perspectives were so ingrained in a way of life that the participants were not themselves consciously aware of them.

To gain participants' conscious perspective on how they saw the workplace experience, a set of narrative interviews was collected. They were analysed in relation to what was already observed in the factory but in order to avoid limitations associated with cross-sectional or categorical indexing of qualitative data, which do not follow an ordered sequence or a uniform layout, narrations were presented one by one as individual stories. I believe that such a presentation of interview data enabled an in-depth insight into individual stories and made it possible to reveal the complex and often contradictory attitudes of the people involved. Analysis of presented narrations took the form of a further attempt to verify my previous observations. On that basis a list of themes and then final conclusions was developed which either challenged, supported or reinforced speculations posited after the participant observation. These related mainly to migrants' responses to the factory work regime, their relationships with co-workers, treatment by supervisors, attitudes towards managers 'upstairs' and many others.

3.8   Challenges of the research tools

Despite the virtues of the above, certain methodological challenges of this approach to data collection and analysis are also to be acknowledged here. Clearly, as with much empirical research, my findings are only a portion of what might be discovered. As Collingwood (1965) insists, knowledge is "created," not "discovered" and therefore the resulting interpretations are always incomplete and always open to challenge. This is because the issue of individual subjectivity emerges. And yet, what is important here is not the extent to which participants' interpretations are factually "correct" but that the findings reflect participants' own interpretations of their experiences (Denzin 1989). Thus the emphasis here is on exploring migrants' workplace experiences and illuminating processes that influence their acculturative strategies.

While the style of interviews chosen for this study was decided to best suit this purpose, it presented me with some challenges. As with all methods, there were times when interviews did not progress smoothly or as expected and situations arose that were not anticipated. These experiences provided me with important learning points, strengthening my interviewing technique in subsequent interviews. Nonetheless, I would like to share some of my reflections on doing narrative interview research.

Firstly, language certainly emerged as a one of the challenges in this type of research. While participant observation did not present me with any difficulties in terms of translation (my field notes mainly consisted of my reporting on the encountered and observed situations), interviews conducted with Poles and in Polish required translation and may have resulted in distortion of the data. However, despite lacking desirable training in translation skills I have managed to minimise the damage by focusing more on meaning than word-for-word translation and have taken the precaution of consulting over the meaning of the more complex and difficult phrases with other Polish-English speakers.

The next challenge I was faced with was the process of conducting the interview itself. A research tool developed by Wengraf (2001) follows the logic that an interviewer should stay "invisible" throughout the interview by being non-judgemental, non-interruptive and letting people talk. While the BNIM method fits perfectly into this type of interviewing, it assumes that all interviewees are good narrators, but they are not. Following a 3-day training course on BNIM where participants could practise being an interviewer as well as an interviewee and where everybody was aware of the structure and what was expected of them, I had gone into the interviews with Polish migrants with perceptions that people are generally good narrators who speak openly, give extended anecdotes, reflect on past experiences and consider present situations, even if these had to be probed with more specific questions. In practice what I found was that good narrators are rare. As other BNIM researchers have noted (e.g. Wengraf 2001) not everyone feels comfortable or appears able to engage in this type of research and my own experience in this study would support this.

However, it was not the case that any of the participants in this study were incapable of telling stories, but rather that some people clearly felt more comfortable answering more specific questions. Any difficulties could be partly explained by issues, present in any research, such as the willingness of people to reveal personal information. This, however, is in part a product of the relationship that the interviewee and interviewer can establish. I did not always have the opportunity to get to know my entire interviewees well, and in these instances I often found it necessary to combine stages two and three by asking more specific questions and giving interviewees a more acute sense of direction to ease their narratives. Consequently, I approached a couple of interviewees who struggled to tell their story themselves in a more responsive way. I tried to overcome such difficulties by striking up conversations in the same way as I would with my peers, having shared the experience of working in Food Co. and as a migrant worker myself. Accordingly, interview transcriptions revealed many leading questions that could result in some value-laden responses. Since my words may have unnecessarily littered the interview material, I decided not to discuss extracts from those particular interviews to ensure the maximum validity of the data. Stories that were selected for presentation in this thesis are therefore the ones that provide vivid accounts of the everyday practices and processes adopted by

migrants in a British workplace context. Nonetheless, even though I acknowledge the fact that interviews conducted by me did not all conform to Wengraf's ideal, the tool remained valid because it allowed me to: (i) focus on the ways in which people talk; (ii) illuminate a rich picture of migrants' every-day working life; and (iii) see what was happening in context and across a range of possibilities.

In terms of challenges that participant observation presented, some of which have already been raised in sections 3.3 and 3.3.1, it is worth reiterating the importance of the "researcher effect," as suggested by Hammersley and Atkinson (1993). The criticism is that due to the impact that a participant observer has on a research site, the conclusions drawn from such data may not necessarily be valid for that setting at other times. Whilst not wishing to remove researchers from the process completely, primarily because they form part of the social world they study and therefore have no external and conclusive standards by which to judge it, I contend that the researcher effect in my own study became a positive boon to the whole data collection process. The reasons are as follows. Hammersley and Atkinson argue that how people react to the presence of the researcher might be as informative as how they respond to other situations. As one of the episodes in the following chapter illustrates, there was the odd occasion when I did not just observe other people's reactions but experienced the impact of conflict first hand. The implicit effect of these situations, however, subsequently proved to be invaluable. Actively participating in shop-floor life and seemingly allying myself with migrant workers rather than managers, allowed me to build a positive picture of myself among work colleagues and gain their acceptance. It enabled me to gradually win their trust and gain their respect as one of their number. I cannot overstate the importance of this for the next phase of my data collection, when contacting co-workers to participate in interviews and when inviting them to tell their stories. This is why my main consideration was not always to remove or at least minimise my influence on the data I was collecting, but to understand how my presence in the factory shaped the data. The way it facilitated the subsequent interview process needs to be acknowledged.

3.9   **Ethics**

Ethical issues are often considered to be complex and controversial. The responsibilities of interviewers to narrators, consideration of harm to others and truthful presentations of research are the major, but not sole, areas of concern. My study is no exception in this regard and I have also been faced with some ethical dilemmas. Some, like ensuring participants' anonymity and getting their agreement to participate in the research, were relatively straightforward issues to resolve. All participants remained anonymous through changing names and work locations. For each subject I provided information on the nature of my research and gained an informed written consent to their participation, while at the same time ensuring that everybody was aware of their right to withhold information at any stage. Also, on a few occasions I found myself talking to people who felt uncomfortable with certain issues so I chose not to push them for any further explanations. In one particular case, for instance, I chose to stop the interview after 10 minutes of our conversation due to my participant's poor emotional condition. Despite volunteering to take part in the interviews, the participant was unable to discuss any aspect of their migration into the UK, and having rejected my private offer of help, left the room. Finally, on a few occasions I managed to organise a follow-up interview where I asked for further explanation of certain issues. However, in the majority of cases I felt that interviewees were doing me a big favour meeting me on their day off and participating in something that had no explicit value for them. Having accommodated their limited time and tiredness from work, I always attempted to gain maximum information on the day of the interview and not to take advantage of the fact that they had already agreed to participate in the research.

Undoubtedly, however, the most challenging ethical aspect has been my very presence in the factory. Apart from adhering to simple rules not to interrupt other people's work nor expose them to any harm or stress (as illustrated above), I found it particularly difficult to manage my relationships with all the organisational actors. This is because I perceived my position within the factory to be rather ambiguous and delicately balanced. On the one hand, I could be seen to be acting as an "insider" in some respects; a Pole who has migrated to the UK and now finds herself working alongside compatriots, other migrants and indigenous workers in a demanding

factory environment. However, I could just as easily be viewed as an "outsider" in so many other ways. I was not there to work as a means of earning a living but was someone who could be fundamentally flexible and independent in the sense that I could drift between departments whilst managers exercised limited control over what I did and where I went. Such a situation had its consequences in terms of my position on the shop floor and whether I belonged to "us" or "them." Whenever possible, I tried to occupy a position of detachment but it proved difficult to maintain on all occasions. Being able to speak English and having relatively better access and power in relationships with managers, I was often expected to intervene in situations of conflict or discrimination. On the other hand, managers trusted me enough not to abuse my position on the shop floor nor disrupt the normal pace of working. I was often told information about the other side in confidence in the expectation that I would reveal some information as well. Thus, in my attempt to perform ethically I never discussed with managers information that I had received from workers (even though I was asked on several occasions), and vice versa. Nonetheless, despite my best efforts to remain as objective and neutral as possible, on a number of occasions I either found myself unexpectedly drawn into a conflict situation or had become the source of some tension between others, as will be illustrated in some of the episodes in Chapter 4.

Talking to indigenous workers was also a sensitive matter. During my time in the factory I mainly performed as one of many other Polish workers. Thus asking British workers about how they find themselves working alongside migrant colleagues might not have proved to be particularly instructive. Therefore, on those rare occasions when making contact with them I tried to present myself more as a researcher than a worker of a particular national group. To complete the picture I also had to interact with Romanian workers who, whilst constituting a potentially rich source of information (they were the first migrants to be recruited from Central and Eastern Europe), were also perceived to be the prime competitors for jobs and promotion within the factory amongst rival migrant groups. Thus, establishing close friendships with Romanian workers was not really sustainable given the necessity to nurture links with Polish co-workers as a central focus of my fieldwork. Nevertheless I did go out of my way to talk to them whenever we were working together but avoided socialising with them in the canteen in sight and sound of other migrant

groups. This way I managed not to be tainted by forming too close an association with my participants' main rivals, but self-evidently, at the cost of losing other worthwhile participants.

3.10 **A final note**

Although the findings do not aim to be representative of the population of Polish workers in the UK, I feel that those findings revealed by my approach are examples that provide an interesting and rich insight into the experiences of some of those people that moved to the UK in the wake of the 2004 EU enlargement.

I believe that my choice of methodology is appropriate for the purpose of this study and both tools complement each other well in the process of building a thorough picture of migrant workers' adaptation to a British workplace. Using participant observation on its own would have given me a good idea of what it is like to work in a factory but I would have missed detailed insights into individual migrants' accounts of what it is like for them to negotiate their position in the factory on a day-to-day basis, what meanings they attach to certain experiences and how it shapes their (in)ability to fit into a new milieu. Moreover, it is believed that culture, as a coherent and homogeneous concept, is always an analytical fiction created by the ethnographer to make sense of what they hear, see and feel. As all people understand and experience cultures in their own unique way, I needed a record of migrants' discourse, which was impossible for me to collect in the factory environment. Thus, narrative interviews were used as a follow-up approach and delivered an additional element enabling me to provide a summation and analysis of these individual understandings and experiences.

4 EXPERIENCING FOOD CO.

4.1 The Food Co. way

The official history of Food Co., which is not referenced here in order to maintain the confidentiality of the company, is a story of how a small group of people, working out of a cramped caravan, established a factory to process milk for local farmers and began a global enterprise which is now a world leader in the food industry. It is a tribute to five men who developed a muddy field into a giant concern in less than thirty years and describes subsequent mergers and acquisitions and outlines the company's strategy, structure and culture. This official account of the essence of Food Co. also elaborates on the importance of its employees. Apparently, they remain the heart of the organisation and are the ultimate and sustainable advantage that powers the organisation through challenging and competitive times. As one of the founders explained, the strength of Food Co.'s culture lies in its people's strong work ethic:

> All those who work at Food Co. work very hard. I'm not sure why they
> still do so, but perhaps we [the top executives] lead it from here.

In order to use this potential Food Co. claims to expend considerable time and effort on developing management capability and strategic skills, and harnessing the skills, motivation and commitment of each individual towards achieving Food Co.'s organisational goals. This emphasis on personal responsibility and the commitment of each individual is said to be a distinctive characteristic of the Food Co. organisation.

But there is potentially another story to be told as anticipated by a contemporary generation of its employees, mostly migrant workers. It is believed in certain quarters that Food Co.'s culture has been defined so strongly as results-driven that an individual has to sell their soul to work for them. Indeed, some find the pace and intensity of work to be so demanding that they do not stay too long with the company. How much truth lies behind this statement and what it is like for an individual to work in Food Co. is the subject of this chapter. It starts with a brief

description of some of the facts and a historical account of new wave migration in the plant. Then it gradually progresses towards more subjective accounts of the workplace that people may experience when coming to work at Food Co. This is done by presenting a selection of episodes experienced during the participant observation stage. These are proffered to provide a rich context as a backdrop to the later analysis.

4.2 Introducing the research site

The site is one of nineteen in the UK and Ireland that belong to the international Food Co. Group. Locally, it is characterised as one of the largest employers with a high proportion of migrant workers. At the time of my research (2008/09) the factory employed almost 950 contracted employees and of these, approximately 26 per cent were of British origin, 47 per cent were Polish and 9 per cent were Romanians. The rest consisted of a considerably smaller representation of other nationalities such as Indian, Latvian, Lithuanian, Slovakian and 21 other nationalities. Additionally, an on-site recruitment agency employed around 160 workers, all of whom were of Polish nationality. They remain employed by the agency for various periods of time depending on their performance and the availability of permanent positions in a given department, some even for over eighteen months.

4.2.1 *Background*

The UK food manufacturing industry provides an example of increased competitiveness and drive to keep operating costs down. The industry mirrors its customer base in the high level of competitiveness between competing suppliers that is present in the market. There are several key players in the UK food retail market striving for market share in both high street and out of town stores. Other discounters from continental Europe also add to the increasing market pressures. Nowhere is the competitive pressure more evident than in the retail stores where the drive is for product quality, low prices and the provision of greater choice of products for consumers. This activity is aimed at gaining a competitive edge and adds to the

intensity of the competition between retailers who have also transferred the competitive heat to those producers and suppliers who can deliver the product quality, selection and customer service that they require whilst seeking to support their business aims. Hence, supermarkets instigate high degrees of auditing, traceability and monitoring of their food manufacturers. This, coupled with constant pressure on prices and sometimes unpredictable demands for goods, heavily impacts on the intensity of the production lines in particular and conditions of work and employment within supply organisations in general. Under such circumstances, the balance of power is constantly shifting and creating a very tough environment for food manufacturers to conduct business.

Food Co. has responded by following a strategy of growing a pastry business that the company believed had the capacity to survive and thrive in this environment. This meant, first and foremost, increasing the headcount of those directly employed on the production line but mostly recognising the fact that high performance and workforce engagement is essential for the business to succeed. Employing migrants who are portrayed as committed and hard-working people and applying a low wage approach to employment relations seems to fit the requirements of today's market. Most importantly however, the presence of migrant workers appears to enable the company to develop Atkinson's (1984) flexible firm model. Employing migrant workers mainly through an on-site recruitment agency and on a minimum wage secures numerical and financial flexibility, while the availability of highly educated and willing migrants to engage in high risk low status jobs gives the company functional flexibility.

4.2.2 *Migrant workers at Food Co.*

The history of employing migrant workers at Food Co. started long before the 2004 EU enlargement but it has never been on such a scale and of such strategic importance for the organisation. The pro-active strategy of recruiting labour abroad was first pursued in 2003 and was dictated by labour market shortages, both regional and national. While it became increasingly difficult to recruit people into the factory, local management recognised that in order to survive it needed to expand its

operations. While they were operating in a very competitive industry, the local labour market was incapable of supplying the numbers to match growth. Moreover, there did not seem to be any labour market nationwide that the employer could tap into and the reasons behind it were twofold. First, people's unwillingness to relocate to the south of England where living costs were perceived to be relatively high. Second, work in manufacturing was perceived as highly undesirable. There appeared to be no alternative other than to fill labour shortages from mainland Europe.

At that time there were long-standing trade agreements between the UK and Romania, which included the ability for Romanian workers to come to the UK under the Sector Based Scheme. The only condition of that scheme was that they would have to return or leave the UK for two in every twelve months so as to be able to return for another twelve months of work. Using this opportunity, the plant HR manager went to Romania and recruited a pilot group of 25 to 30 employees. Necessary arrangements involved funding the flights to come to the UK, making sure that there was accommodation for workers and inducting them into the business. Moreover, because the company claims to be cautious about information that is released into the public domain, mainly due to the fact that it operates in a highly competitive sector, there was also a concern about how workers coming over from Europe were going to be housed and looked after socially when they were not at work. The aim was to give the new incoming workers a sense of being at home. Thus, with issues such as accommodation or transport the company had to strike a balance between not being too invasive or paternalistic outside of work and also not really wanting any third parties to get involved, to avoid the risk of exploitation by unfair agencies or other service suppliers.

An interview with the HR manager revealed an emerging recruitment strategy around 'well-educated' migrant workers that solved their local labour shortages. To what extent it was a deliberate strategy for targeting well-educated people who were more likely to be proficient in language, self-disciplined and self-directed remains unclear, but it could also be that such was the labour pool available to him during pre-arranged recruitment meetings. The situation was that the HR manager found himself interviewing well-educated people, predominantly in their twenties and with good levels of English. Moreover, their skills seemed to be appropriate for the plant as

they were trained butchers; so in the end the company recruited about 150 staff from Romania through that route. The question that remains unanswered however, was at what point Food Co. decided on this deliberate "low road" strategy (Osterman 1994, p.179). It could be that as a result of budget limitations the management chose not to invest in new technology and work methods and pursue the cost-reduction approach, that is, low skill and low wage strategy. Insufficient supply of low-level skill in the local labour market however led to them recruiting in Eastern Europe. On the other hand, it could also be that availability of this cheap labour force abroad made the company refrain from advancing their systems of production and people management techniques. Either way, Food Co. managed to find a way to increase production at low cost and remain competitive in the market but ironically, with a workforce with high level skills.

Since the organisation continued to grow, in 2005 it started to look for a labour force in the accession countries (A8) as it was clearly going to be a much easier process. Henceforth, there were two streams of work going on: one to retain the Romanian workforce, which had been highly productive for the business, and the other to start another work stream in Poland, recruiting people through the Worker Registration Scheme. While the process of recruiting from Poland was much simpler because there was no complication of workers leaving after twelve months of work, the organisation kept the Romanian workforce because at that time many of them were already on their second or third cycle. Hence Food Co. wanted to retain this skill base within the business. It became a dual employment strategy whereby Romanian workers, due to their alleged better skills and experience, started to naturally progress to supervisory and team leadership positions, while new incoming Poles were taking on the lowest positions on the shop floor. As we shall see later, this has created a hierarchy among migrant workers built on their nationality. Again, to what extent this was a deliberate management strategy remains unclear, certainly it is refuted by the HR manager, but such a situation clearly sets up a list of issues and contradictions of which Food Co.'s management could scarcely have been unaware. Firstly, keeping the original group of migrant workers and introducing another with different contractual status seems likely to have created feelings of discrimination and unfairness among the latter. Even though the apparently advantageous position of Romanians who arrived first can be justified by a logic of fairness, subsequent

arrivals of both Poles and Romanians at the same time underlined the significance of differences between these two groups of migrants. Romanians, due to their legal status, can take up employment in the UK only on condition they secure themselves a contract before entering the country. For that reason, Romanians who come to work in the factory are given a contract on the day of their arrival. The situation for Polish and other A8 migrants is different in the sense that they often have to wait several months before they can enjoy the same contractual status. To be more flexible in its operations as well as to keep the costs down, the company employs A8 migrants through the on-site recruitment agency. Such a situation also seems likely to lead to dissatisfaction and conflict among those who have to wait for the benefits of permanent employment and those who are given them without joining the queue. Consequently, it could also be expected that Romanian workers will always be ahead of A8 migrants in terms of promotion because as non-agency workers they start building their careers and relations with the management earlier than others.

Another factor entailed here are the cross cultural differences between Romanians and Poles. Even though historically there is little evidence of overt conflict between Poland and Romania, reality turns out to be different as it is rather common among Poles to distrust Romanians who are associated in their minds with Roma. Due to the relatively poorer Romanian economy, Polish people commonly perceive Romanians as poor and less able to take care of themselves. In certain quarters there is a stereotype of the dirty Romanian, mainly because of their darker skin colour but also poverty that leads them to travel to nearby countries such as Poland where they are obliged to beg for money in the streets (Smoke 1996). Hence gypsies living in Poland, even though they have nothing in common with Romanians, are often contemptuously called Romanians. Such a picture of Romanians in Polish workers' minds plays a role in their perceptions of Romanian work colleagues. When this insight is compounded with Romanians' relatively better position in the company, one may anticipate conflict. In this way the presence of Romanian supervisors and team leaders might be another element that escalates the difficult workplace experience for many Poles.

Even though it seems that Polish and Romanian nationalities are not necessarily culturally compatible, Poland has certainly been identified as a country that enjoys a

good cultural fit with Britain. Consequently, as a response to my question as to why Poland has been selected as a main source of Food Co.'s workforce, only one of the reasons was the country's large population and high unemployment. According to the HR manager, apart from being a source of relatively cheap and available labour, it was also expected that because of the shared history of Poland and the UK, the former has never been perceived as a completely distant and alien country:

> Why Poland? Because Poland hasn't been a bad experience. If it had been a bad experience then maybe the business would have been forced to go somewhere else but I think, I think it is a great culture; I think there are similarities in the UK workforce to the Polish culture. I mean, there are clearly big differences but, you know, when you get down to the shop floor, working with people, they are very similar. You know, they support football teams, they like to have a beer in the evenings, they have an inherent sense of what's right and wrong; there's a culture in Poland of standing up to things that are wrong…hard working people, you know. So I don't think it's so much about 'why Poland?' and it's probably about 'why not?' There is no reason not to go to Poland. It's been a very successful source of labour. (HR manager)

Here Poland is presented as a culturally compatible country, where people are similar to the British. Unlike other migrant cohorts in the UK, especially from Africa and South Asia, Poles have the presumed cultural capital that comes with being white and Christian. Fitzgerald and Hardy (2010) found in their study that at a workplace level, the acceptance of A8 and Polish workers was made easier by their 'Europeanness'. In fact, there is a considerable body of knowledge that suggests that similarity leads to favourable attitudes while dissimilarity leads to unfavourable attitudes (e.g. Rokeach 1960, Byrne 1969, Tajfel 1970). Such theorising implies that visible differences between groups enhance group conflict (Deutsch 1977). Consequently, it could be assumed that because of the similarities there was going to be better communication between Poles and management as well as a better understanding of the employment relations. It is therefore possible that this cultural compatibility was supposed to secure limited conflict and enhanced compliance in the workplace.

Meanwhile, the process of recruitment involved the HR manager going to major Polish cities, evaluating people's level of English and recruiting but also giving them as much information as possible on what it is like to work and live in the UK. Despite giving a number of presentations and distributing leaflets in both English and Polish, the information still seemed to be insufficient to communicate the message of high UK living costs.

> No matter what we did there…the feedback from them is that no matter what you say they were blinded by the perspective of being able to earn more money than they could earn in a month in Poland and come to the UK and ignore the information about the cost of living when they are over here. (HR manager)

As the HR manager admitted, underlying all of this was the fact that they were recruiting highly qualified, talented and motivated people from Poland to come to the business and it would not have survived without them. Moreover, as suggested earlier, it could be that the inflow of this cheap labour permitted Food Co. to continue operating with labour-intensive methods of production. If labour had continued to be scarce, the company would have had a greater incentive to modernise. However, installing new machinery would have been expensive and would have made the production process more capital intensive. More advanced technology would also have required a different sort of labour force; more highly skilled and hence more expensive. Recruiting migrant workers has therefore become the most suitable option for Food Co.

Another problem that arose for Food Co. was that as a result of recruiting cheap and industrious migrant workers the company also gained a by-product in the form of highly-qualified workers. An inherent contradiction has therefore been set up whereby high grade and self-motivated workers are being required to operate in a work regime characterised by low autonomy and discretion and with little opportunity for transferable skill acquisition or upgrading. Following their mission statement as being a market leader through the skills and commitment of their employees (internal document), the company decided to take advantage of the availability of highly-educated workers as long as they were willing to work for low wages. However, such a decision was potentially risky in terms of the unsuitability of

these people for a Fordist work environment. This was especially so in a situation where, due to their age and level of education, it could have been expected that these people had a relatively short experience of working life, in particular of harsh physical work in the production industry. Certainly, for some, their educational and social background meant that it was not only their first job abroad but also their first ever job. Under such circumstances a lack of preparedness, even shock, could accompany young migrant workers who may have lost their bearings in a traditional factory environment, never mind a foreign one. It is not unreasonable to see them as being prone to feelings of work alienation as depicted by Blauner (1964). Migrants' feelings of being lost and uncertainty of their position in the British workplace could translate into employment relations issues.

As a consequence, one could expect that such a clash of strategies was likely to produce high levels of worker dissatisfaction and conflict. It is believed that low wage production strategies characterised by labour treated as a cost item with tight supervisory control and low levels of trust, usually result in low levels of engagement, especially when it affects already underemployed people. In such a situation two of Hirschman's (1970) predicted outcomes from worker disquiet with their employer would be of particular relevance: voice and exit. It could be that having pursued the low road strategy with limited investment in training and people management techniques, the company have never perceived migrant workers as long-term staff anyway. Given the nature of post-enlargement migration it is financially and logically possible for migrants from the new EU member states to come to the UK on a temporary or seasonal basis (Pollard et al. 2008): hence in the long run they might not be perceived as resources worth advancing from an employer's investment perspective. Potentially high staff turnover might also have been incorporated in the company's plans from the very beginning. Because of the availability of a large pool of migrant workers and the need to keep production costs low, it was still strategically and financially sound to combine a low cost production strategy with the use of qualified migrant workers.

Even though this appears to be a rather short-term approach, there is another argument for employing migrants, despite the fact they are often overqualified and common sense would suggest problems in terms of retaining such workers. As Shih

(2002) argues, when recruiting, employers do not focus solely on the skills of job seekers, but rather on the type of relationship that employers might have with their low-skill employees. This is because productivity is seen as the outcome of social relations in the workplace, rather than solely the outcome of workers' skills. From this perspective it is unsurprising when employers' preferences centre around behavioural or attitudinal traits, because "employers of low-skill jobs are more likely to desire workers who are manageable, obedient and pliable i.e. those who are least likely to contest their direct authority" (Shih 2002, p.102). Similar arguments had earlier been deployed by Jenkins (1986) who found that one of employers' criteria for recruiting people was 'acceptability' which was not characterised by any particular attributes but perceived by employers as a characteristic bound up with the problem of management control in the workplace. It seems that at the workplace level immigrants are perceived as the ones who are highly acceptable because of their work ethic. In Shih's study, employers showed a preference for employing migrants over indigenous workers because the former not only demonstrate a willingness to work at any job regardless of working conditions, but they also work hard and obey the orders and authority of employers. Moreover, employers attributed 'having the right work ethic' to migrant workers because of their migrant status, and therefore supposedly believed in the 'American Dream' of meritocracy, where mobility is possible through hard work and persistence. Certainly, the management of Food Co. could have expected the same type of 'right' attitude to work by offering a job to people who came over from relatively poorer countries and who believed in having a better life in the UK. Hence, they were appreciative of having a job and earning money that was incomparably better than home country earnings. Consequently, the strategy of employing migrant workers, even though overqualified and theoretically unsuitable for the low-skilled jobs, in practice turned out to be a success. They gained not only a cheap labour force but also a labour force with 'the right' work ethic.

Nevertheless, while at that time recruiting overqualified workers was not an issue for Food Co., because they were getting capable workers at low cost, it came as a surprise in 2007 when they noticed that the type of people coming from Poland was changing. They were now thought not to be as highly educated as their predecessors with implications for their level of language proficiency, and consequently

communication in the workplace. Moreover, despite working equally well, their motives for being here also appeared to have changed. Accordingly, while in the early days people were highly motivated, in 2009 the management of Food Co. said they were struggling to motivate Polish workers. It seems likely that changed circumstances in the 'receiving' country can help to explain this. With the arrival of large numbers of people from A8 countries, especially Poles, the circumstances have changed significantly since 2004. Unlike the first inflows of migrants, people now migrate to the UK using considerable networks of family and friends who have already settled here. Apparently, they are not as lost and uncertain of their presence in the country and things seem to be less problematic, with the availability of Polish speaking bankers, doctors and trade union activists. Hence, more recently arrived migrants are likely to receive far more help in dealing with everyday matters including finding a job. They might even be less determined to stick to one employer because a well-developed network of friends will always provide information on available vacancies at their workplaces and even guarantee an outstanding performance to a new employer.

Nevertheless, apart from problems with motivating new workers, the company has not experienced so called 'negative migration', that is, people going back to Poland, as there have been no recent changes in terms of how difficult or easy it has been to recruit people to work in the factory. In fact, the opposite seems to be taking place as the major cause of long-term absence from Food Co. recently has been pregnancy which, according to the HR manager, might be an indicator of how settled people have become here. For that reason, it is possible that the company's management is inclined to believe that they provide conditions satisfactory enough for their migrant workers to settle in the country for a longer time period. According to Iglicka (2011), the decision to give birth to a child in another country is an attempt to put down roots in that country. She believes that we are no longer dealing with short-term migration, but settlement, and the fertility rate in the UK illustrates this claim. In 2009 British women had a fertility rate of 1.84 compared to 2.48 for Poles who are now second on the list with the highest number of children born in the UK. This is a significant increase since 2005 when Polish women were placed ninth in this ranking. Iglicka argues that these statistics show not only the increasing number of Polish nationals living in the UK but also the transformation from large labour migration into an

underestimated long-term migration, with a strong desire to settle in the UK - they have children because there are better living conditions for families than in Poland.

One could therefore expect that by having a perceived 'better life' might not only change migrants' settlement plans, but might also have implications in terms of attitudes to the UK job market and employment in the country. Their optimism for a better life could drive their motivation for working hard and tolerating sometimes difficult situations but does not necessarily mean that they are satisfied with the status quo. In the light of relatively higher salaries and better living standards than in Poland, migrants are possibly more understanding and open-minded about their currently harsh working conditions. And yet they hope for a better future for their children and themselves once they have learnt the language, become familiar with labour market rules and built networks with local people. For this reason, the HR manager's assumption that the company provides satisfactory conditions of employment since there is no negative migration visible among Polish workers (source: interview), might not entirely reflect the employment relations at Food Co. Hence, to investigate the reality of working in the factory from the migrant worker's perspective, I now turn to presenting the workplace setting.

4.2.3   *Research setting: the factory*

The Food Co. is a long established food manufacturing business that has been in existence in the town since the late 1800s. The present site was built in the 1930s when it was owned by a local family, and the business was acquired by a number of other owners from the 1960s onwards. Food Co. Group acquired the business in 1991 and it has undergone a number of transitions since this time, the most recent being in 2003 when all pastry manufacture for Food Co. UK was consolidated in the town. The factory building itself, however, has not been renovated since the acquisition and apart from investment in machinery to adjust the plant for the production of pastry, the site lacks the modern equipment and technology which might be expected in a 21st century factory.

The grey and austere construction of the site, which occupies 40,000 square meters and looks like a typical manufacturing plant from the past, appears somewhat intimidating at first. In addition, the smell of cooking food products pervades the air around the plant. The shop floor consists of a number of departments divided by corridors meandering across the site. There are five bakeries consisting of different departments where pastry and fillings are prepared, and ovens and chillers where products are baked and stored before being taken to the packing areas. There are also departments where bowls, racks, trays, tins and pans are cleaned, stores where ingredients are delivered and a despatch area where pallets of ready products are loaded onto the customers' lorries.

Despite the size and substance of the site in the local market, with the number of employees reaching almost 1,000 people and the output of manufactured food reaching 600 tonnes per week, the factory seems to be far from representing modern methods of mass production. In fact, it is a very labour-intensive environment with little use of advanced manufacturing techniques. For example a machine that is over 15 metres long is operated by a team of 30 people. They manually upload slices of raw pastry, bowls of meat fillings and flour. They lay tins for the products and ensure nothing gets blocked in the process. They monitor the quality of manufactured pies, their size, weight and colour, and finally load them onto trays. Then bakers push racks of 20 trays one by one into large ovens. Pies and sausage rolls are baked at a particular temperature and for a particular time period. In each baking department there are usually five to seven bakers whose main responsibility is to collect racks from production lines, upload them to ovens and set the right temperature and time of baking. Having finished they make sure that a record is kept of all baked products which are then taken to fridges and chilling storage areas. At the next stage trays of pies are taken to so-called 'high risk' packing departments which are usually formed from several smaller lines that comprise between three and ten people. The number of people on each line is determined by the type of pies and how many of them will go into the box. It is a high risk area because extra care needs to be taken when dealing with ready-to-eat but unpacked pies to eliminate contamination of the product. At the start of the line plastic boxes are placed onto an automated belt which passes them down the line. On one side of the line there are usually a couple of workers who take trays off the racks while workers on the other side pick pies off the

trays and put them into plastic boxes that move along the line. There is usually job rotation on the line and every two hours workers swap roles to place boxes on the line, take off trays or put pies into the boxes. At the end of the line plastic boxes filled with the product are foiled by a machine and passed down the line to a 'low risk' packing department through a window in a wall. At this end of the line there are usually two or three workers who construct cardboard boxes and fill them with packed pies which are constantly arriving on the moving belt. Finally, the cardboard boxes are sealed by another worker and loaded onto a pallet. Once it is full, the worker takes it to the despatch department where another group of workers organises the products according to the brand and prepares them for collection by appropriate clients.

One may note the similarities between this organisation's work practices and those presented by the studies of Beynon (1975), Roy (1959) or Cavendish (1982), for example, high levels of work division, hence monotony of performed tasks and dependency on other workers' and departments' pace of the line. In Food Co. however, there is an extra element that reinforces the inherent tension within the production process. It is not only the need to operate high volume production lines but also the requirement to operate with the highest hygiene standards due to the nature of food manufacturing. Non-contaminated food is the company's other 'bottom-line' alongside profit making. Hence strict rules in terms of wearing appropriate coats, boots and hairnets, and forbidding any jewellery, make-up, or items in one's pockets other than locker keys and a clock-in card, are just a few examples from the long list of restrictions imposed on shop-floor workers. A lot of pressure is put on workers whose chances of losing their jobs seem to be far greater than in a non-food producing plant. For instance, an individual can be dismissed on the grounds of gross misconduct by not washing their hands on entering the shop floor or eating the product. This adds to the everyday hassle of physically working at full pace on the production line.

The factory operates 24/7 and people work on three shifts: morning, evening, mix, rotating in a pattern 6 days on and 3 days off. Overtime is available when the day's production target has not been met due to higher than usual client orders or machinery downtime. Workers are paid time and a half for working overtime which

is eagerly awaited by most migrant workers who seek to maximise their wage in a given week. As we shall discover in more detail later, the decision on who gets overtime opportunities appears to be highly dependent on one's nationality, just like their promotional prospects and position on the shop floor.

4.2.4 *Daily factory life*

It is reasonable to describe jobs at Food Co. as low-skilled, with most workers repetitively doing the same simple tasks day in day out. Indeed, a significant majority of people working on the shop floor, mostly A8 migrant workers, perform unskilled but physically demanding jobs that do not require any qualifications, previous experience or even English language skills. There are only a few skilled jobs represented on the shop floor and they are usually filled by Romanian workers. So-called QAs (Quality Assurers), Machine Minders and Line Leaders are people trained on the job to perform duties of relatively higher importance than an average employee. For this reason they are paid slightly more and enjoy the privilege of having some level of control over the way things are done on the shop floor. The last group of employees, mostly British, constitute managers who are in charge of every department and report to the main production and operations managers. However, the latter already represent the 'upstairs' employees. Apart from them, in the offices above the shop floor there are finance, human resources, planning and product development specialists, again in the majority of cases of British or Romanian nationality.

Looking at the shop floor jobs only, the vast majority of the workforce is classically organised along Fordist lines which could represent a Taylorist division of labour, skill base and supervisory style. Tasks are maximally fragmented and simplified while production techniques can be compared to those described by Beynon (1975) or Braverman (1974). Any decisions about the manner in which work is to done are made by managers, and stages and methods for every aspect of work performance are dictated precisely. As a result the training of a new starter on the job can usually be done in less than fifteen minutes. Depending on where a person is assigned to work they either push racks to/from ovens and chillers, pack baked pies on the line,

or fold paper boxes and fill them with labelled products. These routinised and de-skilled tasks, despite being physically demanding and mind-numbing, seem to attract many migrant workers. This is because they often see it as a good start - such a job does not require special qualifications, language skills or cultural knowledge, yet is relatively easy to secure. The job becomes an additionally compelling prospect when it comes to the financial terms of employment. The hourly pay rate of £5.80, which was higher than the minimum wage at the time I was at the company (2008/09), is rarely a reason to complain. As a result of this, having completed initial recruitment activities abroad, there are currently no recruitment strategies in place since local labour markets have become saturated with migrant workers. Willingness to work hard in rather severe conditions seems to be a good enough characteristic looked for in potential Food Co. employees. Hence, as long as there are vacancies available, everyone who enters the door and asks for a job gets it, while time verifies the person's suitability. Consequently, the physical work environment remains potentially the most challenging aspect of the job, a real test of people's stamina and determination. Such is the case since the first inflows of A8 and A2 migrants started in the UK.

As indicated above, however, Food Co.'s proactive recruitment strategy had already started in 2003 and it resulted in the significant increase in headcount from 250 to almost 950 workers. Of that number, 506 workers belong to the A8 group including 444 Poles, 244 people are of British nationality, followed by 84 Romanians who comprise the third largest group of workers in the factory. At the time of this research (2008/09), indigenous workers were in the minority on the shop floor, making up numbers mainly in 'offices upstairs', while the rest of the workforce comprised 25 other nationalities. Some of these, such as Latvians and Slovakians, arrived after the 2004 EU enlargement, whereas others, such as the Portuguese or Indians, have a relatively longer-term relationship with Food Co., some having been present on site in small numbers since the beginnings of Food Co. in town.[4]

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[4] migrant workers have been a feature for many years but in relatively small numbers; there have been workers from ex-UK colonies in the 'Far East' (South East Asia), the Caribbean and Uganda in particular - all part of the 'Commonwealth' coming to the UK between the 1950s and the 1970s. In the late 1990s there was an influx of workers from Portugal and a few from France, Spain. Also, some were staying under special conditions from Africa, the Middle East (Iran, Iraq & Afghanistan) and ex-USSR, mainly given asylum. In the late 1990s and early 2000s these were the spouses of staff from

In some respects such a workforce composition resembles that observed by Cavendish (1982) where on the shop floor virtually all the assemblers were migrants (Irish, Afro-Caribbeans, or Indians) and the handful of indigenous workers were mostly in low level supervisory roles. The origins of recent waves of migrant workers to the UK are more varied than in the 1960s and 1970s, less centred on former British colonies, and this is reflected in Food Co.'s workforce composition. However, Cavendish's study is different in that 'her' migrant workers appeared not to differentiate between one nationality and another. As will be presented in the following episodes from the shop floor and interviews later, in Food Co. there is limited space for workplace friendships or networking between people of different or even the same nationalities. Except for Romanians, whose level of support towards each other seems higher than everyone else's, migrant workers in general seem to act very atomistically. This is unexpected compared to the findings of literature such as that of Cavendish, where migrants, irrespective of nationality, constituted a homogeneous group. There was strict differentiation between jobs, grades or gender but nationality appeared not to be a source of workplace competition or conflict. Moreover, in Cavendish's account, shared ethnicity was not even a basis for friendship, and it was only in bad times, such as the aftermath of the strike, that the women broke down into ethnic groups.

Many researchers point to the significance of familial and friendship ties in securing employment, especially for migrant workers (Grieko 1987, Portes 1995, Thiel 2007), and this was also the case in Cavendish's study. However, even though most of the women there had friends or relatives in the factory, all were very friendly and outgoing to everyone else. Inclusiveness was the norm so people behaved as best friends while they were in the factory because what mattered most was the fact they were all in the same circumstances. This form of sociability could be characterised as a strong sense of solidarity. The shared experience and interdependence of the women assembly workers gave them more in common with each other than with any other group, providing a strong basis for their sense of solidarity. Awareness of themselves as a group, and of the potential strength of the group, made them

India working as orderlies in the National Health Service. Next was the influx from Romania, Poland and other A8/A2 countries.

powerful people which was reflected in a strike led by women from below. They were powerful in a sense that women assemblers were aware of their position at the heart of the motor industry, of their connection with workers in other factories and of the potential impact of their collective actions on British industry and the wider economy. On the other hand, these migrant workers were not cowed by their circumstances. According to Cavendish they came over as strong and resilient, prepared to stand up for themselves, and would have been insulted by any suggestion that they were weak.

Whether this is also true for migrant workers in Food Co. is one of the concerns in this study. The interest of this research lies in the intersection of highly mobile migrants and their work which is organised and managed in a traditional understanding of employment relations. To examine the relations between a British workplace and new migrant workers who come into the environment without previous preparation but with expectations of a better life provided the impetus for starting this research in the first place. Hence I entered the workplace not only to experience it myself but also to avoid accepting things at face value when listening to accounts of the main organisation actors.

The following account is my understanding of the situations I found myself in, and not of the people I am researching here. However, these episodes can serve as a source of 'sensitising concepts' (Blumer 1954): they can suggest unique ways in which people organise their experiences, the sorts of 'situated vocabularies' (Mills 1940) they employ, the routine events, and the troubles and reactions they encounter (Hammersley and Atkinson 1993). In the next few sections I therefore present a set of issues that appear important in shaping migrants' work attitudes and their adaptation to the workplace. This includes their responses to the physicality of the workplace and the fatigue of working on the line; workers' 'natural' segregation in the canteen; and the managers' 'invisibility' on the shop floor. Equally, it also refers to the salience of 'neutrality' for migrants and their strong desire to live 'normal' lives. These preoccupations were then expanded upon by my interviewees who spoke about their experiences and so provided some answers to many of the questions that arose during my time in the factory.

4.2.5 *First day at Food Co.*

I could sense it was going to be a hard and strenuous day as I dragged myself out of bed. It is Monday, my first day working at the factory and it's raining cats and dogs. I ought to be excited about this new experience that I'm going to embark upon, but I'm hardly enthused at the prospect. It must all be down to the induction training I had last week. I was taken to the shop floor to see what the production process is all about; to see how the place is organised and get a feel for what working there would be like. I must admit that it was a shocking experience for me because it was nothing like I imagined, having never worked in a similar setting before. Just the sight of the production line sent a chill down my spine; I couldn't imagine pulling through this one. The various duties were extremely laborious and repetitive. The grinding noise of the machinery was unbearable and enough to drive me mad within just a couple of minutes of my arrival. "What have I got myself into this time?" I thought to myself regretfully.

As I was walking around the factory I realised that every department was either very cold (meat storage areas), very hot (bakeries) or extremely noisy (production areas), not to mention all the shouting in a bid to have a quick word with a colleague. At this point I was totally bewildered and couldn't understand why so many university-educated people were in a place like that. Was it because it was a well-paid job? Or did they have a sense of job security? Or maybe the atmosphere was friendly? None of these questions seemed to have answers that ticked the right boxes. Despite the atrocious working environment, four hours had never passed so quickly It was already the end of my induction day. On my way back home, I met a friend who told me a story of a few Polish girls leaving the factory after two days and calling it a "labour camp." That is a phrase I associate with WWII movies. I couldn't say that the story did much for my already fragile motivation for working at the factory.

It's the following morning and I've just caught the train to the factory; I am so stressed at what awaits me. Even though I do realise that if I cannot hack it I can walk out at anytime, I really don't want to come across as a quitter. As I walk

towards the factory, I can see it in the distance and horrific thoughts about the day just won't escape my mind. I cannot imagine how much more difficult it is for non-English speakers. Perhaps I do have that advantage after all and should really think positively at this stage. I also know the management and have the flexibility to switch between roles; maybe it's not going to be that bad after all, I somehow feel better for looking on the brighter side. I keep saying to myself that I am here for completely different reasons and even if I cannot stand the hard physical work and long hours I do not have to stay here. The smell of pies when I'm approaching the factory makes me feel sick, the amount of times I have thought to myself "this is crazy," is unbelievable.

On getting to the factory, I head straight for the canteen because it's the only place I can see some faces I will recognise. After all the rain from last night and this morning, all I find in the café are the buckets collecting leaks from the ceiling and most of the tables and chairs are covered in water. I know my first impression could not have been more accurate; the factory needs modernisation. I go to the changing room to get ready as advised yesterday. I ask for two coats (one with a blue collar for the low risk area and one with a red collar for the high risk area) and get geared up for the long day ahead. I first put on the blue collar coat, my white shoes and a blue hat. I take earplugs and gloves, put yellow boots and the red collar coat into a bin liner and go downstairs. I feel lost and terrified because the person who was supposed to take me downstairs did not show up. I ask somebody how to get to the Hot Pie Pack (HPP) area to which I am assigned and follow the directions.

Before I enter the department I have to change my white shoes into yellow boots, change the coat and put on a red cap. This is all such a fuss before I even get started. On entering the high risk area, I report to the supervisor I met the other day and she asks me to stand on the third line. Everyone down here is already up and going as if they'd been working for hours and it's only the beginning of the day. I'm squeezed in between two people and pretty much ordered by the line leader to pack pies into boxes as quickly as possible. On my first go, I grab a few pies but half of them slip out of my hand before I transfer them. With more attempts at the job I don't seem to be getting any better and I'm getting to the end of my tether. The glares from my colleague are not helping either as I'm slowing the line down; this is certainly not a

good start. A man standing next to me decides to show me how to grab the pies. His hands are blatantly bigger than mine and I don't get how he expects me to pick at least seven pies at one go. I laugh nervously and get the evils; I'm not sure I like this place. I can sense some improvement after a while but this laborious task is taking its toll on my weak muscles. Strangely enough, the smell of the pies doesn't bother me at all at this stage. The aching in my back, hands and wrists keeps intensifying as time passes but the minutes seem to be taking longer to go by. I swear I checked the clock half an hour ago but it has only moved five minutes. I can't keep up with the pace and the noise from the machines is driving me mad, not to mention the head banging rock and roll blaring from the radio; I'm well and truly out of my depth.

I can see why the people in this place prefer not to talk to each other, it's pretty much pointless to try and hold a conversation in this environment. The only thing I can hear is the line leader's voice behind my back telling me to hurry up and pay more attention to burnt pies. He does not understand that I am doing my best. It's just not physically possible to lift a million pies at one go, check their bottoms and place them perfectly in their boxes that are also on a pretty fast moving line. I can't start and be perfect at the same time, what about learning the job Mr Manager? It would be nice if he appreciated that I have only just started! I try to concentrate and be strong. I now have excruciating pain in my muscles, trying to keep up with the speed, annoyed with the music, the noise of the machines; the list goes on and on. Dear God, please bring that tea break.

4.2.6 *Episode 1: 'Them and us'*

Today I'm working in the low risk area at the last stage of the packing process. High risk and low risk areas are separated by a glass wall to allow each team a view of the other and to work at a similar pace. On this side of the wall, pies are packed into plastic boxes and go through a foil-wrapping machine. The foiled pie packets are slid through a window over to the low risk area where they are picked, labelled and boxed. Next, the boxes are put through a machine that tapes them and one of the workers puts them on a pallet and they are ready to be dispatched. Even though there is still a lot of movement, the environment seems to be friendlier here as there

are not so many people and the noise is not as irritating as in other sections of the factory. It is rather warmer in this section too; I quite like working in the low risk area. At this stage I begin asking myself stupid questions: will I finally start to enjoy working in this place? Is it at all possible, though, to enjoy work at this factory? Well, I'm working with a small team of two Polish girls and I have to say that it kind of works for me. I don't like it when it's so noisy and hectic. This time I hope to be able to develop a closer working relationship with my colleagues rather than trying to hold a conversation in the other noisy sections. I've learnt that it really does make life more difficult when all you can manage to squeeze in in conversation is the odd "how are you" or "can you help at line number 5." Half the time in the noisy section it is even difficult to tell whether someone can hear you or is just ignoring you.

One of the girls I'm working with, Ula, is one of those naturally frustrated characters. She seems to be annoyed with everyone and everything around her. Just looking at her facial expressions would tell me everything but listening to her swearing like a trooper completes the picture. This behaviour is really getting to me now and just looking at this girl is making my stomach turn. In fact I think I need to have a word so I ask: "Excuse me, is everything ok?" The response I got was blunt and evocative: "That bitch discriminates against Poles and favours her compatriots!"

I know exactly who she is talking about and I had witnessed it myself but had just let it go over my head. I had heard a lot of grumbling about that issue already so I just nod in agreement but am secretly hoping to hear more from Ula. I know I don't have to wait long because it is clearly something that's eating away at her. She knows that I'm new and that I'm a Pole too so she wants to make sure that I know what to expect here. Finally Ula decides to speak again:

> "Look at those three lines that we have in here, two of them are Polish and one is Romanian. Every time there is a problem on one of the Polish lines, but on the high risk side of it, you know, there are a few minutes when the girls can have a bit of rest but no, the Romanian leader always reprimands them for standing and not working or cleaning around the line. When something like that happens to the third line, she never says anything and the Romanian girls are never pressurised to work. They

don't have to clean around the line and can always take advantage of breaks when there is some production problem."

She continues complaining about the Polish-Romanian situation. She is mainly talking about Poles who are rarely granted overtime working because Romanians have retained the priority, and this is like a red rag to a bull for Poles who always want to maximise their income and use every opportunity to do that. I ask Ula why they never complain about such situations and try to change something. And she says that everybody is simply afraid of stirring up a hornets' nest. They think that if they start the fight against people who have such a good and established status here, the situation would get even worse. She explains it in the following way:

"The truth is that you spend most of your time at work and nobody wants to spend this time among enemies. We just don't want to provoke unnecessary conflicts."

By the time she finishes talking about Poles and Romanians, the time has flown by and it is only now that I have got so much better at the routine in the low risk area and the work is not so painful. The work is going smoothly now because I'm an extra person on the line so the girls don't have to rush with work as they usually do. That gives us more time to talk and enjoy our company but our Romanian supervisor is clearly unhappy about the situation and you can feel in the air that something is brewing.

After the lunch break I go back to work to join the second line as I have to rotate, as agreed earlier with management. The whole reason for switching roles after every break is to give me an opportunity to mix and mingle with as many people as possible. Unfortunately, our supervisor has already made arrangements to move one of the girls from line one into the high risk area. Consequently, there is only one girl left on that line and I have all sorts of feelings inside of me now, particularly based on the nepotism issue that I had been told before the break. The line manager surely must have known that I was going to switch roles after the break anyway. "How can one person be so mean?" I ask myself. I feel sorry for the girl who had to go to the high risk area as I know that work on the other side is harder and nobody wants to work there. I also feel sorry for the girl who is now left on her own on the line as I

know that there is no way she can handle the workload on her own. And I feel extremely angry with the Romanian supervisor who has made that change without consulting anybody. I've got a feeling that she did it just to show us who rules here. I know it is not my fault but I feel somewhat guilty that I have caused all of this. Without me even noticing, I suddenly have a dislike for this Romanian supervisor. The Polish girl who was left on her own in the low risk area has already lost control of the line and she clearly can't cope working on her own. Anyone with common sense would not leave one person to do work that was being performed by three individuals. It has only been a few minutes but the pies are all falling on the floor but the supervisor seems not to take any notice. I can't bear the sight and gather some courage to have a word with the supervisor. I approach her and ask what has happened with the second girl and what I get in response is:

> "There were too many of you on the line so I sent her to the high risk area, they always need workers."

So I decide to put the ball back in her court:

> "Ok, but I'm no longer on line one so how is she supposed to work on her own now?" I said.

She is not happy with being confronted: I think this has never happened to her before. With evident signs of anger in her voice she replies:

> "Listen, I know who you are and what you're doing here. I saw you working as if you were a full timer, that's why I made that decision. If you have any problem with that you can go and talk to the manager."

I don't say anything else because I can almost see that sense of superiority in her eyes. And I know that speaking to the manager at this very moment is almost impossible; I would have to change my clothes and look for him and all that would take time, which I don't have. I have to help the girl from line one. So I smile and rush back to help with packing the pies that have been falling on the floor for the last 10 minutes. I go straight back to work and none of us says a word but I can tell that the girl is grateful for my help; I think she is just thankful that somebody has finally

had the guts to stand up to the supervisor. I somehow feel flattered by the way she is looking at me now. I have definitely gained her respect but I just hope it won't make her life difficult when I leave.

Thirty minutes later the work is under control and we can finally slow down. But this is when the manager enters the low risk area and I start feeling nervous. I don't want any confrontation with the supervisor, I just want to be left in peace and carry on with my work. But the manager wants to talk to me, he says:

> "I know what happened here and you should know that the supervisor is in charge here when I'm not around, she can decide to move any one of the girls to where she finds fit."

I don't know how to react because he is the very same man who gave me the authority to change lines whenever I wanted to. It's almost as if he is blaming me now for doing something that I was authorised to do. Besides, the supervisor said that she knew who I was so I really don't get what the issue about me is but to keep his anger away from me I just say:

> "I'm sorry; I didn't mean to cause any problems. I don't know why I assumed that I'm only an extra pair of hands here, just help."

It looks that quite unexpectedly I've provoked tension in the low risk area. Poles are on my side now, they smile and nod as a mark of appreciation. I feel a bit of a hero now, even though I haven't done anything special. But talking to the supervisor assertively is already quite an achievement in their eyes. I think that being here has secured me a few more people willing to talk to me outside the factory. At least they now know that I'm not one of 'them'.

Time is going by quickly now. It's almost midnight so it's time to go home; I can't wait to leave. I'm about to leave when the supervisor asks for a word in private. I don't know the reason given my understanding that the original problem had been resolved. What else does she want to talk about? I really hope she is not carrying on with this grudge. Or is she just making sure that I won't mention anything to the HR manager? After all she "knows who I am." She asks:

"Why were you angry at me when we spoke?"

I answer:

> "I wasn't angry, just worried about the situation. That girl wouldn't have managed on her own so I wanted to know what happened with the second one."

And she replies:

> "Well, if I had known who you were, I wouldn't have treated you like one of the workers and just let you work alongside others but you seemed to be working as a proper worker. That's why I thought there were too many people working on that line."

As she rambled on I was trying to make sense of our little discussion. Earlier she had told me she knew who I was. I think she actually believes she was right to send off one of those girls. But would I be talking to her now if I was an ordinary worker? I say:

> "I'm sorry about what happened. I didn't mean to. I should have explained what I was up to before I started working. I'm sorry."

Saying this I thought I would provoke a more apologetic response. She wasn't prepared to back down so I just left the shop floor thinking to myself that this day has left a bad aftertaste.

4.2.7 *Episode 2: Frontier of control*

I am spending today in the Cold Pie Pack, although I still don't know what the difference is between CPP and HPP where I worked before. They do exactly the same thing from the looks of it but the pies are somehow different from the previous section I worked in. This section is situated in a secluded part of the factory. It doesn't bother me too much but there is a general feeling of separation when

working here. I have a feeling that people who work here are pretty much isolated from the rest of the staff and are therefore never really fully integrated into the factory community. Apart from breaks in the canteen they don't come into contact with workers who work on the other side; they use a different entrance and stairs to the shop floor. Maybe it's just the factory's physical division that separates CPP workers from the rest then.

I'm working with Marcelina today and I like working with her because she is so lively compared to some characters in this place. Time just seems to go by quicker when I'm with her so the day is not so strenuous.

> "It's my last month in this place, I'm telling you. I've had enough. I have to find a new job or I will completely lose my mind here!" she said to me.

> "Is it that bad?" I try to find out a bit more.

> "Are you kidding me?" she exclaimed. "These people here are so loutish; they don't respect each other, they shout at you, nobody says 'thank you' or 'please', all you get is orders and you have to blindly obey them. I'm telling you, I hear the treatment in the army and in prisons is better than what we get here."

I don't understand. I've been living in the UK for a few years now and one thing that struck me from the very beginning was the extreme politeness of the English people, in particular your bosses. It was something I wasn't used to in Poland. Back home I was of the opinion that my boss should not thank me for doing my job, that's what I am paid to do, isn't it? But it's different here. The majority of the staff here are Polish and nobody is bothered with that politeness, besides there is no time for it. I'm slightly surprised with Marcelina's comment because it's not that she has experienced working in some other English places yet but at the same time I understand how laborious the work here can get, not to mention the nepotism going on from the supervisors. So I try to make it more specific and ask:

> "Are you talking about the English now?"

She replies:

> "No, Poles are the worst. You will see what I'm talking about when we go to work with Sylwester. He is one of very few Polish line leaders here and the way he talks to you…I always fight with him, always."

I'm intrigued now but don't want to push her any further, she would tell me if she wanted to. We continue packing. We hardly say a word and I just think about this English politeness. I am also just thankful that it is not as busy as usual. I can still feel the pain in my wrists from yesterday. The pace of work yesterday was absolutely diabolical. I don't even want to think about it. This place is a relaxed situation, I'm glad it is not so busy but the time is dragging, it's still an hour to go before the next break, I feel like I have been here for more than the usual eight hours.

> "Can you two go to the low risk area now, please? They seem to be busier than we are."

It was our Romanian manager but he said 'please'. I must have not heard right. Am I being obsessive now? Marcelina only shrugs her shoulders and we go to change. We can't enter the low risk area wearing the same shoes, cap and coat. I truly hate this system. I have to change at least six times per day just to enter or leave the shop floor. But we do it; there is no other way. Marcelina seems to be in a better mood now and she says:

> "Great, you will meet Sylwester now. I'm sure he will do or say something that will make me angry. It's only a matter of time with him, just brace yourself my sister."

The moment we come into the low risk area, Sylwester orders Marcelina to work with the pallets. I'm supposed to put stickers on the boxes. Well, I'm good with that but poor Marcelina….working with pallets is a man's job. At this moment she says:

> "We're not in a jail or the army Sylwester. You can't talk to us in such a manner so if you want something from us then you have to say 'please."

A few seconds of silence but I feel as if these were minutes, very long minutes. I didn't know it could get this quiet here. I'm waiting for Sylwester's reaction but I'm not the only one. Everybody else has stopped working, waiting for a bit of entertainment. Then Sylwester responds:

> "Of course! Princess Marcelina needs an invitation to do things, which, by the way, she is being paid for! Everybody is here to work so when you are asked to do something you can either do it or leave! It's your choice what you do!"

> "I'm not going to discuss it with you. I was asked to come here and help with packing, not work with pallets," replied Marcelina petulantly.

And she grabs the factory phone to ring the manager. While Sylwester is still trying to explain to her that she is now in his territory, how he is responsible for her and that she is supposed to listen to him, Marcelina completely ignores him and attempts to speak to the manager. I don't know what she's being told but from her facial expression it looks like something she is not taking well. She starts working with the pallets immediately after the conversation with the manager. I am really keen to know what the manager said but I really don't want to agitate her any further; maybe I should wait until she calms down a little. I want to start putting the stickers on the boxes but nobody is working yet. They are still watching Marcelina and Sylwester. Sylwester looks on with a satisfied grin and poor Marcelina just looks embarrassed. Why is it Poles again who get involved in this type of incident? Clearly, all Poles and other nationalities in the department have just had a few minutes of entertainment. I didn't enjoy it at all. I'm also a Pole and I feel ashamed but mostly…I think that I just feel sorry for my compatriots. Instead of organising ourselves to fight those who discriminate against us or treat us badly, we make enemies of each other and become an object of ridicule to other nationalities. So far it is just a fight between Poles about who is more important and who can give orders as everyone else looks on.

4.2.8 *Episode 3: Atomism*

> "So how much do you have on your account at the moment? Come on, tell us." (Darek)

> "It's not your business. Leave me alone." (Polish co-worker)

> "Well, you always work overtime, and you don't have any extra expenditure because you are single…and you don't have a car." (Darek)

Darek quickly does some calculations of his colleague's income, deducting any potential expenses and speculating on how much he has already sent to his family in Poland. Everybody does it, some because they feel obliged to, others because they want to. But it always feels so nice when your bank account statements show your money accumulating. After all this is why we are here, or at least the majority of us, right? Darek however begs to differ, he laughs at people who save money to buy a flat in Poland or start a business on their return home. He is not like all those money-minded Poles in the factory; he wants to live a normal life here just like the locals.

> "Around £25,000"

He says this in an ironic tone to show his disgust for people like this, who work here only to save money. The other guy, whose money has just been counted in front of everybody, doesn't say a word as if he knew there was no point to that. No one else makes any comments. Are they now comparing in their heads each other's account balances? I'm kind of shocked. I know that Poles often envy other people's money, belongings or position but they never say that in front of the people that it relates to; doing this is rude and insolent. Is it their nature then or has working in Food Co. made them so. This sort of competition is not only fierce but extremely unhealthy; they envy each other's better position, better pay, and even the fact that others can work more overtime hours. Surely this kind of competition is destructive rather than constructive. Why are they doing it?

We've just finished production on line one and everyone is looking for a place on other lines. It is illegal in this place to just hover doing nothing so I'm also pretending to be very busy cleaning the floor around the line. It's a break for me. I look at the clock and can't believe there are still two more hours till the end of this day. Everybody has joined up and is working on other lines.

"Damn it! I have to find myself a place before somebody notices." I'm saying to myself.

"Barbara, why don't you go to line one. Gina is there. You will get fresh pies to pack soon. I will just find you two guys to help with the trays and you can start."

It's Pinky, a Romanian girl who used to work as a team leader but was recently promoted and she is now responsible for planning the production for the morning shift. All the CPP managers have recently worked their way up the ladder and this place became vacant. A lot of people here claim that Pinky got her job because of her Romanian nationality and not necessarily anything to do with her merits from working here. Anyway I go straight to line one as instructed and there are only two people packing on this line, myself and Gina, another Polish girl putting plastic boxes on the line and two Romanian guys who are passing down trays with pies. My initial understanding of such a setup, which I thought was logical to expect, was that the line would have to go slow enough for two girls to catch up with the packing of two trays at a time but I was so wrong. The line is in fact speeding up because of the extra hands and I'm going through the stages of a novice line worker's reactions. I just grit my teeth and pretend to work as if everything is ok. I keep looking at my 'partner' and doing what she is doing. We have the occasional chat and a laugh; Gina is flirting with the Romanian guys. The line is however speeding up and my laughter is getting more and more nervous; it sounds more like the laughter of despair. So Gina asks me:

"Are you ok?"

"I'm not sure...Yes, I'm ok"

I don't know why I said I'm ok when I'm clearly on the back foot. In all fairness I am struggling a bit but the end product is equally as good, looking over... I'm equally as good as Gina who's been doing the job for the last two years. For a few seconds the line seems not to be so fast. I feel so silly now because I'm arguing against myself in my mind and regretting why I ever said that I was fine, the line isn't going any slower; if only I had confessed that I was struggling. Should I or should I not say something now? I don't want everyone to think I'm stupid for back-tracking on something I said a minute ago so I keep plodding on but God, my wrists are killing me! That's it, I can't do it. I saw Gina setting the line speed before we started, she must know how to do it. Even she finds it difficult to catch up now.

> "Gina, why don't we reduce the speed just a little bit?!" I say with a begging tone.

And she replies:

> "It's ok the way it is."

So I'm trying to explain but the tone of my voice shows my irritation:

> "No, it's not. There is no way we can work at this pace for the next hour!"

But all I hear in response is even more irritating:

> "I can't change the speed. If Pinky found out, she would kill me. It's her line, and it's always the best."

I don't understand, it's not Pinky's line anymore! What is she talking about? I'm getting really angry now because if she is trying to show off or prove that she can do better than Pinky, then she won't be doing it at my cost. I'm about to tell her all this when I hear Gina shouting at one of the girls from the next line:

> "There are 20 racks left for you and for us. Are you in?"

And everybody knows what's going to happen, just not me. So Gina quickly explains to me that they sometimes compete with each other on how many pies they manage to pack; and she doesn't forget to add that her team always wins.

"Now!"

She shouts and it starts. I don't even have time to object; it's getting extremely hot now and my fingers are working quicker than usual. I also want to win so don't look around, don't talk, just work. Faster, faster, faster. All of a sudden I grab the last pie, put it into a box and Gina stops the line. We look at the next line and they are still packing.

"We won! We won!"

I'm shouting and jumping up and down for joy. What am I doing? I'm exhausted. Why am I behaving this way? What time is it? It's difficult to believe but we've been doing this competition for an hour but it went by so quickly it felt like just five minutes or so of hard graft. I'm just glad it's over; at least I can go home now.

4.3   Post-event reflection

An organisation in which everyone collaborates towards achieving a common goal is a popular and desired image in management rhetoric. Teamwork is one of these features that characterises successful organisations in which everyone is meant to pull together, whether to sink or swim. Yet the organisational world revealed to me in Food Co. was far from this picture. Is it then an irony or the exception proving the rule that the company is one of the leading food manufacturers in the UK?

My observations of factory working life paint the organisation in rather dark colours. There are narrations of incidents that display the less praiseworthy attributes of human beings: jealousy and distrust, conceit and arrogance, deception and backstabbing, ruthlessness and indifference to others. In the contemporary world of work, however, it is nothing new that lives at work are nasty and brutish; where

people compete with each other for a better position, or bully co-workers (e.g. Pettinger 2005, Lutgen-Sandvik et al. 2007). At the same time, Food Co. has a lot in common with the workplaces from the past. The drudgery of routinised work and alienation reminds us of Braverman's (1974) descriptions of the very real degradation of work in the twentieth century. The division of labour reminds us of Beynon's (1975) descriptions of Fordist means of production. Even fighting with time presented in ethnographies by Roy (1959) and Hamper (1986) with detailed routines and rituals invented to subvert time discipline or make time go faster are almost exactly repeated in my narration of the packing competition between lines. All these inevitably suggest that the lives of today's migrants are no different to those of other workers in the regime.

Indeed, to a large extent, everyday life at Food Co. seems to prove the validity of traditional employment relations theories and frameworks. However, it could also be argued that with the mass arrival of a new type of migrant, certain concepts have lost their meaning or have acquired a new analytical context. For instance, Cavendish's (1982) various 'us and them' groupings on the shop floor were a consequence of the strict differentiation between jobs and grades. Alliances shifted so that particular individuals or groups were sometimes considered insiders, and at other times outsiders, depending on the issue in question. On some days one line was united against the other, at other times all the lines were united against supervisors. Unlike Food Co.'s 'them and us' however, there appears not to have been a differentiation between workers' nationalities. In the context of contemporary employment relations and a new type of migrant worker, nationality seems to act as a 'fault line' in workplace unrest. Women do not unite against men, shifts do not unite against other shifts and line workers do not unite against supervisors because what really matters is one's nationality. Nationality appears to be an umbrella concern because it affects so many aspects of migrants' working life. Nationality seems to be the main factor in the way tasks, functions and jobs are divided, it affects workers' level of work specialisation and position in a shop floor hierarchy, and it is a source of workplace competition with each other, conflict, manipulation, inequality, domination and subordination. Moreover, all these concerns are also likely to come into play outside of the workplace and on a very individual level when the workplace situations start to affect one's sense of identity, distancing from and/or adapting into a host society.

All of these aspects will be discussed by my interviewees in the following chapter and by reference to the main themes brought to light during the participant observation.

4.3.1 *Profiling the actors*

Having reflected on my participative observation findings and what is already known from classical accounts of workplace relations, a few issues are brought to the fore of this research. Strikingly, my experience of the factory suggests no real sense of 'internal community' shown by mostly young and educated Polish workers. Despite being the most predominant group within the factory's workforce, they seem not to derive any sense of communal identity through association with their work compatriots. Their work lives appear to be isolated from each other and they act 'atomistically' rather than 'solidaristically'. This lack of unity among workers from a traditional production line inevitably affects their means of exercising dissatisfaction with harsh working conditions or unfairness in treatment. Apparently unlike the workers in earlier studies, workers at Food Co. do not externalise their resentment but internalise it by fighting each other rather than the management in a more traditional class struggle. Explanations for this internalisation appear rooted in migrants' identification with nationality. These nationality aspects can best be characterised by reference to four key workplace actors and our subjects' attitudes towards them: *Polish* migrants themselves, *Romanian* co-workers, *British* managers and *indigenous* workers or rather their absence on the shop floor.

Polish workers themselves

First of all, it is reasonable to assume that in general young and educated individuals have little previous experience of working in a harsh production environment. Their social and educational background little prepares them for the demands of a factory regime. Little or even a complete lack of exposure to the rigours of routinised/fordist work settings could not only make it difficult to adjust to work on the line but also affect their relationship with others who also struggle to fit in. This could all link to a general sense of apathy, even alienation from others and, most importantly, sullen resentment. Alternatively, it could just be that a lack of solidarity and active

resistance to difficult work conditions is a sign of acceptance driven by their optimism for a 'better life'. Whether perceived as a temporary sacrifice and returning home on saving up some money or finding other employment after learning the language and becoming familiar with the local labour market, migrant workers might just be happy with the steady income that regularised employment brings. After all, it does not require any qualifications or language skills and in fact might be a blessing in a situation when no other options seem to be available. Because for many of them Food Co. is the first employer since their arrival in the UK, migrants might not yet be aware of alternative sources of employment. Hence in their eyes it would be a highly unreasonable action to risk losing their present position by resistance or other explicit forms of dissent or trying to gain some sort of control over their work experience.

Another set of reasons that might provide some explanation for migrants' work journeys relates to their ambition and strong sense of work ethic. Considering the largely economic nature of this migration, the majority of these workers are strongly driven by the need for employment. If we add to the picture the large number of compatriots in the workplace who share the same ambition, a high level of competitiveness and lack of cooperation on difficult issues should not be a surprise. In fact, they seem to fight each other rather than unite as a response to strong competition in the local labour market and fear of losing a job. This could be particularly true for on-site agency workers who aspire to fill the shoes of those with permanent status as fully fledged employees. From an individual person's point of view such a situation is reflected in the changing nature of employment relations in a more general sense. Lack of employment security and a focus on the individual rather than collectivism might make every migrant worker stand up for himself or herself rather than think of the whole group. Such an approach to employment relationships, in the context of culturally different attitudes, might also have the potential to produce a relatively new, more competitive type of group dynamic in the workplace. Hence the presence of Romanian migrants and their specific role on the shop floor might be another factor in shaping Food Co.'s employment relations.

Romanian workers

Despite the fact that the work regime reminds one of more of a 'forgotten' rather than a 21st century manufacturing plant, the most surprising element is the division of

work according to nationality. As a result of my observation I quickly realised that in Food Co. work degradation might not cause as much unrest as other deeply-rooted features of organisational life – such as national divisions among migrant workers.

Even though it is rather less obvious to someone from outside, as indicated previously there is an evident division between Romanian and other A8 migrants and a strict demarcation between Romanians' jobs and those allocated to the rest. Due to the previously described seniority of Romanian workers who started the inflow of migrant workers to Food Co., their work status in the factory is relatively higher compared to that of other A8 migrants. It could be that Polish workers' hostility towards Romanians is a result of long-standing prejudices brought into the workplace from their homeland. Due to a clash between Polish workers' perceptions of Romanians and their actual position on the shop floor it could be expected that their relations are potentially conflictual.

On the other hand however, it is not without reason that Romanians are perceived by others as a source of their daily workplace grievance. Romanians seemingly stick together as a national group and make sure that their compatriots who arrive later do not only receive good treatment but also improve their career progression - Romanian managers promote their compatriots to QA, machine minder and line leaders' positions. Consequently, the indifference of Romanian supervisors to work issues raised by Polish and other workers 'on the line' and the favouritism of Romanian workers in terms of job allocation and overtime distribution seem to signal a problem of a gradually developing hierarchy of workers whereby one nationality dominates in higher positions while the rest is meant to succumb. Under such circumstances non-Romanian workers might feel powerless in their attempts to resist or raise a grievance as their Romanian superiors are supposed to be the first point of contact for such issues. This might well in part be an outcome from Romanians enjoying a different status due to UK migration law but it could equally be caused by British managers' ignorance of the effects the hierarchy has on employment relations in Food Co. A darker interpretation of the situation could suggest British managers deliberately aiding and abetting such social divisiveness as a means of thwarting the formation of potential collective action. For this reason British managers might be

another factor in the chain of causation affecting the current position of Polish migrant workers in the company.

British managers

On a few occasions it was suggested to me that the 'real' managers are not those who I see on a daily basis on the shop floor but those who sit upstairs, the British ones. Possibly because of the negative experiences with mainly Romanian managers on the shop floor, British superiors were often idealised and considered by Polish workers to be less biased towards them because of managers' detachment from the shop floor. Despite the fact that they had little contact with the managers upstairs, A8 migrants believed that their treatment at the hands of British managers would significantly improve if the latter knew what was actually happening on the shop floor. It could therefore be speculated that part of the problem is the aloofness of British managers upstairs and their seeming indifference to the plight of Polish workers downstairs. However, it is also possible that there is some kind of emerging strategy, not necessarily deliberate, whereby managers divide and conquer the workforce in ways that confine workers' discontent to inter-group relations and deflect restlessness away from themselves. It could be that there is an alternative rationale behind carrying out this double recruitment strategy which facilitated the development of hierarchies in teams reflected in workers' different contractual statuses and preferential treatment. In this way any emerging grievances could be channelled into fighting the most immediate sources of A8 migrants' frustration (i.e. Romanians) rather than challenging British managers who supposedly have no knowledge of Polish workers' difficult situation. In this light, Romanians could be perceived as a buffer that shoulders the burden of daily management on the shop floor in making unpopular decisions whilst simultaneously remaining the focus of other workers' discontent. In this way, British managers are removed from the fray. This potential conflict is now confined to inter-group relations on the shop floor rather than elevating it higher to the management level where traditional shop floor conflict could be to the more serious detriment of factory productivity.

Indigenous workers – absence of British work norms

British workers have been identified as the last but not least important actor in the workplace environment. It is possible that because of the number of British workers on

the shop floor is so insignificant they are unable to give Polish workers a lead as to how to respond to the situation in which they find themselves. In a situation where migrant workers are mostly young individuals who have limited or no experience of organisational life in general and working norms abroad in particular, they could become lost in the sense of not knowing how to take action should they experience acts of unfavourable or even discriminatory treatment. Lack of examples that could potentially be set up by indigenous workers might fuel migrants' sense of resentment, lost direction and even isolation. In a sense, what happened in Beynon's (1975) story where young workplace activists provided the shop floor leadership for acts of resistance is somehow missing in Food Co. where an insufficient number of British workers that migrants could learn from cannot help ameliorate their plight. This could also link to the rather weak position of trade unions in the company since migrant workers could potentially feel either uninterested in membership or simply unaware of possibly beneficial outcomes.

To sum up, it should be recognised that even though the probable explanations summarised above are competing, they are not necessarily mutually exclusive. It could be that to a certain extent all aspects of the presented factors that potentially shape the existing employment relations in Food Co. are relevant. In order to verify their validity the following chapters are aimed at presenting the participants' own perspectives on their working lives and discussing them in the light of the above factors. It is believed that such an exercise will shed light on the nature of employment relations in Food Co. Meanwhile, the last reflection on the undertaken participant observation will conclude this stage and close the chapter.

4.3.2 *Participant observation revisited*

From this account it seems that in this ongoing competition among workers there are only a few winners but many losers in terms of preferential treatment from shift managers and supervisors in allocating tasks or distributing overtime. During my short time at Food Co. I felt like one of the migrant workers who do not always win in their struggle with supervisors, but such was the purpose of the participant observation. The initial idea of this part of the chapter was to give the reader a sense

of what it is like to work in Food Co. and invite them to share the 'getting of wisdom' that I have experienced, until they too 'know' what was going on in the research setting. Using Van Maanen's words: "the idea is to draw an audience into an unfamiliar story world and allow it, as far as possible, to see, hear and feel as the fieldworker saw, heard and felt" (1988, p.103). All along the intention has been to equip the reader with some insights into the preoccupations of this group of Polish migrant workers and their daily struggle in coming to terms with the demands of the factory regime.

As mentioned in the previous chapter, I found the experience of working in the factory an invaluable part of my research process. Before, my view of the factory and the work was that of an outsider and it was limited because of this. I came from a comfortable background of education only and had no grasp whatsoever of what factory work was like. I experienced the physicality of the factory and cruelty of the work on a line; I went through the moments of doubt and annoyance when I started questioning my sense of belonging to the group of compatriots. I experienced the feeling of powerlessness when as a result of workplace hierarchies and politics I tried to fight signs of discrimination and unfairness. These and many other rich experiences gave rise to questions such as: does the rest of the migrant community in Food Co. experience the work incidents in the same or a different way? How do they make sense of episodes with Romanian supervisors and Polish co-workers? How do they perceive the presence of British managers 'upstairs'?

Nevertheless, the workplace experience has served not only as a way of introducing me to the reality of migrants' working life and providing a greater understanding of the research context, but it has also significantly facilitated the next stage of data collection. Working alongside compatriots and sharing their (at times) difficult experiences enabled me to establish a solid and trustworthy relationship with them. Situations like the one I illustrated in Episode 1 clearly positioned me on the workers' side and having such a reputation among Polish co-workers was key in getting sincere and unrestricted responses during the interview stage. Nevertheless, being aware of the risks associated with becoming 'one of them' and potentially failing to recognise issues of value for the research I am now turning to migrants' own and uninterrupted accounts of their workplace experiences. The following

chapter presents a selection of my interviewees' narratives which reflect on the many questions that arose during the observation stage and which I presented in this chapter.

5   IN THE EYES OF POLISH MIGRANTS

5.1   Introduction

In the previous chapter I presented my personal insight into everyday factory life at Food Co. Even though my experience was not as thorough as the experiences of my interviewees, because I hardly spent three months there, it was valuable in the sense that I understood how difficult and complex the workplace situations might be. However, to what extent these experiences are those of other migrant workers, and what meanings they attach to these within and outside the workplace will be discussed below. This chapter presents a selection of six narratives which reveal something of the complex nature of employment relations in Food Co. These are stories that provide an insight into individuals' world of work, their complex relationships with each other and other organisational actors but also how their fitting in evolved over time and how it has affected their sense of national identity, settlement plans and other aspects of their future life.

Migrants talk about their own experiences in the context of their own biographies, thus I chose to present them as separate cases. Nevertheless, there are some commonalities of experience and on several occasions I have attempted to bring the individual stories into conversation with one another. However it is in the next chapter that I shall thoroughly discuss the overarching themes that seem to reoccur throughout the interviews and correspond with my observation findings and literature. Meanwhile, this chapter starts with a story told by Marcelina, who has already been mentioned in the research and was my first interviewee. Her story is important in the sense that by representing a typical new wave migrant: she is 25 years old, university educated and arrived from Poland to change something in her life and look for employment; she clearly gives a voice to the complexities and contradictions present in her life as a result of this migratory experience. Marcelina is proud of her national identity but this does not hinder her criticism of compatriots or alter her level of settlement in the UK. She reveals interesting accounts of 'normality' and 'neutrality' that make her believe that England is not a bad country

in which to live. On the other hand however, Marcelina holds some pejorative views of English workers being lazy and unambitious. She also actively supports her compatriots who try to fight shop floor unfairness and discrimination. All of these contradictory attitudes and behaviours of hers do not compete but coexist in Marcelina's awareness.

5.2 Marcelina

Marcelina came to the UK in 2006 together with her classmate who already had an employment contract arranged with one of the agencies in Southampton. This was a largely spontaneous decision, on the back of a breakdown in a personal relationship. Her classmate promised to fix Marcelina up with a job once they got to England, but the reality turned out to be different. She did not expect that she would have to fight for a contract herself. She "just came here completely unaware."

However, upon reaching the UK she found a job quite easily through a Polish recruiter. When Marcelina eventually arrived at Food Co., she went through some medical examinations and passed the language test. After two days of safety and food hygiene training, however, she still did not know what kind of job she was supposed to do. On the third day she started having doubts:

> So we put on those boots, coats and caps…when I saw myself in the mirror I couldn't believe it was me…We went downstairs and those people were like some ants…and we like aliens, as if nobody noticed us. But later we could feel that they were saying of us: "O they are the ones who started with contracts straight away." There was already that accusation of starting a job with the company instead of going through the agency first, like everybody else…When I saw the place I broke down, I completely broke down. For the first 3 hours I couldn't shake it off.

> When I called my parents I told them that I worked in some Chinese factory. When you enter the factory you have to use that passageway with wires and you feel as if you were going to be executed in a moment or like in a prison where prisoners go for walks.

For Marcelina, her early experiences of the plant seem overwhelming. Already she notes hostility among differing groups of workers, not least compatriots, and the sheer physicality of the setting appears to affect her physically too. It might be that the tangible experience of the factory setting combined with a Taylorist work regime make Marcelina feel alienated and not in the right place, possibly due to her education and/or higher social status back in Poland. Under such negative emotions she seems to be pushed far away from assimilative or even integrative strategies. Instead, she compares her feelings to the ones of an alien or a prisoner who experiences isolation from the surrounding environment not by choice, but because of the circumstances in which they find themselves and no one can prepare themselves for a prison experience unless they have already been there.

Marcelina's sense of alienation from the place she found herself in was reinforced by a constraint in the form of a ban on taking holidays in December.

> This migration cost me a lot at the beginning. Separation from my family, it was a really hard time for me at the beginning. Christmas time was particularly tragic. When you can't take any days off and you can't go home for Christmas. …I sat in my room just crying and talking to my family on the phone (...) but I didn't admit in front of my Polish housemates that I was homesick (she laughs), that I was weak and I couldn't cope with the situation.

For Marcelina, seemingly like many people, including myself, the beginning of the migratory experience is a tough time. She feels extremely bad as a result of these new circumstances that she finds herself in so Marcelina keeps coming back to the place she is comfortable with. Even though theoretically she is free to travel home with a visit at any point in time, financial restrictions are often a serious barrier within first few months of migration. Additionally, Marcelina is restricted by Food Co.'s rule of the so-called 'red period' when employees are not allowed to book holidays at busy times such as Christmas and Easter which are important holidays in Polish tradition. Hence, despite belonging to this highly mobile type of new migrants, Marcelina maintains contact with her family within the limits of available possibilities – she cannot go home so she escapes by calling her family and friends who stayed in Poland. This is another aspect of the new migratory wave that makes

it so distinctive from previous migrations. Technology has made it easy and cheap for migrants to contact their families and friends on a regular basis, whether through sending emails, using online chat software or ringing them via Skype or using international phone cards, things that previous generations of migrants did not have at their disposal. These appear to serve an important role here because constant communication with family and friends indicates a sense of belonging and attachment but also functions as a source of emotional support. Marcelina's contact with Poland is now limited but that seems to make it more valuable.

Later however Marcelina admits that time has also played its role in her process of adaptation. The next Christmas was not as bad as the first because she spent it with her brother and friends in the UK so she already had some semblance of a home. Now after three years spent in the country, she is used to spending Christmas away from family. She met her husband in the factory and she is starting a new family with him, so going home for Christmas is not that important anymore.

> I don't miss Poland, or my family that much, because even if you live in another city in Poland you can still miss your family, it is normal.

> I think that I have acclimatised myself here. At the beginning of course I was scared of everything. I was afraid of going out…now I'm ashamed of talking about it but I was looking around on the street, I don't know, to make sure that nobody followed me. I had it somewhere inside of me that you have to be very careful, it was like that until I became accustomed to it. So it was very difficult at the beginning…but now it's ok. The only thing I would like to change is the job into something more developmental.

> By saying that I have acclimatised myself I mean that I have started feeling at home here, as if it was my place in the world. It started to feel ok, I started to feel good here. I love this town and I don't want to leave. It is beautiful. (...) It's not like I'm a Pole so I want to go back to Poland. No, I don't want to go back to Poland. I thought a lot about whether to come back, save some money and come back, or stay for a really long time and I finally decided to stay because I feel good here. We decided to buy a flat here, to start our family here because England is not a bad country, right? It is a country of many opportunities and the

only thing you have to do is reach for it. And I want to do that, I feel that I can achieve something here, more than in Poland.

The above fragments of Marcelina's narrative reveal some potentially important aspects of her settling into the new environment. Initially, she exhibits many of the concerns that a new migrant would express in moving to an urbanised setting in a new country from a familiar rural context. Nevertheless, despite initial feelings of loneliness and homesickness she finally acknowledges a relatively settled existence, except in relation to the workplace. She suggests being able to reach an accommodation with certain aspects of her life to such an extent that she is not afraid of using the notion of home. Thus, while in her private life Marcelina seems to have shifted from complete isolation to full assimilation, her life within the workplace appears to constitute a separate category. Unlike in her private life, where she has been experiencing mainly positive events such as meeting her husband and buying a flat together, it can be that negative experiences in the workplace make the difference. This is why Marcelina tends to distance herself from people she meets on the shop floor and does not fully accept the new milieu.

Throughout her narration Marcelina repeats on a number of occasions that the only thing she would like to change in her new life is work and gives plenty of examples to illustrate the reasons for her dissatisfaction.

> …One day, when he (the Romanian manager) made me cry just on the shop floor, after some two hours he came to say: go and wash your face because you have smudged your make-up and you look ugly. He shouldn't care about my make-up! Come on! I was shocked. Besides, I'm this kind of person who will never let other people offend or humiliate me…in some way he was doing emotional damage to me, he was making fun of me in front of other employees. And this is where all conflicts start in a workplace because in such situations one person will lower his/her head thinking: ok, I'm in different country, I can't speak English, it's good that I have this job and I have money to support myself, everything will be ok. I'm not like that, because for me the most important thing is honour and I have to feel good in a place I work at. Money is not that important to me.

Marcelina always introduces her workplace experiences in relation to either Romanian superiors or Polish co-workers, as will often be illustrated in this interview. Poles and Romanians constitute the two biggest groups on the shop floor, hence they inevitably become important players in the environment. To start with, Marcelina presents herself not as a money-driven migrant but as an honourable individual who in exchange for a strong work ethic and commitment demands respect and good treatment from her employer. In this way she sets up the tone of the rest of her story but first she gives a bit more detail about herself by reinforcing her position and sense of independence given to new EU members by saying:

> They (managers) don't have an easy life with me; I'm not quiet and if I don't like something I just talk about it. I'm not going to sit as quiet as a mouse because I earn a living here. We are in the European Union now and I can work in the whole European Union, in every country; and I shouldn't be discriminated against or treated differently, right?

Marcelina is one of two interviewees who recognised their European identity and on that basis claim to be equal to other workers, both migrant and indigenous. Thus, one could claim that Marcelina is actually pursuing the most unlikely of Berry's (1984) four strategies – marginalisation. She seems to assume a new identity, which is neither Polish nor British, and for the interviewee it appears to be a new standard that everybody should refer to. Unfortunately, the real-life situation is different from what she would want it to be and establishing a new European identity for everybody seems to be constrained mainly by a lack of professionalism and good manners from managers, but not all.

> There is a different culture of people working downstairs and a different culture of people working upstairs. It's just that those people working upstairs are well-mannered, kind, friendly and willing to help while those from downstairs, their culture is below minimum; they laugh at you, humiliate you and can treat you like only an object. This is how I perceive these things. And there is no respect for employees, in particular for Poles…When you leave the shop floor and go to the offices upstairs it's like, I don't know, as if you were leaving the worst hell and entering some normal, standard life.

The contradiction between the shop floor and upstairs is so big that it is difficult to express. I'm told something upstairs and when I come downstairs and they say: "No! What have they told you?! It's not going to be like that! You'd better realise that this job is only temporary!" You know, they give you some kind of hope for something better upstairs and you come downstairs and all you hear is NO! It's some kind of parody, I'm telling you. You can go mad. You don't know whom to listen to and who's right.

On Marcelina's promotion she has gained experience of working with higher management and is now capable of making comparisons. On a number of occasions she speaks of differences between people she meets upstairs and downstairs and perceives those environments as two separate worlds. For Marcelina the world upstairs is associated with a better working life that can be achieved through developing relationships with indigenous people, as the English constitute the overwhelming majority of 'upstairs employees'. While working downstairs means maintaining close relationships with Poles who she does not always want to identify with, working upstairs, on the other hand, would not only enable her to mix with people of greater culture but also develop English language skills, which she finds essential to be able to live 'normally' in this country. Likewise, Marcelina's preference for being upstairs is not surprising as this is the place where she is given 'hope for something better' and she likes what she is being told there. So she draws a contrast between the English managers at higher levels in the organisation and those on the shop floor, who are mainly of Romanian nationality. Interestingly though, words of the presumably more important managers from upstairs do not find application on the shop floor, showing their apparent lack of actual power; unless it is part of a greater plan whereby English managers play the role of good cop and Romanians the bad cop. Indeed, the positive image of English managers is so strong that Marcelina sees them as the most appropriate people to implement the notion of 'neutrality':

I think that in such a factory, in such a place, an English person should be a manager, [those] who manage other people should be neutral, somebody who would treat everybody equally, who is objective. So far there was only one objective manager, he was English; others were very biased.

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And neutral means more objective towards people, that he will be treating everybody the same. It won't be like it is now when the manager is Romanian so he takes care of all Romanians, and flatters their work, while Poles and others aren't important and they are supposed to toil away from dawn till dusk while Romanians can have a rest.

The positive picture of an English manager is in strong contrast with a Romanian superior. Marcelina feels strongly about her attitude towards Romanians and does not stop criticising them. This is because for Marcelina the realities of the workplace are structured by discrimination among both shop floor workers and among the hierarchy of management.

This is how I see these things; that there is no respect for workers. Nobody talks openly about discrimination; and there is discrimination! For example, one day…if we are talking about Romanians, the majority of them are of the Orthodox faith, right? Their Easter was a week after ours and when we had Easter people couldn't take any days off and in addition to that there were no agency workers because presumably they had been told they weren't needed. When the Romanians had their Easter a week later, agency workers were not sent home while five Romanian workers from our team were allowed to go home. They always find some excuses, either lack of experience, or inability to evaluate situations properly, and how are we supposed to feel? Even if we don't have that day off you can always make some other arrangements. In another department, for instance, they could come in earlier to work and leave at 2pm.

Marcelina recounted a number of stories in which the nationality of participants was held to be a factor in their behaviour and a determinant of her workplace experience:

My [Romanian] manager was mostly angry about the fact that I didn't accept everything he was telling me, that I was mouthing off. But it is impossible for me that somebody insults me and I keep quiet. He has no right. He can and I can't? Why? Because he is the manager and Romanian and I am Polish and his subordinate, right? This is how I see these things. But, hmm, I don't know why it is like that. Because the previous manager, he was English, and he really treated everybody equally. There were no exceptions. If someone did something wrong then the appropriate measures were taken against that person, no matter

whether he or she was Polish, Romanian, English, Czech or Slovak, anybody.

I think that it is as if there was a fight between Poland and Romania at Food Co. because there are a lot of Poles and a lot of Romanians. And, Poles also want to achieve something there, right? But Romanians are the ones who want to rule there, but Poles don't want to give up. Poles are a very tenacious nation so there are many arguments, conflicts. But when the majority of managers are Romanian…why don't we have a single Polish manager? Because Romanians always block Poles; because a Romanian manager will never let a Pole make a mark, he will never let a Pole succeed or come to the "power" that he has. Because then they would be equal, and it can never be! A Romanian is supposed to be above a Pole.

The above fragments of a story illustrate the ways in which questions of nationality and identity are imbricated in common tales of workplace strife and friction but numbers also seem to play a role. Not without reason, Marcelina emphasises the fact that 'there are a lot of Poles and a lot of Romanians' in Food Co. While Polish workers constitute the majority on the shop floor and Romanians are only the second largest group, it is notable that there have been no Polish managers appointed. It might be that resentment against Romanian managers is a matter of national rivalry but this is sharpened by those managers' discriminative behaviours and (incomprehensible though it is to the Polish workers) Romanians' dominance in the factory, despite their comprising a relatively smaller group of workers. For Marcelina there seems to be a tension between being Polish and having to be subservient to a Romanian manager. Whilst her proposed solution to these problems is through an appeal to the supposed 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' of the British higher management, it seems not to occur to Marcelina that the higher managers might be complicit in the situation, deliberately promoting Romanians. Instead, she only comments on the situation from the shop floor perspective and agrees that Romanian workers have never had any complaints because they have Romanian managers who always take care of them. Without looking at the broader picture she limits her conclusions to a simple claim that it is Poles who suffer as a result of this system and this has a direct impact on her.

Since Marcelina feels strongly about the fact that Polish workers are discriminated against by Romanian managers, she does not see her future on the shop floor. Her ambition is to develop professionally and work in a place where she feels good, for instance in an office, and she feels she is on the right track for this. Indeed, in her discourse Marcelina pictures herself as a very ambitious person who genuinely wants to achieve something in her working life. With reference to Wickham et al.'s (2009) categorisation of migrant workers, she could be classified as a type of "careerist" for whom her current job is only a stepping stone to something better. Unlike most of my interviewees, Marcelina is utterly determined to escape the shop floor and get a more developmental job. Consequently, she was not afraid of taking matters into her own hands and personally spoke to the HR manager, unfortunately without results due to the unavailability of any suitable positions for her.

Hence, despite previous reassurances about her dedication to change her current job, it appears to be a rather complex and difficult move. This applies despite having relatively more options and freedom than previous generations of migrants, or even the Romanians whose hands are often tied by immigration law that restricts them to agriculture and self-employment. Even though she presents herself as a resolute and ambitious person who knows her rights and will not let anybody take advantage of her, for whom honour is more important than money, at some point Marcelina's discourse again starts to contradict everything that has already been said in this matter. She admits that under certain circumstances individuals sometimes have to accept the situation they are in:

> I can't leave the job right now because I'm buying a flat right now so, you know, I just can't, these are private reasons. It is difficult in a sense because they are bullying you and you have to pretend that nothing bad is happening: this is the worst. But sometimes you have to go through it to improve things.

It is possible, though, that because of Marcelina's current circumstances, her conviction about the situation's inertia and lack of alternatives, she decides not only to avoid exposing herself to shop floor tensions but also makes the most of what she has recently been given. Her recent temporary promotion has reinforced Marcelina's positive attitude towards the place and she does not refer to the workplace as 'a

Chinese factory' anymore, but just 'the factory', as if it was already a different place for her. She might feel that she is starting to belong to this place because this is where her abilities, skills and characteristics have finally been recognised. Even though it is not the type of job she aspired to initially, that is, an office job among people of a higher social class than factory workers, and even though her "Romanian manager keeps disturbing her work", Marcelina is happy with her job now because she believes that she has "worked out for herself quite a good position in the factory."

What appears to be important here is the fact of the promotion, which has moderated her aspirations at least for the time being. Fortunately for the employer, Marcelina's promotion did not moderate her strong sense of commitment, hard work and ambition as she still places herself high above the average English line worker:

> One day two Englishmen came to work in our department, around their 20s… I was completely shocked thinking: oh my God, the recession is really serious (she laughs)… Do you know how long they survived? Two hours! They just left the factory and we've never seen them again…That's how much we experienced working with the Englishmen…An ordinary Englishman will never come to work like this…In our department there is only one English person, he's been working there for 12 years and only because of his laziness he hasn't found a different job.

> [*Interviewer: Would you prefer working with indigenous workers rather than Poles*?]

> I don't think there would be any difference, maybe only the opportunity to learn English…I would still want to work with Poles, maybe not with everybody, but yes, they are my compatriots. These people are particularly close to me…But I wouldn't like it to be a Polish – Romanian factory, funny enough we are in England…But I also think that if English workers worked in this factory, the efficiency would drop by 50 per cent.

The above fragments of Marcelina's narration uncover an interesting contradiction: despite previous perceptions of the English being competent and skilled managers. Down on the shop floor she sees indigenous people as lazy and inefficient workers. It

appears that Marcelina divides indigenous people according to their social status and that is why it would be more natural for her to work with employees who are higher up in the company's hierarchy. Nevertheless, she seems to create an impression that she has no objections to working alongside English workers on the shop floor, even though due to their slow pace of work it would inevitably lead to her having more work than she has now. Unless she actually anticipates the opposite, should English workers dominate on the shop floor and not let the management speed up the lines or worsen their working conditions? However, none of my interviewees mentioned the availability of such an option but instead highlighted the opposite. Many of my respondents who have already had an opportunity of working alongside one or two English workers on a line complain about their slowness of movement and that they consequently end up working twice as fast, such is the level of dependence among workers on the line. Thus, Marcelina's above discourse might be interpreted as her great need or wish to gain more contact with the English language, but not necessarily the English working class. Indeed, language acquisition seems to be particularly important to Marcelina and there might be two reasons for that. She either wishes to fully adapt to her new life abroad and become a member, not a guest, of the host society or, like many recent migrants, she wants to learn the language to improve her job prospects back in Poland. The fragment below from Marcelina's narration, however, seems to explicitly suggest an answer to this issue:

> Learning English…it is necessary to live here normally, to function…To understand everything that people say to you; to be able to do things on my own without looking for words in a dictionary. All those idioms, abbreviations, I would also like to learn them because people use them and sometimes I completely miss the point (she laughs). It is very embarrassing when people say something to you, you reply and then they say that they meant something different. When you spend time with English people you can learn such things, right? It is impossible to learn these things on your own.

As Marcelina noticed previously, working upstairs would enable her to learn idiomatic English. That would help her to live 'normally' in this country – to do all those activities that people do on a day-to-day basis. These things are important if an individual plans to stay in the host country permanently and assimilate or even if only to integrate with the local community. Thus, what Marcelina has already started

seems to be far from a process of separation or marginalisation - she has just got married and bought a flat in the UK with a deliberate intention of settling in the country for a longer time. Nonetheless, while this might be right in Marcelina's private life, language acquisition in the workplace context seems to serve a completely different purpose:

> When I came here I didn't speak fluent English but now my English is much better, I work with people from upstairs, I talk to managers in English, it helps to improve my English. I can organise everything on my own and I can say what I want to say. This is inconvenient for them [managers]…They don't really like me, they would rather get rid of me [she laughs].

Language proficiency appears to be an important determinant of migrants' positions in the workplace by not only helping them to boost their prospects of promotion but also giving them a greater chance to secure themselves workplace well-being. Marcelina uses her language skills as a tool to raise her voice and express dissatisfaction about things she does not approve of on the shop floor. Despite a previous readiness to integrate, she now enjoys being in opposition to the company's management. Later on it becomes clear that her language skill in fact enables her to reunite with other Polish workers by writing petitions to fight shop-floor unfairness. Moreover, in the face of Marcelina's desire to work upstairs and gain more contact with higher managers, her proud tone of voice when she talks about Poles' achievements in the plant is confusing. What appears is that her attempts to live a 'normal' life among the English have nothing to do with her sense of national pride. Nevertheless, it seems that in the workplace environment it is something she must accommodate on a daily basis. This is because staying loyal to her compatriots and fighting for their rights might be in a direct contradiction to becoming a member of the English higher class employees in Food Co.

Nevertheless Marcelina's narrative seems to be full of similar contradictions, and her evaluation of compatriots is similarly confusing. There are times when Marcelina perceives them as 'wonderful people' but later she admits that they can actually be very rude and unfriendly:

I have met here many wonderful people, honestly.

I have never before in my life worked in such a place. Never! I had no idea how loutish people can be.

As if she realised her lack of consistency in talking about her compatriots, Marcelina finally decides to differentiate between two types of Pole:

People who come from Poland, some have come into conflict with the law, or with other problems, they simply run away from something, right? Maybe they couldn't manage their lives back in their country, maybe they didn't have a good enough level of education to work in their home countries so they came here, got a job in a factory and now they feel extremely important when they can manage other people. And now, there are also people who don't have any conflicts with law, who are educated, who are smart and intelligent and they also get a job in the same factory because at that time there is no other job for them or their language skills are not good enough to go somewhere else. Or maybe they don't have English qualifications, right, English qualifications that are the basis for getting a better job here. And suddenly those two groups meet head-on here.

Marcelina, from the very beginning of her narration, makes it clear that she is proud of her nationality but not necessarily of all her compatriots. For that reason she draws a line between two types of Pole who have come to the UK and now interact with each other in a workplace environment. For Marcelina it is evident that for the reasons of conflict and poor relationships among her compatriots, she decidedly positions herself in favour of one group and against the other. Based on her workplace experience she draws negative conclusions about quantitative and qualitative aspects of the new wave migration. She does not like it that so many Poles have been arriving in the UK and categorises them according to their level of education, intelligence and lawfulness, picturing them as a very heterogeneous mix of people. And yet, when her compatriots are presented in opposition to other national groups or the company management, they become a socially homogenous group of ambitious and hard-working people. In situations like that Marcelina seems to feel proud of being one of the Poles, regardless of their social class. Irrespective of what she said about different types of Pole, her sense of national pride seems to be more

important than personal bias. Therefore national identity more than any other attribute appears to be a defining characteristic of the workplace:

> This is what Poles managed to achieve here, that those who manage us are a bit afraid of us. We are not like everybody else, that we will be obedient, no. Our opinion, and what we think, matter more now. They just don't do what they used to do.

> We try everything to change it but…you have to write petitions and involve trade unions, and only then something starts moving. Because they [managers] think that we will rest on our laurels and stop fighting but they are wrong because we will go further, much further than they can even expect it.

Such words could only be said by someone who already feels more confident and secure in their role. Marcelina shows her metamorphosis from someone she used to be when she arrived to the UK, a scared and unsure migrant worker, into an individual who knows what her rights are and how powerful she can be should other Poles unite. Marcelina is not concerned with the physicality of the place anymore and outfit or factory fence are unimportant. What matters instead is respect and observing the most basic human rights so she openly disagrees with the ways employees are treated in the factory. It appears that managers' actions make her give up her former critical attitude towards compatriots and they even possibly become a source of a bond among Poles when Marcelina becomes upset and helps other Poles who face unfairness or discrimination. For that reason Marcelina has become an active trade union member and, together with a shop steward, she writes a lot of petitions and complaints about unfair and discriminatory acts that take place on the shop floor, mainly due to lack of professionalism among shop-floor managers, who also happen to be Romanian. This sense of fairness, possibly sharpened by differences in treatment by members of other nationalities – something that Polish workers did not experience in their home country – might unite Polish migrants. It can be seen that Marcelina's sense of shared mistreatment is so strong that on this basis she even moderates her attitude towards English managers. Unlike her previous praise of English managers' expertise and objectivity, Marcelina admits that even higher management is aware of the shop-floor situation but hardly anything is done to improve it:

I think they get the information but I don't think anything is being done with that.

This suggests that even though Polish migrants have the 'critical mass' needed for organising themselves irrespectively of other national groups, they cannot effectively exercise it and even though they are familiar with the tradition of trade unionism, they possibly lack someone or something to guide their actions. Hence, the only consequence of the discriminative attitudes of Romanian managers and English managers' lack of intervention for Marcelina is that it pushes her towards compatriots who unsuccessfully try to eradicate shop-floor unfairness with petitions and pointless trade union actions. These initiatives appear not only to stop her distancing herself from other Poles in the workplace but also reinforce her attachment to the home country. The following fragment of Marcelina's narration illustrates that in fact nothing has changed in terms of her sense of national identity:

This is my country; this is the place which will always be important to me, right? People say that no matter where you live, where you are, if you feel good there, then there is your home. I agree, just like here is my home. But my real roots are in Poland and it is difficult to move completely to a new country, and not visit family, friends. This is the place where everything started.

The analysis of the interviewee's discourse revealed that the image of home is a recurrent topic of Marcelina's narration. Accounts are first and foremost about her sense of belonging, a kind of personal attachment to a particular place and people and it brings about an idea of 'home' in a 'world of movement'. For Marcelina, being away from her family and home community could theoretically offer freedom of choice but her deep sense of 'roots' reminds her of who she really is, even after moving 'home' to another country:

…The roots are still Polish. So I'm proud of that. Because I am who I am, and I don't think I'm a bad person but everything I have I received from those Polish roots, not English. That's why it is so important for me.

She somehow admits that 'home' and at the same time one's sense of identity is not a question of choice (your home is where you feel good; where your family and friends are) because that choice is often constrained by upbringing and values that make you belong to certain social groups. She has got all of these things because they were rooted in her. It is possible then that for this reason Marcelina admits the following:

> I will never be one of them. I'm a Pole and I'm proud of my nation. I'm proud that we are so intelligent that we can come to a foreign country and speak fluently in their language, live normally here without any problems. This is what I'm proud of, more than I would be if I was an Englishman, for example. I'm not going to apply for a British passport, that's for sure. I'm proud that I'm a Pole.

Possibly her upbringing in Polish traditions and strong sense of national identity make her resistant to completely changing her lifestyle and values. In five years time she would want to be a mother and with confidence in her voice she declared that her children will have Polish names and this could also be a sign of the lack of Marcelina's full assimilation. Hence, despite feeling well-adapted and positive about her settlement in the UK, Marcelina does not deny her Polishness. It is possible that by doing this she is trying to keep her options open so that there is nothing that would put her in a position where she has to make a final decision with regard to permanent settlement in the UK. However, it is also possible that, for Marcelina, being a full citizen of the UK does not stand in contradiction to being a native Pole. For these reasons classifying her as a definite 'stayer' or maybe just a 'searcher' in Eade et al.'s (2006) typology would be rather problematic.

5.3   Ola

Ola's story was chosen mainly because in many aspects she seems to be similar to the previous interviewee and many other new wave migrants. She is also a young graduate, single, independent and highly mobile. Unlike Marcelina however, she does not display positive adaptation outcomes. Mainly due to her love relationship with a Czech supervisor, Ola's experience of the workplace is more personal and therefore traumatic. Her story is more critical of people surrounding her on a daily

basis so she keeps a distance and is highly unsure of her future. Nevertheless, she does not want to give up as this would develop a sense of failure. So she tries to play her role of a migrant in a workplace and outside of it, just temporarily, waiting for what the future will bring next.

Ola's decision about migration was rather spontaneous – largely made on the back of a breakdown in a personal relationship. This first observation refers to the specific nature of the migration experience of recent migrant workers. Unlike previous groups of migrants for which migration was an important, difficult life-choice, for both Marcelina and Ola, and many other interviewees, the choice appears rather casual, given the ease of moving between Poland and the UK.

Ola accepted her friend's invitation and came to the UK in 2007. With a university diploma but without any prospects for a job in Poland she decided to go abroad because 'it was a good opportunity to go somewhere, to see something'; but as she admitted, she would have never decided to go abroad if she had not had that friend who took care of her in terms of accommodation, but most importantly helped in finding a job. That is because a job seems to constitute an important area of her new life:

> I was particularly worried about a job…that I wouldn't find the job and would have to go back home.

While being anxious about a job is probably also a feeling shared by previous waves of migrants, Ola's worry is different – she knows that going back home would not cause her any greater financial problems and it would be easy from an organisational point of view, but it would be undesirable in terms of her sense of personal achievement. Like Marcelina, who was ashamed of admitting that she felt homesick, Ola does not want to portray herself as a weak person, especially in a situation when she does not plan to reside in the UK for a long time anyway. Hence, because of her planned rather short stay, she decides not to waste time looking for a 'good job' and after a week of being unsuccessful, she finally accepts her friend's offer and takes a job in Food Co., a job which is meant to be temporary, at least until she finds something better:

So I came for the first interview to the factory. Everything was ok, but later, my first day at Food Co. wasn't the best one. I think I got a bit disappointed, I mean, I came there very unwillingly. I was made to put on that white coat, cap. I had never before worked in such conditions so it was something new for me. So I laughed at the beginning that we all look funny, and all the same. But after a week or two, I just thought: ok, I can stay here but only for a while.

Similar to Marcelina's experience, the physicality of the place seems to influence Ola's initial feelings, already making her feel unprepared and disappointed on her first day in the factory. Interestingly, despite this negative first impression and Ola's short term intentions with regard to staying in the factory, she seems to be looking for opportunities to integrate: she has a positive attitude to her new job; she smiles at everybody and tries to develop relationships with others. However, regardless of her maybe intuitive willingness to integrate, she finds it difficult to interact with other employees when she recognises differences between her and others' values. Ola feels that she does not fit in with others and that might make her feel alienated:

At the beginning I was very optimistic about everything, about people… However, people started to astonish me with their attitudes…I smiled at everybody because I didn't know what was waiting for me. I was very nice to everybody and I didn't come across any loutishness yet. Later on, it turned out that the factory wasn't such a good place. Unfortunately, people who work there, it is very difficult to start any kind of relationship there…I'm talking about 90 per cent of those people…it is a completely different world. These are people who have a completely different life, different values, maybe they were brought up differently, under different conditions, I don't know.

As the interviewee described it, she was initially very optimistic about the job and people she met there because she perceives herself as a cheerful person. However, the factors that could determine Ola's attitude might not only be her pleasant disposition but also her sense of social class. Similar to Marcelina, who is also a young and highly-educated person, Ola shares the perception of not fitting into the factory environment. Certainly it is not the place she dreamt about when graduating from university and she can feel the clash of completely different worlds, people of different values and different social status that constitute the new wave groups of

migrants. Interestingly, she does not comment on the nature of work that could possibly make her feel unfulfilled or even humiliated but it is the people she has to interact with on a daily basis that seems most important.

> There are people greedy for success and nothing can stop them but I'm different, more sensitive I think, and I look for more personal relationships. So it is not only work that matters to me but I also try to understand a person personally.

Contrary to her initial narrative about the importance of work, Ola is now using the argument to differentiate herself from others. Ola positions herself outside the group of workers who would do everything to succeed. This is because there are things of which she does not approve and therefore she is not going to adopt them. The interviewee does not compromise her values and in that way she possibly gets a clearer sense of her own identity.

Still, what makes Ola think this way and believe even more in her own inability to fit in, are the current events on the shop floor. After only a few months of working on the line, Ola was trained and promoted to quality controller. As she explained it, the department urgently needed to get somebody trained and Ola was the only person at that time who had a reasonable level of English. Unfortunately others saw it differently and assumed that it must have been a result of her being in a relationship with a Czech supervisor. This is something that significantly influenced Ola's everyday work experience and relationships with colleagues:

> There was that smear campaign against me and Daniel. They were constantly offending me.

> Many people wanted to make my life difficult, I mean, it is actually very difficult to live in such an environment, to be with people for eight sometimes ten hours, who are so negatively biased towards you, towards your life, your relationship, your boyfriend. It is very difficult; and I am this kind of person who needs people's approval, some kind of support.

The above fragment illuminates how emotionally difficult the workplace situation is for Ola. Her discourse reveals that she is not a loner by nature and needs other people

to make sure that what she is doing is worth it. Thus, it seems that neither marginalisation nor isolation is an option for her, or at least it was not at the time prior to her work in Food Co. Still, Ola's relationship with a person of non-Polish nationality seems to play an important element in shaping her acculturative strategies. The fact of being in a relationship with a Czech suggests Ola's openness to international interaction but it also creates a new set of circumstances for her under which there is no reinforcement of Polishness in her private life. Additionally, the coincidence of her promotion and starting the relationship with a Czech supervisor became the basis for other Poles to exclude her from the group. Consequently, she might find herself feeling alienated among her own compatriots and therefore pushed, as a person of a social disposition, towards other nationalities to find their "approval" and "support".

> Personally, I sit with the English, Portuguese, and Czechs and I'm always the only Pole there. I think we are the only mixed table in the canteen. I don't know why it is like that. I don't think I would ever dare to sit at the Romanian table though, I don't know why. I think that if I did it, they would stare at me as if I was insane, asking: why did she sit here? The same would happen if a Romanian sat at the Polish table.

Ola's narration illustrates what many of my respondents also discussed: there is limited interaction and thus integration among people of different nationalities. One of the reasons for such a situation might be, again, the large scale migration from Poland to the UK and consequently Poles' dominance in the workplace. However, this fact alone cannot explain the lack of interaction among people of different nationalities, because there are 27 other nationalities in the factory, apart from Poles. What might explain it though, is the new migrants' poor English language skills which might significantly affect their contact with other nationals and a number of Poles commented on that aspect of their everyday experience during my participant observation stage. There is also the possibility of such intense inter-group relations that their integration is simply out of the question for them. However, Ola's discourse not only reveals a lack of integration among Poles and other nationalities but also illuminates a segregation between Romanians and the rest of Romanian workers. Romanians are said to hold the most important positions on the shop floor and control

that part of the production process; they are portrayed as the ones who distance themselves from workers of other nationalities.

Nevertheless, despite some unsuccessful attempts to integrate with other workers she seems willing to integrate with society outside the workplace. Like Marcelina, she is learning English, wants to live here normally and would like to work with English people:

> If I had a job with English workers only, initially I would feel a bit worse than them, and I would probably think that they don't like me, that they are insincere, but after knowing them better, being closer with them, I think everything would be ok. I think I would feel good with them; I think I would want it. I'm sure it would be hard when you won't be able to speak any Polish but after some time I would be happy about it.

Having no experience of working with English workers Ola seems to be full of contradictions in terms of her evaluation of the indigenous people. On the one hand she perceives them as dishonest people, who would possibly be condescending towards her because of her immigrant status. Not knowing them has led to some idealistic perceptions; she assumes that after a while both parties would appreciate each other. Whether it is her trust in supposed English 'fair play' or Ola's aspiration to fit into the English environment remains unclear. Nevertheless, two questions arise: why is she not looking for a job alongside indigenous people and what keeps her in a place where her own compatriots turn her working life into an everyday struggle and make her say that she does not "have that power, that energy to work anymore"? And suddenly, without giving any reasons, she gets ready to accept all the difficulties:

> I agreed to work here so I also agreed to the conditions. I work here of my own free will and, if you don't like it, you can always leave. It just annoys me that everybody is talking about something but nobody does anything because everybody is afraid…But I think it is everybody's individual choice.

There seems to be a number of possibilities as to why Ola has agreed to endure so much in Food Co. Meeting Ola and listening to her story made me believe that she is very ambitious and has a strong sense of responsibility for her actions and the decisions she takes. Thus, since it was her individual choice and nobody pressurised her into coming to the UK and working at Food Co., she has no one to lay the blame on apart from herself. However, it could also be because of Ola's lack of self-confidence and poor language skills, she is unable to find a better job. After all, her perception is that "it is only a factory" so it carries with it consequences in terms of poor working conditions and a lack of respect that is usually felt by people in higher positions, so having higher expectations would simply be inappropriate and naïve. For the same reasons Marcelina, for instance, was desperate to escape the shop floor and pursue her career in an office-type environment but unlike Ola, she did not try to justify her lack of respect towards employees with the nature of the factory regime and that is the end of the similarities between these two women. Ola seems not to share Marcelina's aspirations to change factory employee relations. It could be a result of their different natural dispositions whereby one girl is a more exuberant and controlling type of person that the other, but what also appears to make a difference here is both interviewees' settlement intentions. Indeed, the reason why Ola is prepared to continue working at Food Co., despite adverse circumstances, might be her recognition of the temporality of the situation. Although her initial plan was to stay in the UK for only six months and despite the fact that she has been here for over two years now, she is considering moving to the Czech Republic with her boyfriend when the right time comes.

> I would like to live in Poland, but we're thinking about the Czech Republic. For the time being we are here, for the next two or three years for sure. But we still have a whole life to live…These are plans for today but of course plans like to change.

According to Eade et al.'s (2006) typology of recent Polish migrants living in London, Ola would probably be classified among one of those young and ambitious individuals who keep their options open and therefore are named as "searchers". However, as she admits herself, this is the plan for today and because there is nothing that would stop her from going somewhere else, she seems to accept the availability

of other options. Either way, Ola is not a typical "tumbleweed" (Boyle 2006) who separates completely from her roots and goes with the wind to see what the future brings, nor is she a person whose orientation to the future is one of 'intentional unpredictability' (Eade 2008). She does have higher aspirations than working in the factory but at least at the moment these are unconnected to any concrete plan of action. While this might be true for many new wave migrants who might feel unhindered in their actions by time, law or mobility restrictions, Ola's unwillingness to leave the job might also be a result of her still feeling insecure and anxious about living abroad or making any kind of life decisions.

> It's been two years since I started working at Food Co. I had that moment when I'd had enough of everything; I wanted to change this job… I was just tired of people…I think that all those negative experiences accumulated and I'd just had enough. I just wanted to run away. So I started to learn English but then I started to be afraid of that decision, that maybe it was too hasty. I was simply scared of losing this job because to some extent I'm here alone, on my own. But on the other hand I know that if you don't take the risk you can get nothing. I don't know. I just hope that there will be such a moment when I feel confident enough to try and take the risk…I just don't want to live here and vegetate. I have to live here normally.

The above fragment illustrates how complex and difficult migrants' decisions might be and again it appears that to follow a single strategy of acculturation is not easy, if it is possible at all. A large part of Ola's migration experience constitutes employment which at the moment seems to be a source of frustrations and uncertainties and it significantly affects her ability to make a decision with regards to settlement. The interviewee gives the impression of being torn between staying enclosed in her uncomfortable but safe world and going outside to take on some new challenges and start living "normally" alongside people of the host society, despite the fact that in her eyes this new life will never be as good as the one she had in Poland.

> My life here is not similar to the one I had back in Poland. Of course I try to have a similar life to what I used to have but it will never be the same. Because I live here so I try to function normally here but I will never feel the same way I felt in Poland. In Poland, there are most of my

friends, family, there is my life. But now I'm here and I have to adapt…I will never feel at home here.

Ola's above discourse on feeling nothing like the way she does in Poland might not only suggest common feelings of longing but also feelings of guilt which have arisen as a consequence of migration. Guilt could arise from leaving the family and the immediate environment but could also be superimposed by certain social discourses where melting into the host community would be perceived as a betrayal of one's home values, family and home culture. Later, Ola's narrative will illuminate how strong her attachment to family and friends is - people who make her feel proud to be a Pole. Nevertheless, she still seems to believe that she is in full control of the adaptation process and neither her devotion to her family nor the attitudes of the host society can hinder the process:

I think it all depends on me whether I adapt or not. People can say between themselves that I can't speak good English but it is actually my business whether I learn that language or not.

On the other hand, Ola's difficulty in adapting to the host society might also spring from her lack of psychological preparation for the migration. Maybe the fact that she made the decision to migrate spontaneously and therefore without any further planning resulted in a situation whereby her idealistic expectations lacked a realistic basis. One might also expect that Ola's young age, recent graduation from university and consequently rather limited experience of working and interacting with people from different backgrounds made her unprepared for adult life in general and for migrant life in particular. If such is the reason though, it could be expected that similar problems would be faced by many, if not the majority, of new wave migrants. Unfortunately Marcelina's case would not support such a claim. Despite similarities in education, social background and lack of preparedness for the migration experience my previous interviewee did not have such problems with fitting into the new environment. It is possible then that the severe character of Ola's everyday problems in the workplace have turned out to be decisive in her evaluation of the migratory experience. Her difficult relations with co-workers caused by their attacks on her relationship with a Czech supervisor seem to be quite traumatic but the only explanation she finds is people's lack of personal culture. People she would not

normally have any contact with constitute a significant part of her everyday life by being her co-workers. That is how the importance of workplace relations is revealed because it is probably the only place where an individual cannot choose who to interact with and who to avoid. In any other sphere of one's life it is matter of choice:

> Before I came here I had never expected that people would be able to behave that way…I don't know, maybe I had lived in some closed world before, where I had a group of friends, people I knew since I was born. I just wasn't so exposed to other people; and here I just have to work with those people. I think that in Poland I would never have anything to do with the people I have to work with here.

> I've been here for over two years and the first fascination is gone now. Because when I came here everything was so exciting, new, everything was great. But I started living here and every day problems started and you always struggle with something. Maybe I had different images in my head, at the beginning, but to be honest life here is…if I was born here….It's only about where you are born. This will never be my home; Poland will always be my home.

In cross-cultural investigations, unrealistic expectations built on a basis of incomplete information or through a lack of experience with other cultures, are often quoted as becoming the first source of confusion (Berry 1988; Salvendy 1983; Taft 1987) and Ola's discourse seems to confirm this. It is also expected that this is what pushes Ola and many other migrants towards home. Indeed, the image of home is a recurrent topic of conversation for many of my respondents but Ola seems to stand out from the group. While the majority of the interviewees reported 'homesickness' while abroad, which was particularly strong during the initial phase of accommodation, Ola admits that her longing to return home has never gone away but has even gained in strength:

> I'm going home more and more often now. Now, at this moment, I know for sure that I don't want to be here. I don't want to stay here any longer. I want to go home. But I don't know whether I will be able to go back home, ever.

Ola seems to be particularly attached to her home country and that is why she feels that going back home is an important part of her life strategy. However, Ola's

attitude is different from Marcelina who also feels attached to her home country but believes that longing for family and friends is natural and even living in another Polish town away from them would not change that feeling. For Ola, recurrent travels to Poland, which are available to recent migrants more than at any time before, do not make any positive difference because, unlike Marcelina, Ola simply does not feel happy in the UK. Nevertheless, one could argue that frequent visits to Poland not only facilitate her reinforcement of home values but possibly also make her see the differences between home and the host country more clearly. It might be that such comparisons and regular confrontation of new and old environments make her realise that certain changes have also occurred in herself during her time abroad.

> I have learnt a lot here…I have certainly learnt to keep a distance and not trust everybody; I have learnt not to be 100 per cent open to others.

Like Marcelina, who as a result of her work experiences, also describes herself as becoming less naïve and less prone to fall prey to people who take advantage of others, Ola gains characteristics that help her to isolate herself from others because:

> At my workplace you cannot trust people, they are very unreliable.

Once again, a workplace atmosphere and poor interpersonal relations seem to affect one's level of adjustment and even identity. Lack of trust was identified by all my interviewees and pointed out as an important element in the relations among Poles. Unlike Cavendish (1982) or Romanians in Food Co., Polish migrants do not support each other or make friends in the workplace so Ola speculates that maybe the situation is a consequence of Polish migration en masse:

> Romanians, they are very supportive towards each other, while Poles are not like that. Maybe it is because there are so many of us, maybe if there wasn't so many of us, just like the Romanians, it would be different. But I know that they stick together. I don't know whether it is in their blood; …and Poles, unfortunately, they only plot against each other.
>
> I would like to speak English fluently; maybe to show that I'm not another Polack who came here and can't speak any English. I just want to show them that not everybody is like that. The same is with

Romanians; there are also Romanians who can't speak any English or a Portuguese. It's not that Poles are the only ones; it is offending us. This is what people say of us because there are so many of us. And many different people arrive here. And Poles are in the majority. But if the same number of Romanians or Portuguese came here, the same thing would be told about them, right? Because you would easily find among them people who can't speak English.

Like Marcelina, Ola recognises the great competition and lack of support among Poles but she also believes that such an attitude towards each other has a negative impact on the reputation of the whole national group. An expected cause of that might again be the large scale and diverse nature of the new wave migration. This is because it could easily be imagined that the greater the number of individuals and the wider the diversity, the higher also the probability of finding people who do not comply with the rules. One could also assume that belonging to such a group would suddenly become increasingly difficult as it would mean exposing oneself to criticism of the out-group and being blamed for all the negative behaviours and attitudes that the group is said to represent. Ola comments:

> A few years ago when there were only English and Portuguese workers in the factory, there was no tension, the atmosphere was relaxed, there wasn't that much stress. People could go to toilet when they had to, they could go for a cigarette break when they wanted to…Right now, since Poles came to Food Co., breaks got shorter; they simply started to abuse these liberties, and that's why this has changed, that there is that kind of regime.

> I know they (Poles) can be nasty, cruel, and lazy and they can also take advantage of other people.

But then she adds:

> It doesn't mean that I am ashamed of being a Pole, no, I was born in Poland, and my family comes from Poland, my parents are Poles so if I said to you that I'm ashamed of being a Pole as a result of this conflict then it would mean I'm ashamed of my parents, my family.

> The priority here is always to defend your country, which isn't always easy because I work with so many Poles and they are all so different…generally speaking, I try to keep their side. Sometimes I lose my patience but after all they are still my compatriots.

> I would like us to stay together as well. I would like us to be normal. To show other nationalities that we are also together, and that we can fight together.

The above few fragments of Ola's narrative seem to be very inconsistent. First she talks about Poles' laziness and cruelty but then she takes their side, with common nationality as the only basis of their unity. Similar to Marcelina, Ola's discourse demonstrates how easily people can hold mutually contradictory beliefs, and a consequence of that might be their struggle to sympathise with some groups of workers. It then becomes more difficult for someone from outside, including researchers, to characterise or define such individuals in terms of their life strategies. On the one hand both Marcelina and Ola recognise all the vices of their compatriots and position themselves outside that group, but on the other hand they associate Poles with noble notions of parentage, home and a strong work ethic. It is possible though that symbolic values are of greater importance to Ola than everyday incidents and this is why she is likely to "keep to their side" in the event of conflict with other nationalities.

However, saying that she would like Poles to stick together is an evident aspiration to be like the Romanians. Even though Ola does not get on well with Romanian workers, in particular with her Romanian manager, whose main fault, ironically, is his favouritism towards his compatriots. Nevertheless, despite Ola's willingness to support her compatriots and her wish to be united and "fight together," she does not follow the rest when they take action against the management, as Marcelina would do:

> I just don't go into details; I'm simply not interested. They keep writing some petitions, complaints, but I'm not interested…I don't want to hear about these things. I am only there to do my job, that's all I'm interested in. I want to do the job the best I can and as long as I can. I just don't fancy taking part in some scandals. Maybe if those people were

different, it would all look differently. I think they just see things differently.

I try not to get involved in any of these petitions and I really don't know what they write in such petitions but there is never any reaction. I don't know what's going on there…Maybe it is because it is only a physical job, it is only a factory. People who go to such a factory don't need any skills or abilities, they only need strength, and to be healthy…I have never been upstairs, or written any petition, so I don't even know what it looks like.

Ola is quite unlike Marcelina, who fights alongside her compatriots against their common enemy – Romanian managers. Ola does not contribute to the traditional picture of a Polish community that unites under the notion of shared harm and injustice as it has many times in Polish history (Davies 1981, 1984). One reason for that might be Ola's strong conviction about the dissimilarity between her co-workers' values, behaviours and motivations and those that she is used to. Thus, following them would not make any sense as she not only believes in their otherness but also places no trust in them, and that lack of trust might be an important element of her being unsupportive. However, while this was also true in Marcelina's case, the critical factor here could be Ola's relationship with a non-Pole, which has resulted in some painful experiences on the shop floor and her exclusion from the national group. This is something that possibly made Ola tired of people, in particular Poles who did not give up on hurting her by gossiping about her personal relationship. She realised that people can be two-faced and very opportunistic so she does not get involved in any action undertaken on the shop floor because she knows that everything might be used against her. That is also why she has learnt to keep everybody at a distance and, fortunately for her, the nature of her work enables Ola to do that. She separates from everybody and to some extent lives in her own closed world by building a wall between herself and others:

I think that to some extent I got used to it, to this job. I mean, I have created some kind of my own world here…I think it is the environment, everybody is a human and everybody has emotions. Everybody gives up at some stage and it is difficult to fight with people around you, with 50, 60 people who are negatively biased towards you and despite all that to

just be nice and smile. It is very difficult. But, I'm trying to make things go in one ear and out at the other. That's what I have learnt here…

I organise my work myself and I have this kind of block that separates me from everything that happens on the shop floor, from other people. I have created this kind of wall.

This symbolic wall could categorise Ola as a person who pursues a strategy of separation but, as she explained, it is not something she intended to do from the very beginning. Because her job differs from what most of her co-workers do and she does not have to interact with them, Ola is not exposed to direct competition characteristic for line workers or unfavourably treated compared to her Romanian counterparts. Ola is quite autonomous in her work regime but she still decides to keep away from others. Hence, being relatively independent on the shop floor does not stop her from feeling "alien," as she illustrates in the fragment below. Feelings of alienation in the workplace where she experiences a lot of slights and offences from her compatriots made her give up and somehow switch off in order to survive and be able to carry on with her job. That gives her a sense of independence which, however, does not apply to the manager to whom she is directly responsible:

It is often that he says something to me and I don't understand and I ask him to repeat and I don't understand again, then he treats me that way, I don't know, it's difficult to explain, but his facial expression says everything of what he thinks of you. You know, my English will never be fluent, and I'm not Romanian either, I'm Polish not Romanian and I will never speak his language either. I have a right to feel alien there.

I have a feeling that he doesn't want to have anything to do with me. I have a feeling that he accepts me only because I work fast. Indeed, I have never objected to him, I never complain. I just do what I'm told to do because this is what they pay me for. That's it. So I think that to some extent I'm convenient to him but when it comes to a work relationship, you know, we don't even have any nice chats or something. And this is something I don't like; because I want to live in harmony with people. (...) It is a bit difficult, because the relationship between a subordinate and a superior is important. I feel bad about it but I finally came to the conclusion that it is only work so I don't have to make an effort, or be nice.

Ola decides to devote a lot of her narrative to illustrating her relationship with the Romanian manager. Despite reaching a conclusion that "it is only work," Ola seems to be greatly influenced by the attitude and behaviours of her superior. However, she finds herself alienated despite sharing the common injustice and discrimination with all other Poles in the department:

> He [the manager] is a kind of despot, I think. His attitude often provokes people. He doesn't say good morning to anybody, he doesn't ask how you are. I think that this creates some kind of aversion towards him, and people rebel somewhere deep inside, because every employee wants to be treated well. Working in such conditions is already difficult enough, and everybody makes the effort, but when you additionally face such a negative attitude, then you think: ok, if he behaves like that, then I will be exactly the same.

> Attitudes of Romanians towards Poles got worse. I think that it wasn't like that before because the manager wasn't Romanian, he was Portuguese I think. And now, when the manager is Romanian, I think they feel they have his support. I personally think that the manager should be English, not a Pole or a Romanian but an Englishman, a person completely neutral…A neutral manager wouldn't develop any personal relationships with anybody in particular. He would concentrate on work only and everybody would be treated the same way, equally.

> I don't have any experience of working with English managers...but I think that working with an English manager would be better because I don't think we can get anything worse than what we have now.

As has been suggested by all of my respondents, and there are no exceptions, Romanians seem to play an important role in shaping relationships on the shop floor. Aversion to Romanian managers, who favour their compatriots with regard to assigning them the best jobs or enabling them to work overtime, is caused by other workers feeling discriminated against, inferior and excluded from the community. Consequently, the atmosphere created by the Romanian superior is perceived to be so bad that it could not get any worse and therefore any alternative to the Romanian manager is supposedly a better one. Interestingly however, Ola, just like my other interviewees, does not suggest having a Polish superior but posits a notion of neutrality as a solution to the difficult situation on the shop floor. Unlike Marcelina,

who also believes in English workers' neutrality because she sometimes works alongside them, Ola has no experience of working with English managers but still prefers them over unfair Romanians and "nasty, cruel, and lazy" Poles. It might be that English managers are perceived as a good alternative not necessarily because of their professionalism, objectivity and sense of fairness but because of a lack of other options. Nevertheless, it appears that 'neutrality' is not Ola's only response to managing an internationally diverse workforce but it might also serve as a successful strategy to manage one's relationships with others. In fact, staying neutral is something that Ola does to handle her everyday contact with people:

> I just try to adapt to this place, to England, to the place where you live, and to people; to some extent at least. Maybe I don't always tolerate them but I try to adapt; and often I prefer to stay neutral.

Moreover, that notion of neutrality might be a striking illustration of Ola's state of mind and consequently the complexity of her process of acculturation. While "staying neutral" might simply be understood as being unbiased, that is, not discriminatory towards others, it might also suggest one's lack of a sense of direction. It is likely though that because of Ola's workplace experiences she remains uncertain as to which side she should be taking and instead prefers to locate herself somewhere in between and move around depending on the circumstances. Thus, depending on the situation, Ola is inclined to integrate or even assimilate when she feels like she wants to lead a normal life here, to learn English and possibly establish positive relationships with co-workers by "staying together;" or to separate or even be marginalised when other Poles criticise her relationship with the Czech supervisor and offend her, and Romanian managers ignore and discriminate against her.

5.4 Grzes and Magda

The story of Magda and Grzes was chosen as the only example in my sample of a married couple. It is interesting in the sense of how they both prepared themselves for the workplace experience, placing a high value on reciprocity but not holding too high expectations in terms of future careers. Similar to others, they just want to live a 'normal' life but the presence of vicious Poles and other nationalities make the

workplace experience rather unpleasant. For Grzes, this has become particularly evident after a serious work accident he had – a turning point in their migration stories.

Grzes is a 37 years old secondary school graduate from Poland. He came to the UK in September 2007, together with his wife, for a holiday to visit their friends and see "the real England." Unfortunately, due to their poor language skills they found it impossible to move around freely and, disappointed with their friends being busy earning money and not showing them around, the initial plan of doing a lot of sightseeing failed. They started to run out of money but Grzes and his wife did not want to go back so soon. They could see that living in England was "better and quiet" and they wanted to try it. They decided to combine earning some extra money with visiting the country. So they called their bosses in Poland and asked for three months of unpaid holiday. In the meantime, their friend gave them the address of a factory where they could apply for a job. Grzes was offered the job the next day but his wife had to wait for two more weeks. The first year they worked for Food Co.'s recruitment agency but then were offered permanent employment. They have not changed jobs since then. Even though Grzes had never planned to stay in the factory permanently, he had an accident at work that made him unsure about his future in this workplace and in this country. He has not recovered fully yet and the doctors have not allowed him to work for more than four hours each day. He feels that this situation, combined with his lack of a higher education and appropriate language skills, limits his opportunities of finding any other job in the UK. Nevertheless, he hopes to restore his health to its original condition soon and then decide what to do next.

Under those circumstances, his wife Magda, 31, also feels that there are not many options left for them. They could pack their suitcases and go back to Poland where they still have a flat but nothing else, or stay in the UK. Magda would prefer the latter as she believes they could still have a better life here than in Poland, even if faced with a situation where, as a result of Grzes' accident, she becomes the sole breadwinner in the family.

Grzes

Grzes started his story with recollections of the first room they lived in:

> And our friends organised a room for us. It was a nightmare. In Poland we lived in normal conditions but the room was small, dirty, squalid…ehm…mildewed, in a house where different nations lived, very unkind, I would even say uninhabitable. But we came here…we wanted to see England.

And later he explains in more detail:

> We only wanted to see the real England, not the one from newspapers and television. We had heard about this 'land of milk and honey' and we wanted to see how it is in real life.

This was the first experience Grzes' chose to talk about and we can already notice his frustration with the existing living conditions and tension with regard to living with other foreigners. Those first few sentences seem to reveal some sense of conflict within his migratory experience. Namely, the real life situation turns out to be complex and in contradiction to the traditional acculturation belief according to which integration or even assimilation is assumed at the moment of choosing migration. For those who want to begin life again, who choose a "better life" abroad or move with a spouse to another country, integration is seen as something natural, as a part of life and welfare. Meanwhile, Grzes and his wife, who decided to experience the English way of living, are exposed to circumstances under which neither assimilation nor integration seem to be possible at that time.

Additionally, his mention of Poland, which will continue throughout his narrative, illustrates Grzes' position of simultaneously being *here* and *there*. Constantly comparing the home country with the country of resettlement might indicate that a person is not (yet) well-adapted. And yet, despite realising that the differences between Poland and the UK are so big that it is pointless to compare the two countries, Grzes does make the comparison throughout the narrative.

Everybody knows how it is in Poland so we can't even compare…because people who work here can live normally, have a decent life.

Initially it was supposed to be…just to see how it is…but the money we started earning made us realise that it wasn't that bad actually, because we could live normally and save money, more money than in Poland. So I…we were not 100 per cent sure whether we would be coming back or staying in the factory.

Grzes is first among my interviewees who speaks explicitly about the financial aspects of his decision. He admits that money is actually the key factor that distinguishes Poland from the UK. It enables him and his wife to live normally – a notion that reappears regularly in the narratives of all my interviewees. Nevertheless, that quandary about staying or leaving remains and it seems to spring from the feelings of being stuck somewhere between Poland and England and possibly living in a state of limbo. It is worth noticing however, that Grzes does not recognise finding another job as an option for them. The decision that needs to be made is whether to stay in the factory (not in the country) or go back home. Even though he admitted on several occasions that he is used to hard work, he feels he is bound to the factory, especially now, after the accident. And this is how he recalls the accident:

I had an accident at work, with my spine. I think it was negligence, industrial safety negligence…ehm. No safety rules are kept here…It was an ordinary day…a dreadful pace of work, broken pallets, very high…too high…above the standards; I was taking that pallet off the stack. I just didn't manage to separate two pallets on that stack because they were too high so I took both. They were heavy, wet and broken and that's why I felt pain in my back. What else can I say? I didn't expect such consequences of that accident. It wasn't an accident with a loss of consciousness…or sudden disability…or I don't know. I only felt pain in my back. It was just before I finished my work, around 3pm, so I didn't even mention anything to anybody…apart from my colleague who saw the situation, that I clutched my back and that I felt pain. But I was working for the last hour to finish my shift so I didn't even say anything but my line leader also noticed something because she asked me if everything was ok, and I said yes but I felt pain in my back. That's all. I went to the hospital when I finished, and you know the rest. Constant visits at my GP, because my condition was getting worse.

> Those doctors didn't run necessary examinations to find out what had happened. They were only dismissing me with Paracetamol and Ibuprofen. Experts of the highest category [said with irony].

This fragment, apart from signalling a serious problem of poor safety rules in the workplace and the poor condition of the factory equipment which is old and used, it also illuminates at least two important aspects of Grzes' acculturation process. First of all, it reveals a certain response mechanism that he developed to manage workplace situations - not discussing his problems, worries or anything with people around him. At the end of his narrative, Grzes clearly states that it is a part of his strategy to survive in that place to "shut my mouth for the whole day and work." However, despite hiding his reactions in the workplace, in an interview situation with me, Grzes quite boldly expresses his opinion about the company's negligence in securing a safe working environment, and feels contempt for the English medical specialists. It is possible then that problem lies with his superiors whose reaction Grzes was possibly afraid of. To what extent it was a fear of losing a job or being mistreated by a Romanian supervisor is unclear but the bottom line is that the work accident has put him in a situation he had never anticipated so he now feels insecure and hopeless.

The work accident seems to be an important determinant of not only Grzes' decision in terms of staying or going but also his attitude towards "other nationalities". The English doctors are, in his eyes, poor specialists and that is why he eventually decided to go to Poland to have the necessary examinations carried out. His trust in Polish doctors was reinforced when he found out that an immediate operation on his spine was required to avoid constant disability. In the workplace context, his attitude towards foreigners has also changed. Having a GP's order to avoid hard physical duties, Grzes started working on so called "Romanian lines" where Romanian workers were given mostly easy jobs and a lot of freedom compared with other international, but mainly Polish, lines. Those experiences made him adopt another response mechanism – avoidance.

> Half a year before my accident took place I thought there was no difference between Romanians or Poles. I thought we were equal no matter what jobs we did in the factory. But now I can see the difference.

Romanians stick together and they don't let others, I mean Poles and other nationalities as well, have their voice. They just favour their compatriots. So a Romanian team leader always shows how the job should be done to his/her compatriots while Poles have to learn on their own. And myself, for instance, I had to learn everything on my own; I wasn't given any help. So when I started my job I was expected to know everything and work as if I had been there for at least a few months. Nobody cared that I was new and they only blamed me for not doing the job fast enough. So in this situation I don't have much to say to Romanians. I don't really want to have anything in common with them. I don't mean anything to them so they don't mean anything to me.

The notion of nationality comes up frequently in Grzes' narrative and it constitutes an important part of this migratory experience.

But this is factory work so it's not pleasant at all. Additionally, other nationalities make this work extra unpleasant…they just…ehm…I don't know... they just try to distinguish themselves or something…get a promotion so they force people to work extremely hard. So the work is very hard. A lot of people…a lot of workers leave, there is huge staff rotation. People give up after one day of work. That work, to be honest, is only for desperate people or people deprived of some values, who vegetate day after day, who have no goals…work is dreadful…you really have to be desperate to work there….to stand the pace of the work. You have to work, like everywhere else, but it is really difficult there to work with all those people, and I'm not talking about Englishmen now, because there are only about 10 per cent of English workers, they mainly work in the offices, which is obvious because it is their country. While in production, labour is hard and English workers can't cope… they can't stand the pace of that work. I don't want to use that comparison but this pace of work says it could be called a labour camp, of forced work rather than effective work, or work with satisfaction.

To be able to work there you have to give up some of your values and attitudes, otherwise you wouldn't be able to work there for more than one day. Maybe not all of your values, because there are certain spheres of your personality, the very deep ones that you can't change but if I wanted to be honourable I wouldn't be able to work there at all.

By "other nationalities" Grzes primarily means Romanians who, despite being a significantly smaller migration group than Poles, together with the English, hold the most important positions on the shop floor. In Grzes' eyes they put themselves on a pedestal in that particular workplace environment despite being so similar and equal to other nationalities outside it. They are pictured as those who constantly try to differentiate themselves from other migrants, dominate the factory and turn it into a struggle for survival for others. The Romanians' behaviour could make Grzes feel as if he was a "desperate person" or "person deprived of some values." However, despite the obvious economic reason for this migratory experience, Grzes never positioned himself as a desperate person who does not have any options left. In fact, when asked about his motives for staying in the country, he pointed only to the opportunity to save some money for the future. Nonetheless, the second extract actually does confirm his awareness of losing some of his values and beliefs as without this change in attitude he would be unable to survive.

The word "survive" seems to fit well with the concept of a labour camp, which came up a number of times during my interviews with Polish workers as well as during my participant observation. The inability to handle difficult physical conditions and other pressures of the production process, such as close supervision and rigorous treatment from superiors, may explain why Grzes is not prone to showing signs of workplace integration. He presents himself as a survivor, one who can cope with the bad conditions, who has been deprived of some of his values and who went through the trauma of losing his fitness as a result of a workplace accident; but nevertheless he is still there working and hoping to recover soon.

Finally, in the extract above, Grzes refers to English workers as those who are not present in large numbers on the shop floor for two obvious reasons. First, they cannot work as hard as migrant workers do, and secondly, their place is in the offices upstairs anyway. This reveals an interesting picture of an English worker. On the one hand an English person is not perceived as a hard worker or even a competent specialist (e.g. English doctors), but on the other hand it is fully legitimate for such a person to hold a high position in the factory. It seems that such an understanding of the situation springs from Grzes' appreciation of the hosts' privilege and superiority over migrants - people who are only guests in the hosts' country. Consequently,

English workers appear to play a rather trivial role in shaping Grzes' everyday position, not only because there are so few of them on the shop floor, but also because in Grzes' eyes there is nothing to negotiate with them. As a migrant his status has automatically become lower at the moment of choosing migration. He seemed to be fully aware of that and thus expected to hold only inferior positions:

> We didn't expect to hold any director-level position. Everybody knows that work in a factory is hard…we are not of any aristocratic birth…we, I don't know…we have never had easy jobs in our lives. But, I don't want to complain, because there is no point.

Once again Grzes decides not to complain and voice his concerns but this time he feels helpless about the situation he is in. Thus, since that difficult work environment has not made him decide to leave the factory or even country, it might be expected that out of Hirschman's (1970) three responses, Grzes has been left with the "loyalty" option. This, in turn, might result in a number of diverse, and sometimes contradicting, attitudes of alienation and a desire to achieve affiliation with others. He could feel encouraged to maybe invest more in his relationships with others: with Poles to become more united with the majority, with the English to get a better insight into the "real" English life, or maybe with Romanians to secure himself a more comfortable life within the factory.

Despite being used to hard work and being prepared for difficult conditions in the new environment, what Grzes experienced must have been far beyond his expectations, unfortunately in a negative sense. What he found particularly unpleasant was the work organisation and rigorous or even inhuman treatment of employees. The physical effort required in this job, however, is not as off-putting as the psychological pressure or maybe one is simply reinforcing the other:

> It doesn't really matter if you feel good or bad, if you want to go to toilet or…actually…you can never stop the line. If you really really feel you have to go to toilet you get somebody to replace you but it never happens immediately and only for a short time. You can feel the pressure that it isn't something you are allowed to do, to stop the pace of the work.

Prompted to say more about the pressure he said:

> …we cannot turn the machines off even for a few moments; that's the pressure, you have to do everything in a hurry, almost running, but still with a dissatisfied leader's eyes watching you all the time, complaining and not once shouting at you, at employees. Personally, I've never had such a situation but I know… I see what the relationships look like…maybe I will put it this way: I'm a man so maybe I'm not so sensitive but women who work there often cry, and I've been a witness to such situations many times…when a manager or a person of higher status than an ordinary employee is shouting at a girl…Sometimes it is difficult to cope with the pressure, I mean…psychologically.

> Personally, I would never let anybody take liberties with me that way. I think that it all depends on a person's psyche. I don't know. Nobody is shouting at me because I would never let it happen.

Grzes feels the pressure of being watched and controlled by his superiors. That close supervision, which is nothing new compared to more traditional accounts of factory life, has been an issue for many people in Food Co. and it has been said to create an atmosphere of stress and discomfort. Workers constantly need to be on guard as not doing so puts them at risk of being criticised and shouted at. Working in such a setting might also put those who are observed into a position of observers. Grzes admitted to watching the relationships around him and the presence of women in the factory made him aware of another characteristic that makes the difference – gender. The interviewee believes that as a man he is stronger psychologically and thus less prone to a break down. But he also pictures himself as a person unaffected by the difficult conditions because of his strong psyche. He said he would never let anybody treat him with lack of respect despite previously admitting to feeling helpless and resigned. The question that remains is whether the lack of situations in which he is being treated badly is a result of his strong personality or his mechanism of avoidance and not speaking up that simply saves him from conflict situations. While he might believe in the first, the latter seems to be more probable, particularly with regard to the strict and powerful dominance of the Romanian management team.

The notion of nationality came back in Grzes' discourse about differences between departments and shifts:

We are on a rotating shift, so called mix, but there are two others: am and pm shifts. On the pm shift, their leader is English. And we can see it easily that when we come to work, to replace that pm shift, that there is a different speed of line set up, and the attitude to people is different…And they are smiling… smiling because they want to smile and not because somebody asks them to do that…as it happens on our shift when there is supposed to be some inspection from outside and our leader tells us to smile to controllers (he laughs). It is unbelievable but this is how it is there. [On the pm shift] there is time to work efficiently. I believe that because there is time for things like that, there are less mistakes, and it is for the benefit of the plant because the production is the same, if not better, and people want to come to such work. Whereas there are no people on my shift who come to work willingly. So it is enough to change the leader, his nationality…I think that English people have a different attitude, and treat people more decently than people who came here to distinguish themselves from others, and have a career.

There is no doubt that English people are friendlier than other nationalities; friendlier and more helpful. So they don't disturb your work as it happens with other Poles, Russians or Romanians. They even help but never make it uphill work. Work on the line requires cooperation and if there is no cooperation then the chain gets broken; one person gets exhausted while the other treats it lightly. This can never be if we are supposed to work efficiently. Otherwise it is only stress.

These extracts reveal a number of issues that seem to influence Grzes' process of adapting to this English workplace and one of them is certainly the concept of Englishness. Again, that theme was present on a number of occasions during the interviews with Polish workers and seemed to play an important role. English managers are generally perceived by migrants as being competent, well-mannered and friendly even if their experience of working with such managers is limited. It is probable that because of that limited contact between them, but also because of the unfavourable picture of the Romanian managers, their English counterparts are portrayed as a solution to migrants' problems on the shop floor.

The notion of "effective work" is another element that emerges a number of times throughout Grzes' discourse. He pays a lot of attention to how efficient his work is,

something he is probably used to and is part of his work ethic. This might suggest he is placing a high value on reciprocity, a principle that seems to play a particular role in employment relations. During my work in the factory many people noticed that their performance decreased over time. While this might be a result of some strategic response to comparing themselves with other relatively slower workers, in particular the English ones, it may also reflect their rather unconscious process of fitting in. It has been suggested that the longer immigrants spend in the country, the more their attitude towards work begins to reflect that of the native workers (Bauder 2006). It can be also expected that migrant workers become more demanding as their awareness of employment entitlements and alternative opportunities increases.

A lot also seems to depend on departmental structure and work organisation. While working on the line requires a number of people to cooperate closely and each person's diligence is a highly important element of the group situation, there are certain places in the factory where people work quite independently of each other. During the participant observation stage I spent a few days in a department like this and it was said to be a good place to work because generally people did not have major issues with each other. They tried to help each other and behave in a friendly way but at the same time they were all aware that a situation like this was rather unique in the factory, possibly because they did not have to depend on each other so strongly and there was little supervision compared to work on a line. Grzes' perception of the factory which he compared to a labour camp is that there is no sense of community, nobody to identify with and a widespread feeling of detachment even of those who theoretically should be of the greatest help in a place full of foreigners – compatriots. This is how Grzes reflected on the issue of his relationship with other Poles:

> We have a few friends here, maybe not friends…this word is too big….colleagues who are normal I would say. Because it is difficult to find normality there.

> It is very strange because most nationalities feel attached to each other, more emotionally, and respect each other. But I can't say the same about Poles…It's not a contest for the nicest compatriot but it's enough

to be a normal, kind person and have no prejudice against others, their background or the way they look.

The discourse of normality keeps coming back. The migrant feels the need to present himself as "normal." In the dictionary there are many synonyms of the word "normal" like: usual, standard and routine. Grzes, like all my interviewees, pays a lot of attention to the notion of normality, indicating at the same time how unusual the new situation and people around him are to him – even if these are mainly his compatriots. Grzes seems to adopt two completely contradictory positions with regard to Poles' presence in the factory. On the one hand he recognises the hostility and lack of support among his compatriots and that makes him keep his distance by not making any close friends. But on the other hand, once he acknowledges belonging to this national group in this particular place, Grzes not only tries to justify his compatriots' misbehaviour but also praises their hard work. When asked about his sense of Polishness, despite having rather bad experiences, he admitted to being proud of the fact that he is a Pole, just like both Marcelina and Ola. His compatriots' main crime seems to be great ambition and trying to impress others at all costs.

> As far as I know, Poles have been working there for a very long time. (...) And they always try to show they are good workers by constantly increasing the pace of work, showing that they are very efficient. Because of that I think that there are different production norms now. I'm sure of that because I spoke to an English worker who has been working there for a long time. And she told me that before so many Poles came here, English workers constituted the majority and there was a completely different attitude to work and different production quantity norms.

> [*Interviewer: Can you tell me something more about that conversation?*]

> I will say it this way…she is also an older person and right now she seems to be totally relaxed as well, as if she doesn't really care about what is happening around her. She doesn't care about the pressure of working faster and faster because she is not afraid of losing her job. But still I think she blames other nationalities for this situation.

> [*Interviewer: How did you feel as a member of those 'other nationalities'?*]

I felt aversion towards my compatriots. But when I think about it then I think it is a natural process. I know that to some extent I also contribute to the present situation. But if you want to work there you have to meet the existing imposed rules and norms, and the pace of work of course.

They [Poles] are afraid of competition, mostly from their compatriots, but also other nations that arrive here. However, I don't think that other nations are any kind of risk to Poles because after all I think that Poles are the hardest working nation of all. Perhaps equal to Russians. I think it might be a result of the situation we have in our countries. In most cases Poles and Russians are very hard-working people. I would even say that they work extremely hard. So they are simply afraid of competition.

He again uses the comparison between Poland and England but this time not only to show the differences between those two countries but also to rationalise his compatriots' actions. In Grzes' eyes, the first country is a place where work is associated with a constant struggle to make ends meet and, thus, it somehow validates Poles' attitude to work and aim for a safe position at all costs. England, in turn, is perceived as a place where working enables people to live with dignity – something that seems normal for Western Europeans but unique and valuable for Eastern Europeans. This concept could possibly play a role in sharpening the similarities between nationals of post-communist countries such as Poles, Russians or even Romanians as opposed to the indigenous people. Indeed, while workers of that background might share such an understanding of the situation, Grzes goes even further by concluding that all migrants have a lot in common as after all they are all only guests here. This is something that should make migrant workers stick together.

…that staying with your compatriots only…I think it's normal…in England other nations will always be perceived as worse, for Englishmen it is always their home, their place, their country, and it isn't for us. It's natural. Englishmen might have a grudge that we take their jobs away. And I think it is a bit of a justified perception. Because so many other nations come here and they try to dictate their own terms. So I think that it is natural to have a rather distancing attitude to foreign nationalities and maybe dislike.

Despite having rather limited contact with the English workers, Grzes asserts quite a strong claim about other nations being perceived as worse. It would usually be expected that knowing this would lead to denial, trying to prove the untruthfulness of the perception and possibly hostility in the relationship with indigenous workers. In this case, however, Grzes goes along with such perceptions accepting them as natural and despite being aware of the English workers' potential grudges against his nation, he seeks more contact with them by expressing his willingness to work mainly with indigenous workers. For Grzes, lack of contact with the English means lack of negative experiences in the form of bad treatment or misbehaviour but it also opens up a possibility for developing positive relationships.

Finally, Grzes' narrative suggests he has problems with accepting the changes of migrating to a different country. Yet although he talks a lot about working in a place that has been compared to a labour camp, complains about "other nationalities" as well as hostile compatriots who make the work experience even more unpleasant and describes the lack of "normality," at the same time he gives the following comment:

> As I said, we went to that work and we don't regret anything…. apart from my health of course. It happened here but it could have also happened in Poland.

Grzes, by admitting to having no regrets, sounds as if he had made a fully conscious decision about his migration. However, looking at his story, his lack of any intentional actions or tangible efforts to go in one direction or another, illuminates Grzes' lack of strategy or intent. He seems to adopt a 'wait and see approach'. Throughout his story, Grzes positioned himself in a number of different and often contradictory positions: disapproving the English way of doing things (the negligence that caused his work accident; the lack of competence of English specialists) but wanting to work alongside the English workers and managers; working in a place that he compared with a labour camp but not regretting his decision to come to the UK and being here; criticising and staying away from compatriots but praising their diligence, ambitions, intelligence; and feeling proud of his nationality.

The last thing that Grzes said might be the best illustration of his current position:

I really don't want to present the factory in an unfavourable light because it is a salvation for many people. They come here without any language skills, without education and they wouldn't be able to find anything better than that. For me it is also ok, if only that accident hadn't happened, I would manage. I just shut my mouth for the whole day and work. This job doesn't develop me in any way. I develop when I go to English classes or when I go to Paris for a trip. This job develops my wallet only.

Looking at Grzes' story, some of his choices like "I just shut my mouth for the whole day and work" seem to be very conscious and strategic ways of managing his everyday work experiences. Nevertheless even conscious decisions might often be conditioned. Many other changes, however, are made unconsciously and spring from certain events or circumstances that are rarely under one's control. Grzes' story of migration seems to have more of the latter.

Magda

The significance of family, spouses and partners might be twofold. They can function as a sanctuary that provides emotional support, and therefore facilitates adaptation to the new environment; for instance, Hurh and Kim's (1990) study of the adaptation of Korean immigrants residing in Chicago showed that married immigrants were less depressed and more satisfied with life than non-married ones. On the other hand, they can also serve as an impediment, making adaptation more difficult (Juhasz 2001). A spouse or children unhappy with their lives abroad are not a help, but an extra difficulty with which one has to deal. Sometimes it is impossible to solve such a problem, and the individual has to decide which one to sacrifice: the relationship or living abroad. Grzes does not have such a dilemma because his wife Magda is convinced of the fact that being in the UK can ensure their family a better life – something they agreed on. Despite having some initial doubts about staying in this country, Magda has slowly started to get used to it and appreciate its superiority over Poland.

After two weeks all you want to do is to go back home, especially when you can't speak English, when you don't know how to move around. It's good that we had our own car here so at least our way to work was

easy. But as time flies by you get to know the places, buses, you find out from other people, from Poles, how to get there or there. We also live in different conditions now, we have a different flat and the conditions right now are comparable with those we had in Poland. So the life here has become normal. In terms of my job, hmm, you have to work everywhere, and bearing in mind my language skills I think the job is not the worst. There is nothing to complain about or make a fuss.

That is what Magda included in the first part of her narrative. In only a few sentences she shows her process of adapting to the new environment, starting from a complete lack of acceptance of the new conditions, through gradually getting used to places, meeting people and finally recognising the new situation as normal, usual and well-known. While this might indicate that Magda has successfully fitted into the new milieu, her last comment about work brings in an element of disappointment and uncertainty about the migratory experience, as if employment constituted a separate component. Such was also the case with Marcelina who gradually accepted her life in the UK as normal, good and comfortable except from the work experience. When Magda starts talking about work, she pauses for a second for a short time of reflection. Even though she admits that "the job is not the worst," she signals that she has some worries. Nevertheless, she accepts them and decides not to complain and somehow takes all the blame upon herself – after all, the reason for which she has such a bad job is her poor language skills. Magda takes a position similar to her husband Grzes, maybe because they discussed it at some point, or maybe just because of their humility and effort to be realistic, but they both decided to accept whatever they get due to their migrant status and possibly unsatisfactory education and language skills.

In fact, language is something that Magda keeps referring to, something that would give her more confidence in everyday life and the only condition needed to settle in the country permanently. Interestingly enough, even though she could not imagine staying in the country without appropriate language skills, as that would mean constant reliance on friends or people willing to help, she does not admire those who are linguistically adept. On the one hand, Magda considers it pathetic when people "can't speak English but talk rubbish all the time" but on the other, she does not give high regard to those who can speak the language.

There are a lot of people who think that when they can speak English they can pull off the whole world, they will be ruling, doing nothing but ruling, that they will be given managerial positions straight away. And the truth is that if you want to be respected you have to show first that you can do the job, that you deserve the promotion. It cannot be that a foreigner comes to the UK and wants to manage the English, there are English people who can manage, it is their home and they also want to work, and they have the right to work in those managerial positions, more than the foreigners.

According to Magda, even language capabilities do not give migrants the right to rule in a place that "belongs" to the host society. She refers to both Polish workers who claim the right to hold supervisory positions based on their advanced language skills and Romanian workers who already hold these positions presumably because of their better language skills than the other nationalities. And yet Magda believes that holding higher positions in the organisation is a privilege of English people and therefore all that migrant workers can expect is to be their subordinates. Consequently, Polish workers might feel they are at greater risk from their fellow migrants than from the host society, as the English are already outside the competition. It could be expected that such understanding of the situation might have at least two consequences for Magda: first, her perception of English people might be relatively better compared to other migrants, and secondly, her obedience to English managers might be greater than to supervisors of other nationalities. In her narration, when she talks about obedience to superiors, she does not initially differentiate between nationalities:

I am the kind of person who…if I'm determined to do something, I don't pay attention to other people…If a leader or manager asks me to do this or that I will do those things, it won't hurt me to do that because I know that I didn't come here to have any career, because I can't speak English. I know my capabilities and I came to a foreign country to work so if somebody asks me to do something I do it, why should I give myself airs? If I knew the English language I would look for another job, to be able to develop myself. But if I know that I can't speak English and I have no further opportunities for finding a better job, then I do what I'm asked to do. And I try to do this the best I can.

Nevertheless, when she moves on to her experiences with workers of other nationalities, she states very clearly the differences in position between Poles and Romanians and their obedience to supervisors.

> …you can see that Romanians favour other Romanians. There is that Romanian line and when they need an extra person a Pole is sent to work with them as a form of punishment. Because Romanians speak in their own language and nobody bothers to say a word to such a Pole. Then that poor Pole is going through hell there because imagine standing on a line with a group of people who ignore you and say nothing, and it's like that for eight hours! But generally speaking Romanians are favoured here; they get easier jobs and even when they are asked to go somewhere and do something they can say no and they don't have to do that, a Pole will have to do that for them. Poles cannot say that they don't want to do something, they have no such right, otherwise they are sent to the office upstairs or home straight away. But Romanians don't even need any reason to say no.

The above fragment not only illustrates Magda's infuriation over shop floor unfairness and discrimination but it also exemplifies one of the strategies used by managers to control migrants' performance and relationships with others. She points to the fact that Romanians get better positions through their friends, other Romanians, but she also recognises the constraining impact they have on other migrant workers, in particular Poles. It was often claimed by Poles that their hostility towards Romanians was triggered by an open aversion on the part of the Romanian employees manifested in their discriminating, isolating or ignoring behaviour. It appears that Romanians are the ones with power on the shop floor but what is even more interesting here is that their decisions and actions are backed up by upstairs offices. In this way Polish and other non-Romanian workers might feel controlled in an absolute manner and with little scope to resist as any attempt might end up with an individual being sent home.

To talk about Polish workers' experiences of working with Romanians, Magda uses very strong and emotional discourse. She seems not only to understand the difficult position of her compatriots but also sympathises with them. However, despite acknowledging the complex situation that Poles find themselves in, similar to

previous interviewees Magda disapproves of the way her compatriots behave. She believes that they throw their weight around in the factory far too much:

> Poles simply have that superiority complex. They get a higher standard of living here and they immediately think that they can do everything now. That they are entitled to everything now. The majority of employees in the factory are Polish so they should rule here. They should be the most important ones and everybody should listen to their voice. But it's not like that, they forget that we are still in England, right? And what can the English say? If there are only two English workers and the rest are foreigners? How do they feel? They should chase us away. But the English are different and we, as a nation, are different as well. And it's difficult to indulge us. We, even when we have more than we used to have, we will carry on complaining about how bad our situation is. Poles are a really difficult nation…

Having combined Poles' high aspirations with Magda's rather low expectations that she has formed on the basis of an evaluation of her language skills, Magda positions herself outside the group. Despite sharing the same experiences with them, at the same time she does not feel unity with her compatriots and considers their claims on the grounds of majority-minority privileges as unreasonable. Moreover, Magda describes her compatriots as people who easily become big-headed, demanding and impossible to please. She signals that there are voices among Poles that would suggest their readiness to take over control but the fact that no steps are actually taken towards uniting could prove a lack of either experience or example to follow. By comparing Poles with the English she might implicitly suggest that things would be different should the latter be in a majority on the shop floor. Meanwhile, the situation is quite the opposite and a large number of Polish migrants who do not necessarily behave in an exemplary way "influence public opinion about the whole Polish nation" which worries Magda a lot:

> This is not good of course because that way we are all judged by one standard only. Such a bad opinion then follows you (...) This doesn't have a positive impact on other Poles; Poles who came here to earn some money, and live their life here. Because there are Poles who don't want to go back to Poland, they want to stay here and therefore it's not their goal to make others hear you or talk about you. They want to have a normal life here, go to work, on holiday, drive their car, and walk on

the beach. To do all those everyday activities like everybody else and melt into the local English community, to acclimatise by going to local restaurants or pubs because those pubs are part of the English culture. They try to integrate with the English.

The interviewee now clearly positions herself outside her national group, willing to "integrate" or even "melt" into the local community. She identifies being able to lead an English way of life with "normality." That notion has already appeared a number of times in the narratives of both spouses, and it has always been a form of expressing their striving for stability – stability ensured by a regular income and reflected in their peace of mind. This is not the 'American Dream' any more (that is over-inflated with expectations) but it is its modified, European version that limits the idea to achieving a better and happier life than the one migrants had before – something that was also reported by Galasinska and Kozlowska (2009). They defined the same problem among their Eastern European interviewees who identified having "enough" as being able to afford all the necessities of a real, "normal" life. It is therefore possible that both Magda and Grzes represent quite a common pattern among A8 migrants who come to the UK believing that it is a land of "greater opportunities" and a place where others recognise you for what you are and not where you were born. However, no matter how strong the impression Magda gives of having a better life, she seems to be puzzled about the lack of equality: "We cannot compare ourselves with the English and we will never become equal." Although it still remains unclear as to how she arrived at that conclusion, her narrative about her experiences of working with English workers reveals the nature of their working relationship and possibly gives a key to the above assumption:

> …it is more likely that Poles get in touch with Romanians more than with the English. Or a Romanian with a Pole, to get to know each other or make some friends. Of course there are some conversations with English workers, about their plans for a weekend, but these are not very often. And there are no friendships with English workers, maybe because most people's language skills are so poor. It's difficult to communicate with others if you can't speak their language. It would be easier if people knew English better. It would be nice to talk about our cultural differences, to find out how they spend Christmas for instance…their way of living is different. The English are more open, sociable, they meet other people in pubs, at lunches, they simply go out

while Poles spend their time at work and home only. They separate from others, they shut themselves away…

In the above fragment Magda communicates how distant the English workers seem to be from their migrant colleagues. She chooses to talk about differences rather than similarities, which only reinforces her feelings of isolation. However, similar to many Polish workers I spoke to, Magda hardly ever complains about her English co-workers. They are praised for friendliness, kindness and assistance when problems arise. Nevertheless, even such good relationships with each other seldom change into friendship or partnership. This might be a result of cultural distance, the language barrier or disparities in respect of education and social and economic status (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005). In fact, Magda refers to her English colleagues' lack of willingness to learn new skills and develop professionally, which seems for my interviewee to be strange but understandable at the same time. Additionally, she points to another factor that might to some extent explain the limited interaction between migrant and indigenous workers; namely the low visibility of the latter due to their small representation on the shop floor.

> You can't see them [English workers]. They don't really have any knowledge and they don't really care about things that happen around them. They were given certain responsibilities a long time ago and this is all they can do, their job and nothing else. There are people who have been working in that factory in that certain position for over 20 years and they will probably keep doing that for the rest of their working lives. They don't have such a need to develop themselves, to be promoted. They feel good with what they have. They have learnt their job and they don't want to be pestered to do anything else. Sometimes managers or leaders want to teach them new things, how to operate a machine for instance, but they always refuse. They are afraid of new things, new experiences. Honestly, there are not many English workers in our department and you can't even observe their culture. And even in the canteen, because there are so few of them, they stick together, they sit down at one table and read English papers, talk and nobody interrupts their routine there.

Comparing Magda's previous narrative about English people being open, kind and sociable, the one above seems to be a bit contradictory. While the interviewee often speaks highly of the English as people she would be willing to identify with, the last

fragment of her account seems to push her in the opposite direction. After all, the fact that Magda decided to emigrate from Poland proves that she is not afraid of new experiences and challenges. She is ambitious and wants to improve her standard of living, unlike those English people she meets every day in the factory. Nevertheless, at that stage of her storytelling, Magda does not disapprove of her English colleagues' way of living, recognising it as a form of stability that gives them security and comfort. After all it does not affect her situation in any way; in fact, their lack of interest in being trained and promoted might be very convenient for migrants who would like to improve their position on the shop floor.

The next part of Magda's discourse, however, illustrates how her attitude changes in a situation when the behaviour of English co-workers has a direct impact on her position:

> He [the English team leader] is ok but sometimes a bit strange. He doesn't like new people on his line. He doesn't like over-exerting himself and teaching new people how to do their job. He doesn't even try because he assumes that a newcomer can't speak English. And it would be enough to ask somebody from his line to explain the newcomer's job to them. Generally speaking he is ok but he never stands up for his people. When something wrong happens he will never say that it is not people's fault or mistake. It is always people's fault. He is not a real leader who will protect his people, who will stand up for them, people who actually work for him because he doesn't do much. He forgets that these are only people, not robots and they make mistakes when they have to work at such a high pace. But he will always protect his English workers though. The same is with the Romanians; they will always protect other Romanians. Whenever there is an opportunity to hide some mistakes done by his English workers, he will hide them. The same is with Romanians. But when Poles make some mistakes then everybody knows. It doesn't really matter how big or small the mistake is, everybody knows. But this is to some extent Poles' own fault because they do not stand up for each other. Poles argue with each other.

The importance of the above account is twofold: it illustrates the type of relationship between line workers and their leader, but most importantly it illuminates once more the role that nationality plays in that relationship. Even though Magda starts her narrative by trying to sound positive about her English team leader, her discourse

gradually moves towards a more unenthusiastic and complaining tone. The way she presents the relationship with the supervisor clearly points to his nationality as the main factor determining Polish workers' situation. Once again Magda comes to a point when it can be felt how much she sympathises with other Poles, whose only fault in being victimised seems to be their nationality, and then she suddenly switches back to her negative attitude towards her compatriots saying that after all the only people who can be blamed for this are Poles themselves.

The above fragment of Magda's narrative adds to the depiction of a hostile atmosphere among Poles themselves. Consequently, it could be expected that the interviewee would feel unfulfilled or marginalised due to her lack of identification with any of the groups, but similarly to Ola, Magda seems to develop a number of strategies, or maybe just tactics, that enable her to "get by", if only just, on a day-to-day basis:

> If you are nice and good to somebody because you don't shout at anybody, you don't insult anybody and you don't think that there should be only Poles working in the factory.

> The English are the kind of nation that values culture, social norms and kindness. With these qualities you can achieve a lot here. "Thank you" and "please," these words mean a lot here.

> If a person is good at communication then he/she might survive and cope with the new situation. It's easier to acclimatise then and join some group of people, then follow them and observe everything they do.

Magda believes that there are certain behaviours that can guarantee her survival in the new environment. She counts on politeness, consideration for others and communication as the main factors ensuring a good fit into the workplace. While these elements could certainly be viewed as essential to building and maintaining everyday relationships, in a highly competitive workplace context they might signal one's weakness and inability to satisfy his or her aspirations to carve out a career. In practice one's weakness might become apparent in the workers' absolute compliance with procedures and supervisors' instructions, conflict avoidance and general standing in the shadows and such seems to be Magda's position in the factory. She

does not understand how to seek other people's attention and that is what makes her so different from her compatriots.

> Sometimes…I regret being a Pole. (..) I like it most when I'm working on some small lines where only two people work with you. Even better when these people are foreigners, and then it is quiet and everybody does his job. They even help each other. (...) We are a very strange nation, honestly. You sometimes wonder: why do I have to be a Pole? Or, even when you get to that simple conclusion that you are Polish because you were born there and you didn't really have any choice, then you ask yourself: why people like that came here? Can't they stay in Poland and make all that mess, unrest and trouble in Poland? Since Poland is already such a bad place, why do they take all the rubbish with them abroad? Let's not bring all those dirty dealings here. I would deport such people back to Poland straight away. We have a mess in Poland so you can stay dirty there. Let's not make that mess in a foreign country. We are guests here so let's adjust to the English, not to Poles.

From my own experience of working in the factory, I noticed that such individuals are often perceived in negative terms as people who decide to stay faceless and behave in a conformist way. It is therefore likely that Magda's very judgemental opinion about her compatriots has been shaped as a result of their ignoring or even rejecting her. Nevertheless, the interviewee's stance towards Poles this time seems to be uncompromising. To picture their presence in the factory she uses very negative and off-putting terms: always late, not diligent, lazy, riotous and insincere. Magda feels she cannot accept that way of living and distances herself from other Poles by all means available to her – she cannot change her national roots but she can try to avoid being associated with rebellious Poles. At this point it would be reasonable to conclude that Magda is one of Eade et al.'s (2006) "stayers" because she wants to completely separate from Poles and "Polish mess". At the same time however, she finds it difficult to live in a country where such a negative image of Polish migrants prevails over the picture of those decent people who came to the UK to lead a "normal" life. That is probably what makes Magda deny her Polishness and pushes her in the opposite direction – towards becoming more English.

[*Interviewer: Do you think that you would ever feel at home here?*]

> I think that it is possible; all I need is a good level of communication with people. But in terms of living here, there are many things that are similar. You can have a normal life here, organise your life just like you organise it in Poland, but you have to speak English, that's the condition…I think that once you know the language you can easily get used to their traditions, the way they spend Christmas for instance. I would still want to maintain some of our Polish traditions though.

Even though Magda's language skills are poor and her contact with the host community is very limited, she does not sound like a person who is isolated or anxious. She is willing to gradually "take over most of their traditions," make some English friends and probably become one of them. Nevertheless, despite previous regrets at being a Pole she, at the same time, is not planning to give up all of her sense of Polishness and wants to maintain at least some of their traditions. Talking about such issues signals Magda's intentions, or at least her thoughts, of settling in the country permanently. The following quotes are a good illustration of that:

> If I'm here then definitely I would want to get British citizenship and buy a flat so that I wouldn't have to share it with anybody or rent. And, of course, have a different job. After five years my language should be much better.

> When I know that I want to live here, why shouldn't I be a citizen of this country? When I live here, pay taxes, so why shouldn't I? Theoretically, I wouldn't be a Polish citizen then but I was born as a Pole so my Polish citizenship wouldn't be revoked.

The acquisition of citizenship reveals a lot about the respondents' relationships with their countries of immigration. Magda seems to emphasise the bilateral nature of the agreement: in response to the country's acceptance; she acts as an obedient citizen and pays taxes honestly. While acquiring British citizenship might facilitate her greater sense of belonging to the country, the last fragment of Magda's narrative illustrates how torn between two countries she remains and how difficult the situation would persist even with a British passport in her hand. Despite being convinced of the rightness of her decision, she still has some worries that make her feel unsure about the future. She says that she "feels better here" and that "it would be easier to

live here" but she is still in a dilemma over this migratory experience as she acknowledges that not everything depends on her decision only.

> I still have a brother in Poland and you know, there are different situations in your life so I would probably have to maintain that contact with Poland. But there is nothing that would force me to go back. But it is difficult here right now because of the language barrier. But I've been here for almost two years and it's getting better. Life is starting to look like the one we had in Poland. I start doing the same everyday things without thinking about the country I'm in. But you never know what might happen in the future. It may even happen that the English will finally say that they have had enough of migrant workers and they want us to leave the country.

Magda represents another example of a person who seems to be relatively settled in the new milieu but at the same time her feelings of being inferior to indigenous people and threatened by other migrants, including compatriots, might not allow her to feel at home here. Being torn between two places and two nationalities, however, does not make Magda miserable or distressed, but just one of many who live in the new enlarged Europe.

5.5 **Adam**

Adam is the only representative of the older generation in my sample. Despite his age and understandable concerns about having to migrate in search of employment at his age, Adam feels positive about his new life in the UK. What is more, he wants to become a citizen of the world and take what the world has best to offer. Of all my interviewees, Adam reveals the most positive opinions about the UK and its citizens. Adam feels that he owes this country a lot because he has been given so much. Nevertheless, even though Poland has not been so generous, it is messy and people are unkind, he expects to return home one day, unless his life takes him somewhere else – Adam is open to change.

Adam is a 57-year-old Polish migrant who has gone through a lot in his life. He defines himself as an alcoholic who stopped drinking 22 years ago but the

consequences of his alcoholic illness have been profound: divorce from his wife after 27 years of marriage and the tragic death of their son in a house fire one year later. Nevertheless, because he managed to wean himself away from drinking, he decided to help those who were not that successful. First very informally, and then as an instructor in therapies for alcohol addiction, he worked as a psychotherapist between 1993 and 2006. He worked in many places and became well-known and highly regarded in that profession. Unfortunately, as he recalls that moment, at some stage the therapy programmes stopped being for people and "it all started to only be about money." Because he strongly disagreed with that situation and because he was never afraid of voicing his opinion, Adam came into conflict with his superiors. As a result, on his return to work from a period of sick leave, he was given two weeks' notice. According to Adam the decision was highly political and, having a strong sense of dignity, he decided not to go to the director and "beg for the job." Nevertheless, Adam remains bitter about the lack of respect his superiors showed him by making him unemployed at the age of 55 and just before Christmas.

Adam could not find any permanent employment for a period of three months and, pushed by his poor financial situation, he decided to contact his friend in Ireland: "there was that protest inside of me that I will not give up." He was offered food and accommodation for the time he needed to look for a job and that convinced him to join his friend. For four months he worked at different construction sites, getting on well with his Irish colleagues, earning good money and living in a comfortable flat. However, as the Irish economy started to deteriorate Adam, led by his "intuition or God's help" called another friend who at that time was living and working on the south coast of the UK. In the summer of 2007 Adam packed his suitcase and travelled to Poole to get a prearranged job in the local food processing factory. He started with the onsite recruitment agency and after nine months was offered a permanent position.

Adam

> Before we start I have to warn you that I have a totally different opinion about this migration from others.

[*Interviewer: Why?*]

Because I think that we came to this country, to their country, and it's not our task to organise the country in our way; our task is to fit in with the conditions, the environment they have created for us.

That is how Adam started his narrative on the migratory experience even before the initial question was asked. From the very beginning he positions himself in opposition to his national group, and possibly also other migrant groups, by indicating his different opinion and expressing his full acceptance of the new milieu. The interviewee claims that unlike most of his compatriots he does not have any complaints because "there is no point in changing something that is already good." Therefore he does not understand or accept other Poles' attempts to recreate their homeland in the UK because that is something he wanted to escape from when he decided to migrate.

Why did I leave Poland? Because I felt bad there.

It is as simple as this. Adam does not attach any symbolic meaning to his decision, which was purely motivated by his desire to lead a better life. He probably believes that such is the reason for most, if not all new migrants who choose to leave Poland simply because there was something about this country that they did not like. For this reason Adam cannot understand Poles' attempts to organise this country in their own way. He dedicates a lot of time in his narrative to illustrate and demonstrate how unreasonable or even absurd their claims are.

Poles would like to organise the country in their way…For example, we are working and there is a warning that we cannot sit in certain places. And there are those guys saying: who said we can't do that? And they sit down. And make their own rules. There are hundreds of such small examples when Poles want to do things in their own way. I have such a feeling that we have that mentality of a slave. Meaning that when there is a slaveholder we have to cheat him, to fleece him and do things in our way not his. When they ask you to operate the machine this way, do it the way they say, don't try to do it your way. When they tell you not to carry this, don't carry this. Everything is said, everything is

> clear…These are the rules and we have to follow them. We have to adapt to these rules so don't do things in your own way.

> …they really want to have second Poland here. I came here to have peace, because I didn't have it in Poland. So all I want is to work in peace and I miss my old job.

Adam's discourse clearly reveals his negative attitude towards Poles and indicates ways in which they should behave abroad. They are said to create a familiar "little Poland" in the UK but it is not received positively as a form of building a sense of home but as an irrational transferring of "Polish style" to prove its power and superiority. It is possible that Poles' sticking closely to every aspect of their nationality is a reason for their perception of migration as something temporary and uncertain, and therefore "fitting in" is perceived as not worth investing in. It is also possible that for the same reason they decide not to externalise their forms of resistance since potential for such actions is clearly illustrated by Adam. And yet, to what extent it is Poles' immature showing-off in front of compatriots or an actual attempt to encourage people to join forces and challenge existing rules of employment relations can only be speculated on.

Nevertheless, because of the disruptive behaviour of other Poles, Adam feels separated from this community:

> I'm here among my compatriots but really I'm here on my own, very lonely.

> There are small things that create the whole picture - that it is different in Poland and it is different here. I'm fine with these differences. I had to learn them and adjust to them but I feel good with them, whereas some people don't.

Interestingly, despite having doubts about the rightness of his migration, feeling lonely and missing his old job, his last words seem to signal Adam's rather successful adaptation to the new environment. This foreigner is content with living in the host country, he accepts the values of the host society, enjoys cultural differences and has a low level of frustration with the host culture. Even though the process was not natural and Adam had to learn to accept the differences, he seems to like where he is

now. The next fragment of his narrative illustrates not only his acceptance of the new milieu but also his awareness that other alternatives to the existing situation are available. After all, the decision to migrate to Ireland and then to the UK was a conscious and rational decision. Nevertheless, right now he feels there is no need to face other choices, at least as long as he is satisfied with the current situation.

This notion of a conscious decision and being a master of one's own destiny appeared a number of times during my conversations on the shop floor. It was very interesting that many people complained about working in the factory, being treated badly or unfairly but at the same time all of them were aware of their own free will. It is always clear in their and Adam's minds that nobody has forced them to work in the factory:

> I have an option that any time I want I can get on a plane and go back. Any time. But I want to be here and I want to adjust to this place. Because I want to and not because somebody has forced me to. If work at Food Co. was so bad and I felt terribly bad here, I would accept other offers. I had a few…but it's safer in here. Especially for me, when I can't speak good English. I've tried to learn it, many times, and in many ways. And there is some improvement but the pace of my learning is much slower these days. When 20 years ago I was trading at the German border, I learnt German in six months.

Adam clearly illustrates the difference between him and his 1980s counterparts who migrated within a very different political, social and legal context than is present today. Adam migrated because he wanted to and even though he recognises his diminished social status he does not express disappointment with his social ranking in the host country – maybe because his life strategy is not to have too high expectations and not to complain (as he will express later), maybe because his decision about migration was made freely and consciously or maybe because there are other aspects of his new life that compensate for the loss in work status. In fact, the only area in which Adam admits to not being completely successful is his acquisition of the language. Nevertheless, unlike many of my interviewees and despite his age, Adam has made an attempt to learn the English language and the only reason why he came to a conclusion that he is not particularly successful in that area is because of his

previous exposure to foreign languages and rather quick acquisition of the language he needed at that particular time of his life.

Adam's previous migratory experience, which exposed him to foreigners, seems to play a role in determining his position with regard to people of other nationalities. The fact that these were positive experiences, as is illustrated by the next fragment of his narrative, has probably shaped his current positive attitude towards English workers. Moreover, his trust in English people is so implicit that despite having worries that, in the case of a conflict with an English worker he would be the one at risk, he still prefers working along the indigenous workers.

> I would prefer to work with the English…because when I was in Ireland I worked with Irish people only…And they have that huge solidarity (...) At the beginning I was a bit afraid because we were working in different places, houses in the middle of nowhere, and I thought: what would I do if they left me here? These are some experiences from Poland, that if somebody is a stranger we don't have to take care of him. They never left me…I trust the English, because I know they are the same. They are simply good people.

Interestingly, despite having great trust in the English, at the same time Adam knows that he cannot count on getting the same amount of unconditional trust in return:

> They have that large measure of trust but you can't violate that trust because when they lose that trust they become more restrictive.

Whether that claim has been developed on the basis of his own experiences or only observations of others remains unclear; nevertheless it could be that in this way Adam signals his feelings of having an inferior position in relation to the English. Maybe indigenous people's limited trust is a response to violations of rules by migrants but Adam should not be concerned about this since he does not belong to the rebellious group of Poles. Still, in his contacts with Irishmen he found traits he is probably failing to find in his compatriots but that did not stop him from transferring the characteristics onto members of other nationalities – the English and Romanians.

> They (Romanians) are not foreigners to each other, they support each other. I have very good contact with them. They like me, we talk, tell jokes, play practical jokes on each other. They have never been unkind.

It seems to be likely that Adam's previous exposure to cross-cultural experiences has facilitated his adaptation into the new international environment. The fact that the experience was a positive one probably shaped his attitude towards other nationalities, including the host one.

> If the English didn't like me, I wouldn't be here. If they treated me badly or I felt persecuted. But if I'm still here then it means that the conditions they offered me here are satisfactory enough that I want to be here. I accept them.

Indeed, according to Wickham et al.'s (2009) categorisation of migrant workers, so far Adam could be called a "resident" – a person who has no immediate desire to move on and finds his current employment satisfactory. As he already mentioned, he had other offers available but did not change his job because he felt safe here. Adam finds the job "satisfactory enough" which means that for him there is reasonable pay and he is being treated with respect. Another reason, however, why Adam does not wish to move on may be simply his lack of greater aspirations or expectations, unlike his younger counterparts who still want to look for better developmental opportunities:

> My attitude to life and work is that too high expectations are only a source of disappointment…The first three months I was moved around the factory, like a horse, I worked everywhere. But I was prepared for that. I came here with no language, I knew maybe 20 words. I couldn't communicate with them so what could I expect? That they will give me a managerial position? I was prepared to push racks, clean, do the most basic jobs.

Adam's life and work strategy seems to be built on having reasonable expectations adequate to the situation so he avoids wishing for a lot in a country whose language he cannot even speak. Consequently, he was not disappointed when the jobs he was given were far below his qualifications or ambitions. Nevertheless, it is still surprising that despite such a loss of status Adam genuinely commits himself to the

job in the factory and as he explained: "everything I was supposed to do I was doing immediately and the best I could." There might be at least two reasons for that. Adam's dedication to duty might result from his strong belief in the reciprocity principle and his strong work ethic or possibly his desire to position himself in opposition to his compatriots and other workers by distinguishing himself from the other uncommitted workers. Adam's motive in presenting himself as a reliable and obedient employee, however, might be as trivial as his fear of losing the job, which, after all, is a source of a relatively large amount of money for him.

> Of course, there is not that much money to make me feel like some Arabic sheik or something, but honestly, there is all I need. Now it's less, but I used to save £150 a week. It's a lot of money. [It would be] impossible in Poland. I would never earn this money in Poland. So I managed to renovate the flat in Poland and buy a car. And I still feel safe. And the contract I have, after a year you have a different status and after three years it changes again. I think that the notice period is longer then. I don't come into any conflicts, I'm never late.

What seems to be Adam's great sense of commitment and devotion to the employer might be dictated by his need to feel safe in an environment saturated with people of similar status and characteristics. In a workplace with a high density of migrant workers, especially young and enthusiastic people, it is therefore necessary to differentiate oneself from others and act in a way that pleases superiors. However, what Adam seems to be afraid of is competition with indigenous workers rather than other migrants. On a number of occasions the interviewee signalled his feelings of anxiety in his workplace relations with English workers. Despite having such a positive attitude towards indigenous workers and a preference to work with them rather than compatriots, Adam feels at risk when there are conflict situations involving them.

> …in my department, people seem to be a good team. There is only one person who stands out [an English person]. He is a typical crawler. He always puts himself forward (...) So I have to be careful with him because you never know what he's going to say or to whom.

> At the beginning I always tried to settle all our problems straight away but soon I realised that these conflicts were happening more and more

often. And I started to be afraid because if any of these were heard by any of the managers then they would have to get rid of one of us. I knew they wouldn't get rid of her, because she is English. I didn't want to be moved to another department because I felt good where I was. Then I said to myself: Adam, put away your ambition and wisdom, don't come into conflict and give in to her. Even if she is not particularly smart, just give in to her and don't provoke her. Since then, it was six months ago, I haven't had any problems with her.

Even though Adam feels very confident in terms of his relationship with indigenous people in his neighbourhood or people he meets on a day-to-day basis while shopping and going out, in the workplace context he shows signs of feeling insecure. He admitted to belonging to trade unions only because "it's like walking on the brink sometimes." Despite the fact that he has not experienced "unkindness or bad treatment" and the management "never do anything without his agreement," Adam seems to be aware of his inferior position in the factory due to his migrant status. That is probably one of the reasons for which Adam, and many others, have deliberately chosen the strategy of avoidance and giving up some of their qualities in order to keep out of conflicts with co-workers.

So generally, on the shop floor, not in the canteen, but on the shop floor people try to stay at a distance.

I keep the distance [with co-workers]…I think it's a problem of a different generation…I like people and I like talking to them. But not with everybody. They have different interests, pubs and drinking. I understand this, they are young. But it's a bit risky in these conditions: homesickness, a sense of freedom and money. These can lead you astray and you can end up sleeping under a bridge.

The above discourse illuminates another aspect of Adam's relationships with other workers, namely the generation gap. This is the first time when age plays a role in shaping an interviewee's work relations, probably because the number of workers aged 50 and over is very small and mostly limited to workers of British origin, thus the problem only affects a relatively small group of people. Nevertheless, developing any kind of relationship between people of such substantial age differences, and consequently areas of interest, might be demanding, particularly in a place where

perceived competition among workers is high and hinders the development of friendly relationships anyway.

For Adam, age plays an important role and it eventually becomes something that makes him change his discourse on the options available to him:

> People drop out, more and more…because this work isn't anybody's ambition. Right now I don't have any choice; I won't get any education or extra qualifications. But the English have a lot to offer and Poles, especially the young ones, often take what is available.

The above fragment of Adam's narrative contradicts my previous speculation on a possible lack of ambition and acceptance of the current low-skilled job. In fact, what Adam might perceive as a factor influencing his potential prospects for development is actually his age. He recognises himself as disadvantaged when compared with younger colleagues and that seems to be one of the few regrets Adam showed during the interview – if only he could be young again. Meanwhile, Adam's current situation might be perceived by some to be, to some extent, embarrassing because it could be expected that at the age of 57 a man would have already achieved a certain social status. Indeed, for Adam it also constitutes an element of doubt and theoretically it could lead to him developing regrets about the migratory experience. Nevertheless, as a whole the interviewee seems to feel good about his decision and what he has, even if there is not much of that.

> I know people who worked here, then went back to Poland and very quickly came back here again. I think that after being here for two years it would be very difficult to acclimatise back in Poland. Because the conditions here are different. "Old trees should not be replanted." This is not my country. But I have everything here. I work here, live and manage to save quite good money. Here is all I need. Of course, there are days when I think: Adam, you are 57 and live in such a small room, like in a dive. I can rent a flat but then what? Buy a flower so that it would wait for you when you come back from work? And here, this family I live with, they have some interest in me. They are not nosey but if something happened to me they would get interested and take care of me.

Listening to the above words made me particularly sensible of the complexity of this migratory experience. In only a few sentences, Adam moves from the position of being certain that the decision to stay in the UK is a good one, to a point where he completely loses hope that an immigrant can ever find fulfilment in a foreign country, but still ending up fairly satisfied with his life. Initially, Adam suggests that it would be very difficult for him to go back to his home country even after only two years since migrating (not mentioning the next eight years he is planning to stay), and then he signals that he will not be able to achieve full happiness because it will never be truly his place. The interviewee even uses an old Polish proverb to illustrate the complexity of his position – despite his age, he decided to move his home to another country. Then Adam moves on to describe how confused he sometimes becomes when he thinks about his current situation. He seems to be left without any reasonable alternatives, but on the other hand, he admits to having everything he needs.

The fact that he can count on his English landlords helps to fight Adam's feelings of loneliness. In fact his praise of English society sounds genuine which makes his support of his English superiors more understandable:

> Poles often say that this English kindness and smile are false but I think that they are simply happy people and that's why they smile.

> …the English managers from upstairs they always say hello, smile to you. The English in general have more kindness, willingness to help, honesty…they have more of these characteristics than Poles…They have a different history to us. For a few centuries we were pilloried by the invaders where somebody was always above us. That's why, when somebody is in a higher position, when somebody is in charge of us, we automatically think that he is the bad one. In particular, when s/he speaks a foreign language.

Adam's reference to his nation's historical background might signal his search for a justification of Polish migrants' misbehaviour in the attitudes of the population at large. History has shaped people's attitudes and therefore it is impossible, or at least very unlikely, to change them overnight. Moreover, Ruzyllo (1986), who analysed the positive and negative characteristics of Poles attributed by Poles in Poland and abroad, concluded that opinions held by the native population (Poles in Poland) were

based on current information and therefore were more reliable, while foreign opinions (Poles abroad) were made using more historical data. Thus it is likely that Adam's migratory experience has made him refer to history rather than current affairs to explain his compatriots' behaviour. That might be why, after all, he feels some sense of connection with his compatriots: "I love this nation because I'm a Pole but there is something that makes it so difficult to live with them in peace."

As has been referred to many times throughout the process of my interview analysis, Adam seems to follow a pattern and despite sharing a great sense of national identity with other Poles he disapproves of transferring Polish ways of doing things abroad. Now with the experience of living and working in the UK, Adam is able to compare the home and host countries and either reinforce his sense of Polishness or weaken it. By saying "I want to adjust to everything they [the English] offer to me" he seems to be pulled towards the latter option. In fact, the following section of Adam's narrative reveals how much of the change he has already undergone.

> When, after nine months of being here, I went to Poland to attend some family event, I was shocked. I couldn't switch. Maybe I just wanted to forget about it, how it is in Poland. I felt strange because I wasn't in the country for only nine months and nothing has changed since then. So it wasn't the country that changed but myself. I learnt here that things can be done differently, more normally. That people can be nice and kind to each other. That nobody has to rush in a shop. It is a world of contrast. These things are positive.

Looking at Adam's discourse it becomes clear that he wants to understand more about the host country and society. He acknowledges the differences, accepts them and is not only willing to change himself but actually changes to be able to fit into the new milieu. At the same time, however, Adam seems to realise that he can only be a visitor, "we are guests here," and despite being so similar he will never become one of them because "they are the same kind of people, just like us, but with that difference that they are at home." Thus, it is probable that Adam's awareness that he will always remain an outsider might be the reason why he would want to go back to Poland on his retirement.

I think that in 10 years time I will be back in Poland…I would like to come back to my country but if it happens? I am ready for changes. I think that here in Europe we grow attached to places and people, more than Americans for instance. But the fact that I came here shows that there is nothing ultimate, these things change. It may turn out that there is nothing to come back to in Poland. Maybe I will get that English passport…This is something that would make me feel more like a citizen of the world.

I will always feel Polish. I will only feel more like a citizen of the world then. And I will feel more attached to this country. This country offered me a lot, it gave me a lot. What I have been given here by the English, I had never expected that.

As has already been mentioned in previous interviews, the acquisition of citizenship reveals a lot about the respondents' relationships with their countries of immigration. The residential status of a migrating person should both promote and indicate his or her adjustment level (Jancz 2000). Adam places special emphasis on the expression of attitude he feels towards the UK for being accepted and given a job and financial help when he was in need. Even though Adam already feels well adjusted to the new environment, receiving an English passport would reinforce his attachment to the country. It would not only be a desirable confirmation of a legal status that benefits people, but it would also be an indicator of his identification with British society. Adam goes even further, admitting that it would strengthen not only his sense of belonging to the UK but also to the whole world, emphasising his acknowledgement of the UK as an important and influential player on the world arena.

In Poland a citizen exists for the country and in here the country exists for a citizen. That's the difference and I can see it. But others can't see it and thus they can't appreciate it…The world belongs to us but can we take advantage of it? Do we want it?

The interviewee wants to take everything that the country and the world have to offer him but the optimism and excitement evaporate quickly at the thought that there is nothing certain about his future because after all "who knows what's going to happen in 10 years time." Adam realises that things in his life tend to change and nothing seems to be final, and such is also the nature of new migrants' life.

5.6   **Andrzej**

Andrzej, at the time of this research, is the only Polish shop steward in Food Co. He is young, energetic and ready to fight the shop floor unfairness. Andrzej is not afraid of voicing his concerns and knows how to take care of himself and others who ask him for help. He is critical of compatriots and other nationalities but also the company politics. Despite many reservations about his workplace and this country, financially it is still a better option than Poland. For the time being then, he is a Pole living in the UK.

Andrzej is a 25-year-old secondary school graduate from Poland who came to the UK in 2006 "just like most of Poles to earn some money." He had previously worked in Italy for three years but the job in a mushroom plant was very hard and intensive: he worked 10 hours a day six days a week. Even though he earned a lot of money there and he enjoyed the country's landscape and cuisine, at some stage he and his girlfriend, who is now his wife, decided that they wanted to change something in their lives and try something new.

They came to England on their friend's invitation after having a few months' break in Poland. At the beginning Andrzej worked at various construction sites and he "liked the job more than the one [he has] now and the boss [he had], he was English, he was the best boss [he has] ever [had], in [his] whole life." He worked mainly with the English and that gave him a good lesson in the English language. Nevertheless, he stayed in that job for only a month because he was employed through a recruitment agency and therefore his working hours and pay were not stable. Moreover his wife, because of her poor language skills, remained unemployed and that is why they decided to look for jobs outside Southampton. Advised by a friend, Andrzej and his wife applied for a job in the factory. He got it without any problem: there was no interview but only an English language test and a medical examination followed by two days of food hygiene training.

Andrzej does not know how long he will stay in the country. He has recently bought a flat here and he therefore knows he has settled himself for the next five or six years but he does not have any further advanced plans for the future.

Andrzej

> It was difficult at the beginning, as always. But I think I was in a better position anyway because I could speak English so on my first day I went to a few agencies and the next day I already had a job. So my situation was good because I had English language skills and a car. So I could work everywhere and I could communicate with them. That's why I had a job straight away and since then I've never been out of a job.

From the very beginning of Andrzej's narrative he seems to consider himself successful in adapting to his new environment. On his arrival he immediately found a job and, as he reported, has never been unemployed because of two main reasons: he could overcome language difficulties and was mobile, thus able to work anywhere. Interestingly, when asked about his story of migration to the UK, unlike most of my interviewees, he chooses to talk about his work experience straight away. It is not about his problems with housing or initial contacts with the English but work that seems to be most important to him in the whole process of his migration to the UK. Meanwhile, he continues to describe his first employer, an Englishman:

> He was fair…He didn't make any difference between Poles, Slovaks or Englishmen and everybody worked equally. Apart from that the boss knew that recruitment agencies exploit workers so he used to write more hours on my timesheet than I actually did or when he didn't need me some day he told me to go home but I was paid anyway. He was a really good man and when I left the job I told him that. And we liked each other very much and every time he needed somebody he called me. But I had to find another job to stabilise my income but I have really good memories of him.

Andrzej clearly speaks from the perspective of his current employment. His first boss was a complete contrast to what he is experiencing at the moment and once again nationality seems to be the key aspect. His English employer was not only a fair and

understanding manager but, most importantly, a person with a friendly attitude. However, despite the fact that they got on very well together Andrzej decided to give up on this relationship to improve his financial situation. Having "the best boss ever" did not compensate for an irregular income, instability or a lack of "normality". While the interviewee could aspire to integrative or even assimilative strategies, the real life situation pulled him away from the potentially perfect social milieu.

Nonetheless, it was not until I asked Andrzej for more details of that particular work experience that other conditions of the environment became obvious. His discourse revealed that while generally speaking he had a positive experience of working with people of many nationalities, including the English, there were situations when contact with some members of the host society significantly altered his attitude to them.

> So generally speaking those who worked with me on a day-to-day basis were ok, but there were also some workers who were only coming for a limited time like electricians or roof specialists, there were two people that I remember most. I would describe them as typical Englishmen, in my understanding of course. So they did not say much, they could hardly express themselves, big, bald, and in tattoos. So they look at you and say: "what the f**k are you doing here?!...It should be a job for an English guy". But you always get such cases and you cannot become upset.

Even though Andrzej's first prolonged contact with the host society was with his English manager and it turned out to be a very positive experience, it seems that a couple of unpleasant incidents were strong enough to make Andrzej picture a typical Englishman in a very negative and shallow way. He does not even try to be diplomatic and describes the English in very negative terms. This picture has an element of sweeping generalisation to it and not only separates him from the indigenous group but also positions him far from integrative or assimilative strategies. In light of what has just been said, the following fragments of Andrzej's discourse present, again, a contradictory and complex situation. Despite being "big, bold, and in tattoos" – people he does not want to aspire to, the English treat you "normally" and "with respect:"

You always feel like you are not at home but they [the English] treat you more normally and with greater respect. And in Italy you are only a "*straniero*" for them which means a foreigner…They will never treat you as one of them…a foreigner is a foreigner and you don't have an easy life there [in Italy].

I didn't have any expectations, I just wanted to try something different and now I know that it is something different. First of all, you get much better treatment here…I'm talking about the general behaviour of people in the street…They always treat you with respect and sympathy. Even when you can't speak English it is not a problem for them to get an appointment with a translator…In Italy it is something impossible. When you come to Italy you are supposed to learn and speak Italian. They don't even learn any other languages themselves;…the English are lucky because they don't have to learn languages because the whole world speaks their language. I think that if they were in a different situation they wouldn't have such an easy life. They go to the USA, Canada, Australia and everybody can speak their language.

Throughout his narrative, Andrzej makes frequent comparisons with the country of his previous migratory destination – Italy, which is an obvious point of reference to his current experiences. The hostility that Andrzej experienced from Italian citizens has probably made him more sceptical in his current contacts with indigenous people, but on the other hand maybe it is something that enables him to appreciate the value of English kindness. Interestingly however, having criticised Italians for their ignorance in terms of language acquisition, he does not blame the English for doing the same. According to Andrzej, the difference here is that unlike Italians, the English do not hold assimilative expectations towards foreigners and this is probably what makes him feel less pressurised and consequently treated with more respect. Yet Andrzej simultaneously seems to adopt two opposing positions: he praises the Englishmen's understanding of the difficulties that foreigners might come across when communicating in English but at the same time he perceives them as people who will never be able to fully understand those difficulties because their mother tongue is an international language.

In his criticism of English people however, Andrzej goes even further. The following words illustrate again him being in two positions simultaneously: a critic of his compatriots but also an attacker of members of the host society:

...Sometimes when you read in English newspapers something about Poles, I agree there is a lot of exaggeration, but sometimes there is truth as well. Because I know what the vices of my nation are and I'm not trying to defend them, but I also know the English ones. The English are not saints either. That's why it sometimes hurts me when in the newspaper they detail what Poles have done but they never write about other nations or that the English have done the same. This is a bit unpleasant.

Andrzej is the first of my interviewees who mentions the role of the British media in shaping public opinion about Polish migrants. Despite agreeing with some of the information, he finds it hurtful that only Poles' misbehaviour is the main point of newspapers' interest, which might signal his strong sense of belonging to the nation. Similar to Magda, he is concerned about the picture his compatriots create but unlike Grzes or Adam, Andrzej shows no signs of feeling inferior to indigenous people due to his migrant status. Possibly even the opposite could be said from the fragments below as Andrzej believes that there are no good examples to follow for young and sometimes lost migrants:

Unfortunately we are not at home here. It would be nice if everybody could adjust to their level of culture but to be honest, what level of culture do English people aged 20 and below represent? Because for me it is below criticism. I'm not saying that it's everybody but it is the majority. And those people who arrive here are not 40 or 50-years-old, whose character is already shaped. These are usually 20-year-old people; (...) I just don't think that those young Polish people have any good standards here, when they look at local 20-year-olds. And no 20-year-old guy will follow the example of the 70-year-old person, right?

Like all of my interviewees Andrzej seems to be confused in his judgement of compatriots. In the fragment above he justifies Poles' behaviour in the environment in which they find themselves as if it was something only shaped now but a few minutes later he does not paint Poles as such vulnerable and blameless people. This time he puts the whole blame for Poles' vulgarity and bad manners on their materialism and lack of a proper education:

> Sometimes people say that Poles boss everybody around and I think it is true. (...) A lot of Poles arrive here to earn some money, and a lot of Poles are not educated, and not all Poles who come here are the ones we would like to see here. And sometimes they ruin our reputation, unfortunately. If they haven't done that already.

Consequently, having told a lot of negative stories about both his compatriots and indigenous people it is unclear how Andrzej positions himself in relation to both groups. Alternately he praises Englishmen's culture and character and criticises Poles' disrespect and rudeness. He regrets having so many uneducated and money-orientated compatriots who tarnish his nation's reputation but points at English workers' lack of ambition and teenagers' misbehaviour to show his compatriots in a better light. Unfortunately, moving on to the analysis of Andrzej's current work experience makes the situation even more chaotic, ambiguous and difficult to deal with.

Despite a rather positive first work experience, problems occurred at a later stage. Because of Andrzej's wife's poor language skills, she was not offered a permanent contract but was employed through the on-site agency. Still, on the condition that they would be allowed to work the same days and shifts, they both agreed to start work at Food Co. Nevertheless, on their first day at work they found out that nothing had been arranged and therefore their shifts varied. As is shown in the following fragment of Andrzej's narrative, his first day at Food Co. turned out to be rather traumatic. On the other hand, however, having listened to Andrzej's whole story, it became evident that this particular day was not without significance for his future role in the workplace and relationship with his superiors.

> On my first day I yelled at my manager, production manager and manufacturing manager. I yelled at them not knowing who they were, that their positions were so high…They really needed workers then so they didn't do anything bad to me and after all I didn't know who I was talking to…I used few strong words then and the manager was completely shocked that some whelp who was there on his first day was yelling at him. So he called his manager and I told him exactly the same thing and they called my manager, but I didn't know he was my manager and I told them the same thing. They asked me to calm down and go downstairs while they tried to sort it out.

Undoubtedly Andrzej's first day at work was rather unusual for him but also for his superiors. Interestingly however, unlike my previous interviewees, the physicality of the place and nature of the factory work was not such an issue for Andrzej. In fact, what he decides to talk about is the social side of work: relationships among people, work atmosphere and the approach of his superiors:

> On your first day you are always scared; it was a big department with so many people in there, too many. The line leader is shouting at you, that everything you do is wrong, and there is no training or explanation on how to do the job. I know something about training and it shouldn't be like that. The first day or two should be calm, with no stress. And there you just fall into a trap where everybody is shouting at you and all you want to do then is just say "goodbye" and many people have done that. Why? Because of the line leaders' wrong approach. They are the ones most responsible. Because people come on their first and second day and they are just in shock. My line leader was Portuguese then and he had no approach to people. Later on I contributed to his dismissal. He was our English manager's favourite one. He informed our manager about everything. And one time, the whole department united against him, and it was a big surprise because in our nation it is not a common thing. And we managed to kick him out. Generally speaking he liked Romanians very much and he always favoured them and the rest didn't like it. This is when my role in trade unions started.

Among common feelings of being lost, stressed and not in a place where one would want to be, mainly due to the size of the place and lack of assistance during his first hours and days, Andrzej illustrates an important aspect of this shop floor reality – the multitude of people and their nationality. In an environment where inter-group relations can significantly affect one's position on the shop floor, people might strive to belong to one group or the other. Unfortunately, while integration versus isolation is a question of choice between two options (associating with the locals versus compatriots), the question that remains is how to define developing relationships with other migrant groups and whether affiliation with one group or the other is always a matter of choice in a situation when nationality is the marker. In fact Romanians were also identified by Andrzej as important actors in shaping the nature of the work experience in Food Co. and this cannot be excluded from the analysis.

I don't know why but Romanians are favoured there. But I really don't know why. I asked this question of our HR manager once and he said that maybe it is because they were here first and that is why they feel they are better. And, well…the English can't handle the situation. But on the other hand how are they supposed to handle it? Romanians stick together but the English don't believe that Romanians are so consolidated. We have in our department three Romanian managers next to each other. And ok, you send one person to another department because he didn't do well in yours and in another department the person also cannot get the contract because there are some problems. And the English upstairs can't see it that these couple of managers support themselves in their decisions, that they are good friends and that they communicate with each other. If I am a manager in one department and I don't like somebody so I send him or her to another department where my friend is a manager I would say to my friend: "listen, have a closer look at him or her." But the English have some illusory hopes that these things do not take place, but they do.

In the above fragment Andrzej illustrates the way the Romanian network works in the factory and what problems this can cause for the average non-Romanian worker. More importantly, however, he seems to try and explain the English managers' lack of action in the matter. Initially, he puts forward an argument that it is not actually their fault but the result of their naivety. Nevertheless, he uses the phrase "illusory hopes," which might not necessarily just mean having no knowledge or awareness of the existing situation; it could also signal having no desire to change it. Afterwards the HR manager was apparently aware of the situation but showed little interest in finding out the details and trying to resolve the problems. In fact, in the following fragment Andrzej seems to signal that such a situation is actually convenient for the English who want to keep things the way they are.

…It's not that they are not aware of those things, I think that in our factory they just don't want to know about them. Because then it is only one extra problem for them…Do you know how many times I raised some issues with him [one of the top managers] and he didn't react at all! He knows exactly what's happening downstairs but he doesn't want to react…Most of these problems are likely to slow the production down because you would have to fire a team manager or a leader and then find somebody to replace him or her, train them and so on. (...) The first thing is always efficiency and it doesn't really matter if somebody treats other people badly. I will of course give them all the information

and they will carry out some investigation but there will be no consequence or result of that. (...) I've been here for almost three years and the information keeps coming in. And they do nothing about that because it suits them.

Andrzej clearly illuminates managers' passiveness in improving existing employee relations. He seems to lose trust in his English managers who are complicit in the situation because they always put production first, at any price. That is possibly one of the main reasons for which Andrzej "loses his enthusiasm" despite deriving great satisfaction from his role as a shop steward:

> Why did I become a shop steward? Every time there was some case many people asked me for help, mainly because I could speak English but also because I was never afraid of them. When we have quarterly meetings, the ones with managers, I always tell them what I think about those things they tell us. And that's how I have recently been promoted. I don't know why, to be honest, whether they wanted to keep me quiet or because they honestly think that I'm smart and good at my job. And I will never know the truth.…You don't have any other benefits out of that [of being a shop steward], apart from the satisfaction that you are helping someone…You just need enthusiasm and like doing things like that to be able to do the job of a shop steward. I'm slowly losing that enthusiasm.

Andrzej seems to be a good example of a person who is not afraid of speaking up for himself and it brings benefits. If he had not spoken up from the very beginning, he would not have become a shop steward and then lean[5] project worker. Thus, Hirschman's "voice" (1970) turned out to be a successful strategy for Andrzej, not only in terms of getting promotion and personal satisfaction but also in gaining his own recognition that he wants to help workers because after all he belongs to the shop floor community, irrespective of nationality. The level of power Andrzej has gained in the role of shop steward does not obscure his sense of national identity and he does not feel superior either to his compatriots or to other nationalities. Nevertheless, listening to the following words it becomes clear that Andrzej somehow distances himself from other Poles, this time blaming their national mentality for the situation they find themselves in:

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[5] Lean manufacturing or lean production, often simply, "Lean," is a generic process management philosophy based on eliminating waste and enabling continuous improvement

> We are a very specific nation (...) what hurts most is when Poles raise some issue against other Poles and this happens quite often, when people get promotion and they become nuts. This happens to Poles, as if they disavowed their identity, as if they forgot where they came from. But in fact they are only a pawn that nobody upstairs knows. I think that Poles should stick together but it will never happen…Poles will never stick together because of our mentality. National mentality, unfortunately…When they see that somebody succeeded then they already think that there must be something wrong with it. And when somebody gets a better position they already want to show the rest how important they are.

Since Andrzej did not "disavow his identity" and did not "forget where he came from," his evaluation of Poles is still so negative because the shop floor experience has taught him something different about his compatriots. Similar to Adam who tried to justify Poles' behaviour by their difficult history, comparing their mentality to that of slaves, Andrzej also comments on the Polish mentality of jealousy and their competition over whose grass is greener. In Andrzej's eyes Poles in general are this type of people who cannot be genuinely kind and happy about other people's success as they always suspect an element of fraud, lies and other means of unfair action underlying that success.

Nevertheless, contrary to what has just been said, Andrzej at some point decides to appreciate the value of Polish workers by contrasting them with inefficient English workers:

> …The truth is that this factory has started to operate at its maximum only since this influx of cheap labour from CEE countries started. It's not thanks to the English. If every Pole decided to go home now, this factory would be closed. If Poles only, and there are around 400 Poles, decided to say with one voice: "listen, the pay rise you are offering us is ridiculous, and the company is earning lots of money." It's not true that there is some crisis. They are actually making the biggest investments now; they have just bought another factory. They are just opening a new line – does it mean we have a crisis? And they offer us a 2 per cent pay increase, how kind of them! I will get 10p more per hour!

Andrzej, unlike most of my previous interviewees, does not show any signs of feeling inferior to indigenous workers. Despite his migrant status he does not have this complex of inferiority that makes other research participants perceive themselves only as guests and employees unworthy of higher positions in the factory. On the contrary, he believes that thanks to migrant labour this factory has become profitable and that is what gives the migrant workers potential power and influence. Even though Andrzej regrets that his compatriots are not capable of talking with one voice, he feels strong in terms of his position and role in the workplace. The reason for such high self-esteem might be twofold. Firstly, being successful in the demanding Italian labour market may have developed in him a sense of being strong and capable of coping well even in the most severe conditions. Not without reason then Andrzej says at some point, "comparing this job with the one I had in Italy, it is simply recreation for me."

Nonetheless, what could also boost Andrzej's confidence is his role as a shop steward. As he notices himself, Andrzej's position gives him access to certain information which makes him not only better informed than others but also more aware of the "real" situation. That sense of power and self-esteem was probably reinforced at the time of his recent promotion to a position as the person implementing the lean system in the factory. By having more contact with the managers than an ordinary worker, the interviewee has learnt how to talk to them and has established a different type of relationship with them. Moreover, he believes that this new position has given him even more power and influence than he used to have as a trade union activist. Even though his main motive for taking up this role was to help workers, at some stage it also became clear that Andrzej derives great personal satisfaction from being independent and influential about the way things are done in the factory.

> …Practically I work as much as I want and I have those flexible hours so I can come to work later or sooner if I have some meetings. I only have to do what I'm supposed to do, and it doesn't really matter when or how I do it, and I like that system.

> …It is good that I can solve those problems for people and for the company on the shop floor. So I had a situation recently when 15 people

didn't get the extra money that they were supposed to get for working at night. So I went to speak with the manager and told her: "listen, people are very unhappy, the atmosphere is really bad and all you have to do is send an email to solve it. It will only take you 10 minutes." But the manager didn't like it. The first thing she said to me was: "who do you think you are that you think you can order me?" So I told her: "I'm not giving you any orders, I only want to help you…" But she said: "you are not my superior and I will not listen to you"…So I explain to her this whole lean programme again, even though all the managers had one day's training on lean; but to be honest it doesn't give much because it is difficult to change a manager who has been working like that for five, six or seven years. It is impossible for such a person to change in one day. Of course, that manager finally paid the money after two days but it was only after two conversations with my boss.

It would be interesting to find out whether the manager's reaction to Andrzej's intervention was caused by simple dislike or discomfort from being told how to perform her job after some years of being in that role; and how important in this particular situation was Andrzej'a nationality. Andrzej does not comment on it explicitly but his tone suggests that being a Pole made a big difference to that person. For Andrzej however the highlight of this story was the fact that he managed to help other workers, after all such is the reason for which he became a shop steward. He perceives his role in trade unions like a vocation to help others more than anything else. Nevertheless, at the beginning of that paragraph he also talks of solving problems for the company which would signal that, similar to Marcelina, Andrzej's promotion has built his sense of identification, commitment and belonging to the organisation. Interestingly however, in both cases their dedication to the company was developed despite experiencing rough times at Food Co.

A year and four months ago I had a really difficult time at work. It was a really bad month then. I had some problems with trade unions, I had so many cases then. Additionally, I had to report two complaints against my manager and he moved me to a job on the line, from my position to a normal C grade job. And treatment generally speaking wasn't good. I was just buying a flat and we were moving and I had a really bad time then. A person who is a bit weaker mentally would easily break down.

As it has just been illustrated, the process of negotiation of Andrzej's belonging to the organisation has not been without struggle. Moreover, despite the fact that his current role gives Andrzej greater scope for action and positions him as a person equal, if not superior, to many shop floor managers, he has to reinforce this position on a day-to-day basis in most of his contacts with those managers. One of the reasons for managers' limited trust and cooperation, and consequently Andrzej's difficulties in working with them, is explained by the interviewee himself:

> They [managers] don't think about people, they only think about themselves…Managers are afraid of greater responsibilities; they don't want more duties…they don't like changes.

Initially, it was one of my suspicions that the managers' lack of support and cooperation could be caused by Andrzej's nationality. That is because in a situation when all shop floor managers are either English or Romanian, a Polish migrant worker who is meant to work on the line probably finds it difficult to be perceived and treated as their advisor or helper. Later on however, something else became evident in Andrzej's narrative. Listening to his discourse about his English counterpart who also struggles to work with most of the shop floor managers, it became clear that what matters here is not their nationality but their position in the company's hierarchy because only their English superior, whose rank is the highest, "can get things done without struggle." Nevertheless, my initial feelings about the importance of nationality have also been confirmed. The following fragment about Andrzej's partner in the lean project revealed that nationality does matter and is an important aspect of workplace relationships:

> He [Andrzej's counterpart in lean] is English…We have the same positions but he's got better experience and better money…if I were an English person, after three years of doing what I do I wouldn't be on the shop floor but in the offices upstairs now. And I'm saying this because my counterpart who came with me to work is already a team manager and now he is being trained for production manager. And he is English. And he tells me: "f**k, I want to be that production manager already!" and I tell him: "listen Kris, you have been here for three years just like me and look at us, where you are and where I am. You say that they don't want to promote you because you don't have connections. And what am I supposed to say? After a week of working here I got a grade

and I have the same grade today. So stop bullshitting me and saying that they discriminate against you because I should be the one saying that, not you". Well, that's the life. I just got into a not very good department, with many people and where all positions were already taken by Romanians. And it is still the same situation; the manager is Romanian so...I'm just not a very popular person there.

Evidently, Andrzej believes that nationality plays an important role in influencing people's positions in the factory. He feels that Poles are discriminated against and to illustrate his argument in the next fragment of his story he uses the numbers and nationality of shop floor managers. Interestingly however, despite his previous lack of feeling inferior to English workers, he does not complain about having too many English managers considering the number of rather slow English workers on the line – it is only the Romanian managers that constitute the problem. Having said that it is thanks to migrant and not indigenous workers that the factory has become so successful and Andrzej seems to be deeply concerned about the lack of recognition for Polish workers' work and intentional disregard for their commitment and skills, which is of benefit to Romanians.

> …There are 22 managers and out of those 22, seven are Romanians. It is one third. And there aren't any Polish managers. So let's not say that this is some coincidence. Because even when they were opening a brand new department, a Romanian became the team manager. Right now she is being promoted to the position of a production manager and who is going to replace her? Her Romanian friend of course. In the low risk area there is also a Romanian manager, and on three out of four lines Romanians are leaders, and only on one line is there an English leader. And the machine minders are also Romanian; there are only two Poles. If Romanians are so good, why aren't they heroes of Europe? Why are they even behind us in the European arena? Fact, they have some advantage in speaking better English because they learn English but find me a Romanian team leader whose English is better than mine. We might even have the same level of English but then they will always choose the Romanian for the promotion, not me.

At points Andrzej's discourse becomes very aggressive and full of grievance and claims of discrimination. Even though he sometimes gets very emotional about issues related to discrimination and Romanians' dominance on the shop floor, his arguments

are always reasonable and supported with tangible evidence in terms of numbers and examples. In the above fragment of narrative Andrzej clearly illustrates the way managerial positions are distributed among employees. He does not believe in any kind of coincidence and supports the widely accepted view about migrants' networks that facilitate the obtaining of employment, promotion or more preferential treatment (Massey et al. 1994; Waldinger 1997; Ward et al. 2001). In the light of Andrzej's observation that even when new departments are being opened it is a Romanian employee who becomes the manager, my observations also reached a similar conclusion in that there is a very basic divide on the shop floor between Poles on one side and Romanians on the other. While the first group claims to be doing the hardest work and getting the worst deal, the second enjoys being the privileged group whose members hold superior positions. In exchange Romanians remain loyal and you could never imagine them taking Poles' side against the firm. It might be that what caused the division and difference in treatment is management's perception of those two groups of workers. While Romanians could be discerned as "hungry" and "stayers," in the English managers' eyes Poles could be viewed more like transitory migrants, mainly due to the lack of employment restrictions and ease of travel between the countries.

Since the relationship between Poles and Romanians has been characterised as highly competitive and hostile, the nature of Polish-English relations is illustrated by Andrzej as completely opposite despite developing in the same environment and bearing some of the same characteristics in terms of preferential treatment (e.g. Adam's colleague) or promotion opportunities (e.g. Andrzej's English counterpart in the lean project).

> It's ok [the relationship between Poles and the English on the shop floor]. We [the trade unions] have never had any Polish/English issues. There are no problems with those English workers working downstairs. Generally speaking people like working with the English because they have more respect for each other. And I'm talking about line leaders for instance, I'm not talking about managers. But there are no conflicts between those who work on the line. But, let's be honest, how many English workers work on the line?...Those English people who work here on the line must be either disabled or crazy, or those who came

here when they were 16 because they had no family and no money and stayed here till today…because it is easy to stay.

Narratives about indigenous co-workers always seem to follow the same pattern: they are generally positive perceptions even though English workers are never praised for their attitude to work, commitment or ambition to achieve something more. It is possible though that due to these characteristics indigenous workers are not perceived as competitors but, as Andrzej also noticed, their relatively good relationship with others is a result of limited contact on the line. The small number of English workers on the shop floor results in rare immediate contact between them and other workers, thus fewer experiences in general logically translate into fewer negative experiences. Nevertheless, despite having quite positive perceptions of the indigenous workers' nature, when asked about his preferences in terms of working alongside his compatriots or English employees, Andrzej does not give any conclusive answers. Possibly because of the variety of experiences with workers of different nationalities and ranks, he is unlikely to favour any particular group:

> I have no idea to be honest. Actually, I wouldn't like to work in a place with so many people, like this one. Because when there are a lot of people there are always some cliques and there is chaos. It's better when there are less people and you know them inside out. You know what you can expect of them. But I think that it doesn't really matter with whom you work because you will always find good and bad people. Maybe it is only in our factory, I don't know. And maybe not only Poles who, when they get a promotion, want to show off. But I think it is the mentality of this factory.

Andrzej's position has not clarified over the years of his employment at the factory. He complains about the chaos and anonymity that result from too many people working in Food Co. and that made him unsure about his judgements. I think that this sense of confusion helps him to believe that maybe Poles, who have to compete fiercely with each other and other nationals for a job, overtime opportunities, or promotion, are not such a bad nation after all and that it is only the factory that brings out their worst characteristics. Interestingly, it is the only reason for which, given his role as a shop steward, he accepts their need to compete with each other.

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Indeed, time spent in the factory, but also with people outside the workplace, has made Andrzej clarify his perceptions of his home country and realise that not everything is as bad as it appeared to be before his migration. Having spent a few years in the UK, Andrzej has made some observations and comparisons between home and host countries and that has made him aware of certain shortcomings of the new milieu. These observations, even though not directly shaped by workplace experience, to some extent reflect his opinion of the English workers he works with:

> If I ever have some children, and I'm planning to, I will think twice before I send my children to an English school. Once my children achieve school age, I will make the decision what to do next. Because let's be honest, Polish education is in the world's top. We are in the first five. The only problem is that you don't have work when you graduate. And the English schools? They only have good sports fields. They don't even know where Poland is. It's good when they can say that it's in Europe but to show it on the map, it's impossible. Ask an average English person of my age to show you on the map where Poland is. I don't think he will know where to look for it.

> When I get old and my children grow up here, what's the point in bringing up the children in Polish traditions and talking Polish at home if after so many years they will identify more with the English nation than with the Polish one. That's what I'm worried about. That they will become one of them, educated in that poor system, another halfwit working in Food Co. or somewhere else.

Once again Andrzej seems to be lost in his perception of the host society. Despite previous pictures of tolerant and friendly Englishmen he observes indigenous workers in Food Co. and generalises about ambitionless and uneducated British nationals. However, even though he seems to have far from assimilative or even integrative attitudes, Andrzej to some extent realises it cannot be the complete picture of British society. Indeed, the small number of English line workers in Food Co. makes it rather unlikely that they are representative of the whole society, and Andrzej seems to be aware of this. That is why in the end he appears to acknowledge the fact that nothing is either black or white and concludes the following:

> In England you can find pluses and minuses…When you ask a German if he is proud of being German he will tell you that he is, even when you

remind him of Hitler. Despite that he will tell you that he is German because he was born in that country and he is proud of it. My opinion is that everybody should be proud of his or her country. This is where you were born and this is where you were brought up, your parents are there. Even when some bad things happen there, everybody should be proud of his or her country. But some Poles forget about it and, for example, they don't speak Polish because they are ashamed of it or they forget that they are Poles…For me it is like selling yourself. If you want to sell yourself for British citizenship, you can, it is your business but you were born in Poland and grew up there so you are a Pole and nothing is going to change that…Even if I decide to stay here for the rest of my life I will still be a Pole because I have Polish blood in me.

"Everybody should be proud of his or her country" – in that short fragment of his narrative, Andrzej used the phrase twice. It illuminates his great sense of national pride but also a perception that nationality carries with it one's obligation and responsibility towards one's country. For that reason he disapproves of people who disavow their national identity and positions himself in definite opposition to assimilative attitudes. Consequently, in the last parts of Andrzej's narrative his patriotism becomes clear:

> Yes, I'm proud of being a Pole…Our nation went through a lot in its history and I think that if there hadn't been that 50 years of communism in our history we would be a very advanced country now…This new generation is just starting…This process of new thinking is just being developed. Corruption and things like that; giving bribes; this is all part of the old system. And we need at least 10 more years before something starts changing in Poland. Or even 20.

For Andrzej the capturing of national identity after years of oppression under the communist system is understandably a matter of pride. He believes that the process of creating the new, non-communist national identity is developing now and positions himself as one who belongs to the new generation.

> I have no idea what I will be doing in five years time….wait…in five years, it will be the time of my decisions. Then, I will be able to sell my flat so I will have to think it over whether to sell it and come back to Poland or not sell yet and wait, it would depend on how many children I have then and how old they are. I will have to see what my financial

situation is as well. If I am still in the same place or if I have progressed in my career. These are things that matter. Because if I am supposed to stay in the same place for next five years, then I don't think I would carry on.

The above fragment of Andrzej's narrative clearly shows his list of priorities and, contrary to his initial discourse, work is no longer a central life interest for him. He makes his return to Poland conditional on many elements but his career is only the third in importance, after family and his financial situation. Surprisingly however, in the following section of that narrative he claims to go back to his mother country only on one condition: getting a job with £1,000 a month salary. Suddenly, it is not the family he misses that would make him decide to go back but work.

I would like it to be great in Poland, just like in England, so that everybody could go back and get a job for £1,000 a month. In such a situation I would go back even today. Because I'm in Poland only two weeks in a year and I miss my family and friends. Of course I'm pissed off with Polish roads every time I go there but well, these are the minuses. But I think that everything is changing and going in a better direction. But five years is not enough for those changes.

Andrzej, just like the rest of my interviewees, seems to be full of dilemmas and contradictions. On the one hand his roles in trade unions and the lean project have given him some sense of belonging to the place, possibly fulfilment of personal aspirations and satisfaction from helping workers irrespective of their nationality, while at the same time having some level of power over shop-floor managers. On the other hand, however, Andrzej also feels helpless in his attempts to achieve something more than he already has because of his nationality. He believes that being English or Romanian would make a difference to his position in the factory. Nevertheless, Andrzej is full of national pride and hopes that the situation in Poland will change and enable many migrants to have a "normal" life in their home country. But he is also full of doubt about whether this can happen in the near future. This type of dilemma makes it impossible for Andrzej to make any ultimate decisions and puts him in a position characteristic of many new migrants who, despite being torn between here and there, successfully manage their everyday struggles.

5.7 **Summary**

All six stories presented in this chapter illustrate a number of important issues about the ways in which recent migrants negotiate their employment relations and acculturation choices in the contemporary UK workplace. Among the familiar accounts of homesickness and mass food production, the presented narratives are suffused with notions of a Polishness that was seen to be under threat, mainly from the presence of Romanian managers who are commonly seen to favour their compatriots. Stories of acclimatisation were told in which individuals put themselves in a number of (often contradictory) positions depending on the prevailing circumstances. Their attention was often on society in general, which served either as a point of contrast between feelings of content in their private lives and dissatisfaction at work, or as justification for giving credit to those who did not necessarily deserve it (e.g. alleged neutrality of English managers), and the role of compatriots and other nationalities in this is paramount. In this way, the presence and actions of all four organisational actors have played their role in shaping not only workplace relations but also broader acculturative attitudes.

These stories illustrate the dynamic nature of new migrants' work and acculturative experiences. Narratives reveal a complex and contradictory set of discourses at work. Common workplace strife is shot through with notions of identity, the assumed identity of others, and complex notions of normality and neutrality. In contrast to the largely static typologies of extant theorising in this field, what I hope to have achieved through this discursive section is a rich picture of individuals struggling to comprehend and manage the pressures of "being migrants" in a contemporary migrant-dominated workplace. I trust that the presented stories are all informative and essential elements of migration experiences and serve to present the migrants' acculturative process. What follows is a discussion of the main themes that arise both here and in the process of participant observation.

6 NUANCES, CONTRADICTIONS AND COMPLEXITIES OF MIGRANT WORKERS IN A BRITISH WORKPLACE

6.1 Introduction

In the aftermath of my participant observation, conducted interviews revealed a number of themes that played a significant role in the process of shaping new migrants' acculturation and workplace relations. The interplay between four identified organisational actors: Poles, Romanians, British managers and an absence of British work norms, created a particular workplace situation whereby on a daily basis Polish migrant workers made choices about their position in the workplace and larger society and/or were pushed in one direction or another. Factors that emerged on the basis of daily observations and interactions with these mostly young Polish workers and of the analysis of their discourse when interviewed, took the form of unprompted concerns and/or dilemmas that seemed to preoccupy migrants' thinking, such as their aspirations combined with the challenge of factory life, to which they chose to give voice when invited to do so. The following sections are therefore discussions of empirical findings which present the preoccupations of Polish migrants that resonated throughout the research.

6.2 Contextual factors: social status and background vs. factory life

Two recent EU enlargements have brought unprecedented numbers of heterogeneous groups of migrants to the UK who came not only in large numbers but also for contrasting reasons and varying time periods (Sumption and Somerville 2010). They are said to be mostly young graduates with expectations of a better lifestyle but also with little or no previous experience of physical labour and this turned out be a source of many frustrations. Educational and social backgrounds of many Polish workers do not correspond well with the type of job they have to perform in Food Co. Exposure to factory life which is mainly characterised by harshness of the work regime and physicality of the environment evokes among them only one association: labour camp. On a number of occasions when Marcelina was upset about certain situations,

she was asking herself a rhetorical question: "What is it? Auschwitz or what?" and such a reaction was not uncommon among workers from the factory. This type of feeling accorded strongly with field notes I gathered during the phase of participant observation; "the atmosphere of the factory reminds me of a modern labour camp type…or maybe I slightly exaggerate…but the pace of work is actually unbelievable and it is enough to slow down a little bit to hear your supervisor's voice behind your back telling you to hurry up." The imagery of the labour camp is worthy of note, particularly in the context of Poland's history where such a metaphor has striking potency. It refers to probably the most brutal and most painful and still very recent part of the nation's history.

This image was used by many and resonated throughout the study. It was often referred to in relation to the physical attributes of the plant but also in relation to work organisation, such as work pace, status rivalry, and close supervision. Consequently, one may suppose that this strong reaction to the workplace was sharpened by the contrast between the aspirations of a highly educated young worker and the brutal reality of Fordist food production. Hence, it might also be expected that what Marcelina, Ola and others experienced first hand in the factory, that is, the physicality of the place and the nature of the work, makes them feel alienated and out of place. Indeed, according to some researchers, Fordist work regimes could significantly contribute to these types of feelings. For example, Blauner (1964) explained in his study that repetitive routine tasks that grant less autonomy and decision-making to the worker lead to greater alienation. Similarly, Mottaz (1981) found lack of control over tasks and lack of meaningful work as predictors of alienation. This could be particularly relevant to young, educated and ambitious individuals who often migrate in order to fulfil their dreams of a better lifestyle and career prospects. Meanwhile, for many of these new wave migrants, work at Food Co. means a loss of the status they had back in their home country, status they gained mostly through a university education.

Moreover, Rosner and Putterman (1991) suggest that education increases the individual's ability to derive satisfaction from work but raises his/her level of dissatisfaction when forced to do routine and unchallenging work. It could be argued then that the existing work regime and nature of the factory work combined with the

migrants' high level of education lead to them experiencing a lack of fulfilment and growing disenchantment. Consequently, they oppose everything that is associated with the work experience. Accordingly, it could be argued that such a clash of migrants' high social status with low status jobs could affect their level of commitment and performance in fulfilling their duties.

However, not only the young migrants were affected in this way. It could be argued that Adam, who is the only representative of the older generation in my sample, suffered an even greater loss of status due to the many years he worked in a profession with a significantly higher position. Without doubt, such a loss of professional status could negatively affect one's performance on the job as well as the level of social adjustment to a new environment. Literature suggests several factors that have a significant impact on migratory adjustments and some of them were grouped by Salvendry (1983), who divided such factors into those having negative and positive consequences in social adjustment. Indeed, one of the negative factors that affected the process was identified as a change in socio-cultural status. Adam seemed to recognise his loss of status by indicating how different his present job was from the one he had in Poland. On a number of occasions he admitted to missing his previous position: "Sometimes I feel as if somebody put me aside for a moment. I would like to come back to my old job." Such discourse inevitably suggests feelings of rejection, dejection and frustration, if not regrets about the current migratory experience.

Indeed, a higher education is often associated with high social status and is one of the most often quoted pre-arrival determinants, significantly increasing the chances of successful adjustment (Adorno et al. 1950; Lipset 1960). According to Kolker and Ahmed, education is associated with "psychological openness to change, tolerance for ambiguity and cultural relativity, and capacity for self-detachment…which…enable an individual to preserve his self-image in the face of temporary degradation of status, which accompanies immigration" (1980). Consequently, such a migrant's has a greater ability to learn new roles and adopt the new values of the host society. Moreover, it seems that better-educated individuals tend to assimilate selectively and acquire only the best parts of the new society's cultural heritage and resist abandoning the best from their own culture. Thus, in

Berry's (1984) theoretical model, the desired acculturative level would be one of integration. Nevertheless, despite having a university diploma, most of my interviewees found it difficult to manage their relationships with others, even compatriots, potentially due to that clash of social status. Although willing to integrate with everyone during the initial stages, the interviewees subsequently realised that they could not accept some of the cultural differences; they became frustrated and felt alienated. At this point also it became evident that a large number of different nationalities present in a new environment is not without meaning.

6.3   Nationality

Representing various attitudes and approaches, migrants need to find a way of rubbing along with each other when they come into first hand contact, particularly in a workplace environment where one's economic success depends, to a large extent, on how well one gets on with others. For that reason the notion of nationality becomes a vital element of every narrative, where workers are differentiated by nationality and by this one characteristic the workforce seems to be divided into separate groups. All of my interviewees suggested certain nationalities have better relationships than others and that is what causes conflict on the shop floor. The balance of power seems to shift based on any one nationality joining forces with whoever is in charge. Thus it is not necessarily the group in the majority that holds a degree of power over others, shaping the way others adapt, as is suggested by Piontkowski et al. (2000). In Food Co. it is Poles who make up the majority but they are not the most dominant group as only occasionally do they manage to take control over the way things are done. In fact it is the Romanians who, despite being almost five times smaller as a group, are the most influential party.

Indeed, in common tales of workplace strife and friction questions of nationality and identity were entwined:

So the Romanian team leader always shows how the job should be done
to his or her compatriots while Poles have to learn on their own. (Grzes)

Romanians are favoured here; they get easier jobs and even when they are asked to go somewhere and do something they can say no and they don't have to do that, a Pole will have to do that for them. Poles cannot say that they don't want to do something, they have no such right…Romanians don't even need any reason to say no. (Magda)

I didn't accept everything he was telling me…but he has no right [to insult me]. He can and I can't? Why? Because he is the manager and Romanian and I am Polish and his subordinate, right? (Marcelina)

Nationality more than any other attribute appeared to be a defining characteristic of the workplace, being the main determinant of a migrant's position in Food Co.:

Why don't we have a single Polish manager? Because Romanians always block Poles; because a Romanian manager will never let a Pole make a mark, he will never let a Pole succeed or come into the "power" that he has. Because then they would be equal, and it can never be! A Romanian is supposed to be above a Pole. (Marcelina)

If I were an English person, after three years of doing what I do I wouldn't be on the shop floor but in the offices upstairs now. (Andrzej)

You know, my English will never be fluent, and I'm not Romanian either, I'm Polish not Romanian and I will never speak his [Romanian manager's] language either. I have a right to feel alien there. (Ola)

According to Madison (2006, 2007) and Hayes (2007), experiencing and exploring other foreign cultures facilitates the discovery of one's own identity. Thus, migrants are said to discover themselves when they are displaced from their home countries. Therefore it could be expected that, as a result of that "continuous first-hand contact" with other cultures, one's nationality can be either blurred or sharpened abroad (Redfield et al. 1936, p.149). Being away from one's family and home community offers a freedom of choice that is not constrained by home-grown culture rules. It is therefore possible that when faced with other cultures, certain elements of a migrant's own culture might grow stronger or at least become more visible than they were in the country of origin. That is probably why all of my interviewees became more aware of the bad sides of their nation's character. It is also possible that this freedom of choice causes confusion and uncertainty because after all they can now

choose whether to remain Polish, become more British or reject both options by adopting a European identity. To what extent however it is a migrant's actual, free and conscious choice is a matter for the next few sections because collected evidence would suggest that a Polish worker's identity is an outcome of many factors which interchangeably push him/her in one direction or another. It is a product of mainly workplace experiences and interactions with Romanian co-workers and British managers but also contact (or lack of contact) with members of the host society and family left behind in Poland. The biggest challenge to the Polish sense of national identity however is posed by Poles themselves. Indeed, accounts of workplace situations are suffused with a notion of Polishness that is not only threatened by the presence of Romanian managers, who tend to favour their compatriots, but also by Poles themselves whose immoral behaviour is triggered by some very tangible and realistic threats from today's labour market. Surrounded by great numbers of migrant workers, mainly compatriots, who compete for limited resources, Poles seem to deprive each other of some noble values they associate with Poland. The following section is therefore a discussion of this complex and often contradictory picture of Polish workers' sense of national identity.

6.3.1   Poles vs. Poles

To a large extent Polish migrant workers' sense of identity seems to be shaped not only by contact with other nationals but by interaction with compatriots. Ironically, the large presence of Poles does not give them an increased sense of mutual support, as one could presume. Nor does the large number of compatriots give Poles a sense of inclusion or increased information flow, as Bauer et al. (2002) argue. Instead, as many of the people I spoke to in the factory admitted, Poles prefer to undermine each other and distance themselves from their fellow countrymen. The workplace environment seems to hinder a sense of national identity. Stories like the one below were typical constructions of relationships between Poles:

> Iza told me a story when one night a group of Poles and one Portuguese (all Food Co. employees) were waiting for a bus at the station and suddenly one more Pole came who was recognised as a Food Co. employee but was just coming back from some party and

was a bit drunk. When the bus arrived the drunken Pole realised that he had lost his ticket and had no money to buy a new one but none of the Poles helped him. The Portuguese finally bought him a ticket and just asked the rest: "What's wrong with you guys?! He is one of you and he even works at Food Co. I'm sure he would give you the money back!" It was a brilliant example of how Poles don't care about each other and don't feel any integrity with each other even when in a foreign country. (field notes, 11.09.2008).

Narratives describing relationships between Poles within the workplace were described in the same hostile tones. It was always a picture of Poles who do not unite, are envious and even act against one another. One of the factors that seemed to play a role here was the great number of Poles on the shop floor. According to Salvendry's (1983) research on social adjustment, one of the positive factors that affects the process of integration is an existence of a large local ethnic community. Moreover, as argued by Kim (1988), relationships with compatriots release stress and are related to better psychological adjustment (Ward and Rana-Deuba 1999). None of these were confirmed in this study though. While some Poles admitted to having good contact with their fellow countrymen outside the workplace, especially when they had to rely extensively on their help with communicating in English, most of them recognised rather negative characteristics of Polish migrants and did not want to identify with them at all. Highly competitive, individualistic and ruthless Poles (just like the environment in which they operate) can hardly find any common ground to speak with one voice.

The same was noticed by Jordan (2002) in his study on undocumented Polish workers in London. He describes a general low level of social trust within post-communist societies reinforced by an aggressive strategy of ruthless competition. Such practices are said to be adopted by strongly market-orientated individualistic migrants in a highly competitive environment in the British job market. The reason for that might be the high level of mobility and flexibility of the new wave migrants as well as their characteristics of being mostly young, educated and motivated people, all of which make the local labour market so competitive. Moreover, numbers also seem to play a role because one of the effects of the dynamic influx of Polish immigrants into the UK was saturation of the low paid low status market and a

surfeit of Polish workers in local labour markets. It could be expected that this has led to subsequent changes within in-group relations such as shrinking circles of cooperation and increasingly stronger competition among Polish workers.

Under such circumstances, and according to Piontkowski et al.'s (2000), Poles should have a very limited sense of national identity. In their study it was claimed that there is proportional dependence between one's level of identification with a group and its assessment that the more groups identify with their nationality the more likely they are to assess their group as being more positive than the out-group and so the more likely their support of discriminatory attitudes towards the other group. In my study, despite some very negative assessments of compatriots, Poles not only strongly identified with their national roots but also put Romanians, the closest to their out-group, as a group of exemplary unity and support. In fact, despite feeling ashamed of compatriots and having a countless number of reasons to justify their distancing from them, none of my interviewees expressed interest in changing their citizenship or disavowing their nationality. From the discourse of shame they moved smoothly to the discourse of pride. Oral histories showed a picture of migrants who have complaints about Poland and Polish nationals but who generally feel very proud of their nationality and home values. The discourse of pride relates to their roots, home and family values, but also to the history of a Poland that fought the communist system. National identity, as explained by Andrzej, is simply one of a few characteristics that a man cannot adjust and even living in a foreign country does not change your roots and where you come from. Marcelina, who claimed to have finally found her place in the world, at the same time expressed a strong sense of national identity: "I will never be one of them…I'm proud of my Polishness…Everything I have as a person I received from Polish roots."

Marcelina is also an interesting example of a person who feels successful and therefore happy in her new life abroad and as such confirms findings of Fomina's (2009) research according to which positive self-perception and self-confidence help migrants to discern positive aspects of living in the UK. However, what she also found in her research on Polish migrants in the UK is that the feeling that they have performed well in this new country makes them approach the issue of Polish identity with greater distance. The reason for that is their belief that they do not have to prove

to anybody that they are successful despite being of another nationality because they know their value. Thus successful migrants do not have to protect or flaunt their Polishness in any particular way because they are Poles and nothing is going to change that and this concept is somehow challenged by Marcelina. The interviewee, despite being proud of herself and her achievements in the new country, is also proud of being a Pole and is not ashamed of showing it. Even though she might be far from flaunting her Polishness, she does not want to apply for British citizenship and intends to name her children with traditional Polish names and cultivate Polish traditions and language.

My interviewees' attachment to their home country combined with negative experiences of working alongside compatriots seemed to be an important cause of migrants' contradictions and uncertainty in defining their identity and direction of the acculturative process. In the light of findings presented by Battu and Zenou (2009), who argued in their research that being British and being Bangladeshi did not compete in the minds of most of their respondents, it could be suggested that identities can indeed be multiple in situations when individuals belong to more than one group or community. Surprisingly, even in a monocultural Poland, 71 per cent of the population believes that it is possible for an individual to have two home countries and feel attached to both (CBOS 2005). It is possible that such is the reality for many recent migrant workers. Among family and friends they might associate themselves with all the noble characteristics of Poles whereas in the workplace they already form a different type of community - a shop floor community characterised by high levels of competition, rivalry and jealousy.

These experiences of working and interacting with compatriots and other nationalities also made Marcelina recognise her European identity, which provides equality for every European citizen. She seemed to assume a new identity, which is neither Polish nor British, and for Marcelina it appeared to be a new standard to which everybody should aspire. In the same way Adam admitted to always feeling Polish despite feeling good in this country; however he also aspires to something bigger than that. Being a global citizen is what today's technology enables 'normal' people like Adam to be and he wants to take what the contemporary world offers him. Hence many stories of acclimatisation were told in this research but its

participants always put themselves in a number of often contradictory positions depending on the prevailing circumstances and perspectives from which they spoke about themselves.

This ongoing dilemma over who you are and who you want to be seems to have been a feature of the Polish nation for years:

> [Why do you want to be a Pole? …Has Polish fate been so blissful? Are you not fed up with your Polishness? Don't you have enough of this eternal suffering? …Don't you want to be something else, something new?] (Gombrowicz 1953)

This quotation from Gombrowicz comes from a novel that is an extended examination of what one's nationality is and what it means. Polish literature has discussed the topic of emigration extensively because Poles are often described as a nation of emigrants with some estimates reaching as many as ten million people living abroad (Mazierska 2009). The Polish romantic era of poets was constructed around the notion of exile, diaspora and loss. After all, the Polish national anthem repeats the concept of return migration, inducing the idea of hope that one day, in an idealised future, the nation will be reintegrated again. Hence, exile was always thought of as a difficult condition which involved uncertainty, displacement and fragmented identity. Even though it has been suggested that today's Polish migrants suffer less than their predecessors, or at least that their dilemmas are of a different type, I would like to argue that Gombrowicz's question "why do you want to be a Pole" is particularly important for today's Polish migrants. Niezen (2004, p.40) argues for instance that the experience of deterritorialisation is met with a desire to "relocalise identities." According to Niezen "globalisation entails not only diasporas and combinations, but an opposite tendency toward the erection of cultural boundaries, to the reclamation and protection of distinct territories and ways of life" (2004, p.40). As migrants seek out a balance between these processes, they actively negotiate feelings of belonging and a sense of self, thus identities are never fixed but always evolving (Hall 1990).

Despite the fact that Poland is a society with a strong peasant-rooted cultural significance of the territory, the land (Chalasinski 1968; Kloskowka 2005), it is also

a state which throughout the last 200 years had shifting borders, disappearing, reappearing and shifting back and forth again. For these reasons perhaps, it is not surprising that Poles often feel torn between their sense of patriotism and belonging to Poland, and at the same time their desire to escape the difficult reality of their home country and keep moving towards idealised Western lifestyles. What the modern world gives Poles in terms of faster, easier and cheaper means of transport and communication, would suggest that it is less of a struggle today to live the comfortable life of the West and at the same time remain Polish. This research has shown that Polish migrants, despite leading a comfortable life abroad, still try to define themselves in relation to their motherland, family and friends they left behind. Open borders and relatively cheap flights enable them to travel home at least three times per year while significantly improved communications through telephone and the internet facilitates regular contact with Poland, even on a daily basis. There are numerous attempts to reconstruct Poland abroad through some real or symbolic means such as language, education, religion and traditions. Availability of Polish shops and churches help them feel Polish even when hundreds of miles away from home. There is also a group of people who try to acquire a new identity as a European or world citizen. Nevertheless, whatever strategy they choose there always seems to be an ongoing confusion and uncertainty because the contemporary globalised world enables them to be *both* here and there or maybe, looking at their confusion, it would be more appropriate to say *neither* here nor there. This state of mind seems to dictate their often complex and contradictory behaviours and perceptions of self and others. It could therefore be argued that that their state of being torn is reinforced by both new mobilities and historical factors.

Indeed, in this study Poles' sense of identity turned out to be a complex idea as it oscillated between national pride when fighting invaders and the communist system, being committed and a hard working nation, and embarrassment caused by jealousy and constant competition with each other. This divergence in the self-perception of Polish migrants was particularly evident in the factory. On the one hand, they complain about the lack of solidarity and social trust, strong rivalry and frequent violation of social norms such as cheating, unfair competition, exploitation or even thefts. But on the other hand, Polish migrants perceive themselves as ideal employees: hard-working, committed, honest and loyal towards employers. And

even though they believe that the second image prevails among UK employers, they are aware of their poor image in wider society. Magda feels ashamed of Poles who get drunk and fight in the streets, whereas Andrzej points at negative media coverage of the Polish community. Nevertheless, to understand this discrepancy in Poles' self-perception, it might be useful to employ two dimensions of in-group and out-group perceptions based on morality and competency (Phalet and Poppe 1997). From this perspective, Polish migrants could perceive themselves as being competent workers but immoral compatriots. They proclaim their efficiency, cleverness and consequently economic value to the host society, but interpret their informal activities in terms of being unfair, dishonest and unhelpful towards each other as legitimate market behaviours, and justify their market strategy as forced on them by external conditions (Grzymala-Kazlowska 2005). While none of my interviewees presented an unambiguous picture of their compatriots, they all agreed that Poles have significantly improved the factory's efficiency, but the workplace experiences have made them display their worst national characteristics – all-pervading envy, hostility and constant dissatisfaction.

It is possible though that living and working in the UK has made Polish migrants acquire some attitudes and norms that made them realise the differences between themselves and other Poles and set them apart from Polish mainstream society. However, portraying other Poles as selfish and lacking any convictions could be posited in a wider Polish discourse about the character and values, or rather their lack, of the younger generation of Polish people. Those who do not remember the triumphs of Solidarity and martial law are often labelled derogatorily as "Generation Nothing' because they do not have any ideals or ideas for life and have no respect for others. They are characterised by conformism and a lack of critical awareness whereby Poland is an empty signifier that does not define any values for them or govern their actions (Mazierska 2009). Moreover, if we follow this line of reasoning it might also explain Polish migrant workers' envy because this generation had a less-privileged upbringing and also developed some kind of natural jealousy towards western societies that seemed to have everything in excess. Alternatively, Poles could only become aware of their generation's characteristics when they started comparing themselves with other nationals. It is possible then that as a result of these inter-group comparisons, Poles started to feel particularly envious of their Romanian

counterparts who, despite being so similar, managed to obtain significantly better positions within the factory. Their negative experiences of encounters with Romanian co-workers, however, have also made them more careful in their contact with others.

6.4 Distancing & passivity

Issues related to self-identity are to a large extent interlinked with decisions on maintenance and/or rejection of home and host country cultures, and these are also dealt with on a daily basis by Polish migrants in Food Co. For most of them, it could be expected that living in a monocultural Poland and having limited exposure to interactions with other nationalities might make them feel uncomfortable or insecure in such a multiethnic workplace. After all, the political entity of Poland is the place where in the last national census only 2 per cent of the population declared that they belonged to an ethnic or national minority (CBOS 2005). However, while none of my interviewees explicitly expressed any worries in this regard, they all seemed to adopt one dominant strategy in managing their everyday interactions with others: to maintain distance. The narratives and observations suggested a preference for behaving passively and remaining conflict averse despite their keenness to share their resentments and frustrations, even when unasked. This passivity takes on a number of different features which could be described as getting on, getting by and rubbing along with each other, all at a time when they perceive themselves as individuals within this setting. Hence, as individuals their distancing strategies take many different forms. Ola, for instance, decides to "*build a wall* between her and other workers" and "*stay neutral*" in her contact with co-workers. Adam uses a discourse of *obedience* and *not trying to change anything;* similarly Grzes decides to "*keep his mouth shut* and just work." His wife Magda also described behaviours and attitudes that generally speaking could be classified as *avoidance of conflictual situations.* She believes that following some simple rules of kindness, non-intrusiveness and communication can guarantee her peace of mind and survival in this new environment. The key thing, however, is to always get used to whatever they have to deal with and endure.

While the above tactics served to keep a distance between both compatriots and other nationals, a factor that seemed to significantly facilitate the practice of distancing from the latter is language. In fact, language proficiency is said to be a critical element in terms of how readily migrants integrate into the labour market: it stimulates a feeling of belonging (Fletcher 1999). McDowell et al. (2007) also noticed that migrants tend to speak their own language at work and this is something that creates labour division. All this seems to be confirmed in this research. As argued by Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007), avoidance is sometimes used by immigrants as a coping strategy to protect oneself from feeling inadequate, especially in communication with local people, and as such was probably the main reason that the informal division into Polish and non-Polish speaking tables in the canteen was established. In this way, separation of themselves from other groups on the line is encapsulated in the preferences shown over sitting arrangements in the works canteen. There is no sense of a communal workforce to be forged across nationalities, even though they are the dominant group. This type of segregation, which Poles have probably generated themselves to feel more secure and supported in the presence of many other nationalities in the factory, is not necessarily a good thing. It reifies the differences and distinctions between groups of workers and makes them less able to integrate. The process of joining the Polish community by sitting at one of their tables rapidly establishes the newcomer as a member of the in-group in a familiar social environment, but it also shelters the migrant from the necessity of learning how to cope directly with the new cultural environment. Such an approach hampers interaction with members of the out-group and facilitates further separation. Moreover, these kinds of explicit distinctions being made between Polish and other factory workers reinforces the perception of distance between these groups and possibly has a negative effect on their attitudes towards each other.

Getting by and rubbing along with co-workers and managers in practice has come to mean for the majority their way of coping with the demands of the work regime without compromising their ability to fit in accordingly. On a daily basis migrants distance themselves from each other and potential sources of inter and intra-group conflicts such that there is little appetite for collaboration around resistance to work despite their resentment at the perceived injustices surrounding their work on the line and, for some, the physical hardship associated with working on the line. It is not

really a classical Beynon's (1975) site of struggle for job control in a factory with a Fordist work regime. There is no discernible frontier of control, no accounts of resistance or even attempts to slow the line down. Indeed, in some respects it can be the opposite as some migrants in the study see working on the line as a tournament which constitutes an element of competitiveness. The overriding emphasis is therefore put on individualism as there is an absence of any real communal identity. If anything, there is a strong sense of compliance with the requirements of the production line and those placed in authority over them. The most common means of doing so is by remaining invisible to others on the line and not challenging the authority of mainly Romanian superiors and other shift managers. As such, 'keeping your head down' seems to be the most popular strategy adopted by all those interviewed.

It is impossible not to notice that the above tactics of getting by in a new milieu do not require any effort on the part of Polish migrants and in fact they are very passive and safe in nature. It is almost as if migrants are afraid of doing anything that draws other people's attention and makes them visible in the workplace. The narratives and observations suggest a preference for behaving passively and remaining conflict averse when it comes to acting collectively despite their keenness to share their resentments and frustrations, even when unasked. While one of the reasons for this situation could be the already mentioned language barrier, another could be a difference in understanding of employment relations by both Polish workers and their English and Romanian managers. Indeed, Poles seem to bring to the British workplace Polish sensitivity about how things are done but this seems to be hardly understood by the management:

> We get clusters of the workforce getting a petition together supported by the union; the union organising groups to write a petition and a complaint through a petition about a manager…but we won't manage by petition. One person having a complaint against a manager is just as important as ten people…I think this is also bound up with union rejuvenation and agitation. (HR manager)

And then the manager explains even further:

I have to say that some of the tactics that they are using are not helpful to me as an HR manager…The problem is that we do have a grievance procedure and we enforce it. So all an individual has to do is raise that and the union's almost educating them not to do that. We're educating them to do it. So there's a tension there.

The HR manager's point of view reveals a divergence in understanding of the rationale behind writing a petition and engaging trade unions in any actions against the management. It is often said among Poles that a person who has never written or at least signed a petition cannot be called a real citizen. The tradition of writing a petition and getting involved in a collective action is said to give a sense of greater security and reassurance because the voice of so many people cannot be ignored, especially when it is officially written down on paper. The British interpretation of the situation, however, is that trade unions only create an additional problem for HR management and in consequence what happens is that managers focus on the individual grievance that lies behind the petition and solve the problem individually.

From that perspective, the case of Poles in the UK is also ground-breaking on two other counts. First, the level of cross-border linkages and cooperation between the Trade Union Congress and Solidarnosc[6] is rather unprecedented, compared with other migratory inflows. Second, special Polish-language union sections (the first in Southampton) have been developing as a result of this large-scale familiarity with trade unionism migration. However, it is also worth mentioning that such an initiative might not only be an interesting case of community unionism but also raises questions on class unity, given the role of language as a barrier and the potential for conflicting interests between Poles and locals (Meardi 2007).

Nevertheless, despite the familiarity of Polish migrants with union traditions and a huge potential for collective action, in practice union's actions are sporadic, narrow and limited. Only one or two of my subjects had taken the precaution of joining the union but more from a concern to take out an 'individual insurance policy' (if I get fired then at least I have someone to represent me) rather than it being perceived to be a legitimate voice of justice. In fact, the union's presence on the shop floor is weak

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[6] Solidarnosc (Solidarity) is a Polish trade union federation

and unlike the stewards in Beynon's (1975) plant, the two stewards at Food Co. have a very small role in shaping labour relations.

Interestingly, however, in the absence of either solidarity or militancy, two of my interviewees who became active in the trade union did demonstrate a certain degree of opposition and managed to escape the line. Both Marcelina and Andrzej adopted a different approach and voiced every concern or problem they faced which resulted in improving their position on the shop floor. It could therefore be expected that greater solidarity among migrant workers and/or stronger leadership in mobilising against the management would improve the workers' stance.

Unfortunately, Marcelina and Andrzej's better status did not protect them from sharing the same ongoing dilemma as the others: to stay comfortably where they were or take the risk of looking for more lucrative and rewarding employment. It seems that the experiences that migrants go through in the workplace make them adopt some personal, behavioural, attitudinal and cultural changes in both conscious and unconscious ways in an attempt to fit into the new environment. The fact that they are free to choose, highly mobile and independent seems to make little actual difference to how their employment relations are at Food Co. They still feel 'doomed to this place' as if no other options were available within their reach. Possibly their choice is governed too much by money and a desire to live a 'normal' life and this job is only a means to achieve it. In this way Fantasia's (1988) claim when addressing the issue of solidarity in the workplace seems to be very relevant, arguing not that workers have a true consciousness but that the ways in which people behave can be explained in terms of their material conditions and the ways in which they give meaning to these conditions.

6.5   Settling and living 'normally'

It is surprising that despite being so free and mobile, the majority of migrants decide to remain passive in their everyday struggle in the workplace. Many people I spoke to during the study portrayed themselves as victims of the existing shop-floor injustice. They choose to endure hard working conditions, discrimination and other

grievances instead of looking for better opportunities or at least preparing themselves in terms of language lessons for taking the risk of changing jobs later on, if they plan to stay in the country a little longer. Even though migrants' narratives did not provide explicit answers to this paradox, knowledge available on this new wave of migration as well as intuition based on my own experiences and ones of my closest friends suggests to me that the problem has at least four possible aspects.

6.5.1   Temporality of the current situation

The first aspect is the migrants' potential belief that the situation in which they find themselves is temporary. They are prepared to accept the reality of their work situation for the time being, they allow for a short-term trading off of social status against economic well-being and a lifestyle they desire but at the same time they are open-ended as to the future, whether this is in the local area, somewhere else in the country, back to their home country or moving on to a third country. All options seem to remain on the table and are not fixed or even particularly time-constrained. Settlement or return strategies are emergent and evolving as changes to circumstances dictate.

For these reasons, changing anything through acts of resistance and conflict with authority would not make any sense since they do not anticipate staying in the factory, or maybe even the country, for long. This mindset could be caused by the aspirations of educated people to achieve something more than a factory job, helped by the lack of external barriers to moving on. Such is the nature of modern migrations, particularly within the European Union, that borders are easier to cross, thus facilitating more back-and-forth movement. In this way, Sheller and Urry's (2006) paradigm of new mobilities could possibly explain migrants' distancing themselves from shop-floor affairs but also challenge traditional assumptions of migrants' acculturation processes.

6.5.2 Cash nexus

Despite their sense of grievance and frustration with factory life, migrants' passivity and tolerance of the workplace regime overall may be explained in a large part by their take-home pay at the end of the day. Workers can earn in a week what they might expect to earn in a month in Poland. Despite the relatively higher cost of living in the UK, Polish migrants still find it easier to live comfortably abroad than to struggle to make ends meet in their home country. It appears that, for many Poles, the picture of the West as a promised land is not a myth but their way to 'normality'. In many cases it is not absolute poverty, as maybe with previous migrant cohorts, that has made many Poles leave their country; rather a lifestyle below their expectations, combined with the hope that elsewhere they will be more successful. They seem to actively pursue a Western lifestyle that 'average' Europeans enjoy and strive for the choices/opportunities that are available to most people in Western Europe. This highly idealised model of 'normality' did not entail the pursuit of wealth and prosperity per se but the enjoyment of a comfortable life without having to struggle (and ultimately fail) to achieve it. They want to earn "a little money" or "enough money" to ensure all the necessities of a real life and believe that the receiving country offers this prospect to them. This is the 'holy grail' that many of them confessed to wanting, making the perceived disparity between lifestyles the driver behind their migration.

Meanwhile, it is said that the minds of today's generation have been ruled by the media and people strive after a reality that does not exist because it has been created by television and commercial radio stations. It is a world that people miss because they find there everything they lack in everyday life. It is therefore possible that on these grounds people who want to be independent and decide freely about their life direction facilitated by new mobilities and without being constrained by any (non)financial reasons, leave their home country with a confidence that anything is possible in Western countries – a symbol of great opportunity and prosperity. Ironically, where many migrants end up working once they have migrated is surprising given their high desire for freedom of choice in deciding their life direction, which they feel is constrained by the realities of Poland's labour market. It could therefore be speculated that for many Polish migrants it is the financial aspect

of their migration and not self-realisation or career aspirations that matter most. Thus, leaving a job that is secure and taking the risk of being left with literally nothing might jeopardise achieving the goal of a comfortable life. The possibility of such a situation could create a fear of failure that becomes another factor constraining migrants' free choice.

6.5.3 Fear of failure

Many of the narratives hinted at a deeply held fear that migrants' return home would be interpreted by family and friends as involving failure in some way. The fear is that the reasons that justified their departure are the same that explain their return. Seemingly then, no tangible progress has been made in terms of neither lifestyle advancement (normality) nor their personal development which could be of particular importance for young and ambitious migrants. It seems that avoiding this sense of defeat is a strong motivator for some in coping with factory life. For example, despite the fact that the first days in Food Co. were such a shock for Marcelina who experienced some traumatic moments as a result of her separation from her family, she did not want to return to Poland. Unlike previous migrants, for whom the decision about going back home after such a short time was practically impossible due to the potential costs associated with such a move, Marcelina's situation was different. It was not her inability to go home anymore but possibly a lack of readiness or hope for something better in the near future that made her stay in the UK. It is possible, though, that the interviewee did not want to go back because that would mean giving up too quickly and admitting to making a mistake, to failure. There were probably certain expectations, a sense of pressure or ambition that made Marcelina stay in the UK for a little longer. In a similar way Ola's ambition has probably made her feel unfulfilled, ashamed of failure and unsuccessful despite having all the necessary instruments – being young, educated, flexible and mobile.

The post-communist period was characterised by emigrants returning home because they failed to achieve the success they had hoped for: they were neither rich nor famous and their personal lives were often in a mess. Hence, it might be that current migrants, in their struggle to achieve a better life, end up in low status jobs and are

alienated from compatriots because going back would be even more difficult and embarrassing. After all, they must all be aware of the negative discourse that prevailed in the Polish media shortly after the mass migration from Poland started. Being portrayed in some quarters as weak and cowardly individuals who are unable to deal with the Polish realities could possibly postpone migrants' decisions about a potential return. The wage dividend possibly alleviates this foreboding and reinforces the lack of urgency in making any final settlement decisions. Nevertheless, it appears that despite the availability of relatively cheap transport means going back home at times of failure might not be an easy option, but a lot also depends on individual circumstances.

6.5.4   Personal circumstances

Many constraints however, mainly seem to lie in migrants themselves. Their strong overwhelming desire to leave their homeland so as to live their lives 'normally' possibly did not anticipate potentially serious problems such as language, qualification or personal circumstances that could hinder achieving this aim. Migrants often seemed not to consider that it could be their labour market attributes, or lack of them, that would impede their occupational mobility and consequently impact negatively on their expected lifestyle. Without any exceptions in this matter, all research participants described the importance of being able to communicate in English. This is an element that enabled Andrzej to secure a good position in the factory and Marcelina to gain more contact and recognition from higher management – certainly steps towards a greater sense of workplace wellbeing. This is because the constraint in the form of a lack of English language skills possibly makes them less powerful or even passive in negotiating their position within the workplace. It might be expected that because of the above, migrant workers are potentially more vulnerable to the imposition of others' rules of behaviour or even attitudes, just as it has determined their decision with regard to staying in the factory. That is why the phrase "I am doomed to this place" was so common among non-English-speaking migrants.

Along with language competencies, some of my interviewees also recognised the importance of English qualifications. Marcelina admitted to having difficulty in finding better employment not only because her English is not fluent but also because her qualifications are not recognised. The same issue was also raised by Adam whose main problem however is age which constrains his ability to gain both recognised qualifications and language skills. Of course what transpires in migrants' personal lives through the course of their stay will fundamentally affect their ultimate decisions whether to stay or return home for the time being and so it is with this small sample of closely-observed individuals. Thus purchasing property in the area locks one person into the financial stability associated with continued factory working, another considers returning home as the preferred option following a work accident whilst yet another enters into a relationship with a Czech supervisor that isolates her socially from the rest of her compatriots on the shop floor. It seems that the category of personal circumstances will never become saturated as every individual brings in their own set of personal histories and situations that will constrain or facilitate their decision-making in one way or another, irrespective of their freedom to travel between countries or move around looking for a job.

6.6   Language and prospects

Language, as mentioned in the previous section, was cited by all participants as an important element that facilitates one 'getting on' within the factory and 'getting out' into the wider labour market. The immediacy and daily oppression of the line makes them reflect on their chances of leaving it behind, either through promotion off the line or gaining employment beyond the factory with improved prospects. But the importance of being a competent and confident speaker of English transpires not only through the ability to find alternative employment but also through relations with people around migrants, in particular the host society. Being able to speak fluent English is an important element of migrants' new life abroad and many researchers have confirmed the importance of language acquisition arguing that you cannot take part in something if you do not speak the language. According to Waddington (2007), for instance, migrants who cannot communicate in the host language might find it difficult to manage their everyday life in the new country and, thus, isolate

themselves from mainstream society. Others, for example Kim (1988), Ward et al. (2001) and Gudykunst (1998) recognise the acquisition of the host country language as a clear indicator of integration into the host society. Maydell-Stevens et al. (2007) also found in their study on Russian-speaking immigrants in New Zealand, that new environment and language difficulties often cause significant isolation from the host community. It manifests itself through a lack of understanding of cultural traditions and social norms, no contact with the host population and, as a result, a very secluded life.

What is more, not being able to speak the host country's language, might have negative effects not only in terms of the segregation of new wave migrants but also their exploitation. Following the UK government's immigration policy requiring an English proficiency test for any prospective migrants from outside the EU, workers from A8 countries could become the lowest strata in the British labour market by offering unskilled labour without the language proficiency needed for either developing a career or claiming rights (Meardi 2007). Lack of language skills also makes them vulnerable in local labour markets because even employers interviewed for research by the Home Office saw "language barriers [as] the only disadvantage to employing migrants" (Dench et al. 2006, p.vi).

On the other hand, a good command of the language might result in migrants' feeling more independent and powerful, as I experienced myself:

> *[fragment of my field notes - on my way to the factory*] I'm in Food Co. now and get more stressed with every minute. I don't know why I'm reacting this way but I am already terrified with this place. I cannot even imagine what people who can't speak English and just came to England must feel on their first day at Food Co. I've got an advantage over them but it doesn't make me feel better even though I keep saying to myself that I'm here for completely different purposes.

Knowledge of the English language gave me the advantage over others in terms of being more self-reliant and capable of controlling my position. The feeling of being more influential in managing my own situation to some extent was a result of my different role in the organisation. Nevertheless, the ability to speak English increased

my sense of self-confidence and consequently shaped my relationships with English-speaking workers into less formal and more comfortable positions for both parties. From the Polish workers' perspective, the lack of language skills was perceived as one of the main barriers to finding better employment, while being able to speak English gave them the psychological comfort of having a choice:

> [*fragment of my field notes - situation in the canteen*] One of the Polish girls sitting at the next table is talking on the phone and she is very nervous; I can see tears in her eyes. She is swearing very loudly but nobody seems to pay any attention to her as if it was a normal situation here. I approach her by asking if everything is ok. She says that her team leader blamed her for not informing him about meat running out. The girl got very angry because it is the team leader who is responsible for checking the supplies and not her; she is not paid for doing that. The girl has been working at Food Co. for over three years and said to me that it was three years too long! After a minute she adds that it's good that she could speak English, and if another situation like that happens she will tell the team leader what she thinks of him! And she will leave the factory!

As was raised by McIntyre (2008), learning to speak up and fluency in language is an important element in the migrants' acculturation process. In her research, interviewees showed that acquiring the ability to express themselves vocally was of benefit to them personally and developmentally. At the other end of the spectrum, not speaking up and voicing their thoughts, opinions and feelings may have negative consequences in the form of stress, depression and lack of self-confidence. While none of my interviewees revealed any of these effects, they all at the same time admitted that life outside the workplace without language proficiency is not as stressful mainly due to British citizens' tolerance and lack of assimilative pressures. Availability of translators when needed and lack of pressure or offence when communication becomes difficult is what makes Polish migrants feel welcomed. Unfortunately this is what has recently been turning into one of the main aspects of the UK's new integration policies, which seems to provide a less favourable atmosphere for new immigrants. The role of language has been included in some political and policy debates and consequently, in 2007, the government introduced a new points-based system that imposed tougher English language requirements on migrant workers. Moreover, the Commission on Integration and Cohesion

emphasised in their statement that a shared language is fundamental to social integration and thus translation services should be reduced (2007). It is argued that in the longer perspective, such an approach would certainly be of benefit particularly to those who plan to stay in the country a bit longer than just a season, but without doubt their inability to speak English also affects their current relations, even if only temporarily. Certainly, in the minds of participants, the issue over language reified the differences between national groupings across the workforce. This separation by language has only exacerbated perceptions of the 'distance' and discrimination of those who barely speak English.

6.7 Neutrality and equity

Along with the notion of normality, Polish migrants seem to have a particular view of Britain as being a fair place. The language that captured this phenomenon is the "neutrality" with which British managers were associated. While Polish migrants seemed to expect that having a high work ethic and being a good performer would of themselves be duly recognised and rewarded, which to some extent could prove their naivety about the nature of work and work relationships, there is a sense of resentment and frustration that this is not always the case. In the main, they view themselves as victims of the harshness of the shop-floor regime and subject to discrimination at the hands of their immediate Romanian superiors. Apparently, the presence of the Romanian workers, who form a large proportion of line leaders, supervisors and other skilled roles in the factory, was the main source of perceived injustice and prejudice on the shop floor.

In fact, the constant struggle over line speeds and the victimisation of Polish workers was a struggle for a degree of job control within the factory but only between two groups of workers: Poles and Romanians. Despite being so similar in terms of age, education, strong work commitment and background, and because they all came over from relatively poorer Eastern European countries to find employment in the UK, both groups are far from even tolerating each other. This is very much unlike Piontkowski et al.'s (2000) claim that a perceived similarity between members of two groups has a positive effect on the inter-group situation and results, as argued by

Byrne (1971), in greater acceptance and attitudes of integration and assimilation. Possibly, to a certain extent the aversion to Romanians could be a result of stereotypes that Poles often hold about Romanians and their low status as a minority group in Poland. When people with this kind of picture in their mind come to a place where Romanians occupy the best positions on the shop floor, it might cause a sense of frustration or even humiliation. It is therefore possible that the attitudes of dislike for, and isolation from the Romanians were shaped back in Poland. But there are also other studies on inter-group contacts that could possibly explain Polish-Romanian conflict. According to Bond (1986), Fiske (1993) or Spears et al. (1997), when actors from different ethnic and cultural camps have a similar status and the social distance between them is insignificant, when they can communicate effectively and are not involved in direct competition for limited resources, the encounter is more likely to eliminate prejudice and bring about mutual acceptance. It seems that a big problem here might constitute this involvement in direct competition for limited resources as both groups openly compete for the best jobs on the shop floor, in addition to overtime opportunities and other privileges associated with holding higher status positions. Moreover, there is a difference in migrants' status which makes the fight unequal from its very beginning. That is because, as a consequence of UK immigration law, Romanians, as members of the A2 countries, are signed up to full contracts from the start of their employment. Poles and others are typically obliged to go through agencies and only gain full contracts later, sometimes after as long as nine months, when a vacancy finally arises in the department. Because every new Romanian arrival is given a job without having to join the queue, it causes a sense of envy and annoyance among those who have to wait, or are still waiting, for the contract. What is even worse, however, is the fact that often less experienced Romanians gain promotions because their service as company employees is longer compared to those who had to start as agency workers.

While young and inexperienced Romanians who become managers are blamed by other nationalities for being a source of conflict on the shop floor, the HR manager is inclined to put the blame more on the company rather than the Romanians:

> I would lay down the criticism to Food Co. as we're not great at supporting managers; and I know actually it's not just Food Co., it's the

food industry generally, isn't great at supporting and developing managers, but we're getting better.

While Romanians are perceived by their co-workers as the ones who enjoy undeserved and privileged status, an insight from one of the British managers provides a better picture of the situation. Since it was part of my informal conversation with the manager I present fragments of relevant field notes:

> She [the manager] said that their [Polish workers'] work ethic is very low; Romanians are much better in terms of work ethic and this is something she admires the Romanians for…she says that Romanians get better jobs not because of their nationality but because of their high work ethic, because they work faster and better than Poles, not to mention their level of English, which is significantly better than Poles'.

> According to Brenda [the manager] they [Poles] have a misplaced faith in their skills and abilities, which means that they are very rebellious and have a lot of demands but there are no grounds for them. Brenda complained that on this shift in particular [the rotating shift] there are many rebels who destroy the atmosphere and encourage others to protest. She needs to separate those people from others, move them between high and low risk areas and if that doesn't work she decides to take disciplinary action.

> I try to understand why Brenda told me all that. After all I'm a Pole, one of them. Maybe she had some agenda in her mind and she actually hoped that I would tell the rest that according to the managers they are not as wonderful employees as they think they are. Maybe she thought that it was a way of undercutting their concept of being the best employees ever, so that they don't think that they can set rules here or manipulate others only because they are in the majority and because the media keeps saying that Poles are such good employees.

As illustrated, Romanians' position in Food Co. is not only better due to their contractual status but they are favoured over others as a result of a few factors that distinguish them from Poles. First of all, their supposedly better communication skills were explained by the HR manager as a result of greater emphasis put on English language skills at the time of recruitment in Romania. However, while this could be true in the case of those with a longer presence in the factory, it does not

justify promotions of Romanians who have recently arrived in the UK. In fact, the language argument seems to be an important tool in the employer's hands. Apparently, a lack of language proficiency often provides the employer with the opportunity for legitimate discrimination on the grounds of nationality. Although Monika's story was not presented in this thesis, her narration of times when she was applying for internal vacancies but rejected on the basis of Romanian candidates having better language competencies was striking. The same was also confirmed by Andrzej who, despite having equally proficient language skills as his Romanian co-workers, was never offered a higher-grade position.

Another factor, which in fact might constitute an even more important element of employment relations with Romanian workers, is their apparently greater compliance with managers' instructions. On top of what Brenda said, an analysis of the HR manager's discourse seems to confirm that even though officially Romanians have never been favoured over Poles in their appointments as managers, they are often perceived by other managers as less rebellious:

> In terms of being prepared to raise issues and be vocal when there is a sense that something isn't right, then I think that people from Poland generally, you could say, won't lie down if they disagree with something. And there's a consequence of that, you could say, that relationship with Poles has the potential for being more problematic…On the whole we haven't really had any problems from the Romanians.

Due to the potential controversies that such an opinion would evoke if made public, the British managers' official explanation of the Romanians' dominance in the management structure on the shop floor is very different:

> Those guys [Romanians] were here earlier and started their journey on the ladder sooner so they are just that step up. At the time when the business was growing, there were a lot opportunities. I guess since the majority of the Polish workers have been in, the management structure is established. So these vacancies aren't there. But we are almost looking to positively discriminate to get some Polish managers developed and we're getting there slowly. But it's a slower journey now because obviously the explosion of growth that we had for a couple of

years has now virtually come to an end so it's now really a natural succession. (HR manager)

Indeed, Romanians have dominated the shop-floor management structure and as explained so far there are a few reasons lying behind this situation. For Poles and many other nationalities however, the main source of tension between Romanians and others is not a common 'us and them' view of management-employee relations but the nationality of managers and their apparent willingness to favour Romanian workers. In that way, Romanians have created a tight 'in' group, at the same time as excluding others from any type of decision-making or influence on the shop floor. Under those circumstances Piontkowski et al.'s (2000) claim about groups' identity this time seems to fit well with the Romanians' sense of national identity and their attitude towards others. Thus, according to the researchers, the more groups identify with their nationality the more likely they are to assess their group as being more positive than the 'out' group and so their support of discriminative attitudes towards the other group is more likely.

The HR manager's opinion on this matter confirms that a tight Romanian group might be a reason why Poles feel isolated or ignored by others:

> I think that Romanians are quite a tight kind of little community and they've come over almost as a family and you can still see those close links. So I can understand, but not necessarily because you're Polish, just you're not Romanian, you might not feel that you're part of that sort of community. (HR manager)

According to Datta et al. (2007), migrant supervisors and managers play a particularly critical role in determining the ethnic character of particular workforces by being responsible for recruitment. In their study, participants often claimed that managers of one nationality were friendlier with other workers of the same nationality and, for instance, gave them extra shifts. In a few conversations that I had with Romanians during my work in the factory it became clear that they are mostly relatives or very close friends. That way they have developed a rather closed in-group which, for Poles, constitutes a significant determinant of their position in the factory.

New arriving Romanians are always taken care of by compatriots who already hold higher positions and quickly progress in their careers on the shop floor.

Nevertheless, even though the management of Food Co. seems to be aware of the situation, nothing is being done. It seems that as long as it does not disturb the production process it is not perceived as an issue:

> I don't think there is a great amount of integration between Romanians and Poles, or Poles and Indians…but it's not something I suppose we have gone out of our way to force. It's up to people I guess who they want to be friends with; at the end of the day we want people to work effectively as a team in the factory… Obviously if you put a group of any nationalities together in a room and say: get yourselves together in groups, there will be a natural tendency, I think, for them to gravitate towards their own kind. And I think it needs to be expected. So I'm not consciously looking to break that down, I don't see it as such a big problem that we need to break it down…But then we don't see that reflected on the shop floor in the performance of the business in those areas that you can say: well, they haven't really integrated; you can't say that those areas are really performing badly, either. (HR manager)

According to the HR manager, from the business perspective the lack of integration among workers is not a problem because it is not reflected in their performance. Interestingly, however, the possible reason for that is people's "natural tendency…to gravitate towards their own kind." Thus, one could expect that in a multinational environment, separation is a naturally expected outcome:

> People have tried to speak English, they've tried to engage as much as they need to but it doesn't mean to say that they have become completely socially meshed, you know, there are still clear differences and social differences, if you like. People still go to the canteen and sit on the table with their friends and obviously, if you're having a break then you want to speak in your own mother tongue, that's perfectly natural. (HR manager)

The HR manager's observation implies that it is nearly impossible for migrants to fully assimilate and become one homogeneous group. It is therefore anticipated that regardless of one's effort to integrate, there are certain differences that will remain.

It seems that this kind of exclusion strategy exercised by Romanians has also been explicitly supported by British managers who themselves appear remote, hardly ever visible on the shop floor, preferring to remain upstairs in their offices. Interestingly, contact with them seemed to appeal to many Polish migrants I spoke to. As Ward and Rana-Deuba (2000) argued, what matters in contact with host nationals and influences migrants' adaptation is not quantity but quality of the contact. Because there is little exposure to indigenous workers on the shop floor, their role in shaping migrants' adaptation attitudes is also rather nonexistent. Thus, the few interactions with British higher managers are highly valued and provide an idealised alternative to the discriminative treatment meted out by their Romanian supervisors, not least because of the former's politeness, sense of fair play and 'gentlemanly conduct.' This perception is partly reminiscent of Winkler's (1974) work on directors, being statesmenlike and acting as umpires as a last resort. In Food Co. the lack of negative experiences combined with a picture of ever-smiling and polite managers of British origin makes migrants want to work alongside indigenous people. Such a perception might also be transferred outside the workplace where English people are generally perceived as happy and kind individuals. Even their greeting "how are you," which is so unusual for Poles and, despite being perceived by some as false, is also seen as harmless and allows the stereotype of an English gentleman to prevail, in the factory and elsewhere. Consequently, my interviewees' proposed solution to the problem of bad treatment by Romanians and their favouritism of compatriots was through an appeal to the supposed fairness of the British managers in the plant, referred to as their 'neutrality' and objectivity:

> So far there was only one objective manager, he was English; others were very biased. (Marcelina)

> I personally think that the manager should be English, not a Pole or a Romanian but an Englishman, a person completely neutral. (Ola)

It seems not to occur to Polish migrant workers that higher management might be complicit in the situation, deliberately promoting Romanians. I have no direct evidence of this, but analysis of discourse from both official and occasional

conversations with HR and other British managers enables me to speculate that their actions might in fact implicitly heighten Poles' poor self-portrait, feelings of frustration, unfairness and marginalisation. Whether just by luck and with no intentional approach or by a deliberate strategy, management of Food Co. has succeeded in building a workforce which is not only cheaper than local labour but also willing to work hard, in a harsh work environment and over long unsocial hours without manifesting dissatisfaction or resistance in a traditional understanding of these industrial relations terms. In line with Labour Process Theory they have found a way of increasing productivity and maximising profits by applying a low road strategy and developing methods that capture workers' 'extra effort'. Through a double recruitment strategy and favouring one of the groups, they have managed to establish an effective system of control on the shop floor. Romanians who developed a tight group of those in power not only find it easier to be tough on non-Romanians but also put pressure on ambitious Poles who aspire to supervisory and even managerial roles. In an environment of fierce competition for shop-floor privileges, Poles try to impress the management upstairs by working extra-hard and proving that they are equally good, if not better than Romanians. At the same time, while the company is increasing the pace and productivity of each worker, through increasing line speeds for instance, typical resistance to this Fordist regime such as soldiering does not take place because migrants' attention has successfully been diverted into inter-group conflict rather than fighting the system. Romanian supervisors and line leaders as the group in power on the shop floor seem to be the main target of other migrants' dissatisfaction and the only acts of resistance are directed at them personally, not at production. In this way, a double balance of conflict and cooperation (Cressey and MacInnes 1980) is exercised in Food Co. more effectively than anywhere else. The British employer not only controls its employees without any side damage to production outcomes but also releases their potential through a means of competition between the two biggest groups of workers. Workers on the other hand, can resist their own subordination in line with their interest and without jeopardising their cooperation with the employer who they rely on for their livelihoods.

6.8 Adaptation

Due to the nature of new wave migrations that started after EU enlargement in 2004, many of the people who decide to leave their country of residence do not even qualify for the demographic definition of a migrant, as this category requires an individual to stay abroad for more than 12 months. Under such circumstances, researching migrants' level of acculturation into a host society, which is also becoming increasingly diversified as a result of massive migrations, becomes not only difficult and complex but also lacks the support of traditional theories and models prevailing in migration and acculturation studies. As it is argued throughout this study, the process of acculturation has potentially become a lot more fluid, dynamic and lacking the one-way direction of gradual assimilation into the new environment as was typical for previous generations. Back and forth movements explained by the new mobilities paradigm provide grounds for developing a new understanding of acculturation which is now very fragmented and constantly evolving. The migrant status is often unplanned, fluid and corresponding to the typology of "transnational migrants" (Pries 2003) rather than the classic models. Hence it is difficult to pigeonhole individuals into some fixed categories of assimilated or marginalised migrants as the process is ongoing and shifting in various directions depending on current circumstances.

These circumstances to a large extent seem to depend on the context in which this migration is taking place. First of all, groups of new incoming migrants are very diversified. Due to the lack of restrictions imposed on members of the A8 group as well as relatively easy and cheap transport between Poland and the UK, people of different backgrounds, education and social and financial status can migrate without difficulty. Secondly, unlike any other migratory inflows, the scale of this one is unprecedented. Due to the large numbers of people arriving to the UK, the density of people of the same nationality in one place is exceptionally high. Consequently, as is argued in this study, the dynamism of workplace relations might be different from situations that predominated when migrant workers were in the minority and their role in organisations was relatively small and less visible compared to indigenous workers. Hence, contemporary migrant workers might not always have a mainstream culture that they can refer to like that of the indigenous people with whom they wish

to integrate. Finally, given the history of migrations from Poland to Britain, there might be implications from the fact that there is an established Polish community in the UK. It is possible that one of the implications is that the English may be more familiar and used to Polish citizens than other nationals in previous inflows, such as Indians or Chinese. Given cultural proximity between these two countries it might have a positive effect on Polish workers' reception in the country. Moreover, it is possible that some of the recent migrants also benefit from a substantial Polish community established after the Second World War by finding help and support in Polish clubs and churches.

Today we know that recent Polish migrants have created their own numerous means of national support. Polish migrants concentrate in multi-occupant "Polish houses," attend Polish mass on Sundays, go shopping to Polish shops and use the services of Polish hairdressers, beauticians, doctors, mechanics, nurses and baby-sitters. Consequently, such centres of Polishness might be a source of emotional, financial or practical support for some but for others these exhibit a lack of integration with the host community and demonstrate separation and independence of the indigenous people. For Grzymala-Kazlowska (2005) reasons for this limited adaptation might be low education, a minimal amount of cross-cultural experiences and poor interpersonal and foreign language skills. Observations of my study participants show that not everything is so black and white and the list of factors affecting one's adaptation or not is much longer, some of them being directly related to the workplace situation.

It looks like the process starts from day one when a person who starts working in a new place instinctively pays a lot of attention to the nature of the work and physicality of the place. The place itself and the working conditions dominate an employee's first perception of the workplace. Such was the case for Marcelina and Ola, whose rather traumatic first contacts with the factory were possibly reinforced by the fact that they both came from a comfortable educational background. Having no previous experience of working in a physically demanding place made many migrants compare the factory to a labour camp. Thus it is not surprising that under such circumstances there is little identification with the place or people associated with it. Consequently, this striking point of reference is not only meant to illustrate

the hard physical work, difficult working conditions, and harshness of the regime or close supervision: it also demonstrates the migrants' lack of acceptance and possible confusion with what they have to go through, making their presence in the factory an experience that is rather separated from themselves – it is not what they really are. However, people such as Adam and Andrzej, who had previously experienced working in hard physical conditions, seemed to have an increased level of tolerance of the current conditions. It could therefore be argued that a lack of previous work experience combined with the physicality of the place and harshness of the work regime militated against migrants' assimilation. For people such as Ola this aspect notably hindered her process of adaptation. Having graduated from a university and holding the ambition of one day being a bank clerk, she found it extremely difficult to position herself as a factory worker. All these potentially escalated Ola's initial intention of not staying long in the country and therefore keeping her distance from people with whom she has to interact.

It appears reasonable to assume that migrants' rather limited preparation for the migration experience formed by the ease of transport and no legal restrictions made them ill-equipped for the process of fitting in. Because today's decisions on migration are not so final and can be made without any particular financial or organisational effort, new migrants might often end up with little consciousness and anxiety of what it is going to be like. As Adam's case revealed, having prior migratory experiences might have an impact on shaping an individual's attitude to subsequent relationships with foreigners and provide adequate preparation for contacts with indigenous people. Moreover, Kim (2008) claims that a new intercultural identity develops through intercultural communication experience. That is because every migrant undergoes a gradual process of intercultural evolution as the individual becomes "an open-ended, adaptive and transformative self-other orientation" (Kim 2008, p.364).

This limited preparation is often combined with too high expectations raised by a discourse that describes the UK as a "land of milk and honey." In fact, in cross-cultural investigations, unreal expectations built on the basis of incomplete information or through a lack of experience with other cultures, are often quoted as becoming the first source of confusion (Berry 1988; Salvendy 1983; Taft 1987).

However, listening to participants' narratives has made me believe that there is also common ground for determining migrants' acculturative choices - their intentions with regard to settlement. Both Marcelina and Andrzej for instance bought properties in the UK and at the same time made a step towards settlement, if not permanent then certainly for a long time. This intention could be reflected in their workplace behaviour and relationships. Unlike others, who probably still consider this situation to be rather temporary and uncertain, Marcelina and Andrzej tried to take control of their new life with greater determination, possibly because they realised that in the longer term getting by is just not enough. Migrants' struggle for 'normality' therefore takes different forms; maybe for some it is easier and shorter than for others, but it is certainly shaped by the realities of their daily life. But even the HR manager differentiated the company migrant workers according to their settlement plans and pointed to those who search and wait to see where the opportunities arise as potentially the largest group:

> There are people in the UK who I would expect to sort of stay but they are keeping their options open, to see how things go.

It could be argued that such an approach is a privilege of young people. In literature it has often been recognised that younger migrants are likely to experience fewer migration-related difficulties because of their greater flexibility with respect to the changes required to adjust to a new society (e.g. El-Badry and Poston 1990; Fargallah et al. 1997; Kim 1988; Szapocznik et al. 1980). Thus, even though it would seem useful to conclude that age at the time of arrival might have an impact on the process of an individual's adaptation into the new milieu, Adam's example shows that in today's migrations this rule does not necessarily apply to everybody. Despite the common belief that older people lose their ability to adjust, Adam seems to feel good and happy with the new conditions ("if I weren't happy, I wouldn't be here"), even when the experiences are characterised by limited contact with the people surrounding him day in and day out.

Adam is also a good example showing that single migrants tend to enjoy more options through socialising with members of the host country. While it was previously assumed from the example of Magda and Grzes that married migrants

should be better socially adjusted because of the amount of support they receive from each other, research undertaken by Jancz (2000) contradicted this hypothesis. He argued that the activities of married migrants are concentrated more around their own relationship and therefore they are less concerned about building social contacts in general. Adam's discourse shows how individual these choices are because being a single migrant does not necessarily mean having more opportunities for socialising with others. This might require the presence of other factors such as a more outgoing personality or ability to communicate in English, if relationship building is to take place between a migrant and a member of the host society, but also openness to contact on the side of the indigenous people.

In fact, what Berry (1997) stresses is that it is significant in cross-cultural studies to include features of both home and host countries to be able to understand migrants' acculturation process. For this reason it seems important to have a look at broader acculturative attitudes towards migrants this time and media play an important role is shaping indigenous people's position. My interviewees felt particularly discouraged by the way they are often portrayed by media that detail Polish migrants' wrongdoings and remain silent on the English or other migrant groups. Indeed, Poles seem to be given considerably more coverage than the rest of A8 or A2 migrants and it has become common to use the discourse of "Poles and other Central and Eastern Europeans" (Financial Times 2007, p.12) when referring to new migration. It is probable that because of the dominance of Poles among A8 migrants, opinions about the new wave of migration to the UK are focused just on Polish nationals. Among Polish migrants there is a belief about some kind of a smear campaign launched against Poles and it is also noticeable in the workplace environment where they feel discriminated against. Those who mentioned media in their narrations did not mention positive comments but talked about negative coverage only. They somehow failed to recognise that even though some of the stories reported in the British media are exaggerated, the intensive coverage in daily newspapers highlights the fact that the presence of Polish migrant workers is of great importance to local British communities. While the media are said to not only represent but also shape the attitudes of society, Polish migrants could easily feel unwelcome in the UK.

It is interesting that despite Polish workers' awareness of being negatively spoken of by the indigenous society, they still positively value British society and many seek contact with it. This significantly challenges Steele and Aronson's (1995) claim about migrants' being disinclined to attempt to acculturate if they believe that they are negatively perceived by the host society. One could therefore wonder whether the workplace situation in this case has such a bearing on Poles' attitudes towards British citizens because although the workplace can provide opportunities for engagement with the host community through interaction with colleagues (Korniek et al. 2005) these may be limited in workplaces like Food Co. where the majority of workers are also migrants. Steele and Aronson's claim may therefore not necessarily be true in a workplace environment where members of the host society are in a minority and therefore have a limited influence on the migrants' position. Consequently, rare but valued contacts with British managers could potentially have an important role in shaping migrants' positive opinions about the British in general. Thus, Padilla and Perez's (2003) argument that limited contact with, and exposure to, people in the host society may in turn limit migrants' successful adaptation might also be inaccurate. In fact, the effect could be quite the opposite. An idealised notion of English fair play applied to upstairs managers' style of management might spread outside the workplace. Consequently, migrants might generalise and build a positive picture of the host society, while at the same time possibly fail to appreciate other nationalities. It might also be the other way round; having experienced positive contacts with English people outside work, they now transfer that perception to workplace situations.

The above speculations certainly confirm the findings of many acculturation researchers (e.g. Eshel and Rosenthal-Sokolov 2000; Horenczyk 1996; Trimble 2002) about the adaptation process being complex and relative because the same options are not preferred, or the same strategies may not be adopted, in different areas of life. Marcelina, for instance, is looking for opportunities to learn idiomatic English and join British employees in the offices upstairs, but at the same time she tries to reinforce her sense of belonging to the Polish nationality by choosing traditional Polish names for her children born in the UK. This time Hurh and Kim's (1984) study showing that a good indicator of assimilation is how immigrants' first names change to the names more familiar to residents of a host society is hardly

applicable here. Moreover, even though it is expected that migrants will adopt more integrative strategies in their workplaces because it is not perceived as their core values domain (Navas et al. 2007), many of my interviewees tried to reinforce their sense of Polishness in the workplace more than any other place because their sense of national identity was threatened with the strong presence of other nationalities in the plant. Indeed, because of their daily experiences at work, Polish migrants felt excluded from other migrant communities, in particular Romanians, who created very tight in-group, and a sense of belonging could only be established through strengthening home values while at the same emphasising pejorative views about other ethnic groups. This was also confirmed by Datta et al. (2007). Under such circumstances, there is potentially limited scope for developing consensual relationships as discussed by Montreuil and Bourhis (2001). The researchers imply that in situations where there is little difference between group attitudes, positive and effective communication will occur and there will be low inter-group tension.

Unfortunately for researchers, people's attitudes are not fixed but prone to change should circumstances alter. This simple truth is also recognised by Navas et al. (2005) who admitted that migrants and indigenous members' original attitudes and strategies may change in different directions over time as they gain more experience of each other and acquire more knowledge, depending on the positive or negative evaluation of these new circumstances. It should not therefore be a surprise that at times Poles feel a strong attachment to their country and firmly refuse to become 'one of them' by applying for British citizenship, while at other times they are ashamed of admitting they are Polish and aspire to become a member of British society. In general however it feels that a positive picture of the English and the good standard of living in the UK combined with a deeply rooted sense of national identity makes Polish migrants uncertain about their settlement, whether *here* or *there*, a feeling that I believe is familiar to many migrants, including myself.

Indeed, such a feeling often seems to transpire through constant comparisons of home and host countries, especially at the beginning of one's migratory experience. Drawing on my own experience of being a migrant, it seems natural that comparing both countries is particularly intensive during the first few days, weeks and months. After years of living in a foreign country, those comparisons do not disappear but

become less prominent as the individual becomes used to certain differences in behaviours and practices. Nevertheless, it could be argued that constant evaluation of host and home countries, even years after migration, might signal an individual's dilemma. On the other hand, such comparisons might not necessarily be a symptom of some maladjustment or potential problems for the individual because these might also be indicators of that person's rationality, objective observation and logical calculation (Mol 1963). They do not necessarily suffer from being caught between two worlds. According to Chan (2005) migrants live within and between two cultures, striving to integrate with the host country, while maintaining an affiliation with, or loyalty to, their home country. However, the argument that such dualism, by which biculturalism and integration are characterised, results in people's distress (Child 1970) or their becoming marginalised (Bochner 1982), has to be treated with caution because so far none of my interviewees has admitted to suffering from distress or marginalisation as a result of their being *here* and *there*. This observation could prove the claim that such is the nature of new wave migration where nothing is fixed and final, migration does not cause such distress as for previous generations, especially at times of advanced telecommunication, internet and cheap international flights.

6.9   Summary

Placing the research in a workplace context enabled me to explore some new aspects of current migrants' experiences. Even though the study is not comparative, apart from the old accounts of discrimination, exploitation and language constraints, new migrants presented some interesting pictures of identity dilemmas. Narratives revealed a complex and contradictory set of discourses at work: common workplace strife is shot through with notions of identity, the assumed identity of others, and complex notions of normality and neutrality. In fact, nationality seemed to be an overarching concept for almost every single account of the workplace situation. The presence of a large number of compatriots as well as other nationalities, who no longer constitute the minority in the workforce, seem to challenge current migrants' sense of belonging and their own identity more than at any time before. Poles compete with compatriots for rare workplace resources but distance themselves not

only from jealous fellow citizens but also from better-positioned Romanian colleagues. What is more, new migrants no longer have points of reference in terms of adjusting to the mainstream of indigenous workers' standards but instead are faced with diversity and a rather unclear, possibly confusing structure. The biggest group is that of Polish nationals but they are by no means the dominant group in leadership terms. This role belongs to a relatively smaller and closed group of Romanian workers who exercise the privilege of being first in the factory by holding the best positions on the shop floor and supporting each other in everyday work matters. Their generally better status in the factory, combined with stereotypical tarnished images of Romanian minorities in Poland, does not predispose Polish workers to act positively towards their Romanian co-workers. Hence, accounts of contact with Romanians were always recollections of tensions and conflicts. At the same time this inter-group conflict seems to be taking place in full view of the British managers who stay away from the shop floor tensions and retain the image of a fair and kind employer. Such an interplay of four organisational actors brings forth an appealing picture of today's migrants' lives in a British workplace, the significance of which is discussed in the final chapter.

7   NEW MIGRATION: SAME BUT DIFFERENT?

7.1   Introduction

The subject of recent Polish labour migration to the UK has already received considerable attention. However, the way this new migration has been researched and understood to date, mainly via mapping exercises (e.g. Anderson et al. 2006, Pollard et al. 2008) and general integration studies that aimed to shed light on A8 migrants' experiences (e.g. Boeri and Brucker 2001, Ryan et al. 2009), largely lacks a qualitative dimension that might usefully illuminate the quotidian, especially in the workplace. My intention therefore has been to 'zoom in' on the realities of recent migrants' everyday work experiences to give a detailed account of some aspects that have as yet remained undeveloped. This locally embedded in-depth ethnography has so far been missing in the research agenda, which often sees today's migrants as a homogenous group of people from Central and Eastern Europe. This research is situated at the heart of the trend towards micro studies of migration. Throughout the thesis it is the experiences and perceptions of the individual that are key. Such an approach has been deemed to be illuminating in terms of the complexities and dynamism of today's migration within Europe.

The research has sought to contribute to an existing body of knowledge by studying migrant workers' acculturation choices and constraints within the context of a British workplace environment that has received insufficient attention to date - especially one that encapsulates both old and new workplace dynamics. Given the scale of this migration as well as the opportunity for unrestricted mobility, the workplace now becomes a rich research site for re-examining new migrants' acculturative strategies. Accordingly, I have attempted to look at the potential distinctiveness of these new wave migrants upon entering into a traditional employment relationship with a British employer. This is because few of the available sources of knowledge specify how the social and reciprocal exchange relations between new migrant groups and indigenous workers, employers and/or trade unions might be characterised at an individual company level. Also lacking from these studies are answers to how these

relations might evolve over time and what might influence migrants' choice over their acculturation into a traditional British workforce. The dilemma of whether to 'rub along' or fully assimilate is managed every day, in particular in the work environment and in the light of the current economic recession when possible tensions between continually interacting sets of workers is potentially severe due to the increasing diversity and competition among workers. The aim of this research has therefore been to investigate what shapes people's choices and how a particular group of migrant workers position themselves within the complex interplay of work environment enablers and constraints. These are related to issues such as the work environment and the nature of work itself but also to the presence of large numbers of migrants, level of cooperation and tolerance among them, competence of the management team and activity of trade unions. Such insights have aimed to complement existing literature by providing a richer understanding of the reality of migrants' work experiences and their everyday struggles such as those depicted at Food Co.

The key contention is that by critically engaging with traditional acculturation and employment-relations research, this study has contributed to our understanding of new-wave migration. Bearing in mind the distinction to be made between 'old' and 'new' migration waves I have tried to show the uniqueness of this migration by focusing particularly on what transpires in the workplace. My purpose in doing this has been to contribute to a wider understanding, whether in relation to managers who employ new migrant workers, policy-makers whose strategies affect migrants' experiences or academic researchers wishing to fully explore the new migration phenomenon. For instance, Martiniello (2004) argues that models of multicultural policies cannot be transferred from one country to another unless due account is given to: the importance of the local social and political context; the demographic characteristics of the population; and the relevant demands of minority and majority groups in the field of cultural diversity. Consequently there seems to be an ongoing need for this type of research. The contemporary context for migration seems to be particularly fluid due to increasing globalisation and corresponding new mobilities processes. Thus, understanding the mind-set of today's migrants and how they experience the new milieu seems to be highly appropriate and will hopefully stimulate some further enquiry. Consequently, what my research findings can tell us

about the new wave migration that both complements and adds to current knowledge of the phenomenon becomes the central focus of this chapter.

7.2 New understandings?

Traditionally, migration is believed to involve adjustment at many levels of meaning, including losses of various kinds: migrants' loss of family, friends and home culture, loss of familiarity, loss of an internal sense of harmony, and often a loss of one's mother tongue (Akhtar 1995, 1999; Grinberg and Grinberg 1989). It is a process seen often to be accompanied by such emotions as melancholia, emptiness, stress and anxiety (Berry 2001). As argued earlier however, there is a growing tendency to perceive contemporary migration as distinct from previous inflows. This is mainly captured by the notions of globalisation and transnationalism which suggest that today's migration processes have certain distinctive characteristics, particularly in terms of the relationship between migrants arriving in receiving countries and their relationship with the citizens of those receiving countries. This makes it more contingent, less predictable and less final in terms of their settlement in the receiving country. Hence, I have approached the topic of migrant workers' acculturation process with an expectation that today's migrants might have settlement needs and strategies rather different from those who arrived in the UK 30 years ago and therefore their acculturative outcomes might not necessarily be so momentous and decisive in life-changing terms.

7.2.1 *Implications for Acculturation*

The changing character of international migration has blurred the distinction between temporary and long-term, permanent migration. The 'new mobilities' paradigm situates many people's movements in a new context whereby regular crossings of country borders have become easier, more commonplace and for multiple reasons, whether economic, social or family. In previous migrations there was a kind of pattern where people came, settled, assimilated and drew upon the indigenous culture. Contemporary migration from Europe seems to be in contrast to this picture.

Young people arriving from the new European Union countries to the UK do not know where they will be next year and there is no kind of expectation from either migrants or local citizens that they will merge with the host culture. More than ever before, migration does not necessarily lead to permanent resettlement, as Ip (2003) argues, since migrants may retrace their route and make circular movements in response to their or family members' needs at particular stages of their lives.

Given the increased opportunities and choices that structural and legal changes to the EU labour market have created since 2004, the decision to migrate and resettle has become much more contingent upon personal circumstances. Portes et al.'s (1999) argument has relevance for us when they suggest that what makes current migrants' situations different is the improved communication channels and transportation systems that make it possible for migrants to act more readily, quickly and decisively. For both Marcelina and Ola the decision to migrate was a largely spontaneous decision, on the back of a breakdown in a personal relationship, and it did not involve any particular preparation or financial sacrifice. Moreover, Adam emphasised his freedom of choice and being able to move to any place in Europe should his current circumstances and location make him feel unhappy in any way. Hence, the crucial aspect here is the dynamism of the new migration which has consequences in terms of migrants' greater opportunism and fluidity but also of their greater confusion and uncertainty over choosing the best of the options available. Andrzej moved from Italy to the UK in the hope for better working conditions and an improved lifestyle but at the time of the interview he was still unsure of his future in the country and considered moving back to Poland or elsewhere in Europe. Thus, given that the reasons for migration remain diverse and individuals do not all prepare for migration in the same way nor do they go through the same experiences or settle in similar social contexts, their subsequent cultural and social adjustments vary. This of course raises some concerns over the way we might understand the contemporary processes of migration in society at large and the workplace in particular. For these reasons, migrants' acculturation processes remain enigmatic for many researchers.

For Callon et al. (2004), the new mobilities perspective justifies abandoning the usual notions of spatiality and scale. It also challenges existing linear assumptions about temporality and timing, which often assume that individuals are able to do only

one thing at any one time, and that events follow each other in sequential order. Consequently, none of my interviewees could have been labelled as 'assimilated' or 'integrated' at any particular point in time due to the lack of permanence in their mindset and the greater dynamism of the acculturative process associated with the European context. The research shows that contemporary migrants can be very selective and inconsistent in applying their acculturative strategies. This Polish group of workers provides evidence that migrants can feel both integrated and separated simultaneously and the factor that facilitates this process is their sense of freedom and lack of constraints in deciding about re-settlement. Frequent and relatively unrestricted mobility between home and host countries creates this new type of context. In this way, the research also challenges older views of acculturation (e.g. Gordon 1964; Park 1950) according to which it is a one-way, progressive and irreversible process which eventually ends up in the form of assimilation. Marcelina has probably shown the phenomenon in the most explicit way – she feels attached to her new milieu and despite holding very negative views about indigenous people she wants to learn idiomatic language to merge with the environment and lead a comfortable life of a Western Europe citizen. But at the same time she does not aim for British citizenship because it would obstruct her strong sense of national identity and willingness to cultivate Polish traditions, despite having very negative attitudes towards her compatriots.

A sign of the times lies in the fact that research on this new wave migration goes beyond static accounts of 'settlement', 'community' or 'identity' and demonstrates what being mobile means for individual life choices here and now. It brings to the forefront individual agencies and a preference for deconstructing and contesting static notions of acculturation. All of my interviewees and people I met in Food Co. reported frequent visits at their homes in Poland which not only enabled them to reinforce their sense of Polish identity but also made an ongoing comparison between host and home countries and informed the decision with regards to resettlement. By revealing migrants' self-perceptions of being simultaneously connected to several places and the frequent practice of comparing 'here' and 'there', this research demonstrates the importance of the 'new mobilities' paradigm in the study of contemporary migration where nothing appears to be permanent and fixed. The ease of transport and decision-making processes for migrants in terms of where

to go and for how long however, make it difficult to predict how their current experiences will actually influence their longer-term decisions with regard to staying in the current workplace and country.

Acknowledgement of the above made me consider the possibility of new modes of adaptation to the receiving country and revisiting the traditional acculturation models which, as already argued, now appear to be relatively static in character. Switching attention away from acculturative outcomes towards an examination of the process itself seemed to be a good way of catching the dynamic and complex nature of the new migration. The above helps to explain why I made little attempt to classify migrants as either integrated, assimilated or marginalised but tried to examine *why* and *how* they decide whether to 'fit in' or adopt some more distancing tactics when it came to the issue of their adaptation to the British workplace. What I have attempted to convey is a picture of a migrant's working day at Food Co., their everyday struggles and dilemmas to position themselves inside the shop-floor structure. Because this type of migration is potentially more temporary by nature, the grounds for many (workplace) situations might also be different from previous migrations. Thus, investing time and effort in building long-term relationships with significant others such as indigenous and other ethnic workers might not be worth doing. The same could explain new migrants' passivity and lack of resistance to organisational injustice as exemplified by some of the narrative analysis discussed earlier. Their age, level of education and European citizenship are likely to feed aspirations of a better job than factory work, leading to a perception of this phase of migration as only a way of earning money and then moving on. Under such circumstances, keeping their heads down appears to be an understandable response for such migrant workers. For these reasons, longitudinal studies might prove useful in illuminating the longer-term effects of migrants' 'fitting in' behaviours on their decision to settle or otherwise. Arguably, such an approach better reflects the assumed greater fluidity of migrants' decisions and increased dynamism of the constantly changing context.

It has been argued in previous chapters that the acculturation process is subject to a context in which individuals interact with each other. Migrants have to make their own cultural synthesis, taking and/or rejecting some elements of both cultures, but it will not take place in a vacuum. There will be certain ideologies, mainstream

discourse, prejudice or relations of power that mark the context and will eventually affect the acculturation process. Accordingly, migrants and indigenous people's original attitudes and strategies may well change in different directions over time as they gain more experience of each other and acquire more knowledge, depending upon a positive or negative evaluation of these new circumstances (Navas et al. 2005). For this reason, none of the conclusions reached in this study can be considered as final or definitive. For example, what was the perceived reality for my interviewees a year ago might not be true today. Indeed it is not only their evaluation of the situations to be faced that might have changed but similarly the work environment itself has changed, as might their personal circumstances. This, however, only adds to the argument that the structured nature of European migration with its emphasis on fluidity makes new migrants' life less straightforward and decisions less decisive and subsequently more ambiguous and open-ended. Complexities, contradictions and difficulties in the acculturation process, as migrants attempt to adapt to various aspects of the changing environment, seem to constantly challenge some of them and at the same time question and/or reinforce their sense of belonging and national/self identity. All this makes it impossible to categorise migrants' attitudes and strategies into any kind of 'boxy' models[7].

7.2.2 *The centrality of employment relations to the migration experience*

There is a suggestion that the novelty of contemporary European East-West migration underscores recently-observed patterns of mobility. Polish and other migrants from the new EU member states are not only mobile across countries but they are also mobile within national labour markets. Hence, unlike previous generations of European migrants, new migrants are not bound by a work permit and can frequently change employer. Consequently, there is an expectation that such a change of circumstances has had a significant impact on the current state of many British workplaces – the largest number in Europe in terms of A8 and A2 workers. I believe that the context of this study is therefore compelling because workplace environments in particular present today's migrants with significantly different and

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[7] According to the foundational work of Berry (1980; 1984) which is the most widely applied theoretical model in cross-cultural research, migrants can apply only one of four acculturative strategies: integration, assimilation, separation or marginalisation.

unique circumstances to those faced by previous waves of (mostly colonial) migrants. On the one hand, free movement of labour within the EU has given new migrants almost equal rights to indigenous workers but on the other hand it also attracted more migrants than usual, turning workplaces into multi-cultural and multi-ethnic environments.

Indeed, there is a new context for today's employment relations, but the content seems to remain the same. Despite the fact that many workplaces in the UK have become increasingly diversified places in terms of employing people from around Europe, and where migrant workers are not necessarily in the minority anymore, traditional forms of managing employment relationships inside places like a food manufacturing plant have stayed unchanged. Old fashioned Fordism, hierarchies or relations of power are still very applicable to a context of everyday factory working life. To a large extent, this study provides a contemporary rejoinder to earlier studies into working life in a British factory (e.g. Beynon 1975; Cavendish 1982). Much remains the same in certain manufacturing workplaces since Braverman (1974) wrote about alienation from the labour process – factory work being monotonous and unpleasant and workers tending to fragment into groups who often mistrust each other. However, studies in this particular group of Polish workers revealed some interesting and distinctive characteristics.

Indigenous workers' invisibility however, which arose as a result of these demographic changes to workforce composition in the factory, created another set of different scenarios in the work environment – notably the lack of a catalyst around which workplace resistance could form. The classic responses of workers to perceived harsh workplace regimes, such as shirking, absenteeism or time-wasting, seem to be missing in this particular work setting in which young Polish migrant workers tend to predominate. It might be the case that forms of resistance have failed to emerge because there is no focal point of reference for these new job entrants and no one amongst them has been prepared to take the lead in challenging the authority of the factory management and in organising resistance to that authority. It seems that in this particular case the multi-ethnicity of the workforce has prevented the emergence of a common understanding of how favourable work norms might be established that begin to undermine management control and as part of a wider

struggle over the 'frontier of control' in line with Goodrich's observations of factory life in the 1920s. An alternative explanation sees them lacking the necessary confidence to repeatedly break work rules and norms as the means by which to actively re-negotiate the position they now find themselves in.

Moreover, in a workplace that is now dominated by migrant rather than indigenous workers, a strong inter-ethnic competition has developed that is largely self-induced whilst also being ignored, if not tolerated, perhaps even encouraged by the local factory management team and which also acts as a mask for a class-based rather than identity-based workplace struggle. Thus, young, educated and ambitious migrants report themselves to be highly frustrated and dissatisfied with the quality of the work they are asked to perform. The reality of the production line is certainly not what most of them envisaged when first thinking of a modern 'Western' workplace – a clean, quiet, technologically advanced and friendly environment. Most notably their disappointment refers to the exhausting daily grind of factory work, the harshness of the production regime and the existence of low-trust relationships with both their co-workers and superiors[8]. This breach of the migrants' psychological contract, combined with a sense of powerlessness to change their current situation, channels their opposition in the direction of those of the workforce deemed inferior by reference to the perceived social hierarchy of their own making. In this case, hostility is shown to Romanian workers who hold the majority of skilled and managerial positions on the shop floor. At face value, Polish migrants seem to articulate their sense of frustration through highlighting national character differences that only serve to emphasise the dissimilarity of Polish and Romanian workers. However, this inter-group conflict appears to be only a symptom of a strong sense of competition amongst them which, unlike mobilisation, is perceived to be the primary means by which they might escape their current situation through career advancement and so alleviate their sense of frustration with the drudgery of the job. Strong competition among Polish migrant workers contrasts with mobilisation and transpires through workplace behaviour accordingly. While the former derives from them being

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[8] Yet, in the light of recent report on migrants' experiences of forced labour and exploitation in the UK food industry (Scott et al. 2012), Food Co. is not as oppressive as other places. In their study of migrant workers from the UE and China, researchers identified fourteen forced labour practices , including threats and bullying, tie-ins (money, accommodation, work permits), disciplining through dismissal.

individualistic and self-seeking in terms of conduct, the latter engenders feelings of solidarity, community and collective actions.

Generally, factories conforming to Fordist-type work regimes have a reputation for being rather oppressive towards their workers such that the latter are presumed to react negatively to the routine, to fatigue arising from undertaking monotonous work, being tightly supervised and the lack of job autonomy. The question is whether such negativity converts into outright workplace opposition that takes the form of open conflict? This further raises the issue of the extent to which such workers can subsequently be organised into union membership and so become mobilised at the shop-floor level. The assumption here is that the resources, leadership, and leverage that unions bring to bear will bolster workers' power and capacity to demand favourable changes to their situation on the ground through the exercise of a collective 'voice' (e.g., Ashenfelter and Johnson 1969; Edwards 1996; Rubin 1986). Thus, a sense of justice is claimed to play a significant role in people's lives such that those who feel unfairly treated by their local managers are more likely to resort to retaliation in the workplace (e.g. Miller 2001). It has been commonly observed elsewhere and over time that such discontent leads workers to adopt various workplace 'misbehaviours' such as 'cheating' (Mars 1983), 'sabotage' (Taylor and Walton 1971), 'making out' (Burawoy 1979) and 'soldiering' (Taylor 1911). Also, it appears that discontented workers are more predisposed towards belonging to a union in general and to sit-ins and strikes in particular and, as a consequence, are more prepared to act in unison generally (e.g. Leung et al. 1993).

Contrastingly and based on the evidence from this study, there is little to suggest that these aggrieved workers are prepared to exercise their collective might to any great extent, either in terms of formal or informal conflict, and so confront their managers with their grievances other than in the most fragmented and patchy way. At Food Co. it seems that this particular group of Polish migrant workers have, for whatever reasons, deliberately chosen to act atomistically, as individuals who seem unwilling to share their sense of grievance and so enter into a common struggle. Perhaps rather surprisingly in a plant that 'time has forgotten', these workers perceive themselves to be powerless in effecting change to improve their lot. From their own narrative accounts, there appears to be little or no means by which they see themselves able to

come together collectively and so demonstrate their shared opposition to the situation they find themselves to be in, other than through petition and competition.

What is distinctive about the accounts of shop-floor Polish workers is that rather than conforming to the collectivist values, these workers seek to secure self through highly individualistic discursive practices that differentiate and separate themselves from other shop-floor workers. Because of the large size of the Polish cohort at Food Co. and the predominant characteristics in the group such as lack of support, jealousy and back-biting, individuals seek opportunities to escape – this being identified as one of the many such practices. In addition to enhanced economic rewards, upward mobility appears to offer the promise of overcoming identity problems. Indeed, all of my interviewees signalled their feelings of shame and embarrassment when they spoke of the unacceptable behaviours of their compatriots, both within and outside the workplace. For these reasons they find competition as the only way of distinguishing themselves from the homogeneous mass. After all, the making of career and of self is viewed as the exclusive responsibility of the individual; hence there is little interest in coming together as a group. Also, the petition, which is the only act of solidarity among Polish workers, appears to be unsuccessful within the group. Even people significantly affected by shop-floor injustice, like Ola for instance, show little interest in signing petitions because there is little identification with the group and belief in the success of activities that require group cohesion and solidarity.

In a nutshell, despite sharing common working life experiences and social identities (Oberschall 1973, 1993), this particular group of migrant factory workers appear to lack the capacity to mobilise on a large scale and in a sustained way. Instead they prefer to remain as individuals who are isolated from each other but who also struggle to improve their position and status within the factory through competing against each other over work performance in an attempt to gain advancement and recognition. This lack of solidarity and mobilisation on the shop floor, of self-identification with the plight of co-workers and of any sense of a "them" and "us" (e.g. Taylor and Whittier 1992; Kelly and Kelly 1991) creates a workplace environment whereby there is little likelihood of employment relationships within Food Co. providing the necessary basis for collective action amongst a group of mostly young and

reasonably well-educated migrant workers who constitute the majority of the factory workforce.

7.2.3 *Transnational migration*

Interestingly, despite sharing the same bad experiences of the workplace the acculturative outcomes are not the same for every migrant. It could be that migrants' acculturative strategies are to a large extent shaped by their lives outside work but it could also suggest individual's different perceptions and reactions to workplace situations. While Magda modestly admits that she has never anticipated being equal to indigenous workers who are the hosts here, Andrzej's expectation of the British workplace is to be given equal opportunities and treatment regardless of one's nationality, including indigenous co-workers. Consequently, there are no predictable patterns of adaptation to a new milieu, whilst social identities remain fluid and acculturative choices deferred until the right time comes because this is what the new migratory context allows individuals to do. Consequently, migrants end up with numerous contradictions around their sense of national identity, and around differing perceptions of other migrant groups as well as the local indigenous community. Accordingly, these contradictions illustrate an unclear sense of direction and indecisiveness in terms of only applying one particular strategy regarding possible settlement. The research findings therefore confirm the acculturation process for this sample of Polish migrant workers to be marked by ambiguity, multiple loyalties and divergent identities that are quite characteristic of the new wave migration. Their experience is one where everything is open-ended, even unfinished business, and where individuals have a number of decisions to make in terms of where, when and for how long they wish to migrate – decisions which are not structurally time-constrained. The lack of finality and pressure to make a decision with regard to staying and settling or returning home, signals an unprecedented level of free choice. How they manage this opportunity seems to be of emerging interest.

In this modern context of transnationalism and new mobilities, many movements are described as multiple and spatially unpredictable – in McHugh's words 'inside, outside, upside down; backward, forward, round and round' (2000). For people

involved in this type of trans-movement, the notion of 'being unsettled' becomes a permanent state of mind. The notions of nationalism versus globalisation have become less distinctive as confirmed by some of the subjects in this study who identify themselves as being not just Polish but also 'European'. They see themselves as part of a transnational community for whom being firmly rooted in just the one location is difficult to envisage at this stage of their lives. For some of my interviewees, 'home' no longer exists as such and they find themselves to be both 'here' and 'there'. This is because the distinction between 'home' and 'abroad' has become somewhat blurred. This is true for Marcelina who feels that she acclimatised well to her new environment but she also acknowledges the importance of her Polish roots, hence the feeling of being at home in two places simultaneously. On the other hand, the absence of any particular ties to 'here' or 'there' makes Adam feel generally rootless and more a citizen of the world.

The contribution that this study makes to the field of acculturation transpires through complementing the existing insights by Horenczyk (1996), Eshel and Rosenthal-Sokolov (2000), Trimble (2002) or Navas et al. (2007) who claim that the adaptation process is both complex and relative because the same options are not preferred or the same strategies may not be adopted in different areas of life, in particular work and private life. The characteristics of this 'new mobility' mindset allow people to defer indefinitely having to make such 'once-in–a-lifetime' decisions. They can pursue a lifestyle and operate with a mindset that does not necessarily require them to choose between home and host country values. Members of this new wave of migration might correspond more to the idea of "transnational migrant", as suggested by Pries (2003), rather than to the traditional concept of a migrant, as their life is organised across borders rather than only in the host country. It may even be argued that the subjects in my study come to represent migrants of an even newer type in that they enjoy EU citizenship and therefore might not conceive of themselves as migrants in the traditional meaning of the word so long as they are prepared to confine themselves to the borders of the EU.

I am close friends with a couple who work in the UK Monday to Friday but fly over to Poland every weekend to undertake education at a Polish university. Because it is cheaper this way and because their English is not good enough to study in England, I

can see how being both here and there is not only a theoretical option available to new EU migrants but a practical way of life. They can fish for opportunities and use what the integrated Europe offers to its citizens. Available means of communication and transport enable individuals to live across borders and, as in the case of my friends, a notion of commuting seems more relevant than migrating. For these reasons, I think it is reasonable for me to expect that in many situations terms such as migrant, assimilation or separation might simply lose their applicability as they will be replaced with notions of transnationality, super mobility and multi-integration.

Thus, in contrast to the static typologies of extant theorising in this field, what I hope to have achieved through the discursive turn of my research is a rich picture, not of a homogeneous mass, but of individuals whose real-life situations are complex and contradictory and who struggle to comprehend and manage the pressures of 'being migrants' when finding themselves to be in migrant-dominated workplaces.

7.2.4 *Method*

It feels that a combination of participant observation and narrative interviews was both very useful and innovative in researching this new wave of migrants. Nevertheless, although the above findings would not be possible without adopting a discursive approach, the method was expected to achieve something more. In uncovering the various ways that migrants strategise, the discourse analytic approach was expected to reveal potential structural forces that push migrants in one direction as opposed to the other, as illustrated by Bowskill et al. (2007). In this way, the research was meant to examine the ways in which forms of integration could possibly be positioned as moral "goods." What appears to have happened in practice is that, in contrast to Bowskill et al.'s (2007) study, this workplace appeared to exhibit few explicit pressures towards assimilation. Thus there seem to be two overriding reasons to explain the slightly disappointing results from the method.

Firstly, the approach was not used extensively enough to include interviews with other migrant groups, indigenous workers and most importantly, the management of Food Co. If this had been done, however, perceptions of me as an unbiased and

trustworthy researcher might have been influenced by my affiliation to a group of Polish workers during the participant observation stage. Hence, interviewing Romanian workers and British managers would have had to be conducted by a third person in order to achieve a well-rounded picture of Food Co.'s strategies.

Alternatively, the second reason may be that there appeared to be little or no pressure towards assimilation from either co-workers or management of the organisation, who seemed to be content with the status quo. The perceived reputation of Polish workers may be the key to this phenomenon. In contrast to the "threatening" Muslims of Bowskill et al.'s (2007) work, we may perhaps see Poles as offering a non-threatening and indeed positive alternative to British workers. Even Romanian migrants might serve as standard setters while confrontation with Romanian managers is meant to maintain a high level of determination among Poles to do better. In such circumstances management has no need for assimilative strategies. However, this is a rather speculative conclusion and more work would have to be undertaken by expanding the study to include the remaining organisational actors to test its veracity.

7.3   **My research journey**

Working on this research has been the most challenging project I have ever undertaken. It began in 2007 when the phenomenon of A8 migrants in the UK was dominating public debate across the UK. Extensive media coverage and increasing interest in the issue among academics enabled me to embark on a university-funded project that very much concerned myself, my closest friends and my family. I believe that being part of this migration cohort gave me invaluable insights into various aspects of the phenomenon and, unquestionably, a better start to explore the subject in greater depth than a non-A8 researcher would ever have. Being Polish I was able to provide the valuable perspective of an insider (e.g. Easterby-Smith and Malina 1999) by gaining access to recently employed migrant workers, sharing the same experiences through working alongside them and interviewing them in their mother tongue; but most importantly analysing the collected data from the perspective of a person who comes from the same background.

In terms of my personal experience and over the course of three years, the research has taken over a great part of my life. After all, it concerned me as well. On one hand I have met some wonderful fellow countrymen and women who have become my closest friends here, but on the other hand I have also shared many experiences of the factory milieu. I have experienced ambiguous feelings as a Pole, making me think twice before approaching compatriots and doubting whether my sense of Polishness has remained the same. I have felt ashamed of some of the people I dealt with in Food Co., and at times I felt disappointment and even regret that I belonged to this national group, which consequently pulled me away from my compatriots. However, I have to admit that I do not know how my attitude towards Poles would be today if I had stayed in the factory for a longer and indefinite time. I knew that my role there was to observe and that I would be leaving any day but earning a living in such a place would certainly influence my attitude towards my fellow countrymen and women.

Nevertheless, in terms of the research itself, if I was to do it again, I would not have approached it differently. Given the time constraints of this project, I believe I have done as much as possible to gain a deeper insight into the work experiences of recent migrants. Saying this, however, does not mean that there is no further scope for developing this study. First of all, it could be argued that an obvious and immediate challenge to this research is certainly the lack of insight into the work experiences of other migrant groups. The research site has been characterised by a large diversity of workers and it provides a useful platform for further research. Given the chance to continue my research I believe that exploring Romanian workers' experiences and perceptions, as well as representatives of other groups, not least indigenous workers and British managers, would certainly be my next step in making the research more comprehensive and insightful. As argued before, doing this could possibly shed some light on structural forces in Food Co. and, potentially, the hidden agendas that management might hold in relation to particular migrant groups.

Moreover, when relating to either Poland or England, it is this sense of duality in terms of belonging simultaneously to both *here* and *there*, that is seemingly present in most Polish migrants' accounts. It would therefore be interesting to see how their

identity changes over a longer period of time; whether they become more settled in a new work milieu that makes their attachment to the home country less emotional. It would also be interesting to see how this process was affected by migrants' position in the job market as well as their interaction with other migrants and indigenous workers. For this reason I believe that a follow-up study could be used to explore the robustness of the findings raised by this study, not only through adopting a longitudinal perspective but comparatively through studying different workforces which are less migrant-dominant as in the case of Food Co. and with a different skill component than factory workers. There is still more to be done in the area of CEE migrants and their experiences in the British labour market in particular. It has been claimed that the experiences, expectations, aspirations and needs of the incomers are critical to understanding current and future migration trends (Sinclair 1998). It is my hope that this thesis offers a useful contribution in this matter and will serve as a basis for future investigations by myself and other researchers.

7.4   A concluding note

Contemporary migration of Poles to the UK is argued to be different in character to the post-war wave: it no longer consists of political refugees but of economic migrants who travel to the UK en masse seeking 'normality' and a 'better future' (Galasinska and Kozlowska 2009). While this might not necessarily be something new in the history of migration to the UK, this particular group of migrants is distinctive in terms of being relatively young, well-educated and free in terms of being more footloose and less pressured to resettle in the host country. The new legal structure enables them to be as mobile as ever, avoid long-term commitments and be more opportunistic. The quotidian is different as a consequence. Because migrants are no longer rooted in one place only, as suggested by the ideas of transnationalism, many migrants are both *here* and *there* in terms of country allegiance and sense of identity.

So what does the analysis tell us about recent migrants' acculturation? The dilemma over whether to settle down, make roots and integrate into the workplace is no longer in the foreground when migrants think about their situation but has taken a back seat.

In their mind's eye, there is no longer a sense of finality in moving from one EU country to another when the home ties that bind prevail and the social pressure to integrate is perhaps not so strongly felt as previously. Their discourse around the subject of whether to settle or not betrays a certain indecision about where migrants might finally settle and what they might eventually do. Choices can be deferred or rescheduled indefinitely during which experiences of the workplace might infuse attitudes towards settlement or vice versa. In fact, there is a strong sense of postponing settlement decisions until they secure a better purchase in the job market, either here or back home, or their personal and social circumstances related to love, marriage or family change. The structure of migration within the EU allows for orientation to both countries simultaneously and they are not seen as incompatible. Often it is never a simple dichotomy that migrants face; there is no final burning of bridges as seen with post-war Polish migrants for instance. What are more likely to occur are a series of incremental changes that help to determine the extent to which migrants become more home-country facing or host-country facing over time. As matters currently stand, this migration is a piece of unfinished business for many of them.

Hence, it can be argued that the dynamism of migrants' acculturation process, as well as their geographical mobility, can hardly be captured in any traditional way that has prevailed in migration studies to date. While I hope that one of my aims here to shed light on the above issues has been achieved, I also believe that this piece of research has triggered some further questions in this area. Would the dynamism be different if the workplace had a different ethnic structure, or migrants interacted more with indigenous workers than with their compatriots? Would migrants' confusion or indecision in terms of country allegiance be different if they worked in higher status jobs? Would migrants' predispositions to settlement be different if they were given more time, or the economic situation in Poland changed? Certainly questions like these might be tackled through a comparative study and longer-term observations of new wave migrants. I believe that this piece of research provides significant scope for further study which will potentially shape the way in which we understand the phenomenon of migrations within the enlarging EU.

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